

WHEN YOUR ACTIONS CAUSE AN INTERRUPTION

Leader pages on pp. 138-141

THE POINT:
GOD CAN REDEEM
OUR MISTAKES.

EXODUS 2:11-22; 3:5-10

^{2:11} Years later, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his own people and observed their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people. ¹² Looking all around and seeing no one, he struck the Egyptian dead and hid him in the sand. ¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you attacking your neighbor?" ¹⁴ "Who made you a commander and judge over us?" the man replied. "Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses became afraid and thought, "What I did is certainly known." ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard about this, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.

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¹⁹ They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ "So where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why then did you leave the man behind? Invite him to eat dinner." ²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² She gave birth to a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a resident alien in a foreign land."

MEMORY VERSE

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^{3:5} "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ **Then he continued, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.** ⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ⁹ So because the Israelites' cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, ¹⁰ therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

KEYWORDS

Their forced labor (v. 11)—Out of fear of their growing numbers, Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites and used them as slave labor.

The land of Midian (v. 5)—Located in northwestern Arabia to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Reuel (v. 18)—The name Reuel means "friend of God." Such a name might be further proof that Reuel was a prophet of the Lord God.

Holy Ground (v. 5)—Holiness refers to the complete separation of God from His creation.

HOW DOES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS REDEEM OUR FAILURES?

I'm fascinated with stories of "chance encounters." History is full of them. And so is your life. Ever made a left turn when you should've gone right? Maybe you knocked on the wrong door or stood in a long line only to discover thirty minutes later you were in the wrong line?

We don't usually see these as life-changing encounters. But they could be. James Chadwick stood in the wrong line—and science is glad he did. James was only sixteen when he enrolled at Manchester University. This young upstart had his eye on studying mathematics—until he got in the wrong line.

Chadwick got in line to register for mathematics, but it turns out he was registering for physics. He decided to stay enrolled because he liked the professor he talked with, Dr. Ernest Rutherford.

This wrong line and chance encounter led to a lifelong friendship and partnership. Was that a big deal? It turns out that Rutherford, who mapped out the atom, instilled in Chadwick a love for physics. Chadwick went on to discover the neutron, and he became a pioneer in nuclear science.

All because of the mistake of getting in the wrong line. I'm not saying that every mistake or wrong

turn in your life is divinely ordained by God. But since you're there, look around. God may want to use you in that situation.

Just don't assume your mistake is just that: a mistake. That mistake could be an opportunity. We sometimes wonder if God writes us off when we make bad or sinful decisions. But Moses shows us that God can use the mess we make of things to refine us if we let Him.

Our Actions Can Cause an Interruption // Exodus 2:11-15

Orphaned as a baby, Moses was now an adult, highly educated, trained for Egyptian royalty, and "powerful in his speech and actions" (Acts 7:22-23). His was a life of luxury and privilege.

But there was an ache in his heart that only orphans understand. Moses wanted to know his roots. What he discovered in his search was far bigger than bloodlines. Moses learned about God the Creator, who called the Hebrew people His own—and this captured him. In time, Moses embraced his heritage: he was a son of Abraham, not the son of Pharaoh's daughter.



THE POINT: GOD CAN REDEEM OUR MISTAKES.

Hebrews 11 tells us that Moses gave up his status in Pharaoh's family to join the faith and the suffering of God's people (v. 24). We're told he "went out to his own people" to see their suffering up close, and spotted "an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people" (Ex. 2:11).

Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. Scholars differ over details: Did Moses already sense God wanted him to liberate Israel? Was this murder or defense of a third party? Differences aside, on this they agree: Moses was reckless and sinful, and his actions sparked unintended consequences. Ever shake your head at a foolish decision?

- In 1938, Joe Schuster and Jerry Siegel sold their rights for a comic book character they invented for \$130. The character's name was Superman.
- Little Richard was one of the most influential musicians of all time—but a bad record deal and the pervasive racism of the 1950's American music industry kept the singer from cashing in on some of his biggest hits, with no royalties on many of his records that were covered by white artists or used in movies.

In our text, Moses killed an Egyptian, then tried to cover it up. His actions were wrong on several levels. It was unnecessary; he could have ordered the Egyptian to stop. It wasn't God's will; God had not yet called Moses to free His people. It wasn't God's way; "Human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness" (Jas. 1:20).

Moses's conscience was obviously warning him. Look at his efforts to make sure no one was watching. He worked hard to hide the evidence, but the next day, he discovered that the news had leaked and the fellowship with his native people he hoped this might generate had backfired (vv. 14). When Pharaoh heard of it, Moses had to run for his life.

WHEN HAS TAKING MATTERS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS MADE A SITUATION WORSE?

