

# "Moses' Legacy: Pass On Your Secrets"

Deuteronomy 34:1-9 John 16:16-24

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Remember the childhood game of "Secret?" You know, line up a group of people, often children, and whisper a secret to the first one. Then that person whispers to the next one and so forth down the line. By the time the last person hears the whisper and then says it out loud, it often sounds nothing like what was originally said. Secrets are funny things, aren't they. We love to hear them, but can't keep them to ourselves. As someone said, "the only way to keep a secret is to tell no one."

If you have been reading "Great Days With The Great Lives" by Charles Swindoll, the book Dr. Davis recommended for our Summer reading, you know that Moses closed out his life with some important lessons for all of us. Today, I want to look at those three secrets of life that we can learn from Moses. Then I want to look at what appeared to be Jesus kind of hinting at what was to come, while the disciples thought he was keeping a secret from them. In closing I want us to think about some things we tend to keep secret, when we should be telling everyone.

The first secret Moses passes along is: fulfillment in life comes from involvement. If you've read the weekly cover piece, you have an idea of how involvement in life really is important. Moses taught that lesson. He stayed involved with the Israelites to the very end of his life. He didn't say, "Hey! I've done this long enough. It's time for someone younger to take over." He continued to listen to God and follow wherever God led him. Moses taught us that staying involved with people lengthens the purpose and meaning of life. For Moses, and for many others, staying involved adds years to one's life.

It's the same for us. We need to stay involved with life. I've shared with you before, when I was leaving the engineering field to prepare for the ministry, I felt fulfilled for the first time in my life. When I retired from full time ministry, I thought "This is nice; I can stay home, write some children's stories, do what I want to do, rest a lot. Just relax and take it easy." But it wasn't long before I started getting bored. My wife was at work, and I was home alone. I realized I wasn't feeling fulfilled any more. I discovered pretty quickly I needed to be involved in life again – somehow. So I began looking for a way to get involved with life again, and God lead me to FPC Kingwood – and that feeling of being fulfilled.

One of the great things about our church is there are many ways for you to get involved. Whether it is teaching, or learning or helping others, or being a part of a prayer group, there are lots of opportunities to become involved with people and let your life grow – emotionally and spiritually. There are lots of opportunities to give back, to be with people, to make your life count

for more than just yourself. So, ask yourself: do I feel fulfilled? And the corollary question: Do I know someone who needs to be fulfilled?

The second secret we learn from Moses' life is the secret of being humble. Never do we find Moses saying anything to the people about his importance because he has a special relationship with God. You may recall, when God first called Moses to take the leadership role for the people, his first response was something like, "Not me, Lord, I'm slow and can't speak well." Moses never stood before the people and declared, "I'm your leader, God said so, and you better do what I tell you to do."

Throughout his leadership, he led with humility and grace. He never went looking for accolades, he never thought the people should bow down to him or anything like that. He simply and humbly did what God told him to do, and gave God the credit. Humility gives breadth to life. Those who are confident in the Lord, but humble in their manner and lifestyle, have a wide circle of friends. So, again, ask: Have I learned this secret? The secret of living a confident, but humble life? And, Do I know someone who needs to learn this secret?

The third secret we learn from Moses is that happiness in life comes from our perspective. You have all, no doubt, heard a child complain that something is "not fair!" The complaint comes simply from the fact that they didn't get their way. Then, of course, the child will try to emphasize their point with ranting or tears or whatever they think will get the most sympathy. I suspect we have all felt something was not fair, only to learn later in life or even later in the day, that the way the issue worked out was actually best. The point is, if we can step back and give the issue a little perspective, we will be a lot happier. You have all probably run across people whose whole lives could be described as ADD. I'm not talking about Attention Deficit Disorder, I'm talking about Another Dramatic Development. There are some folks who live their lives as if everyone they encounter and everything that happens is intended to make life miserable for them. They blow everything out of proportion in the hopes that they will get pity or extra attention or more compensation of some sort. What folks like that don't seem to realize is that if you take a step back and look at the situation or event from a wider perspective, things don't appear to be so bad. It's a lot easier to live a happy life if you keep things in perspective.

When God showed Moses the Promised Land, but told him he would not go in, we would fully understand if Moses threw a tantrum and started screaming: "That's not fair, God! After all I've done for You? It's just not fair!" But Moses was able to take a step or two back and look at the whole situation and accept God's will. He knew that no matter what, God is worthy of our praise. We can't see the whole situation, we don't know what the future holds, but God does. We will live a much happier life if we take some time to step back and give situations some perspective, instead of turning everything that happens, that's not exactly what we want, into an ADD moment and rant at everyone about the injustice of the situation. One more time, the question: Do I rant about things not being fair for me, or am I able to step back and put things in perspective? And, once more, Do I know anyone who needs to learn this secret?

Just this week, Sandra Smith placed a new sign on the door of the office we share. It says: "Whoever smiles first, wins!" Be the first to smile at others. If anyone asks why you are smiling, tell them that you know God is in charge, and all will be well according to His will.

In our Gospel lesson we heard Jesus telling the disciples, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." It's almost like He is saying: "I know a secret, but I'm not going to tell you." The disciples, of course, are going nuts. "What's He talking about, 'In a little while?'" "Where is He going?"

