

THE “*IN-BETWEEN*” – A TRANSFORMED LIFE

Romans 12:1-8

June 18, 2023

Have you ever thought about the question, “*What brought you to where you are today in your faith journey and where is Christ taking you?*” Canadian Christian recording artist Matt Maher wrote and performed the song for the opening of season three of the “*CHOSEN*” which came out at the end of 2022. The song was titled, “*The In-Between,*” highlighting how the lives of various individuals in the “*CHOSEN*” series were drastically transformed when Jesus stepped into their lives. In the song he called that encounter with Jesus a holy collision which brought about a clear change from who they once were to who they forever will be. Jesus brought them from death to life, from darkness to light, and from doubt to hope, and He has done the same for each one of us as well. What I enjoy about the “*CHOSEN*” is in how it depicts the struggles of Jesus’ followers in living out their lives as disciples, showing us how they weren’t these super-Christians, but real men and women like you and me who constantly struggle with their faith. I can identify with many of Jesus’ disciples on this journey of faith, since Jesus stepped in, becoming my “*IN-BETWEEN,*” and still my “*IN-BETWEEN*” as I continue to work out my salvation with fear and trembling like Jesus’ disciples, I am a work in progress!

In our faith journey, the Apostle Paul gives us this encouragement in how we are to live out our transformed life as believers living in a secular culture that is becoming increasingly more hostile towards us – read **Romans 12:1-8**. Our striving is to be accepted in Christ’s eyes and serve Him in humility rather than try to please those around us. This is Father’s Day, so I would like to base my message on one of the great fathers of faith in the Bible who models for us in following Paul’s encouragement in Romans 12:1-2. A father of the faith who lived a transformed life once God stepped into his life, becoming his “*IN-BETWEEN.*” As we have spent the last few months in the Old Testament, I thought it would be fitting to look at the life of Moses, a great example for us of a transformed life. I choose Moses, because like most of us, this transformation was not quick and easy as Moses spend 40 years in the wilderness in order for him to learn to become the kind of person God could use for the great assignment of bringing His people, the Hebrews, out of 400 years of bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land.

We all know the familiar story of Moses birth – how he was a special child born to a Hebrew man and women from the tribe of Levi. At the time Moses was born, the current Pharaoh had forgotten about Joseph, and because the Israelite numbers were growing rapidly, he ordered the Egyptian midwives to kill all the Hebrews boys at birth. However, Moses was spared and hidden for 3 months and when his parents couldn't hide him any longer, his mother put him in a papyrus basket and sent him down the Nile, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter, and he become her son. It was God's plan for Moses to be raised in Pharaoh's palace as an Egyptian, but somehow Moses knew He was a Hebrew, so at 40 years of age, he thought he would do something about the hard labour that the Egyptians were forcing on his people and come to their rescue.

Exodus 2:11-15, “One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Looking this way and that seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” The man said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.” When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian.” Here in the land of Midian, out of the reach of the Pharaoh, Moses spends the next 40 years looking after his father-in-law's sheep. Moses went from a prince to a shepherd, yet in the desolation of the wilderness Moses learned the most valuable lesson of his entire life, he learned the important qualities of humility and patience, qualities necessary to lead God's obstinate people, the Hebrews to the Promised Land. Moses needed a transformation to take place. Moses needed an encounter with God, who became his “*IN-BETWEEN*,” between who he once was and who God wanted him to become!

This transformation took God 40 years in the wilderness to develop Moses' character – and transform him into the person who could carry out God's rescue plan. That seems to be God's way, it's usually in the desert where God transforms us into the type of person who is totally yielded to follow Him, and be used by Him for His Kingdom purposes. It took Moses 40 years to yield to God's will, and even then, he was still reluctant to be used by God as we read in the dialog

between God and Moses at the burning bush in **Exodus 3 & 4**. Moses finally gives in because God would not take NO for an answer, and then we read in **Exodus 4:19-20**, *“Now the Lord had said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead.’ So, Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.”* A transformed life brings us in line with God’s will!

I believe that God has a calling and purpose for every believer from birth as he had for Moses – and it is our challenge to discover His will for our lives and serve Him in whatever role He has for us. God gives each believer important Kingdom tasks to accomplish in our lifetime, but it takes time for us to step into those tasks, and often those tasks don’t turn out the way we thought they would. I know that God had definitely called me into ministry, but I still have difficulty knowing what kingdom tasks He wants me to accomplish in my calling as I continue to serve Him as I enter my next phase of ministry.