I've been there. Amazed at my own words and deeds and staggering under the consequences. Here's what I learned on the backside of some bad decisions: you can keep hitting repeat on the "if onlys" and stay stuck. Or you can receive the bitter harvest of what you sowed as a necessary part of your spiritual growth.

Our Interruption May Be Our Preparation

// Exodus 2:16-22

The wanted posters didn't say "dead or alive." Pharaoh wanted Moses dead. As Moses put distance between Egypt and himself,



DIGGING DEEPER MOSES

Moses's life is a saga of preservation where God orchestrates the events of his life to fulfill His divine plans.

- As an infant, God saved his life by keeping the midwives from killing him and having him placed in a basket in a river for Pharaoh's daughter to find and adopt him.
- As a child into adulthood, Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house as a son of Egyptian royalty where he learned the inner ways of the land's ruler.
- As an adult, choosing his birth heritage over his adopted royalty, God kept him from dying at Pharaoh's hand after committing murder and preserved him in Midian.

Before confronting Pharaoh to demand the Israelites' freedom, Moses had encounters with God's faithfulness. There was more for Moses to be assured of about God than there was for him to doubt when experiencing the burning bush.

What can we learn from Moses's life about trusting God?



he faced a hard reality. Everything he had known was gone.

- Life where his every desire was provided for was over.
- He was a man without a people; neither the Egyptians nor the Hebrews claimed him.
- His hopes of leading his people to better things had been destroyed.

Alone, with only the clothes on his back, Moses was running on empty. God never wastes time or experiences in our lives. The question is, Did Moses learn anything from his failure? God tests us in ways that reveal and refine us, depending on how we respond. Moses was now up to bat.

Test #1: Life in the Wilderness

Moses traveled about 300 miles to a place where he could disappear: the remote wasteland of Midian. There, his life was reduced to the daily necessities of water, food, and shelter. The wilderness is one and the same with scarcity, isolation, and adversity—the kind of hard place that forces you to seek the Lord. Many were called to repentance by John the Baptist in the wilderness (Matt. 3:1-4).

By the time his first child was born, something deep had shifted in Moses. He named his son Gershom, which is a play on Moses's life story: "I have been a resident alien in a foreign land"

(v. 22). When Moses looked back to his early years in Egypt, he recognized that as a prince in the palace he was a resident alien in a foreign land. Living in the foreign land of Midian, he was a resident alien in a foreign land. Moses had no idea that his status as a resident alien was preparation for his leadership as the shepherd of the Israelites through forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Test #2: Starting a Family

While in Midian, Moses paused at a well. Soon, seven sisters came to fill the watering troughs for their father's flock. While watering their flock, a group of shepherds arrived and pushed them and their flock out of the way (v. 17). The sisters work was delayed and their flock were forced to wait.

Moses stepped in and came to their rescue. He watered their flock, modeling how a man should treat women. Without violence, Moses demonstrated the kind of self-control a leader needs to break up tense situations. This display of bold, softened compassion impressed the girls and their father, Reuel (also called Jethro), the priest of Midian. Moses was invited to dinner and eventually into their family. He became a husband and a father, building servant-leadership and self-denial deeper into his character. He worked as a shepherd in the family, bringing further humility since Egyptians despised that lower class laborious work (Gen. 46:34b).

HOW HAS GOD USED TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES TO HELP PREPARE YOU FOR THE FUTURE?

Moses's experiences show us that God can use the unintended consequences we bring on ourselves to create something new. God works in our hardships to make clear what we are committed to and speed up our spiritual maturity.

Our Interruption May Lead us to God's Greater Work

// Exodus 3:5-10

The providence of God is an intense and comforting conviction that is woven throughout the Bible. It teaches us that God is personally and powerfully upholding and directing the universe and everything in it according to His purposes.

THE POINT: GOD CAN REDEEM OUR MISTAKES.

Maybe Moses noticed the flaming bush in the distance. Then he looked again and the bush was unchanged. Moses's curiosity turned to amazement as he realized that the flame, like God Himself, wasn't dependent upon anything else. Adding to the wonder, Moses then heard his name called. ("He knows me?!") God cautioned him to keep his distance, then introduced Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had heard Israel's groaning. He saw their sorrows.

"I am coming down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey . . . **therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh** so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" (vv. 8,10).

God was saying, "Moses, Israel has prayed for deliverance, and you are My answer. I will lead them out through you." Moses cringed at God's interruption. He felt his smallness before such a task. He felt unworthy because of his past, scared because he won't know what to say, and incapable on his own of bringing together Israel's support or gaining Pharaoh's compliance.

Yet, in the end, Moses returned to Egypt with God's mighty hand upon him and Aaron by his side. Midian probably felt like the end of the line for Moses. But with God, wilderness time is only a detour, not a dead end.

HOW HAS GOD MET YOU IN THE WILDERNESS?

