Really, there’s no such thing as an overnight success. But God is in it with you for the long haul.
becoming an
overnight success

by berni dymet
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Have you ever been impatient with God? I mean you’re ready to get on with it! You’re ready to go and do what God made you to do. And yet He, for some unknown reason, doesn’t appear to be in any hurry. It’s enough to drive you crazy!

I think anyone who has ever lived life, anyone who has ever wanted to get out there and do something, achieve something, fulfil their destiny, knows the frustration of meeting stubborn resistance and delays. I think in particular, when we’re young and idealistic and ready to take on the world, the fact that the rest of the world doesn’t seem to want to revolve around our plans and hopes and dreams can be incredibly frustrating.
And as we get older, the realisation perhaps that things aren’t going to pan out the way we’d envisaged, at some point, for many, leads to the classic mid life crisis.

The whole thing between our expectations of life and the reality – the mismatch, the yawning gap between the two – is a bigger deal than we might realise. Many people are living lives of frustration and disappointment because things aren’t panning out the way they’d hoped. Their careers, their finances, their dreams for marriage and family and where they’d live and what impact they’re going to have in this world…

And so what many people end up doing, is settling for second best, always dissatisfied, quietly, with their lot in life.

I wonder if any of that sounds just a little bit too familiar. I wonder if you’re sitting there thinking, “That’s just a bit close to the bone.” And I’m believing that just a few people are going to have one or two “ah-hah” moments as they discover what God’s really up to in your life.

Overnight success seems to have such a great ring to it. The whole ‘get rich quick and then retire in luxury’ is a secret, seductive thought that many of us harbour. But the truth is, that really, there’s no such thing as an overnight success, or at the very least, they’re very rare.
Yes, there seem to be these internet sensations that rocket to stardom seemingly overnight.

I remember when a guy called Psy burst on the scene with his gangnam style dance and music video. Remember that? This slightly chubby, Korean guy in a white suit dancing around the stage in that odd, somehow intoxicating gangnam style – and for some reason that just took off. In fact, his video on YouTube became the one in history to reach one billion views. Imagine, something as crazy as that.

That doesn’t happen very often, and even when it does, the overnight thing is usually an illusion. I have no doubt that even Psy put in an enormous amount of work and effort into doing what he did. And yet so many people harbour this secret dream of overnight success.

The problem, it seems, begins in our hearts.

Because invariably God has made us to be a certain person, to do certain things, and naturally, we have a heart to be that person, to do those things and to become who God made us to be. The problem is that we approach this central issue of life with a McDonald’s ‘two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun’ mentality – a fast food mentality for instant success.
In truth, this booklet is really about learning to play the long game, because life is a marathon, not a sprint. And I don’t know anyone who is better equipped to teach us about the long game than Moses, in the Old Testament.

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When in reality, often, our first few attempts at becoming the person who God made us to be, can end up being something of a disaster. In truth, this booklet is really about learning to play the long game, because life is a marathon, not a sprint. And I don’t know anyone who is better equipped to teach us about the long game than Moses, in the Old Testament.

Now the reason I chose Moses is that after Jesus, he is the next most talked about character in the Bible. Certainly he is the most talked about Old Testament character in the New Testament, and when you read some of the pithy summaries of his life and successes in the New Testament, you could easily get the impression that Moses was somehow, an overnight success.

That’s always the way! The further we are from the reality of someone’s life, the more it seems to us that their success happened “overnight” somehow. But is just wasn’t like that.

Moses lived for one hundred and twenty years – that’s a very long game – and had three very distinct phases in his life. We’re going to look at each of those to see what we can learn for our own lives, our own long game, kicking off with his first phase, living effectively as Pharaoh’s son.
So here’s how it happened. The Israelites have been exiled as slaves in Egypt for over forty years. Pharaoh makes a decree around about the time that Moses is born, that all Israelite male children are to be killed. But instead, Moses’ parents in faith, put him in a floating basket on the Nile and Pharaoh’s daughter finds him. As a result, Moses grows up as the prince of Egypt in Pharaoh’s house, always knowing that he’s a Hebrew. He lives this life of amazing power, privilege and luxury. But here’s the problem – it’s a problem, if I can call it that, that each of us faces at some point.

