

Is There a Little Bit of Pharaoh in All of Us?

The recent chaos in Egypt has the raised eyebrows of most of us. President Mohammed Morsi's decision to grant himself sweeping powers and place himself above the courts has triggered sweeping negative reactions.

Morsi's grab for power has left Egypt destabilized; some have been killed and many wounded. His new nickname is "The Pharaoh President," after the manner in which the Pharaohs claimed they were the incarnation of the ancient Egyptian gods.

I don't know Morsi's motives for desiring absolute authority. He may be but a pawn in a larger plot, having been coerced by his advisors so that the Egypt would shift its alignment from being a U.S. ally to a U.S. enemy. He may have even caught the Pharaoh spirit of believing his own press to the point of dictatorship.

Whatever the motive, Morsi reminds me of Pharaoh Tutmose III—the leader over Egypt during Israel's exodus. This ancient ruler radiated arrogance and pride throughout the entire Exodus ordeal until Egypt was destroyed. And we all know the cause and effect pride has in our lives: Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall (see Prov. 16:18).

With all the fingers pointing at Morsi, I have taken a different resolve—I wonder how much of a Pharaoh spirit may be in me! What we are witnessing in Egypt on a large scale is what happens in our world on a smaller scale when we embrace pride and forsake humility.

We, like Morsi, will face opportunities in which we must choose how large we will allow our egos to become. Pastors are faced with this option when parishioners seek to exalt them above true biblical honor. Managers face this temptation as

opportunities arise for power grabs. Parents face such a choice when prompted to raise children with an iron hand and a closed heart.

All human beings are exposed to this type of decision regularly. Obviously, we must learn to forsake pride and embrace humility. We have to keep the Pharaoh spirit at bay. But what exactly is humility?

Humility is one of those elusive graces that seems to make little sense. By most people's understanding, any recognition of personal worth or value contends with humility. Yet, this is not accurate.

Humility is not financial poverty or verbal belittling of oneself. Some think to be humble means becoming a doormat for others or seeing oneself as the scum of the earth but it is not. Humility is not shyness or passivity neither does it have to do with physical weakness or illness.

Humility is a comparative grace. It is our response to the sense and understanding of how "omni" our Creator is followed by a realization that all that we are and ever will be is derived from Him. Once we comprehend our nothingness without Him and awesomeness in Him we will respond with gratitude for His grace.

The result of such knowledge is that we will allow no flesh to find glory in His Presence. As God exalts us in leadership we will avoid becoming like Pharaoh Tutmose III. Instead, we will become like Jesus Christ in John 13, where the King of the universe girds Himself with an apron to wash his subordinates' feet.

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very

truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him (John 13:12-16).

From Christ's example, we understand humility's role in leadership: we serve people not dictate over them. Leaders exist for the people not the people for their leaders.

How will we know if we are beginning to step into the trap of our little Pharaoh? One sign of pride is strife and contention. Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice (see Prov 13:10). Here is a checklist that can help you catch the Pharaoh before he becomes larger than life.

1. When there is more war than peace around you—someone is in pride.
2. When there is constant debate over who should do the menial task—there is pride.
3. Where people are constantly being hurt and wounded—as in Egypt—there is pride.

Let's dethrone any Pharaoh that might be in us and take the low road. The result will be personal peace and blessing from the Prince of Peace.

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