

## FOUR THINGS A LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW

### Exodus 3 - 15

Leadership books boldly outline what a man needs to know to be an effective leader (i.e., management principles, finances, personnel issues, conflict resolution, people skills, marketing, etc.). However, when it comes to spiritual leadership, there are really only four things a godly leader must know.

#### I. Know God.

J. I. Packer said it well: *A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge about Him. (Knowing God. p. 21).*

In Biblical thought, "to know" someone is profoundly **personal** and **intimate**. It involves much more than gathering information *about* someone. It is much deeper than casual acquaintance. To know is to get **face-to-face**.

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived.... (Gen. 4:1. NKJV).*

Knowing (Hebrew, *yada*) God is one of the major themes of Exodus. The book tells how both Moses (and the Israelites) and Pharaoh (and the Egyptians) got face-to-face with God.

#### A. Moses and the Israelites get to know the LORD.

*Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (3:13).*

In biblical thought, a person's name indicates his **character**. God already knows Moses by name (3:4; 33:17). For God to reveal His personal name (LORD, *Yahweh*) is to invite the recipients of that revelation into a personal and intimate relationship. The rest of the Book of Exodus (and beyond!) is a record of God's **self-disclosure**. He is revealing Himself... and seeking a relationship with Moses and the people of Israel.

This is consistent with the rest of the biblical story.

- *...the people who know their God will display strength and take action. (Dan. 11:32. NASB).*



- *Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and **knows me**, that I am the Lord.... (Jer. 9:23-24).*
- *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in **the knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6. NASB).*
- *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of **knowing Christ Jesus** my Lord.... **I want to know Christ** and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.... (Phil. 3:8, 10).*
- *Now this is eternal life: that they may **know you**, the only true God, and **Jesus Christ**, whom you have sent. (John 17:3).*

God's deliverance of the Hebrews from bondage was really His manner of introducing Himself to people with whom He desired a relationship!

- *I am the **LORD**. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El-Shaddai (God Almighty), but by my name the **LORD** I did not make myself known to them.... Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the **LORD**, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you... I will redeem you... I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. **Then you will know that I am the LORD** your God.... (6:2-3, 6-7).*
- *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart... that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and **that you may know that I am the LORD**." (10:1-2).*
- *At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. **Then you will know that I am the LORD** your God. (16:12).*
- *Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. **They will know that I am the LORD** their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the **LORD**. (29:45-46).*
- *You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so **you may know that I am the LORD**, who makes you holy. (31:13).*



God's purpose in Exodus is not just redeeming His people from bondage and solving their problems. No. His great purpose is **knowing** and **being known**. His great purpose, then, becomes our great purpose, too!

*What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it – the fact that **He knows me**. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him, because He first knew me, and continues to know me. (J. I. Packer. Knowing God. p. 37).*

This is what **worship** (another great theme of Exodus) is all about! God wants our worship because this is where we get face-to-face.

- *Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the Lord says: 'Israel is my firstborn son, Let my son go, **so he may worship me.**'" (4:22-23).*
- *Say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, **so that they may worship me...**" (7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3).*
- *Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people.... **Go, worship the Lord** as you have requested." (12:31).*

#### B. Pharaoh (and the Egyptians) get to know the LORD.

But not only did God want Moses and the Hebrews to know Him. He also wanted to introduce Himself to the Egyptians! The stage is set when Pharaoh makes it clear that he does not know this new deity Moses is invoking.

*Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? **I do not know the LORD** and I will not let Israel go." (5:2).*

The following chapters (5 – 15) tell the story of how God got face-to-face with Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

- *And the Egyptians **will know that I am the LORD** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it. (7:5).*
- *By this you (Pharaoh) **will know that I am the LORD...** I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. (7:17).*



- *But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that **you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land.** (8:22-23).*
- *See also 8:10; 9:14, 29; 14:4, 18.*

The Egyptians were being invited to put their trust in the one true God. They had the chance to believe. However, hard hearts kept them locked in unbelief and rebellion. As a result, they too got to “know” the Lord. But their knowledge of God came through His **judgment and wrath**.... not redemption.

The ten plagues revealed God to both Hebrews and Egyptians. To one group, the plagues were signs of blessing and **hope**. To the other, they were signs of condemnation and **despair**.