God had put something in Moses’ heart – call it a dream, call it a deep motivation or call it what you will. Whatever it was, Moses was given a heart for his people, the Hebrews. And just as well, because God’s plan, unbeknown to anyone at this point, was that Moses would become the man who would lead God’s chosen people out of Egypt, out of slavery, to freedom and towards the land and the life that God had promised their ancestor Abraham all those centuries before.

As Moses grew up, more and more, he saw the oppression and the brutality that Pharaoh inflicted on his people, his kinsmen, the Israelites. Until one day, it boiled over. Things came to a head.
One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, “Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?” He answered, “Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses.

(Exodus 2:11-15)

So, the heart that God had put into Moses, a heart for God’s chosen people, ends up completely disrupting the life of privilege that Moses had lived for his first forty years. The heart that God had put in him, ended up turning everything on its head.

This is exactly what I see happening in people’s lives over and over again, and they just don’t realise it.

God’s given them a heart, a dream, a deep motivation, a calling, to become who He’s made them to be and do what He’s set out for them to do. And when you don’t quite know yet what that is, that
heart that God’s placed inside you disrupts your life.

I wish God would set it out nice and neat in front of us, so that we can see the big picture; so that we can see where our lives are headed; so that we know what’s coming next and why and what it all means. Wouldn’t that be nice? Sure it would … but that’s not how it works, because God wants you and me living by faith not by sight. He wants you and me trusting in Him.

We expect to live lives that are always on the up and up – onwards and upwards, every post a winner. But sometimes life is one step forward and three steps back, as it was here for Moses who was ultimately seen as one of the most successful leaders of all time. But when you’re down in the trenches, it’s easy to lose sight of the big picture.

So my point is this: sometimes who you are – how God made you to be, what He made you to do – is going to seem to work against you and bring failure on your head. But don’t lose heart. God has a plan. It’s just that His plan rarely involves overnight success.
I don’t know about you, but I’ve often thought to myself, wouldn’t it be nice to become an overnight success. All this hard work, all the grind, if only we could bypass that bit and just arrive and succeed. But more often than not, life often heads in the opposite direction. Just when we think things are bad … they go from bad to worse.

The idea of becoming an overnight success is incredibly alluring. It’s seductive. As an American colleague of mine once said, it has “cerebral curb appeal”. You want to pull up next to it and stay for a while. In this success-driven, success-focussed, success-oriented world in which we live, man it would be so nice to dispense with all the hard work of getting there, and just … get there. Arrive. Success. Woohoo!
If only. I’m now on the other side of fifty, well and truly, and whilst yes, I’ve had some successes in my life, nothing spectacular mind you, just the odd success here and there – I have never once, NOT ONCE, had an overnight success.

They’ve always involved twists and turns and surprises and setbacks and hard work and sheer grind over the long haul. Now that can mean one of two things. Either I’m not very smart, or overnight successes are as rare as hen’s teeth. I’m going to go out on a limb here and go for the second of those two. Hopefully.

I’m not a gambling man, but lots of people put money on the lotto, or the pools, or they buy a lottery ticket, or worse still go to the casino. All with the dream of winning the big one, striking the mother load. How many of them ever do? Answer: almost none. As a percentage, the big winners are close to zero percent of the players. After all, they don’t build casinos on winners, do they?

But as we journey through life with a dream or a calling or whatever it is in our hearts, sometimes, instead of getting closer to the success we’re hoping for, things go, as I said earlier, from bad to worse. And that’s what I want to look at right now. From bad to worse on your road, chasing after your dream,
following your calling.

Because it happens. It happens way more often than we’d like to think and if we don’t know what’s going on, if we don’t realise what God is up to, it’s actually rather devastating.

