

Among prophets, Moses was really big. Jesus said so. But apart from his mother's faith, Moses would not have been. To keep her infant from being killed by Pharaoh's code enforcers, Jochebed put him in a watertight basket and set him in the Nile. (Exodus 2)

Jochebed's ability to let go of something as precious as her own child, was her contribution to God preparing someone to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt 70 years down the road. As a mother with great faith, perhaps she had this dream for her son!

Faith requires us to hold things lightly so God can work through us--even things we consider precious. Whenever we hold anything tightly, our hands are occupied and unavailable for God to use.

The application to material things is obvious. When we hold too tightly to money or possessions, we can be devastated when tragedy takes them away, or create judgmental excuses to not be generous in giving them away.

The application to non-material things is less obvious. Spiritual maturity is about loosening our grip on our expectations, dreams, opinions, attitudes, comfort zones or even what we have been taught for generations. Don't drop them--just hold them lightly! If we hold on too tightly, we won't be able to let go when the Holy Spirit calls us to let go of a specific one. Jesus took this principle to the extreme by warning a follower to even hold his own biological family lightly (Luke 9:58-60).

Scripture has numerous examples of people whom God invited to let go of cherished positions, worldviews, or interpretations. When they did, they discovered they were wrong, and God was right. They left their comfort zone with a leap of faith.

Joseph *knew* how he had to respond to Mary's pregnancy...until he listened an angel in a dream. Saul *knew* he was right in persecuting followers of Jesus...until Jesus got his attention and brought about a

180 degree change in Saul's theology (it took three years!). Peter *knew* he was right in viewing Gentiles as second class...until God renovated his mind through a vision and a Gentile (Cornelius). Jonah *knew* his theology was right...(we don't know how that one turned out!)

What precious thing is God calling each one of us to put in the Nile, so God can transform it into something greater? What precious things is God calling Shalom Mennonite Church to put in the Nile, so God can transform them into greater things?

Jesus said, "...the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these..." (John 14:12). How can this be?

Greater things happen when we see ourselves as God's legos, which God creatively places into faith communities. We are the living stones, not the contractor. Greater things happen when we embrace the counter-cultural beatitudes as our *modus operandi*. Greater things happen when we acknowledge our individual and corporate need for help, and thus depend on the Spirit to show us what is True, and grace us with spiritual gifts. Greater things happen when we acknowledge our need for help, and eagerly *receive* the spiritual gifts of sisters and brothers.

Our second Congregational Dialogue is July 10. We will consider the natural life cycle of a congregation, and reflect together on where Shalom might be within the cycle of congregational life. Our conclusions will inform next steps in the transitional journey. Information regarding follow through on the first Dialogue session (June 19) will be announced Sunday.

—Gary Martin

Looking Ahead:

July 3 9:30 a.m. *The World's Best Sermon*, Mt. 4:23-5:12 Sabrina Falls

July 10 9:30 a.m. *Do I need help?* John 14-16

11:00 a.m. Dialogue #2: *Congregational Lifecycle*

July 17 9:30 a.m. *Spiritual Gifts: The Operating System for Jesus' Church* 2 Kings 5; 1 Corinthians 12

Gary's projected in town schedule: July 10; 13-14; 17-19; July 31-Aug3