

## What's in Your Hand

Exodus 4:1-17

7/13/08

### Intro

Exodus chapter 4 brings us to when Moses had an amazing encounter with God. He had been raised in Pharaoh's home with education and privilege, and even tried to be Israel's deliverer by his own power. He saw an Egyptian beating a fellow Hebrew and he struck down the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. But Pharaoh quickly found out and Moses had to run for his life, spending 40 years in the desert of Midian.

One day Moses was pasturing a flock for his father-in-law when he sees a bush which is on fire but is not consumed. He turns aside to look, and behold, God called to him from the midst of the bush.

God called Moses to be the deliverer of Israel. "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and tell them that I am indeed concerned about them and what has been done to them in Egypt." Then in verse 18 He said, "They will listen to what you say, though the king of Egypt will not listen except under compulsion."

Moses didn't want to go so he gave God a series of excuses. And this is where there is such application to our lives.

<b>I. Step Out and Do What God is Asking</b>
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- Verse 1, Moses says, "What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say?"
- What's interesting is that God already told Moses that they would listen. But Moses is afraid, and tries to cover with excuses.

A. God has a purpose for all of us

- God wants to do something with each one of us. He gives us a life to do something with it, to have a purpose and a meaning. Many people are afraid that their lives won't amount to anything, but they're also afraid to do anything about it.
- There is no one who is insignificant in the kingdom of God. He has decided to make a difference in other people's lives through us.
- Every one of us knows people who are hurting, who are oppressed, and who need the help of God in their lives.
- Paul wrote that God has given us the privilege of reconciling people God...

**II Corinthians 5:18-19, Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

- Paul also wrote that the real work of ministry is actually to be done by the body of Christ...

**Ephesians 4:11-12, And He gave some as ... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**

**Illus – I remember when I was living in Longview and decided to be a volunteer chaplain at the hospital in the oncology unit. There was a full-time chaplain there, but do you know really made the difference? It**

**was those who had lost someone to cancer and was now ministering to other families.**

- Many people are convinced that because there has been some kind of failure in their lives that they are of no value, of no usefulness.
- Yet God uses us in our failure to give hope to others who need to know that the power of God restores and delivers people from bondage.

**App- Moses could easily have seen himself as a failure. His attempts to be Israel's deliverer failed miserably and now he was just a shepherd of someone else's flocks out in the middle of no-where and was not exactly in his prime.**

B. The great "I Am" will be with you

- Moses had already tried to get out of what God wanted him to do. Earlier in chapter 3 when God told Moses that he was being sent to Pharaoh, he said, "Who am I?"
- God's answer was powerful and rings through all generations to our ears today! "I will be with you!"
- Then Moses came up with another objection when he said, "When they ask me your name, what will I tell them?"
- Tell them, "I AM has sent you!"

**Illus – I read the book recently about a scientific theory of everything, or TOE, for short. In short, it theorizes that everything in the universe is made up of little bits of**

**energy that vibrate like little strings. In other words, everything in the universe is made up of energy, but where did this energy come from? I have an additional theory of everything, his name is I AM!**

- When Isaac was being offered on the altar of sacrifice, God provided a ram and the said, “I am Jehovah Jireh; I am your provider.
- God said to the nation of Israel, “I am Jehovah Rapha; I am your healer.”
- When Moses was leading Israel against the people of Amalek in Exodus 17, He said, “I am Jehovah Nissi; I am your banner, your victory.”
- When Gideon faced a Midianite the army of 32,000 with 300 men, God said, “I am Jehovah Shalom; I am your peace.”
- When David was out on the fields as a lonely shepherd, God said, “I am Jehovah Ra-ah; I am your shepherd.”
- The Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah, “I am Jehovah Tzidkaynu; I am your righteousness.”
- The Lord said to the Prophet Ezekiel, “I am Jehovah Shama; I am always with you.”
- When Israel faced an Assyrian of more than 144,000 God said to the prophet Isaiah, “I am Jehovah Sabaoath; I am captain of the armies of the host of heaven.”
- God said to Gabriel, “Tell Joseph and Mary that I am Jehovah Shua; I am your salvation.”