Moses was a man who had a dream – a calling to help his fellow Hebrews. Even though through God’s mighty hand, he ended up not as a slave (like the rest of his countrymen) but as an adopted son of Pharaoh, living in privilege and comfort, with wealth and power, deep in his heart, it ached to see how his people were being mistreated and abused. Until one day, as we saw in the last chapter, he came across an Egyptian guard beating one of the slaves, so he rose up and killed the guard. Woops! Bad move. Now the heart that he’d had for his people, completely disrupted his life.

His first forty years he spends in privilege and this one even means that the next forty years he’s going to spend in poverty. Let’s pick up the story.

*When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well. The priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. But some*
shepherds came and drove them away. Moses got up and came to their defence and watered their flock.

When they returned to their father Reuel, he said, “How is it that you have come back so soon today?” They said, “An Egyptian helped us against the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock.” He said to his daughters, “Where is he? Why did you leave the man? Invite him to break bread.” Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She bore a son, and he named him Gershom; for he said, “I have been an alien residing in a foreign land.

After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (Exodus 2:15-3:1)
Now, I want you to stop and think about this. Put yourself in Moses’ shoes for a minute. For the first forty years of your life you live in a palace as Pharaoh’s adopted son. Pharaoh in Egypt has all wealth, all power, all privilege and all comfort. Life doesn’t get any better. BUT, God puts this heart in you, a heart for your own people, a heart for God’s chosen people and through this one act of taking out a guard who was beating a defenceless slave, now you’re not only booted out of home … you have to flee for your life and go and live in the wilderness. In fact, we’re told in the last verse there, Exodus 3:1, that when God finally came to find Moses, another forty years later, He found him, out “beyond the wilderness”.

Out the back of nowhere. The contrast between Moses’ first forty years and the next forty could not have been more stark. From privilege to poverty. From significance, to insignificance. We’re not told a whole lot about this forty years in the wilderness, but can you imagine what Moses was thinking? Can you imagine how Moses felt? Can you just imagine?

By age eighty, he was a burnt out old wreck. A has-been. A nobody. Out in the back of the wilderness, tending sheep. Dream over, right? Regret filling his heart. He would have been through all the stages, denial, anger, fear, regret, bitterness … finally just
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giving up, and tending these wretched sheep. And then ... then God comes to him with a crazy plan. We’ll look at that a little later.

But for forty years in the wilderness – beyond the wilderness – he had no idea that God even had a plan; that God even cared about him; that God even remembered him. I’m guessing you’ve been in that place too. Dream over. Calling dead. Can’t possibly resurrect this mess from the ashes.

Yet mark this!

God had Moses cooling his heels for forty years in the very same wilderness through which he would lead the nation of Israel on the Exodus. So by the time God comes to him in the burning bush, Moses knows this land like the back of his hand. And what was he doing? Shepherding a flock of sheep!

So in fact God was getting Moses ready in this forty-year lonely wilderness experience to take on the mantle of leadership of Israel and guide them for another forty years, a million or so people, shepherd them through the very wilderness that he already knew.

And when the setback comes in your life, in my life, that’s exactly what God is doing for us. Getting us ready. Preparing us, teaching us, moulding us, shaping our character for the next thing He has already planned, already prepared for us to do.
I remember the exact moment, on the exact day, when God called me to preach the Gospel to the nations. It was so clear, even a dummy like me couldn’t miss it. I’d been a Christian for, ooooh, about five minutes, but I was raring to go. Problem was, that first, God had an eight-year wilderness experience for me to go through. He needed to prepare me, shape my character, get me ready. The call came in 1996. But God didn’t release me until 2004, to do what I’m doing now.

Fortunately, right at the beginning, a guy called Mark Brett (I’ll never forget this, it was during a worship time at the theological college where I was studying), sidled up to me after one song and said, “Berni, I don’t know if this means anything to you, but I think God wants you to know that He’s not in a hurry.” That word gave me the patience to wait on God in the wilderness, while He did the things He needed to do.

