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God's Servants Have To Be Broken

by Zac Poonen

When Moses was 40, he was strong in himself and felt qualified to be the leader of the Israelites. Yet in God's eyes he was not ready.

Acts 7:22 says that at the age of 40, "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." (Living). When Moses visited his Israeli brethren one day, he saw one of them being unjustly treated by an Egyptian. He defended the Israelite and killed the Egyptian. He thought that the Israelites would recognise him thus as their God-appointed leader. But they did not.

Moses still did not understand what it was to be a servant of God.

And so God took Moses out into the wilderness to break his confidence in his human strength and wisdom. In God's perfect plan, that training was probably scheduled to take only 10 years. But it took 40 years instead, for Moses to be broken.

And so the Israelites had to wait for 30 more years - for their leader to be ready.

God's plans can be delayed when God's leaders are not broken in time. God has an appointed time-period in which we must be broken. We cannot shorten that time-period. But we can lengthen it, if we do not yield to God's training. If we are hard and unyielding, we ourselves will lose much. And God's work also suffers.

We may see ourselves, like Moses, well-taught in the doctrines of Scripture, knowing the whole counsel of God, anointed with the Holy Spirit and in our own eyes, as "men of power in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22). We may even be concerned, as Moses was, about our defeated and oppressed brothers. And so, we may imagine that we are well-equipped to serve God. But we are not.

We may be eloquent in our speech ("mighty in words") as Moses was. The mere fact that others are willing to listen to us preach for one hour proves nothing, for people are willing to listen to political leaders for even two or three hours!! We have to be careful that we don't seek to do God's work with our natural resources.

The more gifted we are, the more we are in danger of depending on our human abilities to serve God. That's why we need to be broken.

The Israelites did not have confidence in Moses. God also did not have confidence in him to appoint him as their leader. How can a man lead others when neither God nor man has confidence in Him?

We may consider ourselves as fit for God to use as His representatives. But God may not think so. If we are to do an effective work for the Lord, we must have the attestation of God on our ministry. And He won't attest our ministry until we are broken.

Once Moses was broken, the same man who was once mighty in words, finally said, "Lord, I cannot speak" (Exod.4:10).

How did God break Moses? He sent him into the wilderness. There Moses got married and had to live with his wife's parents in their home. It is amazing how quickly one can be broken when he has to live in helpless dependence upon his in-laws!! That was how God broke Jacob too, many years earlier.

It was in Moses' home situation (with his wife and children, and in-laws) and in his work situation (looking after his father-in-law's sheep) that God broke him and humbled him. And that education took 40 years. God was willing to wait. An

and God's people had to wait too - for God's man to be ready.

God is waiting even today. There are many places in India where there are needy souls who need to be built together as the Body of Christ. But God is waiting for men whom He can find, whom He can break and prepare, to be used as His servants to build that Body.

That is why we need to see our home and work situations as God's University. The tense situations that we face with our in-laws and other family members are all part of God's education process whereby He prepares us to be His servants. He is teaching us something more than doctrine in these situations. He is breaking us.

But how few God finds who submit to Him, as clay in the potter's hand. Most trainees rebel and refuse to die to themselves - and so God sets them aside.

What Moses learnt in those 40 years was not doctrine. Doctrine can be learnt in a very short time, if one has a clever mind. But it takes time to be broken. It is not easy to be rooted and grounded in small thoughts about ourselves at all times.

We may not consider ourselves as important people when we are in the midst of more mature believers. But when we go to our own home-churches, there we can begin to think we are quite important. That's the danger. God has to break us so thoroughly that we recognise ourselves as the least of all the saints, everywhere we go.