



## Learning Constantly

### Encounter Prayer:

Dear God we give you thanks for sending your Son, Jesus Christ to save us. We give you thanks for all who have died while spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. We give you thanks for the lessons that we have learned. Please forgive us for our sins. Please help us to spread your message of love to the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Encounter God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

### Encounter Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

### Encounter Scripture: Acts 7:23-30

*"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites. When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand. The next day he came to some of them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, "Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?" But the man*

*who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses aside, saying, "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons. ' Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush."*

Last week, we discussed how God used Noah to build an Ark to save Noah's family and the animals from the floodwaters. Everyone and everything in the Ark were saved from the destruction when the floodwaters prevailed against the earth. Through Noah, humanity and all of creation were given a second chance.

Likewise, Moses was saved from infanticide because his mother put him inside a waterproofed basket that was placed among reeds along the Nile River. The infant Moses was discovered by one of Pharaoh's daughters and she decided to raise him as her son once he was beyond nursing age. Moses was saved while all other Hebrew infant boys were drowned in the Nile River as ordered by the royal decree of Pharaoh. Through Moses, the Hebrew people were delivered from slavery in Egypt. The people received Torah, or The Law from Moses and Moses became revered as Israel's greatest prophet.

The context for our New Testament text today, Stephen, a man filled the Holy Spirit and a follower of Jesus Christ was brought before a

biased tribunal on the following charges: (1) He speaks “blasphemous words against Moses and God” (6:11); (2) he “never stops saying things against this holy place and the law” (6:13); and (3) he claims that “Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs of Moses” (6:14).

Our text today is part of the speech that he delivered in response to the charges. His words are not a defense against the false charges, but a retelling of an unrepentant Israel’s need for repentance and restoration. Many scholars regard this speech as the most important speech in the book of Acts. Stephen retells the story of Moses in 40-year increments. In the first 40 years, Moses is rescued from the infanticide and raised in Pharaoh’s house where he learned Egyptian wisdom. When he was 40 years old, he let his impulses get the best of him when he killed an Egyptian who wronged a Hebrew. Rather than being thankful for Moses’ intervention, the Israelites rejected his leadership. Likewise, the Tribunal rejected the ministry of Stephen and most importantly Jesus Christ.

Moses fled to Midian. Moses spent the next 40 years living in Midian. He became a shepherd, got married, and raised two sons. During this time, Moses learned how to lead sheep from his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses also learned how to lead a family. Moses’ time in the Midian also helped shape his character. The bible says that Moses became the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3).

When Moses turned 80 years old he had his burning bush experience, when he encountered God and was called by God to deliver his people out of bondage in Egypt. Here Stephen uses Moses’ theophany of the burning bush to demonstrate what makes a place holy is the Presence of the Lord. Therefore, the worship of the Lord should not be confined to a particular place such as the Temple. Additionally, the Temple was not the problem, but Temple politics were the problem. Many religious elites used the Temple as a means of wielding power

and control rather than a means of the grace of God.

Moses was obedient. He delivered the people out of bondage, but the people complained and wished to return back to Egypt. The people made a golden calf and worshiped it instead of the Living God. Due to the people’s lack of faith and sinfulness, they are forced to wander the wilderness for 40 years. While Moses was unable to enter the Promised land, he prepared Joshua to perform the task of leading the people. Although the Tribunal did not want to accept it, the truth remains that Jesus is the central figure, not Moses, for the salvation of humanity. Salvation cannot be gained through the Law; it can only be gained through Jesus. Jesus’ teaching, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the body of Christ are all available to us so that we like the Apostles and Stephen can fulfill the purpose that God has given us.

Gaining formal education, receiving on the job training and raising a family, and finally fulfilling the mission of God were the seasons of Moses’ life. The lessons learned in each season prepared Moses for the next phase of his life. He learned lessons in the palace and pasture that prepared him to lead the people out of bondage and through the wilderness.

We too have seasons of life. I celebrated my fortieth birthday this year. In each season of life, I am thankful for the lessons that I have learned and for the people who have taught me. I am thankful for the gift of salvation that saved me from drowning in my sins.

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**Encounter Heads:**

What is a theophany?

What is the significance of the number “40” in scripture?

**Encounter Heart**

Share what you have learned during the different seasons of your life? Who were the people who taught you the lessons? What lessons did you learn from trial and error?

Share the most important lessons that you have taught others. Who are the people that you are currently mentoring or teaching?

What is the important lesson that you have learned?

**Encounter Hands:**

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

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## Notes Sections

**Prayer Concerns:**

**Celebrations:**

### **Daily Reflection Questions**

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?