**App – “I Am” not restricted by your resources, your needs, or by the desperation of your nation. I am everything you need, God would say to each one of us.**

## **II. Throw it Down Before God**

- When Moses raised his objection in verse one, God responded, “What is that in your hand?” then Moses responded, “A staff.”
- “Throw it down on the ground,” God said.

### A. It is God who makes it something

- “What is in your hand?” A symbol of failure.
- “I know this rod very well,” Moses could have said. “I once held the scepter of riches and power, but now I hold this symbol of my mediocrity. I’m just a shepherd out here, noticed by no one. It’s just an old wooden staff, it’s nothing.”
- The problem was that Moses was interpreting the staff in the light of who he was. But what he needed to do was to interpret the staff in the light of who God is.
- If only he could have remembered what God had just told him, that God was the Great I Am.
- “What’s in your hand?” “Throw it down before me and I will give it life,” God was saying.

**Illus – What is that in your hand?**

**A ram's horn**, -- it's nothing. "Throw it down before me, Joshua, and the walls of Jericho will fall to the ground.

**A slingshot** – it's nothing. "Throw it down before me, David, and the course of the nation will be changed when you take down the enemy that defies the God of Israel."

**3 loaves and 2 fish** – it's nothing in light of the need. "Throw it down before me and 5,000 will be fed.

**Two mites** – it's nothing. "Throw it down before me and a widow will give more than all the wealthy men of Israel and the world will be blessed by your generosity."

**A pile of wash** – it's nothing, I'm just stuck here raising this child and it's so hard. "Give it to me and I make something from that life that will make an eternal difference in many lives.

**My business, my life....**

- He is the One who takes what is nothing and makes something. If we would just interpret life in the light of who God is.

**John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."**

**Illus – Joni – Erickson Tada once gave her testimony at a Billy Graham crusade and said, "You see I am in this wheelchair and you may say that I am disabled. But**

**my eyes have seen the glory of God; my ears have heard the wonderful news of His coming. My body awaits the day when I will dance before God in heaven.**

**But I say that you have many disabilities. You have eyes, but cannot see. You have ears, but cannot hear. You have a mind but cannot understand.**

- God is the One who takes nothing and makes something.

**Acts 7:22, “And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”**

B. “Lord, send me”

- The Lord then demonstrated his power over the gods of Egypt.
- The serpent was the symbol of power in Egypt. In fact, the royal crown included a coiled cobra. It was a symbol of Egypt’s ability to strike down their enemies.
- The healing of the leprous hand showed that God can do what the gods of Egypt could not do. They were powerless over leprosy and it was greatly feared over all the Middle East.
- The blood was a symbol of life and death. Moses would of course turn the Nile River into blood. The Egyptians worshipped the river itself as the source of life.
- Moses that gave one more excuse by saying that he was slow of speech. Some believe that Moses

had a speech impediment, but I'm not sure we can say that because Stephen wrote...

- I think it is more likely that he thought he would have to be the one who persuaded them by the power and eloquence of his speech, not realizing that his eloquence had nothing to do with it.
- “Who made man’s mouth?” God responded. “I will be with you mouth and teach you what you are to say.”

**Illus – When we were in Africa we would take many difficult questions and the pastors with me all felt an amazement as God gave us scriptural answers as references came to our minds.**

- Finally, Moses gives one last try to get out of it, “Send anyone you want other than me!”
- Now this is straight-up resistance. Moses simple has run out of excuses and the truth comes out, he doesn’t want to do it.
- Amazingly, though God is upset, he allows Aaron to be his mouthpiece so they can go together. But this is less than God’s best.
- What a contrast to Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6...

**Isaiah 6:7-8, He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”**