And can I give you that same word today. If you’re in a wilderness, wondering where the dream went, wondering what happened to the calling, wondering where the passion in your heart disappeared off to, don’t worry. God is still in control. He hasn’t forgotten you. He hasn’t lost sight of His plans.

He’s just getting you ready … for the next thing.
It’s one thing to have a dream in your heart. It’s one thing to have a sense of God’s calling on your life. But if we truly believe that God is calling us to something, then at some point, we need to stop dreaming and start doing. And that, let me tell you, is one of the most difficult times of all.

In my experience, having a dream to do something, to get out there and be who God made you to be and do what God made you to do – that dreaming bit is the easy bit. It’s easy to sit on the sofa and dream. But dreams don’t come to fruition, until you do something about them.

There is a powerful, spiritual principle that you discover in the book of Acts where an angel comes to release the Apostle Peter from prison:

CHAPTER 3
THE BIG DECISION
Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, “Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” Peter went out and followed him … (Acts 12:7-9)

The spiritual principle is this: **God expects us to do the things we can do and He expects to do the things that we can’t do.**

There are two parts to that principle. If you get either part wrong, things just don’t happen. If you expect God to do the things that you’re capable of, nothing’s going to happen. If you think that you’re going to do the things that only God is capable of, nothing is going to happen.

The angel told Peter to get up quickly and dress himself. That’s the bit he could do for himself. Note: God did not pick Peter up by the scruff of the neck and dress him. But the bit that Peter couldn’t do for himself – getting the chains to fall off his wrists and swinging the prison doors open … that’s where God stepped in with supernatural power.

The problem often is that when God taps us on the shoulder and says, “It’s time to go” we just don’t
want to get up, get dressed and get going. Not at all.

And that’s exactly the problem that Moses had. When you read some of the pithy accounts of Moses in the *New* Testament – he is, after all, the most spoken about Old Testament character in the New Testament – you can easily get the idea that he was an overnight success. But that’s not true.

After forty years of living in privilege as Pharaoh’s adopted son, as we’ve seen, he kills an Egyptian guard who was abusing one of his fellow Hebrews, and as a result has to flee into the wilderness, where he lives for the next forty years. A place and a time where God was getting him ready to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt towards the Promised Land.

We’re going to pick the story of Moses’ “overnight success” at this moment of transition, after forty years as a burnt out old wreck in the wilderness, when God comes to call him to get up and go do what He was always intended him to do – to lead God’s people out of Egypt.

Now you might think at this point that Moses would get up, dust himself off, and say “Well, it’s about time God! Do you realise I’ve been rotting out here in the wilderness, forgotten by you, after all those years of privilege in Pharaoh’s house?!”
But that wasn’t exactly how Moses responded to God.

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyp-
tians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain. (Exodus 3:1-12)

No, the last thing that Moses wanted to do was to go and confront Pharaoh. In fact, he had another four excuses on top of that one. Eventually God had to get angry with him and show him a couple of miracles to get him going.

We all want to be an overnight success, but after forty years rotting in the wilderness, after forty years of self-pity, after forty years of playing the victim, well, you get comfortable with being a victim. Get up and go? Are you serious God?!

Do you see the paradox?
What I love about God’s Word is that it’s as fresh and alive and relevant today as it was thousands of years ago when it was written. And I know that there are a few people today who need to hear this. God’s call on your life has seriously disrupted your status quo. You’ve experienced the time cooling your heals in the wilderness. You’ve become accustomed to it and all of a sudden God comes along and says, ‘Quickly, get up, let’s go!’

If Moses hadn’t gone, Israel would have perished in slavery. If Peter hadn’t gone, he’d have died in that prison. What about you? Are you ready to go when God calls you? Are you?!

I remember when I first received the call to proclaim the Good News of Jesus from God. It was as clear as a bell. God let me stew in my juices – a bit like Moses – but thankfully only for eight years not forty. I wanted to go and follow the call, from day one. But when, eight years later, God was ready, it was unsettling. Stepping out of my comfort zone was a seriously scary thing to do.

