

Exodus 2

This chapter is about **resistance, identity, and character**. It begins with two acts of **resistance** to Pharaoh and his decrees. The first act is by a Levite husband and wife, meaning they are descended from Levi who acted to bring justice for his sister and to liberate her from her captors. Perhaps there is something that carries on in this line of Hebrews. Their act of resistance is to have a child in the face of the king's decree that all male children will face death and ultimately all female children, assimilation. They can do nothing else because they are God's people who have been called, even in slavery, to be fruitful and multiply. When the child is born, the mother sees that is "fine", which is actually the Hebrew word "good" used to describe God's initial creation. This good cannot be given up and so the mother places the child in an "ark" and then into the water. Though she does not know it, this ark will save people as well. The second act of resistance comes from the Egyptian princess who finds the child. She knows that he is a Hebrew and yet, rather than kill him in the water, she saves him, turns him over to his mother to be nursed, then raises the child as her own. Once again, the resistance of women will help save God's people.

Resistance leads to a crisis of **identity**. When the child is weaned (at about three years old...meaning he has learned the Hebrew language), he is brought into the palace as a prince. As such he is named "Moses", which is an Egyptian name meaning "son." At the same time though the princess makes it clear that the name also alludes to the Hebrew word for "drawing out of water." From the beginning then, Moses has no clear identity. Is he Hebrew? Is he Egyptian? It is not at all clear. In a sense Moses will have to search for his identity. He will have to discover who he is.

The first instance of **character** comes when Moses finally leaves the palace. He had been surrounded by power and privilege and kept safe from the outside world. Yet, as a man without a home or identity, he ends up seeing the forced labor of his own people...evidently with whom he still identifies. After observing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses kills the Egyptian. Not a wise move, but one that seems to speak to his character; that of a man who does not like injustice. Notice Moses does not behave like a member of the Royal household who could command the Egyptian to cease and desist. Instead, Moses acts...which is character trait number two. He is man of action, who does not spend time contemplating, but acting on his "Levite" ancestry. We see both traits and one more in the next incident. When Moses sees two Hebrews fighting, he attempts to be a peacemaker. His attempt fails, but we come to know him better. These traits come together again, when in Midian he protects the female shepherds and ensures their safety and liberation.

The final demonstration of character comes not from Moses but from God. When the Hebrews have had enough of their enslavement, they cry out; not to God, but they simply cry out. In that moment we discover that God hears and remembers, God looks and notices. God's character has not changed. This is still the God who keeps "*hesed*" or covenant faithfulness.

Reflection: We live in a world that attempts to draw us into time honored injustices. We are carefully groomed to go along to get along. Moses, his parents and the princess all demonstrate that God calls us to resist. We are called to be people of actions, justice, and peacemaking. We are called to do because it is these character traits that lead to freedom for ourselves and others; freedom that allows human beings to flourish. Sometimes this resistance may mean finding a new identity, or perhaps simply our own true identity.

Questions:

1. Where have you resisted, or desired to resist the powers and principalities of this world?
2. Where have you struggled with your identity? With defining who you are?
3. How would you define your essential character traits?