

The Lion King - You are Never Too Far

Circle of Life with kids dancing opening music video playing (4:10 min)

What a beautiful way to start today. As the Next Gen Director we had to make sure to get the kids involved! The start of Lion King is when everyone in Prideland comes together to celebrate the birth of Simba. They come from near and far...reminds me of Jesus' birth!

I am so excited to walk alongside you in this journey of the Gospel through the Lion King. This is a favorite in my household! Denali loves the Lion king and watches it often, unfortunately not the Broadway one but that's okay. I had the pleasure of seeing the show when I was in middle school with my family. It was amazing!!

I love this story because it shows redemption, and fulfilling your purpose. Through the whole story we see Simba as he tries to be like his father, struggles with who he is "supposed" to be, and then stepping into the truth of who he was born to be because he was invited home.

Act 1: Fear and Separation

In the first half of this show we see Simba enter the world and what that means for the future of Pride Rock. He is the King to be! He wants to be brave like his father Mufasa. When he gets in trouble for going to the Elephant Graveyard he shows a fear that he might not be able to live up to what his father wants for him. This particular scene ends with them talking about the love Mufasa has for Simba and that no matter in life or death Mufasa will help guide Simba. One of the things Simba says is that he was trying to be brave like Mufasa to which Mufasa says, "being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble." I love this line because it reminds us that the gifts we have are given to us for a purpose and to be used in a specific way.

Next, Simba's Uncle Scar enters the scene and he devises a plan to get himself on the throne. Scar's pride and jealousy leads to plotting the death of his brother Mufasa and he tricked Simba into thinking it was Simba's fault. Can you imagine being in Simba's shoes? Well you know who can? Moses!

Exodus 2:14-15

The man replied, "who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Then Moses was afraid, thinking "Everyone knows what I did." And sure enough, Pharaoh heard what had happened and he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian.

Simba fled for the guilt of what he was convinced he did. Moses fled for something he had done. Simba wandered until he found friends. They learned to take care of themselves and enjoy life. Moses wandered until he found Midian. He ended up at a water well where he rescued the priest's daughters from other shepherds. They went back to their father..

Exodus 2:20-21

"Then where is he?" their father asked. "Why did you leave him there? Invite him to come and eat with us." Moses accepted the invitation, and he settled there with him. In time, the priest gave Moses his daughter Zipporah to be his wife."

Both Simba and Moses got to a place of peace and contentment.

Sing Hakuna Matata

I mean life was pretty good for Simba and Moses at this point in their stories but there was a bigger calling waiting for them both.

Act II: Redemption and Return

At this point in the story the pride land has fallen into a famine. There's no water or food so the lionesses are searching outside the land for water and food. This is when Nala stumbles across Simba, well Pumba and then Simba! Nala was Simba's childhood best friend.

Nala tells Simba that everyone thought he was dead but now he can take his rightful place as king! Simba is reminded that when he is feeling lost his father will guide him and always lives in him. Just like our heavenly father. In order to live into his birthright Simba has to remember who he is. Going back means he will have to face his past! Simba has a moment where he speaks with "His father" or at least the memory of him.

Exodus 3: 7-11

The Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave

drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey-the land where Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt. But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses has been called to rescue his people. Simba is called to rescue his people.

Both know that in returning they are going to have to face their past and all the people who have doubted, and the stories that others believe whether they're true or not.

Now, because it's Mothers Day weekend and this story is heavy on the fatherly relationships, I have to point out that the moment when Simba's mother Sarabi recognizes him, she immediately welcomes her son home. In the scene where Simba returns, Sarabi is having an encounter with Scar and she sees Simba and thinks it's Mufasa but then immediately knows her son. The power of a mother's love. Then without question, she jumps in to support Simba as he overthrows Scar's reign and takes his place on the top of Pride Rock.

When I first started looking at Lion King through the lens of the gospel I immediately went to the story of the Lost Son in the book of Luke also. Listen to this scripture and see the similarities between the Prodigal son and Simba.

Luke 15:11-32

"A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so

hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger!

¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you,¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”

²⁰ “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’^[Q]

²² “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast,²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house,²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

²⁸ “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him,²⁹ but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

We see here a son who runs away and is thought dead by his family. He decides to come home. His return is joyous to his parents, but not to everyone in the family. When Simba returns to Pride Rock, Sarabi and Nala and the other Lionesses come around him and support him. Now, they

don't throw a party, however they overthrow the current king. Simba would not have been able to do that without their support and acknowledging his homecoming.

This week in med moments we will take a deeper look at this story and all of its characters.

I want to jump back to Moses because at the end of The Lion King, Simba takes over, the land becomes fruitful again, and he and Nala have a little cub. When Moses went to Egypt to free his people it took convincing Pharaoh and then they had a journey to actually get to the land flowing with milk and honey.

The prodigal son, Moses, and Simba were all led by the spirit that lives in them to guide them.

Sing He Lives In You

Through Simba, Moses, and the lost son, we see the same truth: no matter how far away you feel, there is always a road home.

Simba ran from his past. Moses ran into the wilderness. The younger son ran from his father. Even the older brother was close to home but far in heart. Yet in every story, grace met them where they were.

God met Moses in the desert. The father ran to his lost son. Simba was reminded who he really was and called back home.

You are not too far gone. God is not waiting to shame you — He is waiting to restore you. No matter where you've been or what you're carrying, the road home is still open, and God is still calling your name.

Lets Pray.