

WHY ARE YOU CRYING OUT TO ME?

Exodus 14:5-25

The Russian play *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov is usually billed as a comedy; but if you see it, don't expect any belly laughs. Like much Russian drama, *Uncle Vanya* consists of a lot of unhappy people standing around talking about how unhappy they are but never taking any action to make things better. You want to stand up in the audience and yell, "Shut up and *do* something!"

The characters in *Uncle Vanya* are trapped in inactivity because the playwright has put so many hopeless words into their mouths. Chronic complaining immobilizes us. It is easier to gripe than to take action to change things.

At a time when things looked desperately hopeless, Moses cried out to the Lord. The Lord surprised him by telling him to stop crying out and start moving forward.

Group Discussion. If a friend said to you, "I feel stuck and can't do anything about my situation," what would you say?

Personal Reflection. Do you agree or disagree that sometimes, in some situations, we have no choices and no options? Why do you answer as you do?

Equipped with the "staff of God," Moses and his brother, Aaron, went to the Egyptian pharaoh to demand the release of the Hebrew slaves. It took a series of devastating plagues on Egypt before pharaoh finally allowed the slaves to leave. Shortly afterward, pharaoh realized he had lost his main labor force and sent his army after them. *Read Exodus 14:5-14.*

1. Why did the Israelites have good reason to be terrified (vv. 7, 9)?
2. What options appeared to be open to them?
3. Think of a time when you felt stuck, and you desperately asked the Lord to help you. What happened as a result?
4. How did Moses try to encourage the people (vv. 13-14)?
5. If you were one of the Israelites and heard Moses' words of reassurance, how do you think you would react, and why?
6. Read *Exodus 14:15-25*. From verse 15, what do you suppose Moses might have been feeling that he had *not* expressed publicly?

7. Throughout Scripture people cry out to the Lord, and he answers. Moses was sent to deliver the Israelites in response to their crying out in slavery (Exodus 2:23-25). As Pharaoh's army approached, the trapped Israelites cried out to God (Exodus 14:10). Then why does the Lord abruptly cut off Moses' cries for help (v. 15)?

8. Instead of crying out, what was Moses told to do, and with what promise (vv. 15-18)?

9. What were the results of this new course of action (vv. 19-25)?

10. Moses had a problem, he cried out to God, and God spoke to him in some understandable way. We have our own problems, and we cry out to God. What are some ways we hear from God in response to our prayers?

11. What is the connection between closeness with God and knowing what God wishes you to do?

12. The Lord told Moses, "Tell the Israelites to move on" (v. 15). How might the Lord be saying to you now, "Move on!" or in other words, "Get going! Take action!"

13. What will you do to obey the Lord's promptings?



First of all, pray for a closer relationship with God, which will put you into the path of his plans for you. Then pray for wisdom to know when to wait and when to move forward.

NOW OR LATER

Study other Scriptures in which people are reluctant to do something and the Lord tells them to get moving anyway:

- 2 Chronicles 20:1-30
- Acts 9:1-19
- Acts 10:1-23

Moses received direction from hearing God's unmistakable voice. Normally, we are not so privileged. To help you think further about discerning God's will, here are some resources from a range of perspectives:

- *Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View* by Garry Friesen
- *Discovering God's Will in Your Life* by Lloyd John Ogilvie
- *God's Will: Finding Guidance for Everyday Decisions* by J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom
- *God's Will, God's Best for Your Life* by Josh McDowell and Kevin Johnson
- *Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will* by Gordon T. Smith
- *A Slow and Certain Light: Thoughts on the Guidance of God* by Elisabeth Elliot