We all have dreams of doing great things for God. You love God and feel God has something significant for you to do, but you can easily feel confused and discouraged when nothing seems to be happening, or you feel like you are heading down some dead-end trail. In those times of confusion and discouragement we fail to realize that God has an agenda for our lives like He had for Moses,, and it may take a long time for us to get on His agenda, because like Moses, the problem may be that we come to serve God with our own agendas that don’t line up with His agenda. So how does God get us on His agenda? God enrolls us in Character College to humble us and help us to change the way we think and the way we see the world. God had to get Egypt out of Moses as He also has to get Egypt out of us, and Egypt is whatever is trying to conform us into the pattern of this world. We can see from the life of Moses, when he was 40, he thought he had an agenda on how to save his people, but Moses’ agenda wasn’t God’s agenda, or on God’s timetable, so God enrolls Moses in Character College for 40 years to humble him and help him to change the way he thinks and the way he sees the world!

Right from his birth – we are told that Moses was no ordinary child. Moses had a special calling on his life, and it was God’s plan to spare his life and place him in Pharaoh’s palace to get him ready for his divine calling, but things went terribly wrong because Moses wasn’t ready to take on God’s assignment. Life was extremely easy for Moses in Pharaoh’s palace, so he would have had great

difficulty identifying with the Hebrews who were living under the heavy burden of slavery. On a visit out to one of Pharaoh's many building projects, Moses believes his time has come to step into his calling. Moses sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people, so looking around and seeing no witnesses, Moses kills the slave-master and hides his body in the sand, and then here's what happened – **Exodus 2:13-14**, *“The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’ The man said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’”* This conversation was a shock and a rude awakening for Moses, because he was convinced that he was the right man for the job, chosen by God to deliver His people from slavery. Moses must have had a vision that he was going to be the deliverer and saviour of his people, but when he went out to execute that dream, killing an Egyptian to try and make it happen, he was rejected and humiliated by his people and had to flee Egypt with only the clothes on his back!

Here was Moses' problem – at 40 years of age and living all of his life in Pharaoh's palace, Moses wasn't ready to do what he had been called to do. God needed to carry out some transformation and build his character, so that he would be ready to carry out the great calling that God had placed on his life from birth. Moses needed an attitude adjustment. Moses needed his mind transformed so that he would have a different worldview – a God Kingdom worldview – rather than an Egyptian worldview. Moses was rooted too deeply in the pagan idolatry of the Egyptian mindset to lead millions of Hebrews to the Promised Land. You will notice that God's plan never changed after Moses messed up, God was still planning on using Moses to deliver His people, but God had to first send Moses to the wilderness for as long as it would take to get him ready. Moses had earlier thought God was going to use him powerfully to bring about a great deliverance; instead, Moses had to flee for his life to a desolate wilderness and go through a season of the dark night of the soul.

God allowed Moses' first attempt to fail – because God knew that once the Hebrews would have gotten out in the desert and started to whine and complain about not having enough water or food, they would have headed back to Egypt, and Moses would have gone with them, and the first five books of the Old Testament would have never been written. God would never let that happen! In the same way, God may give us dreams, visions and desires that may end up in

failure and frustration until we get in step with His agenda and that takes spending quality time with the Lord. Of course, we can't answer the question of why God may allow our dreams, visions, and desires to fail, but looking back, we can see how God used Moses' failures to shape him into the great man of faith he became. So, I believe this story is in the Bible, to help us to see how God may need to humble and prepare us, for future service as He did in the life of Moses. Failure is one of the courses He offers in Character College!

Hindsight is always beneficial – today I can now see how God had prepared me for ministry in those early leadership roles I had at the Dresden United Church, and how God used the experience of failure in those difficult church splits to build my character. And those years working in research taught me valuable skills of dedication, having an open mind, and the importance of being a life-long learner. Then those years in men's ministry with Promise Keepers, working with a great many pastors and denominations taught me the importance of unity among believers. Our **PAST** failures and experiences are there for a reason, to help us become the person God can use **TODAY!** So, no matter how difficult your past may have been, thank God for what you had learned along your faith journey, especially travelling through the wilderness!

