MOVE ONE: A Testimony from Moses

I began this adventure with such high hopes...great expectations.
1. You should have been there at the burning bush!
   • To hear the voice of God!
   • To be given signs and wonders to prove your calling!
2. And those months wrangling with Pharaoh...
   • The demands and threats and lives drawn in the sand – thrilling!
   • “Let my people go!” – How I loved to thunder that line!
3. And then the plagues!
4. It was all pretty heady stuff.

But then reality hit.
1. Pharaoh finally said “Get out!” and suddenly I had hundreds of thousands of people to pack up and move out.
   • They wanted to bring everything with them.
   • They were slow – didn’t seem to realize how urgent...
   • Just getting them into a line of march was a logistical nightmare!
2. And then we hit the Red Sea...and Pharaoh changed his mind!
   • Water in front of us...Pharaoh’s army behind...desert on all sides.
   • Oh, you should have heard the wailing and moaning!
   • “Weren’t there graves enough in Egypt?!”
   • “What have you done to us?”
3. Then they got thirsty...then they got hungry.
   • “Give us water! We’re starving to death!”
   • Oh, the complaining and grumbling!
   • Everytime, God provided. Everytime, they forgot. Everytime, the gripes.
4. I had to intervene for them time and again.
   • “Lord, do not treat them as they deserve.”
   • “Lord, forgive their sins...do not abandon them.”
   • But, I confess, there were times they were too much for me! Numbers 11:11 – 15
5. The worst of it though, was the constant questioning of my leadership, the attempted rebellions, the betrayal of my own brother and sister.
Move One (Contd)

Give me a good horse and I could have made Canaan in **days**.
1. 40 years. 40 years!
2. And, in the end, I never got there. Because of them!
   - I just go so weary of carrying them all!
   - I was tired...exasperated.
   - “Shall we bring forth water for you **rebels**?”
   - It was just a momentary lapse. But it cost me the Promised Land.

I was tempted to leave some of them on the side of the road.
1. Why take so many when a few would do just as well.
2. Why not take just the strong and the fast?
   - Leave the old, the lame, the weak behind.
   - Why limit our speed to the slowest among us?
3. Why not take the faithful, the committed?
   - Leave the grumblers behind.
4. Why should everyone be punished for a few people’s folly?

It would have been easier to get to the Promised Land if I didn’t have to drag all of Israel along on the journey.
1. The whole community! Not just part of it.
2. The strong/weak. The good/bad. The helpers/burdens.

I don’t know why God wanted them all. Frankly, I wish he’d been a little pickier about who came along on the journey!
MOVE TWO:

It is popular to assert these days that traveling in the company of others is not necessary...is not, in fact, desirable.
1. You can be a Christian without the hassles of community.
2. You don’t really need other people to practice a valid faith.

There has been a radical individualization of faith in the Western church.
1. Jesus died for me.
2. I make a personal decision to follow him.
3. “Salvation” is reduced to my life, my soul, my eternal future.
4. I must walk the narrow road...I must take up my cross.
5. One day, I will stand before God to give an individual accounting.
6. The mansion I get in heaven will have my name above the door.

All of which is true enough – as far as it goes! But it overlooks the fact that faith is also communal – that we travel in the company of others.
1. Jesus also dies for us...his blood makes us one body.
2. We follow him together, helping each other along the road.
3. “Salvation” is about more than “me”...it’s about “us,” God’s people, the church, all of God’s children, all of Abraham’s sons and daughters.
4. We walk the narrow road with arms linked...we lay down our lives together.
5. We will give an accounting for the people around us...did we take care of each other; did others make it because of us?
6. Will there be mansions in heaven? Or will they be apartments, condos, shared dwellings with lots of public space?

John Donne was right – none of us is an island, entire of ourselves. We are each a part of the continent, a part of the main.
MOVE THREE:

The author of Hebrews cannot imagine traveling alone.
1. He writes in the plural: We, us, our, all, others, children.
2. He envisions a journey that is crowded with other people
   - Yes, there’s the individual on his way to eternal life.
   - But ahead of him is Jesus, leading the way...and a cloud of witnesses shining light on the path.
   - And alongside is the Holy Spirit, the church, your leaders...keeping step, encouraging, cheering on.
   - And coming after are those being influenced by your journey...your family, your friends.
3. In Hebrews, no one walks alone.

