

COFFEE BREAKERS

...when you need a break from the daily grind...

FOUR FACES OF FAITH

#1 of 4: Faith that fears

➤ **READY TO GO**

Moses was one of God's greatest servants and yet he had various issues in his life. When God called him to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt he was reluctant to accept the commission. And are you surprised? Two million people led by one man out of a hostile country and into the desert? No wonder he balked at the idea. Although he was a man of faith, Moses' faith was sorely tested. At the beginning when God called him, can you guess what Moses' response was? He was afraid. There are at least five different aspects of Moses' fear highlighted in Exodus chapters 3 and 4. See if you can spot them and fill in the blanks below.

➤ **READ**

- **Read Exodus 3:11.** Fear of _____
- **Read Exodus 3:13.** Fear of _____
- **Read Exodus 4:1.** Fear of _____
- **Read Exodus 4:10-12** Fear of _____
- **Read Exodus 4:13** Fear of _____
- Take a moment to speak to God about any of these fear issues which may be hindering your service for Him

➤ **REFLECT**

Moses feared in a number of different ways. He feared inadequacy, not knowing what to say, not being taken seriously, not being good enough and giving up control. Perhaps you identified other aspects of Moses' fear. Certainly Moses faced a daunting task. Imagine having to go to a hostile king and demand that he release all his slaves, and then lead a group of people as large as the entire population of the English city of Birmingham, out of Egypt and into the desert to go to a country they'd never seen. Now that is scary! It's unlikely we'll be asked to do anything as massive as that. But it can sometimes be just as scary to speak to a work colleague about Jesus or to read your Bible in the dining hall at university.

It's not a denial of faith to be afraid. We will encounter many situations in our lives as Christ-followers that will make us afraid. But if it's the right thing to do, if it's something God wants us to do, then we just have to do it – afraid!

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#2 of 4: Faith that follows

➤ **READY TO GO**

Have you ever tried to put together some gadget that you bought at the electrical store? It looks complete in the picture on the box but when you take it out it's in pieces and needs assembled. Still it won't work and then your friend comes in and says, "Did you follow the instructions?" "Well, not really..." you sheepishly reply. One of the things that made Moses great is that he followed God's instructions in a number of different ways – to the letter.

➤ **READ**

Read the verses below and see if you can identify the ways in which Moses obeyed God's instructions. Think about how you can apply this principle in your own life situations.

- **Read Exodus 3:1-6**
- **Read Exodus 3:10 and 4:18,19**
- **Read Exodus 4:18-23 and 5:1**

The clearest example of Moses following God's instruction is in connection with the Passover. **Read Exodus 12:1-14**

- What similarities can you identify between the Passover lamb and Jesus who is called the Lamb of God?
- As followers of Jesus Christ, what is the significance for us of the instruction to apply the blood to the door posts and lintel (verse 7)?
- Take a moment to thank God that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

➤ **REFLECT**

Moses followed God's instructions in many different ways. He showed reverence for God at the burning bush. He obeyed God's commands to do crazy things like pick up his staff when it turned into a snake! He returned to Egypt although he had previously been on the run after killing an Egyptian. He obeyed God's instructions about the Passover to the letter. Sometimes he obeyed afraid, sometimes reluctantly, but he always obeyed. How did he do this? Well Hebrews 11:28 tells us that it was by faith. He believed God and acted on that belief. It's as simple as that – and as difficult as that!

One of the keys that unlocks the blessing of a fruitful Christian life is within our reach – obedience. We want to mystify the issue but really it's quite simple. God has told us what he wants us to do in His word the Bible. It's up to us to do it.

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#3 of 4: Faith that fails

➤ **READY TO GO**

Failure. The word has a horrible ring to it. I think we probably all hate failing at something we've set out to do. Well, Moses failed. In the two previous studies we've seen some of Moses' great qualities. But the Bible paints it as it is. Although Moses was one of God's greatest servants, he still failed at one crucial point.

➤ **READ**

Read Numbers 20:1-13

- What are some of the factors that might have contributed to Moses' failure to obey God fully (verses 1-6)?
- In what ways did Moses disobey what God had commanded (verses 7-11) and how can you apply this?
- How does God's response to Moses' disobedience (verses 12-13) challenge or confirm your view of God?

Read Exodus 17:1-17

- In what way(s) does this incident differ from the one in Numbers 20 and what do you learn from this?

Read Romans 6:10 and 1 Corinthians 10:4

- Why do you think Moses' disobedience was viewed so seriously by God?
- How does the phrase "and that rock was Christ" encourage you as you seek to live as a follower of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4)?

➤ **REFLECT**

I think we can probably have some sympathy with Moses. He had led this huge crowd of people through the wilderness for 40 years and for much of that time the people had grumbled and complained. Now Moses' sister had died and the people were complaining again. Moses had had enough. While that may go some way to explaining his disobedience, it doesn't excuse it. He dishonoured God before the people and was excluded from entering the Promised Land as a result. One of the reasons this was viewed as a serious matter by God is that the rock was a picture of Christ. He died once for our sins. To strike the rock a second time undermined this picture of the *once and for all* sacrifice for sins and suggests Christ's sacrifice was insufficient. God wouldn't stand for that.

Failure doesn't have to be final. Failing doesn't mean that we need to be defined as failures. God is willing to forgive. When we fail we need to confess it and move on to experience the victory of Christ over sin.

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#4 of 4: Faith that finishes

➤ **READY TO GO**

I don't know if you are interested in athletics. I was never very sporty at school but I can still remember what a great feeling it was to cross the finishing-line at the end of a long race. For me 400 metres was long enough but to get round the last bend into the home straight and across the finishing line was exhilarating. Although Moses stumbled, he picked himself up and with God's help crossed the finishing line. We can all do that. Let's read more about it.

➤ **READ**

Read Deuteronomy 32:48-52, 33:1 and 34:1-12

- Moses was allowed to see the Promised Land but not to enter it (32:48-52). Does this mean he failed in his mission?
- How does the Bible's verdict on the life of Moses encourage you as you seek to live for God (33:1)?
- What do you learn about faith that finishes from this description of Moses (33:1)?
- How do you think Moses felt as God showed him the Promised Land, knowing that he wouldn't enter it (34:1-4)?
- What practical lesson(s) do you learn from the account of the death and burial of Moses (34:5-6)?
- How many great qualities of Moses can you identify in his epitaph and how do they encourage or challenge you (34:7-12)?

➤ **REFLECT**

It was never God's plan that Moses should lead the people into the promised land of Canaan. The commission God gave him was to lead the people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10). He succeeded in the task God had given him to do. What's more, the Bible's verdict on the life of Moses is uniformly positive. In Hebrews 11:26 we are told that Moses considered suffering for Christ to be greater than all the riches fame and power of Egypt. So where did it all get him if he was excluded from entering the Promised Land? The answer is that Moses got to experience something much better. He kept company with Jesus. Moses appeared in glory with Jesus when he was transfigured (Luke 9:30-31). So in a sense, he did enter Canaan, but in a much greater way than he could have anticipated. Moses' faith was faith that finished.

In this life, by faith, we walk and talk with Jesus Christ. His Spirit in us gives us finishing line faith. And once we're across the line it gets even better. We will be like Christ and we will keep company with him for ever.

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Unless otherwise stated, the Bible version used is the New International Version