

Holy Discontent

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Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Exodus 2:11-15 (NKJV) “Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, ‘Why are you striking your companion?’ Then he said, ‘Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ So Moses feared and said, ‘Surely this thing is known!’ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.”

Are you discontent? We are usually discontent with a lot of things in life such as with our job, marriage, health, finances, and spiritual life. However, there is a discontent that is holy and comes from God. God works in our life through “holy discontent”. Holy discontent is the deep frustration we feel when we see and experience unrighteousness and injustice. In essence, our life becomes unsettled because of the sin, deception, evil, and suffering that goes unchallenged. As a result we are stirred to take action in the name of the Lord.

Holy discontent stirs us to do two things: 1) *speak up* and 2) *step up* to solve the problem. Speaking up alone makes us a complainer. But speaking up and stepping up makes us a reformer. Holy discontent compels us to be involved. Holy discontent brings about a passion for God and a compassion for people.

How does holy discontent take place? It usually begins with what someone has described as a “Popeye Moment”—a time when nagging discontent has reached its boiling point and we say: “I’ve had all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more!” When we experience this kind of holy discontent, it moves us from the sidelines and into action.

Moses experienced a nagging discontent. Moses, a Jew, was raised in Pharaoh's palace and was allowed to share in Egyptian position, privilege and power. He had everything he could ever want except for a settled heart. Something began to nag him each day as he watched his own people suffer great injustice and cruelty under oppressive slavery? How could he enjoy the Egyptian position, privilege, and power that fostered this kind of treatment?

One day, his nagging distaste over injustice and cruelty reached its “Popeye Moment”. He watched as an Egyptian slave master severely beat one of the Hebrew slaves. His anger reached a boiling point as he delivered the Hebrew slave by killing the Egyptian and burying him in the sand.

Unfortunately, oppression had caused the Hebrew slaves to turn against one another in angry brawls. After killing the Egyptian Moses tried to break up a fight between two Hebrew slaves. They responded with accusation and rejection of his efforts. Moses tried to exercise righteousness and justice in his own strength but failed. What was he to do? Pharaoh would surely find out and his own people had rejected him. His discontent had caused him more problems than he expected. So he fled for his life.

Moses did what so many of us do when we can no longer stand to see and hear what we feel powerless to change. He ran to an isolated place far removed from the sights and sounds of suffering and injustice. Moses opted to bury his head in the sand and pretend that everything in the world was okay. No matter how far Moses ran, the memories of his

oppressed relatives would not leave his thoughts. The sights, sounds and smells of cruelty were etched in his mind. How could he enjoy a life of freedom and solitude knowing that each day his own family and people were still entrenched in severe suffering? How could he enjoy his own freedom while others were longing to be free? Once holy discontent touches our heart, we can never be the same again. We may avoid it but we cannot escape it.

Moses spent forty years in Midian trying to forget. Moses thought he had escaped the burden, but God had other plans. God used this time to humble Moses and develop him as a leader He could use. God trained Moses to lead as a shepherd rather than as an Egyptian lord.

One day while Moses was on the backside of a desert taking care of sheep, God appeared to him in the burning bush. God told him that He too had seen the oppression of the Hebrew people. God was touched with the same sense of injustice that Moses had felt. In fact, it was God who had allowed Moses to feel what He felt. God was moved to action and would use Moses to bring about Israel's deliverance.

God commissions holy discontent. Moses' holy discontent had now been recognized and commissioned by God for action. The ministry of Moses was born out of holy discontent. This time Moses would not act in his own position, authority, and power as an Egyptian. God gave Moses the promise of His presence and power. This time Moses would represent the Lord's position, authority, and power. As a result, God brought about a great deliverance for Israel. It all began with holy discontent.

Moses is only one example of holy discontent. David experienced holy discontent when he saw and heard the giant Goliath spewing blasphemies against God and His people. Nehemiah experienced holy discontent when he heard the report of the ruins of Jerusalem and the condition of its people. Both of these were moved to action through holy discontent.

God moves His people to action through holy discontent. Why do Christians do what they do and volunteer to serve where they do? Why do people give money, time, and resources free of charge for a cause? It is because their sense of holy discontent stirs them to do something about what they see, hear, and feel.

Like the cartoon character Popeye, we can "put up" with things for a long time. But finally our holy discontent will not allow us to sit idly by. Eventually we say, "That's all I can stand, and I can't stand no more!" At that moment we rise up and draw strength from the Lord to go in His name to do something about the problem.

As the church, we are called to bring the message and power of the kingdom of God into the oppressed areas of human life. As individuals, we are most likely to respond where we are most moved. What is the one thing you can't stand? Are you feeling a "nagging discontent" over the pain and suffering being experienced in other people's lives? Are you uncomfortable with your freedom in Christ knowing that others are still slaves to sin and the devil? What is your holy discontent? Is it possible that God is working in you a holy discontent that He will use to bring forth His salvation and deliverance?

What do you do with holy discontent? First acknowledge that you have it. Don't run away from it but toward it. Feed the fire of your holy discontent. In the end, God will use your holy discontent to set others free.