In fact, the author of Hebrews believes we must travel as a community.
- 10:24 Spur one another on to love and good works.
- 10:25 Meet together and encourage each other.
- 10:33 Stand side by side with those who are persecuted.
- 10:34 Support (sympathize) with those in prison.
- 12:1 Be aware of the cloud of witnesses surrounding you.
- 12:2 Fix your eyes on Jesus who walks ahead.
- 12:14 Live at peace with others.
- 12:15 Root out bitterness and discord.
- 12:16 Don’t pollute the community with sexual immorality.
- 12:23 Remember the church and those whose names are written in heaven.
- 12:23 Remember the righteous people who have gone before.
- 13:1 Keep on loving each other.
- 13:3 Remember those in prison and brothers who are mistreated.
- 13:7 Remember your leaders who walk beside you.
- 13:16 Share with others...Remember those with you on the journey.
- 13:17 Obey your leaders.
- 13:23-24 Greetings from Timothy...greetings from Italy.
MOVE FOUR:

You don’t need to bother with other people, perhaps – if you’re a Moses!
1. If you’re strong and bold and brave.
2. If you have God’s ear and enjoy God’s favor.
3. If you know where you’re going and how to get there.

But there are two kinds of travelers on this journey.
1. The strong and the weak
2. The bold and the timid
3. The courageous and the fearful
4. The faith and the vascillating
5. Great men and women of kingdom...struggling, discouraged, doubting.

The weaker among us may complain about...
1. The difficulties of the journey...
2. The dangers on the road...
3. The uncertainties and vagaries of living out of a suitcase...
4. The pace of travel, the miles, the temperature...

But it takes someone strong to really be contemptuous of community!
1. It takes someone who can make it on their own to chaff at others.
2. It takes someone young and fast and capable to weary of the rest.
3. It takes someone who doesn’t really need to depend on others, to be bothered that others might depend on them.

I can give you lots of reasons why the weak need traveling companions...
1. Why the slow must hope others will wait up...
2. Why the infants and the aged need others to carry them along.

But what can I say to the Moses’s among us?
1. That traveling companions make the journey easier? They don’t.
2. That traveling companions will encourage you on the way? They won’t.
3. That traveling companions will sustain and strengthen and enable you to finish the course? Not Moses! “Because of you…”

Truth is – if you’re Moses and have no higher calling – travel alone!
1. Don’t bother with anyone else.
2. Don’t wait...don’t listen...don’t carry.
Move Five: “Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these . . .”

Know why I put the children in the car when time comes for a family trip?
1. Not necessarily for the pleasure of their companionship on the journey, but because I want them with me when I reach the destination.
2. Not because they make the journey easier but because, in a very real way, they are the reason for embarking on the journey to begin with.
3. I take my children with me because, whatever the difficulties we encounter on the road, I want to be with them when we arrive.
4. Home is not just a place you return to. It is the people you take with you.

God has put us in the company of others on this spiritual journey for a reason.
1. The reason, frankly, is that there are very few “Moseses” among us.
2. Very few of us are equipped to make this journey on our own.
3. And even if we made our lonesome way to the banks of the Jordan, would it still be the Promised Land if everyone who slowed us down had been discarded along the way?
4. Even heaven can be hell if some people do not reach the Promised Land with us. We put up with others on the journey, not necessarily because they ease our path but because we want them with us when we reach the destination.

At least God wants as many people as possible to make it to the Promised Land.
1. He is concerned to save you, but not you only.
2. He has many children whom he wants to survive the journey and live with him forever.
3. Not all of them are strong. Not all of them are fast. Not all of them are brave and faithful and confident.
4. They need help for the journey. They need the strength of others. They need people to lean on if they are to make it through the wilderness.

God is depending on those who could make it more easily on their own to bear the burden of their weaker brothers. He’s counting on the strong to carry the weak, for the fast to wait on the slow, for the faithful to bear with the vacillating.

So if you would rather travel quickly, if you don’t want to wait for the weak and the slow and the complainers—go on. Leave the rest of us behind to make your convenient way to the promised Land. But when you get to the border, don’t be surprised if God meets you there and says,

"Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.” [You might say] "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" And he will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”