I had a great, well-paying career as an IT consultant. I worked hard, but it was a comfortable life. And then God called me into this ministry that was all but dead. Christianityworks had been going for over half a century, but had been so run into the ground
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that it had almost no supporters, nor was it producing any radio programs, which was and remains our core business. It was at this point of “last one out turn out the lights” that God clearly called me to leave my IT consulting career and its lavish income behind and step into this leaky boat that was steadily sinking.

That step is never easy. It wasn’t for Moses. It certainly wasn’t for me. And if you’ve been in that place, I know it wasn’t for you either. But I also know that there are some people today who are at this very point in their lives.

It’s that big decision to step out of your comfort zone – because God’s purposes for you will always lie outside your comfort zone – and get on with it.

So, I’ll ask you again, are you ready to go when God calls you? Are you ready to step out of your comfort zone? Are you ready to place your life and your future completely in His hands? Well, are you?
The thing about the dreams that God puts on our hearts is that their execution is much, much, much more difficult than their conception. It’s easy to sit on the sofa and dream about something great that God is going to do through us, but getting out there and actually living the dream, well, that’s another thing altogether.

Dreams, ideas, hopes and plans, are wonderful things. The thing that makes them so exciting is that they don’t have a downside. I can sit on the sofa all day, day after day, dreaming about the great things I’m going to do, the great things that God could do through me, and you know the best thing about those dreams? They never face any opposition. There are no obstacles. Because your dreams can go wherever you want them to go.
Although, I know that when I was dreaming about doing what I’m doing now, those dreams were scary, because they were so ridiculously big. I mean if I’d told anybody that I felt that God was calling me to share the good news of Jesus with millions of people, given who I was then and the mess my life was in back then, they’d all have thought I was delusional.

But once you step out and actually start living that dream or calling or motivation – whatever label you want to put on it – the first thing that happens is that you run into opposition. And opposition, it seems, comes at you from every direction (all at once) the moment you step over the starting line.

We all want to become an overnight success. We do. It’s always part of the dream to fly first class from A to B by the most direct, fastest possible route, without any turbulence along the way.

But God isn’t so much into overnight success. God wants to grow our faith, by teaching us to play the long game, by taking us on circuitous wilderness journeys along the way. That’s how He grows our character. That’s how He knocks the rough edges off us. That’s how He breathes humility and gentleness into our hearts. That’s how He builds courage into our spirit, as we experience firsthand His faithfulness, day after day after day.
As we’ve joined Moses on his journey, we’ve seen how God gave him a heart for the misery of his fellow Hebrews, and how that heart disrupted his life and plopped him alone in a wilderness for forty years. And how difficult it was for him finally, after all that time, to follow God’s call to confront Pharaoh and lead God’s chosen people out of Egypt back towards the promised land.

None of those stages were easy. Following God’s call on our lives, living out the dreams that He’s placed on our hearts – those things are never easy.

But once you get going, once you’re on the road, surely you know, things must get easier, right?! Well, not for Moses. Let’s pick up his story. He’s been to Pharaoh, and given him God’s message, “Let my people go!” Nine times Pharaoh said, “No”. Nine times God sent plagues on Egypt. Finally, after God struck down the firstborn of all of Egypt, Pharaoh relented and the Israelites fled.

But no sooner were they on the road, than Pharaoh decided to chase them and destroy them. Perfect! Just perfect God!

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, “Was it because
there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

(Exodus 14:10-12)

Remember I said to you that the opposition seems to come from all directions? Poor old Moses. Eighty years old and now he has Pharaoh’s great army pursuing him from behind … and as though that weren’t enough, in front of him, he has a grumbling, complaining rabble.

Some call from God! Some road to success! Excuse me God, but could we just call it all off at this point? Please! That’s what most of us end up saying to God, isn’t it!? And yet God stepped in, because Moses had done what he could do, and so now God did what only He could do.

