

Ordinary Men



Studies in becoming a man of valor

Study 02
Bezalel

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When I was a child I loved to draw pictures of buildings and other objects. Then I would try to build what I had drawn. I used sticks, stones and anything I could find to make a model of my drawings. My parents saw what I was doing and asked to a neighbor if I could be his apprentice. He taught me to use my skill to make tools and pottery. I also learned about carving and casting metal. I was very happy and enjoying my life.

Then they came. My parents had told me about them. They told me they owned us. Until that day I did not understand what it meant to be a slave. We had our own villages and we cared for our own needs. I knew that every day people from our village, even my father and older brother, left the village to work on various projects for someone called Pharaoh. Our life was hard but I had no idea what it meant to be a slave until that day when they came and took me away from my family.

That day a foreman was in the village for inspection. What he really was doing was checking to be sure that everyone who could work had gone to work. But when he stopped at our shop and saw what I was doing. He told the soldiers to take me to Pharaoh's workshop. They didn't even let me say good-bye; they just took me. I tried to fight them but they beat me. I tried to runaway but they chained me to a post. I refused to work and they threatened to kill my family.

In the midst of my anger and fear, my father was brought to me. He did not threaten me or criticize me. He did not even seem to be afraid. Nor did he plead with me to do what they asked so that my family would not be killed. Instead, he shared with me something unexpected; he asked me to do something I didn't expect to hear. He told me to make use of this opportunity to learn all that I could.

When I asked him why he said he believed God had something special for me to do. He believed God was watching over our people and that he would send a deliverer one day, maybe soon.

He had heard about a man named Moses who had defended a Jew when attacked by one of the slave masters. He told me that many believed that God had heard their cries and seen their suffering. My father challenged me to do my very best at this new shop so that when God needed my skills I would be ready to serve Him.

That day I respected my father even more and I chose to listen to his words. I learned everything I could about how to work with wood, stone and metal. It wasn't always easy because it often involved making materials and images of the gods of Egypt. But there was much to learn and the years passed by. At times, I wondered if the God my father trusted in and believed in really existed and really cared about us. The treatment by the Egyptian slave masters became harsher. They seemed driven and almost fearful in their desire to control us and destroy our spirit. Life became more and more difficult.

Then that man my father had mentioned, Moses, returned and suddenly we were free and leaving Egypt. It was almost impossible to believe. All that happened was incredible.

And now we are here at God's holy mountain, Mount Sinai. Moses has just told me and another craftsman Oholiab, that God has chosen us to be responsible for the construction of a tabernacle for worshipping the God that has freed us. Moses says God will guide us in understanding what he wants and will provide all the resources we need. Already, my mind is filled with designs and ideas. It is incredible.

But what is even more significant is how the words my father shared with me on that day so long ago have come to pass. It is hard to imagine why God chose me but it is clear that if I had not obeyed my father and learned all I could, God could not use me today. I would not have the skills needed to honor God as I should.

Week one – Read James 4:13-16

Do you know what will happen tomorrow, in a week, in a month

or in a year? How will the decisions you make today affect what will happen in the future? How important is it to live by faith and obedience today for the work God has for you tomorrow?

Week two – Read Luke 14:28-33

What will it cost you to become proficient in what you want to do? What commitments will you need to make? How will these decisions affect you and your family?

Week three – Read 2 Kings 5:17-19, Daniel 3

Unlike Bezalel, you are not a slave, or are you? Do you have the freedom to choose where you work and what you do? What will you do if you are asked to do something that violates God's law?

Week four – Matthew 25:14-30; Colossians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15

Reflect on how you can improve in your skills and abilities. How can they be used to serve God? Does everyone have an ability which God can use in his service?