At 40 years of age, Moses was filled with pride and arrogance, being raised in affluence, he was too full of himself. Moses didn't know the meaning of hardship. He had no survival skills to lead anyone through a desert. The problem was that there was too much Moses in Moses to be used by God. YES, his motives were commendable, but his character and judgment weren't up to the demands of the leadership that God would require of Him. Moses was a self-made-man – but Moses needed to become a God-made-man, and to make Moses into a God-made-man, there were things God needed to work **INTO** his character, and things He had to work **OUT** of his character, and that takes time. So, God takes the necessary and required time, and like Moses, at times we need to learn things the hard way. As we go through the many difficulties and hardships of life, I find that there are two results: they will either break you, or make you into a Kingdom person, and it all depends on the choices we make. We all know people whose lives have been destroyed by things like job loss, divorce, addiction, or substance abuse, suffering physical or emotional abuse, having to deal with personal or family health issues or prodigal children. And then, we know of others who have turned their lemons into lemonade, making the choice to us what they had gone through to develop a strong

character that allows them to minister to others. Your past can destroy your character or strengthen your character and the choice is up to you!

Our past sins, failures, mistakes, and feelings of worthlessness can side-line us, making us ineffective in carrying out God's work, because we believe that God can't use us. So, when someone asks us to help out in some way at the church, we are hesitant and reluctant. After all of those years in the desert, Moses still carried the heavy burden of guilt and shame around with him, as he made all kinds of excuses when God called to him from the burning bush. Forty years earlier Moses was immature = underequipped and over-confident; now Moses was equipped, but under-confident. So, God had to convince Moses to let go of his past failures, telling Him that He will not have to go it alone, as he did the first time, but God will now go with him, which will make all the difference in the world. When God goes with us, we are always guaranteed success. Remember your past belongs to God. Leave your past with Him and don't pick it up again. When God calls you don't be hesitant and reluctant!

The humbling process always hurts – and this is indicated in the name that Moses gave his son. Moses named his first son, **Gershom**, which means *“I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”* Even though Moses lived in Midian for many years, he must have always felt like a foreigner, an outsider that didn't belong. I believe for all those years in the wilderness Moses must have been discouraged and remained distant from God, but once Moses accepted His God given calling and became the deliverer of God's people, the Bible honours him by saying this about him in **Numbers 12:3**, *“Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone on the face of the earth.”*

The wilderness experience had radically changed Moses – he was not the same man he used to be back in Egypt, but that change didn't happen overnight, and neither does change happen for us overnight. The process of spiritual transformation is designed to humble us in the wilderness until we listen so that when God tells me what He is going to do, I get in step with Him, and the result is that God uses me to achieve great things for God's glory.

God eventually remembered Moses – and came to meet him at a burning bush. That day was his graduation day from Character College and Moses never expected a personal encounter with God after 40 years in Midian. While Moses no doubt thought God had abandoned him, God was actually with him all through

those years in the wilderness, guiding him and equipping him for his future role. For all of those lonely years herding sheep God was preparing Moses for a great task, equipping him so later he could deliver God's people through the same wilderness where Moses had spent 40 years. As you can imagine, Moses most likely shook with fear at the burning bush encounter and couldn't believe what he was hearing as God gave Moses the big picture of what He is about to do, ***"The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them...So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt'"*** (Exodus 3:7-10).

The day finally came when Moses was ready – he had finally graduated, but now the task seems too overwhelming for him. His earlier self-assurance and confidence is long gone and now he feels inadequate for the job, becoming the humble person God needed, becoming the person who would depend on God and not on his own abilities. It's interesting how God works, when Moses considered himself adequate for the task, God considered him inadequate, and now that God considers Moses adequate, he considers himself inadequate. This is a principal we see played out over-and-over again in the pages of the Bible. God can only use a person once they have come to realize that they are inadequate and must totally depend on Him – as the Apostle tells us in **Romans 12:1**, ***"I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."***

Here's the takeaway –like Moses, you are not an ordinary child of God. Like Moses, you are one of God's crowning achievements, and no sin or mistakes you have made in the past can change that fact. Like Moses, God created you with a purpose and calling, and has something great for you to do. However, like Moses, every one of us starts our spiritual journey with a mindset and worldview that needs transformation and most often requires a season of training in the wilderness, being enrolled in Character College to receive a degree in humility and the ability to listen to God's voice. So, wherever you happen to currently be on your spiritual journey, remember God is always near and doing His part. But we have to also do our part by waiting upon the Lord and letting Him take the necessary time to recalibrate how we see Him, how we see ourselves, and how we see our role in the world. And like Moses, be strong enough to not be tempted to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And then

as the Apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 12:2**, *Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*”