### TABLE TALK

1. What is the difference between knowing God and knowing *about* God?
2. Describe the knowledge of God that Moses and the Hebrews had. Describe how Pharaoh and the Egyptians “knew” God.
3. At what point can a person say “I know God”?
4. Do you know God? Or do you only know *about* Him?
5. Describe how knowing God affects leadership.

## II. Know Yourself.

- A. The big question: “**Who am I...?**” (3:11).

*Moses spent his first forty years thinking he was somebody. He spent his second forty years learning he was a nobody. He spent his third forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody. (D. L. Moody).*

Socrates: “Know thyself.”



B. The big answer: "**I will be with you...**" (3:12).

Moses discovers his true identity only when:

1) He **finds** God.

The secular search for the self is a **dead-end**. The only One Who truly knows Who I am and why I am here is the One who **created me!** When I find God... then I **find** myself!

2) He **loses** himself.

Who am I? God's answer: I will be with you.

But here is the rub. Moses knows that the presence of God (guidance, power, comfort, etc.) is contingent upon the surrender of **his will** to God's!

Moses learned what every child of God must learn. If I try to **find myself**, I will never succeed. But if I **lose myself** in God, I find both Him... and **me!**

- *Whoever **finds** his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matt. 10:39).*
- *For whoever wants to **save** his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. (Luke 9:24).*
- *Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to **keep** his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (Luke 17:32-33).*
- *The man who **loves** his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25).*

3) He discovers his **gifts**.

The discovery of our spiritual gifts does not come through aptitude tests or psychological analysis. Rather, it comes through trust and obedience. We will never know our true gifting and purpose in life until we come to a place of **full surrender**.

a. The Shepherd's staff. The shepherd's staff represented Moses' work, identity and livelihood. "**Throw it down**, Moses..." (4:3).

Once surrendered to God (4:1-5) this ordinary shepherd's staff became the instrument of liberation for two million souls. It became "**the rod of God**" (4:20).



- i. It becomes a snake (7:8-12).
  - ii. It strikes the Nile and turns it to blood (7:17).
  - iii. It brings forth frogs (8:5).
  - iv. It makes the dust become gnats (8:16).
  - v. It brings locusts (10:13).
  - vi. It divides the Red Sea (14:16, 21).
  - vii. It strikes the rock and brings water in the desert (17:5-6).
  - viii. It is held up in prayer for victory in battle (17:8-13).
  - ix. It sprouted buds, blossoms and produced almonds (Num. 17:1-9).
  - x. It was placed in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder! (Num. 17:10).
- b. Ability to speak. (4:10-16).

It is ironic that the man who “could not speak” became one of the most eloquent, articulate and powerful orators in human history!

Great speaking, in God’s eyes, is not the product of skill in oratory and rhetoric. Rather, true eloquence comes when the speaker has **a message from God** burning in his soul. Godly leaders soon discover that what is important is not the messenger... but the message!

George Whitefield, one of the greatest preachers in history, said it well:  
“A sharp spear needs no polish.”

### III. Know the mission.

#### A. Where are we going? Why are we doing this?

If we don’t know the destination (purpose, goal, mission), then it really doesn’t matter what road we take! Anyone can steer a ship, but it takes a leader to **chart the course**.

Success in life can be measured by only one criterion: Did I **accomplish the mission** God gave me to do? If the answer to this question is “No,” then no other accomplishments matter at all.

Godly leaders are those who would rather **fail** in doing God’s mission than **succeed** in doing anything else!



## B. Moses' mission.

Moses received very clear marching orders.

*So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up **out of** that land **into** a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey... So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt. (3:8-10).*

*He **brought us out** from there to **bring us in** and give us the land that He promised on oath to our forefathers. (Deut. 6:23).*

Moses' mission can be summarized in two short statements.

- a. Get the people **out of Egypt**.  
Deliverance... forgiveness... freedom... justification...
- b. Get the people **into Canaan**.  
Victorious living... bearing fruit... possessing our inheritance... holiness... sanctification...

Everything in life was devoted to this mission statement. This is how Moses measured success. Nothing else in life really mattered.

## C. Your mission in life.

Like Moses, you too have a mission in life. Do you know what it is?

- George Foreman.  
"Preaching is my calling. Boxing is moonlighting."
- William Wilberforce.  
"God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners (=morals)."  
(Written in his Journal on October 28, 1787).

Take a moment and attempt to write down your own personal Mission Statement. (If this is the first time you have ever attempted this, you will need more time.) As you write, prayerfully consider:





#### IV. Know your Enemy.

God's purposes will always be contested. In fact, if you are not encountering opposition in life, it may well indicate that you are in Satan's service... not God's!