LIVE IT

What can you do to navigate through unintended consequences that left you feeling frustrated, or stuck in regret?

Life's detours can be overwhelming, but what if these moments are part of God's plan to shape and redeem you? As you reflect on personal missteps, how can you embrace God's grace is sufficient to transform failures into growth? Let's explore how God redeems failures.

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- **Ask God's forgiveness.** If sin put you in the wilderness, confess and receive God's forgiveness. Read Psalm 103:10-14; Ephesians 1:7.
- **Remember your past wilderness times.** Reflect on the wilderness and waiting seasons of your life. In God's hands, consequences aren't just for correcting, but for cultivating.
- **Follow God's call.** Moses felt disqualified, just like we do. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you seek to be obedient to His call.

DID YOU KNOW?

Consider how the Israelites got to Egypt. We learned from Joseph's story in Genesis, that God preserved them from famine by first sending Joseph to Egypt to become an overseer and then reconciling with his family there. By Moses's lifetime, the Israelites began to outnumber the Egyptians, becoming a threat to Pharaoh. The Israelites' journey to Egypt was both a blessing and a burden, showing how God redeems even unfavorable circumstances. This history displays how God's purposes go beyond immediate outcomes. Even though the Israelites were enslaved, their time in Egypt set the stage for God's miraculous deliverance through Moses, revealing His faithfulness and power. This challenges us to trust God's redemptive work in our lives today, even when consequences feel like a wilderness.

Biblical Truth: "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

How can we live out our faith in God when things don't go as planned?

DAILY READINGS

1. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH // EXODUS 2:11-15

Is this another day to witness the turmoil the Egyptians are imposing on the Hebrews, my people? Enough is enough! I believe this is what Moses was thinking when he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. Did he act impulsively, or was he just tired of seeing the mistreatment of his people? Fearing Pharaoh would find out, Moses fled to another land where he settled. We can see that impulsive actions can lead to detrimental consequences. When faced with a conflict, do we take matters into our own hands, or do we pray for God's intervention? Let us always seek God because our actions may interrupt God's plan for our lives.

Sing, "Lead me, guide me along the way; For if You lead me, I cannot stray."¹⁸

2. DETOUR REALIGNMENT // EXODUS 2:16-22

Moses's life shows how God kept and prepared him until his divine appointment to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Born a Hebrew in Egypt, Moses was found in the Nile River by Pharaoh's daughter and raised as an Egyptian. He fled to Midian, a foreign land, after killing an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew. Exiled and outcasted, Moses rescues Reuel's daughters from unruly shepherds at a water trough. What an unlikely place to start anew. When Moses ran, he did not know what he would discover, but God was ordering his steps. Whatever detour we take that interrupts our lives and God's plan, know that God will realign us back to his glorious plan.

Almighty God, thank you for the safe haven in a foreign land. In Jesus's Name. Amen.

3. IF I KNEW // EXODUS 3:5-10

When God calls us for such a time as this, hesitation and doubt can arise. When God calls Moses he hides his face in fear. God tells Moses that he sees the Israelites' misery, and here is my rescue plan, Moses: "I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out

of Egypt." God chose Moses for a monumental task: to lead a nation. Despite his hesitation, Moses answered God's call. God is calling each one of us to fulfill our purpose. If I knew God's plan, would I doubt like Moses, or would I gladly answer his call? God's plan will always prevail.

Father, thank you for choosing me to fulfill your plan. Amen.

4. NEVER TOO BUSY // MATTHEW 20:32

We are fortunate to have facilities that provide emergency care when our loved ones are sick. Urgent Care Centers offer immediate, twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week, walk-in medical treatments. In Luke 8, Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, has a young daughter who is dying. He is desperate for a healer. Jesus, a known healer, was surrounded by a crowd when Jairus pressed his way through. As he falls at his feet, I imagine Jairus is frantically saying, "Please, please, Jesus, come to my house and save my daughter!" Jesus stops, listens, and goes to provide care. When we need him most, he will respond.

Let us sing, "Jesus is on the mainline. Tell him what you want."¹⁹

5. STOP TO SERVE // PSALM 144:3

"It's been estimated that at least 150 million people—about 2% of the world's population—are homeless."²⁰ These persons are often overlooked and forgotten. Their daily struggles are about survival. As Jesus journeys, he interacts with the poor, blind, sick, and homeless. Psalm 144:3 reminds us that the Lord cares about us. "Lord, what is a human that you care for him, a son of man that you think of him?" Jairus, in Luke 8, discovers Jesus cares about his dying daughter. Jesus interrupts his journey to go to Jairus' house. Just as Jesus cares, we should care too. As we journey, let's not be too busy to stop and be mindful of those in need.

Jesus, may my actions demonstrate that I am following your example. Amen.