

Fighting Mediocracy

Doug Hamilton

The Lord Promised a Land.

The Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land after spending forty years in the desert. This was a new generation of Jews knew only the wilderness of Sinai. Therefore they were anxious to enter the land. With that in mind, Moses would find it necessary to revisit the commands concerning the taking of the land.

- Deuteronomy 11:8-12 “You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; ⁹ so that you may prolong *your* days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ “For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹ “But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, ¹² a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.”

This was a long promised land as dictated to their ancestor Abraham. He was called out of Ur of the Chaldees and told to enter the Promised Land of his inheritance from God.

- Genesis 13:14-17 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶ “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. ¹⁷ “Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”

The Lord said He would help them to take the Promised Land, but they would have to fight for it as well. There would be many immoral inhabitants who would be in the land, but if they trusted God at His word, they would be victorious.

- Deuteronomy 11:23-25 “...then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. ²⁴ Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. ²⁵ No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.”

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The trans-Jordan tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh settled short of the entering the Promised-Land. When they saw the good pasture land east of the Jordan River, they deeply desired to have that as their inheritance. Without ever seeing the Promised Land which God promised, they approached Moses seeking it for their own.

- Numbers 32:5 They said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan.”

Moses accused them of wanting to avoid fighting for the Promised Land for their fellow tribes. He said it was a major discouragement to the other Jews. In response they said the following:

- Numbers 32:16–17 Then they came near to him and said, “We will build here sheepfolds for our livestock and cities for our little ones; ¹⁷ but we ourselves will be armed ready to go before the sons of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, while our little ones live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

Giving their word to go and fight with their brothers, Moses gave the blessing for them to settle in the “middle land” just short of the Promised Land (Numbers 32:33). This decision to stop short of the Promised Land would haunt the trans-Jordan tribes for many years because it put them in the path of many foreign enemies. Marauding invaders would often attack them from the borders and kidnap their people. Whenever the people of God stop short of the Father’s plans, they are at risk.

Fighting the Mediocracy of Moses

Moses had a history of this type of behavior. He strove for mediocracy when God called him into service. He said to Moses, *“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”* But Moses said to God, *“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”* (Exodus 3:10-11)

Moses used the excuse that he was a “Nobody”, implying that he could not do the job which God was calling him to do. How did God assist him in overcoming this? He did so by saying, *“Certainly I will be with you...”* (vs. 12). He would go through many months of stressful times with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but God would be with him. He would go through many trials with the Israelites over the next forty years in the desert, but God would be with him. It was that knowledge that helped him not to strive in mediocracy concerning his leadership.

Many times we as Christians strive for mediocracy when it comes to sharing the gospel with their people because they are persuaded they are a “Nobody in Christ”. Have we forgotten

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what Jesus has done for us on the cross? Do we not remember that God is with us and there is nothing to fear? Do we not remember what Jesus did for us?

- Philippians 1:6 *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*
- Philippians 4:13 *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*
- Psalm 118:6 *“The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?”*

We are somebody in Christ and must never forget it. Our success in reaching the Promised Land of heaven. God is always there for us, but we must keep that in mind.

This however was not the only excuse Moses would use. *Exodus 3:13–14 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”* Moses tried using the excuse that he did not know enough about the God who was sending him on this task to free the people of Israel. God also removed the excuse by saying, *“I AM WHO I AM”*; and He said, *“Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”* (vs. 14).

We as Christians can also use this excuse to not share the gospel with our people. “I don’t know enough about the Bible” is a common excuse I hear from my fellow Christians. We do not have to know a lot about the Bible to lead someone else to Christ. We simply need to know the gospel of Jesus Christ and how it saved men from their sins.

There was yet another excuse offered by Moses. *Exodus 4:1–7 Then Moses said, “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’ ”* He was worried about their lack of belief that he was being sent by God. The LORD removed this excuse by allowing Moses to perform a couple miracles.

Christians are also bringing a message from God of the Savior Jesus Christ. We hold the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) for everyone who believes, but forget that the Creator of the universe has sent us. He did not give us miracles to do, but instead a Bible that is historically, logically, spiritually and scientifically superior to whatever man has to offer.

Yet another excuse was offered in pursuit of mediocracy. *Exodus 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”* God removed that excuse as well by having him team up with Aaron his brother. He would be the mouthpiece for the two (Exodus 4:14).

All Christians might not be dynamic in speech, but they can also team up with another to help out. It does not exempt them from the responsibility to lead others to Christ. Paul was not a good speaker (2 Corinthians 11:6), but he teamed up with others on the mission to lead

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souls to Christ. We must also do the same. We must strive to incorporate the entire plan of God in our lives, including our sharing of the gospel.

Fighting the Temptation of Mediocracy

Moses learned well the lesson of avoiding mediocracy in his walk with God. This would be tested by Pharaoh in the days to come. *Exodus 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'*" He was to lead all the Israelites three days journey into the wilderness and offer sacrifice to God (5:3). There was to be no compromise in this task.

After a few plagues, Pharaoh offered a compromise of mediocracy. *Exodus 8:25 Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land."* Pharaoh wanted Moses to be mediocre for the sake of convenience. It would be very easy to make a one hour trip instead of a three-day journey, but Moses would have nothing to do with it.

Therefore after a few more plagues on Egypt, Pharaoh was willing to make another offer. *Exodus 10:8–11 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?"*⁹ *Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."*¹⁰ *Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind."* It was okay to go three days journey to make a sacrifice, but they would have to leave the children behind. This is the compromise of the family. This was not going to work for Moses, for that would be mediocracy.

There were some more plagues brought about by God and Pharaoh was willing to make another compromise. *Exodus 10:24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you."* This is the compromise of resources. This was not going to be acceptable to Moses because once again it would be striving to be mediocre.

It would not be until the last plague, the death of the firstborn, that they would be allowed to leave without compromise. Three straight attempts were made by Pharaoh to pull Moses into mediocracy, but he would not bend.

We as Christians are being tempted into mediocracy from the same ways. The world calls for the Christian to only take a path of convenience, but we have to fight it. It is not always convenient to make it to worship, but we do. It is not always convenient to make that hospital or nursing home visit during football season, but we do. It is not always convenient to be involved in other's lives around us, but we do because we are not a people of mediocracy.

We also are not a people who leave our children behind, but make sacrifices to lead them to the throne of Jesus. We send them to Bible camps, VBS, Bible Bowl, Youth Retreats,

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Youth Advance, Lads to Leaders and many other activities because we are a people striving for the best that God has to offer. We will never sacrifice our children for mediocracy.

We are also a people that will wisely use our resources for the kingdom of God. We give money and time to the work of the kingdom, knowing that we have been blessed by God. We give beyond our ability, knowing that we have heavenly treasure awaiting us in heaven. We are a people that strive to make a difference with our homes, our cars and our bank accounts because we are not a people of mediocracy.

The Charge

We are the people of God, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and carrying the promise of eternal life in heaven. We cannot strive for mediocracy because our Savior gave it all on the cross so that we might have hope. We must not give up, but run the race which is set before us with endurance.

- 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.
- Philippians 3:13–14 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Focus clearly on the task at hand. Fight mediocracy in the kingdom of God. Fight it for all it is worth. Stop wasting our time on things that distract us from accomplishment. We have one life to live for Jesus and we must strive to live every day to the fullest for Him.