- *In fact, every one who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (1 Tim. 3:12).*
- *...so that no one may be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. (1 Thess. 3:3).*
- *We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22).*
- *In this world you will have trouble. (John 16:33).*
- *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. (1 Pet. 4:12).*

But who is our enemy? How are we to understand obstacles and hindrances to God's work in our lives?

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God.... (Eph. 6:12).*

In Moses' life, "the spiritual forces of evil" arrayed against him manifested themselves most powerfully in four areas:

##### A. The gods (demons) of Egypt.

The real enemy that stands in the way of the mission of God is a spiritual enemy: Satan and his demons.

*I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. (12:12).*

The ten plagues were a systematic revelation of the inability of the gods of Egypt to save.

1. Water to blood (7:14-25). The Nile god was named Hopi.
2. Frogs (8:1-15). The frog god, Heqt.
3. Gnats (8:16-19).
4. Flies (8:20-32).
5. Livestock (9:1-7). Apis, the bull god.



6. Boils (9:8-12). The magicians get boils, too.
7. Hail (9:13-35). Isis was the goddess of the sky.
8. Locusts (10:1-20). Osiris is the god of vegetation.
9. Darkness (10:21-29). Ra, the sun god.
10. Death of the firstborn (chs. 11-12). Pharaoh was a god!

*Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods.... (18:11).*

#### B. Pharaoh's **hard** heart.

Pharaoh vehemently opposed the mission of Moses. His heart was "hard" (stubborn, dull, unresponsive, obstinate). But how did it get that way?

Notice carefully the 19 references to Pharaoh's hard heart:

- i. Six times the text simply says that his heart was hard. No cause is given. It is simply stated as a fact. (7:13, 14, 22), (8:19), (9:7, 35).
- ii. Three times Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart. (8:15, 32), (9:34).
- iii. Ten times God is one who is credited with hardening Pharaoh's heart. (4:21), (7:3), (9:12), (10:1, 20, 27), (11:10), (14:4, 8, 17).

When placed in chronological order, we begin to see the progression of hardening and an indication of how it occurred.

- a. God says, "I will harden his heart" (4:21). A prophecy of a future event.
- b. God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (7:3). Again, a prophecy.
- c. Pharaoh's heart "became hard" (7:13). No cause is mentioned.
- d. Pharaoh's heart is "unyielding" (7:14). A fact, no cause mentioned.
- e. Pharaoh's heart "became hard" (7:22). No cause is mentioned.
- f. Pharaoh "hardened his (own) heart" (8:15). This is the first reference to the cause of hardening that is not prophetic.
- g. Pharaoh "hardened his heart" (8:32).
- h. The "Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (9:12). The first time God is said to be the cause. Prior to this reference, when God was cited as the cause, it was a prophecy of a future event.
- i. Most of the remaining references state that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.



## SUMMARY:

1. Pharaoh is confronted with a choice: acknowledge LORD as God...or not?
2. Pharaoh hardened his heart.
3. Pharaoh was given several other chances.
4. He hardened his heart each time.
5. By about the 6<sup>th</sup> plague, Pharaoh's choices have culminated in a settled fact. His heart is permanently "hard." He now becomes something of a puppet in the hands of God.

C. The Hebrews' divided hearts.

The Israelites waffled from faith to unbelief, from obedience to disobedience. At times they trusted God and longed for Canaan. At other times they fell into despair and longed to go back to Egypt.

- *The Israelite foreman realized they were in trouble... "May the Lord look upon you (Moses and Aaron) and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." (5:19-21).*
- *So the people grumbled against Moses, saying "What are we to drink?" (15:24).*
- *In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to the, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." 16:2-3).*
- *We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost – also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna. (Num. 11:5-6).*
- *"Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num. 14:3-4).*



D. His own **doubting** heart.

Perhaps Moses' major enemy was himself! Discouragement, doubt, despair... Had he heard God correctly? Could God really pull this off? Was it worth the cost?

- Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all." (5:22-23).
- Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country." But Moses said to the Lord, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips." (6:10-12).

**TABLE TALK**

1. Look at the four sources of enemy attack named in the preceding material: demons... hard hearts... divided hearts... doubting hearts. Where do you find the greatest opposition to God's work in your life?
2. What lessons can you learn from Moses about overcoming the obstacles and opposition in your life?