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel.
And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. (Exodus 14:19-20)

There it is again, that spiritual principle: God expects us to do the things that we can do, and He expects us to leave to Him to do the things that only He can do. That’s exactly what happened here in the wilderness, at the beginning of the Exodus. God showed up. God was faithful. God guided. God intervened. God put Himself between Israel and her enemies.

That’s always what God does. He takes us to the edge, He puts us, deliberately between a rock and a hard place, so that unless He shows up we will fail. And then … He shows up. This very same thing has happened so many times in my life … and you see it so many times over the next forty years as Moses leads the grumbling, complaining, faithless Israelites through the wilderness towards the Promised Land.

God always shows up to deliver. God always shows up to guide, to feed, to protect and to deal with the grumblers and complainers.

The one thing you and I do not want to be on our ‘Exodus’ is a faithless grumbler and complainer. Remember, it was only an eleven-day journey from
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Egypt to the outskirts of the Promised Land. But because of their lack of faith and their complaining, it took them forty years!!! And then, because of their lack of faith, all but two of the million or so Israelites who left Egypt under the staff of Moses, perished in the wilderness. Only two of the originals – Joshua and Caleb – as well as the next generation, ended up crossing over into the Promised Land. There’s a lesson in that I have to tell you. As you read the rest of the book of Exodus, you see how many times the Israelites turned their backs on God, worshipping idols, not believing God’s promises, turning on Moses – in fact so much so that God was going to wipe them all out.

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them,
'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people. (Exodus 32:11-14)

Do you really want to follow God’s call on your life? Do you really want to live the dream that He wove into your DNA before time began? Then forget the idea of overnight success and get ready for your ‘Exodus’.

It wasn’t easy. It was a long, long, long road for Moses and yet God worked mightily in him and through him to achieve His purposes. God’s purposes, not Moses’ purposes. Do you think Moses would have planned it this way? No way! Forty years with a grumbling, complaining, ungrateful people under his charge. Overnight success? Forget it.

It’s about hard work. It’s about difficult times in the wilderness. It’s about opposition from all directions – from inside your own camp, and from the enemy outside the camp. It’s always how God works. He achieves His perfect will through imperfect people in imperfect places.
I don’t know how you imagine your life will turn out, whether you’ll achieve your life’s purpose or not, but often times – and you see this very much of people in the Bible – God puts dreams in their hearts, He puts a call on their lives, but they don’t get to see the end game. That, to some, can be somewhat disconcerting.

If we approach life on the basis that it’s all about us, that we are at the centre of the universe and that everything revolves around the fulfilment of our dreams for success, then it’s a disappointing notion to think that we may not get to see all that God has planned to do and to achieve through us. And there are plenty of people who have that perspective – the world’s full of “I’m at the centre of the universe” kind of people.
Sadly, churches are also full of those sorts of people.

I’m on Facebook, as you may know – and I saw something the other day that really, really annoyed me. A prominent Christian posted a graphic that said this, “Lord, I thank you in advance for my financial overflow!”

Really?! So I posted this as a response, “Lord I thank you that you died for me even without the clothes on your back. And Lord I thank you in advance that you have called me to take up my cross and follow you, no matter where you should lead or how much it may cost me, even if it should cost me my all.”

Two entirely different perspectives on our faith: one says that it’s all about me, the other says that it’s all about Jesus. Now, I am not here to tell you that I live my perspective out perfectly on a day-to-day basis. I, like you, am a sinner and I, like you, make plenty of mistakes. But the question is, what’s you’re fundamental perspective? How do you look at this world? With you at the centre or Jesus at the centre?

Because if it’s you at the centre, you are going to be horrified to find out that you won’t get to see all the plans that God has purposed to work out involving you. But if you see your world with Christ at the centre, then the fact that you won’t get to see it all, be involved in it all, get the kudos for it all, will be an absolute delight.
Overnight success – as we’ve seen so far through the story of Moses, there’s pretty much no such thing. Moses spent forty years in privilege in Pharaoh’s house, forty years alone in the wilderness, and then another forty years leading God’s grumbling, complaining and faithless people through the wilderness.

