**The Life of Miriam**

Introduction:

1. There is so much to be learned from the lives of other people.

2. Often we see similarities in ourselves—both strengths and weaknesses appear in us as we look at them.

3. Sometimes we are more willing to see and acknowledge ourselves through indirect comparisons with others than we are by more direct observation.

4. In this study we will look at the life of Miriam, Moses’ older sister. Allow her to be a window through which you are able to see yourself.

Discussion:

I. The first we read of Miriam is in association with the early life of Moses (Ex. 2:1-10).

A. Miriam stood at a distance to find out what would happen to Moses.

1. It seems the whole incident was planned.

2. It is not entirely clear what relationship Miriam had with Pharaoh’s daughter.

3. Maybe she had a previously relationship and had talked with her about the

circumstances associated with the Hebrews and the male babies. Maybe she

already knew that Pharaoh’s daughter was sympathetic to their circumstances.

4. Was Miriam the catalyst behind this situation? Was it her mother too? Had they

arrived at this plan together?

5. There are many details that we do not know, but it is obvious that she was

significantly involved and served in the provision that God was making for the

preservation and training of Moses.

B. Miriam placed herself in a position to be used by God.

1. Although the Hebrews seemed powerless in Egypt, Miriam acted in a powerful way.

2. Do you position yourself to act in the providence of God?

3. Miriam did and in so doing she affected the whole Israelite nation in a very powerful

way. Who knows what might have happened if she had not acted in this way. You

might think that what she did was not very important, but what might have

happened if Moses had been destroyed?

4. Don’t discredit even the small things that you can do for the Lord. Who knows you

may be delivering the next deliverer of the nation!

II. The next mention of Miriam is after the Red Sea crossing (Ex. 15:20-21).

A. Miriam is identified as a prophetess.

1. In this case her prophesying consisted of a song of praise to the Lord.

2. Don’t underestimate the value of song writers among the people of God. They are

a very powerful influence.

3. Women have often occupied a special place among God’s people in writing songs.

Ex. Fanny Crosby (Redeemed), Glenda Schales (Be Strong and Courageous),

C. E. Couchman (Exalted), Mrs. M. A. Kidder (Did You Think To Pray), Annie

Hawks (I Need Thee Every Hour), Eleanor Schroll (The Garden of Prayer), Mrs. R.

A. Evilsizer (In the Morning of Joy).

B. She led the women.

1. In our religious tradition it seems that women diminish their role.

2. It is as if we think, “If I can’t preach, be an elder, exercise authority over a man . .

. if I am only a wife, homemaker, teacher of women and children my role is not

very important.”

3. Don’t diminish yourself and the importance of your work in the kingdom. Miriam

was not Moses. Aaron was not Moses. But each had a role in the plan of God.

Comparing ourselves to one another and feeling of diminished status causes

serious problems for us personally and as we relate to others, as is evidenced in

Miriam’s life.

III. The third instance in Miriam’s life mentioned in Scripture has to do with her attack on Moses (Num. 12:1ff).

A. Moses has married a Cushite woman.

1. Miriam objects, along with Aaron, saying, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only

through Moses.”

2. This marriage raises some questions.

a. What about Zipporah, the daughter of the Midianite priest, that Moses had

married while in Midian? See Ex. 2:21.

b. Some have suggested she was deceased, but there is no biblical evidence of

that.

c. Some say Moses had two wives, but this is uncertain too. Maybe Zipporah is

deceased. We just do not know.

d. It is suggested by some that Zipporah was a Cushite. Unlikely that the daughter

of a Midianite priest would be from Cush.

e. Maybe this Cushite was one of the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with

Israel (Ex. 12:38; cf. Num. 11:4).

B. Cush was a region located south of Ethopia.

1. The people here were known for their dark skin (Jer. 13:23).

2. This was an interracial marriage.

3. Was this part of the problem for Miriam? Perhaps so! Later her skin is going to be

made especially white with leprosy. More on that in a moment.

C. What is Miriam thinking?

1. Everything may not be entirely clear to us, but some things are.

2. It is the marriage that she has problems with and she has involved Aaron. The fact

that her name is mentioned first and then his (12:1) suggests she is the leader in

the objection. The fact that she is struck with leprosy and Aaron was not suggests

she bears greater guilt.

3. It is obvious that Miriam is concerned about her status and Moses marrying this

Cushite woman in some way is a challenge to her status.

a. Does she think that Moses has lowered himself by marrying the Cushite? Is

Miriam considering her Hebrew race as superior?

b. Somehow she feels her status affected.

c. It seems she is jealous of this woman. Is the Cushite being elevated more

than Miriam? Is Miriam thinking this woman is better looking, younger, more

appealing to Moses and the people than she is?

d. In circumstances where jealousy exists gossip, slander, malice, hatred, and

other sins seem to thrive.

4. Miriam “feeling less than” stands in contrast to Moses’ humility. Feeling less than

is often translated to arrogance. When you feel less than you want to grasp for

being more (Rom. 12:3). Arrogance is not really about feeling better than others

so much as it is about feeling less and trying to exalt oneself. Moses had been

humbled. He thought he was the Deliverer of Israel at age 40 but at 80 he

preferred someone else (Ex. 2:14; Acts 7:25; Ex. 3:11;4:1, 10). Now in his 80’s

Moses is described as “very humble, more than any man on the face of the

earth” (Num. 12:3). Note that he does not defend himself against Miriam and

Aaron’s objections. Defending yourself often reflects your feeling of “less than.”

5. Status is not a matter of importance to children. It was to the disciples. But

Jesus called on them to be like children (Matt. 18:1-6). As we entrust ourselves

to God rather than to defending ourselves we reveal true humility. See 1 Pet.

2:21-24; Phil. 2:3-8.

D. God defended Moses.

1. He called the three of them to the tent of meeting and confirmed Moses as

having a special role.

2. Miriam was struck with leprosy. Her skin became white as stone. Contrast the

dark skin of the Cushite. Isn’t this interesting. God has His ways of humbling

us.

E. Aaron intervened to have Moses pray for Miriam. Moses prayed that she be

healed, but God said seven days outside the camp should be sufficient for her

insubordination. She was humbled before all the people. They waited for her

recovery before breaking camp. We need to learn of our value before the Lord and

also how much other people value us. It will humble us. Then we can serve. And

the Lord exalts those who humble themselves and serve (Phil. 2:3-11), just as He

did Moses.

IV. Other mentions of Miriam in Scripture.

A. Death and burial (Num. 20:1).

B. In the lineage of the Levites (Num. 26:59).

C. A reminder to remember what the Lord did to Miriam in regard to following the Lord’s

teaching about what to do in cases of an infection of leprosy (Deut. 24:8-9).

Conclusion:

1. The Lord has used many women in the accomplishment of His purposes.

2. A clear understanding and confidence in who we are enables Him to use us more effectively. When we compare ourselves to others, develop feelings of being “less than,” we then tend to lift ourselves up (arrogance) and all these become hindrances to us.

3. Women can feel these things particularly in this world. It can lead to anger, jealousy, hatred, gossip and so many other sins.

4. Women stop comparing yourselves to men and other women. Recognize that you are valuable to God and to His people. Humble yourself before the mighty hand of God. This does not mean diminishing yourself. Humility is not about diminishing one’s self. It is about recognizing your special value, and the value of others, before our great God.