Jesus senses the confusion and uncertainty in the disciples and gives them a little more information. He doesn't go into all the details, but gives them some reassurances that, while they may have some sadness and grief for a while, things will be okay. He is telling them to step back, get some perspective, wait, and don't make snap decisions. That's good advice.

As a group, we humans are naturally curious people. That's what drives so much of scientific exploration. Sometimes we may know what only a few people know, or something very personal (known only within, say, our own family) and others sense something that makes them think we are holding back information. We're curious; we want to know what they are not telling. It may be about a family situation or health needs, something very personal, something we are just not comfortable sharing. That's when Jesus' approach is very appropriate: hang in there, don't make snap judgements, wait and you will get the information when the time is right, or when that person feels comfortable sharing about their situation, or once the doctor tells them the best way to proceed, what their treatment will be.

On the other hand, there are some things we know that we should be sharing with everyone. Things like, why we believe in Jesus. What He did for us. We may be really solid in our faith, but just not comfortable telling others about it. I know how that is. It's not an easy thing to do. Let me put in a plug for the upcoming ALPHA course. In that program you can bring folks you want to help find Christ, and introduce them in a non-threatening way to the basics of the faith. It will also help you learn to verbalize your own faith more easily.

Another way to get those secrets about your faith out in the open is to think about how you first came to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. I've shared with some of you how I grew up in the church, and always claimed that I believed in Jesus. But it wasn't until I was about 30 years old that I discovered there was more to it than just head knowledge. I volunteered to help chaperone a youth retreat at my church. That weekend, I saw many teens who had something I didn't have, and I wanted it. I went to talk with my pastor the next week and he helped me understand that I needed to invite Jesus into my heart and let Him be in charge of my life. I needed more than an acquaintance with Jesus, I needed a relationship. Once I did that, my whole life changed. I began to experience the joy those teens had, and I was excited!

There are lots of ways to begin a conversation with someone about faith. One easy way to open the conversation is to ask someone who is wearing a necklace or earrings with a cross on it why they are wearing it. If they say it's because they are a Christian, tell them that's great so are you.

Then ask how they came to know Jesus. If they say they wear it because it's pretty, tell them the real meaning of the cross.

I read about one guy who goes to a mall and tries to find a place to sit in front of a store offering a big discount. He will strike up a conversation with someone asking a question like: "Would you buy something if they offered a 50% discount? How about a 99% discount? Of course at 99%, most everyone would say, "Yes, of course I would shop there." Then he tells them how they can get a 100% discount – because Jesus has already paid the price for them. He then leads into what that means and how to get it.

Jesus reminded us: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Many of us are not ready to be so forward. Another way to share the secret of your faith is to help someone in need. Often, they will ask why you are doing this for them. Then you can tell them because you love Jesus and you want to show His love to others.

Kary Oberbrunner, author of *Your Secret Name*, shared a story about his encounter with an older man named Bob. While Kary was at the local gym, trying to stay focused on his exercise routine, he noticed an elderly man fumbling with an MP3 player and headphones. At first, Kary tried to ignore the man, but as the man was becoming more frustrated with the technology, Kary reluctantly introduced himself and asked if he could help. The man dejectedly explained, "Hi, I'm Bob, and I love jazz, but I can't get it on this dumb player."

When Kary asked Bob if he had heard of iTunes, Bob shot back, "I what?" It slowly dawned on Kary that God had placed Bob in his path for a reason. So they set a date when they could spend some more time unraveling Bob's MP3 troubles. Kary continues the story: Against his initial wishes, I visited him at his apartment. Turns out his wife had died a couple years before, and all his earthly possessions were crammed into a small apartment. She had been their main breadwinner, so the bank repossessed his house when he was unable to make payments. Bob and I made a makeshift space in his back room near his desktop computer. One at a time I imported his jazz CD collection onto his hard drive, intending to transfer the MP3s eventually to his player. While importing his music, Bob and I talked about life, his wife, and God.

The weeks following I checked in on Bob often. Kind of funny how two guys who are complete opposites can become the best of friends, all because of an MP3 player. Bob is 71. I am 32. Bob is black. I am white. Bob doesn't have much money. I have more than I need. Bob is an ex-convict. I've never been to jail. Bob is a widower. I'm married. In short, we're opposites.

Soon, Kary invited Bob to church, deeply desiring for him to meet Jesus. After a few invitations, he eventually accepted and sat with Kary and his wife. If he felt awkward sitting in our mostly white church, he didn't let on. After the service ... Kary knelt with him near the altar, and Bob told Jesus that he wanted to follow him. Bob confessed that he wanted to stop trying to control his life and invited Jesus to take over .... Kary writes, "Bob wept and when I looked into his eyes I noticed the distinct peace that now defined his face. Bob changed my life and the life of my church. I get more joy from him than he'll ever understand. Whenever I say goodbye to him at the YMCA or hang up the phone after talking with him, he always tells me to "give his love to my family."

Kary concludes his story, saying, "I'm saddened by the reality that I almost missed Bob simply because I was too engrossed in my own little world."

Think about this for a moment: who do you see at the golf course, the gym, the country club even the grocery store who needs to experience the love of God. Then, find a way to show that love and let it open the door to a meaningful conversation about what it means to be a Christian. Or simply invite them to the ALPHA course.

Jesus said, "If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

Let's pray...