And if you read the pithy account recorded many years later in the book of Hebrews, you could easily come to the conclusion that Moses was an overnight success; a bit like Mary Poppins, *practically perfect in every way*. But not so:

*By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king’s anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.* (Hebrews 11:24-29)
Not half bad, and when you stand back at a distance like that, it seems that Moses was a great success. And yet, Moses failed God and so He wasn’t allowed to complete his mission and lead God’s people into the Promised Land. He didn’t see the promises of God fulfilled in his life.

The Israelites, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there. Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and against Aaron. The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had died when our kindred died before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink.” Then Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting; they fell on their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Take the staff, and assemble
the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them; thus you shall provide drink for the congregation and their livestock.

So Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarrelled with the Lord, and by which he showed his holiness. (Numbers 20:1-13)

Pretty harsh, don’t you think? I mean, you read the account in the book of Hebrews and Moses was an amazing man of faith, really. Yet because of this one small failure, a lapse in his faith, God kills him off before entering the Promised Land.
But listen up. It wasn’t about Moses, it was about God. Imagine if Moses had been the one both to lead Israel out of Egypt and then, forty years later, lead them into the Promised Land. Given their propensity to be led astray by idols, no doubt God’s people would have ended up worshipping Moses instead of God, and God doesn’t share His glory with any man.

As great a leader as He was, as much faith and courage as He displayed … it wasn’t about Moses, it was always about God’s plan which went way beyond the wilderness, way beyond the Promised Land, through the Cross of Christ, down to you and me. Moses, like everyone else, just had a small part to play in a much bigger plan. God … God is playing the long game. Get it?

So what does that mean for you and me, as we set about laying aside our dreams of becoming an overnight success and step out to start following God? What does that actually mean, hmm? Well, simply this.

Our part, the part that God has given each one of us to play, is going to be challenging. It’s going to have setbacks. There will be times when we have failures and there will be times when we experience triumphs.
It wasn’t about Moses, it was always about God’s plan which went way beyond the wilderness, way beyond the Promised Land, through the Cross of Christ, down to you and me. Moses, like everyone else, just had a small part to play in a much bigger plan.

becoming an overnight success
But no matter how well suited we are to the part that God has given us to play, the point is that we are bit players. We are called to play our bit, and that’s it. And when you think about it, that’s exciting. The ripple effect of what Moses did, well, it’s reaching several thousand years down through history and across the globe today into your life and mine.

It’s the ripple effect of our bit, that’s the exciting bit.

I had someone ask me once, *How do you know what impact your radio and television programs are having? What quantitative measure do you have to tell me that what you’re doing is worthwhile?* The answer is – there is no quantitative measure. Do I know millions of people are listening? Yes, I do. And I hear the odd story of the terrorist who stopped killing people, the woman pulled back from the brink of suicide, the eleven-year old boy whose parents were going through a painful divorce and who met Jesus through these programs.

And I thank God for giving me a small part to play in people’s lives, and I pray … I pray for the ripple effect through them into the lives of others. I pray that the former terrorist will lead many to
Christ, that the woman pulled back from suicide will bless her daughter with her love, that the young boy will be given a powerful part to play in God’s plan. The ripple effect.

God is playing the long game, and if you’re on **Team Jesus**, then the joy, the delight, is to play your part in that long game, for His glory. Amen?!
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing – it isn’t just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni’s radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That’s what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni’s passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God’s hands. The real change agent is God Himself. 

And to Him – and Him alone – be all the glory.

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Wouldn’t it be nice to become an overnight success? I think that’s pretty much everyone’s secret dream. Success without the hard work, by next Thursday. Just perfect! The problem is that life’s just not like that for 99.9% of us. So for many, disappointment sets in, when all along, God is up to some amazing things with us and through us. It turns out that God is playing the long game.

So join Berni Dymet in this latest story, as he opens God’s Word to discover that the plans and the purposes that God has for your life!