

Great Question Series

#2 – “What is in Your Hand?” (Exodus 4:2)

July 1st, 2018

We are in week 2 of our Great Question series in which we’re looking at 5 questions that God asked and then we’ll be looking at 5 questions that Jesus asked.

This week’s focus is on a key question that God asked of Moses when he was trying to recruit him to go to Egypt to rescue His people from slavery. But this question is also a really good question that God is intending for us to consider every day - and we’ll be looking at that in the second half of the sermon.

As you may remember, Moses, because of Pharaoh’s decree, should have been killed at birth. But thanks to God’s intervention, Moses instead was raised in the household of Pharaoh. So, early on he was used to a very comfortable and plush life. But at age 40 he ended up killing an Egyptian and fled the country in order to save his life. And for the next 40 years he was tending sheep out in the desert region. One day while tending the sheep he looks over and a bush is on fire but it’s not being consumed. So, he goes a little closer to check it out and that’s when God instructs him to take his sandals off for the ground he’s standing on is his holy ground. Moses quickly complies and then God informs Moses that He’s heard the prayer and cries of His people in Egypt and He’s going to use Moses to rescue His people out of slavery. And so that’s where I’m going to pick it up this morning as we hear Moses’ response.

Reading **Exodus 3:11-4:17**

I think it’s safe to say that Moses isn’t exactly eager to return to Egypt. While it’s been 40 years since he fled for his life, he doesn’t know if there’s still a bounty out for his head. So, this could mean risking his own life. So, his reluctance is certainly understandable. But God doesn’t usually take “No” for an answer.

Notice Moses’ objections:

1. **Who am I?** (vs. 11-12) **God’s response** – *“I will go with you.”*
2. **Who are you?** (vs. 13-14) **God’s response** – *“I am who I am”*. He’s not one of the Egyptian gods that Moses grew up with. This God is different from all the others. He’s always been here and always will be.
3. **What if they don’t believe me?** (4:1-3) **God’s response** – turned his staff into a snake and his hand leprous.
4. **“I’m not a good speaker”** (4:10-12) **God’s response** – *I will help you to speak*
5. **“Please send someone else”** (4:13-16) **God’s response** – *I’ll send your brother, Aaron with you.*

Did you notice what the last thing God instructed Moses to do? Make sure to bring that staff with you to Egypt. Why? Because it’s like **God’s safety blanket** to Moses. It’s a constant reminder that God is with him as he goes through the process of delivering His people from that land of slavery. The same staff that when he dropped it to the ground and God turned it into a snake, Moses ran from it.

Aaron also brings his staff with him and between the two of them their staffs do amazing things.

- It turns into a snake and then consumes all the other Egyptian magician’s staffs/snakes. (7:12)
- It turns the Nile and surrounding waters into blood (7:17-20)
- It brings frogs into the land (8:5)
- It causes lice to come into the land (8:16)

- It brings thunder and hail throughout the land (9:23)
- It brings in the locust across the land (10:13)
- It divides the Red Sea so the Israelites can safely cross it (14:16)
- It causes Red Sea to close in on the Egyptian army
- It brings forth gushing water out of a stone (17:5)
- It brings victory to the Israelite army (17:9) as long as Moses' arms were held high with his staff the Israelites won, but as soon as his arms with the staff went down they got beat.

When God asked Moses what he had in his hand He wasn't seeking information (as if He couldn't see what was already in Moses' hand). He wanted to make this a defining moment for Moses. A time he could look back on when he was afraid in Egypt, remembering that God used a dead thing to come to life (and in a threatening scary way). But that moment continued to give Moses confidence when he was actually in Egypt being used by God to deliver His people.

The key is not in the staff but in **making anything we have available to be used by God.** God specializes in using common and ordinary things and people for the display of His glory. Because when God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary then the people or things don't get the glory but He gets the glory. And this principle is consistent throughout Scripture.

God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary:

- God used the **blowing of trumpets** to collapse the walls of Jericho
- God used a **slingshot and a stone** to fell mighty Goliath
- God used a **talking donkey** to deliver a message to Balaam
- The **widow of Zarephath** only had a handful of flour and little oil to make one last loaf of bread for her and her son to eat and then die. But God promised to make her flour and oil not run out.
- Jesus used the young boy's **5 barley loaves and 2 small fish** to feed over 5,000 people.
- The widow had just **2 coins** to give to the Lord but Jesus lifted her up as a model of giving.
- The **"sinful" woman had a jar of perfume** and she used it and her hair to anoint Jesus.
- The woman with a serious medical condition had nothing left in her hand, she'd spent it all on medical doctors who couldn't help her. All she had was a desperation hope that maybe Jesus could help her and when she touched the hem of Jesus' robe she was healed.
- The **Samaritan woman at the well** had only a bucket to draw water with but Jesus used that encounter to change her whole life by giving her hope.
- **Dorcas** had a thread and needle but she used it to provide clothing to the poor in town. She later died but God raised her back to life.

In addition to Moses, God is often using seemingly insignificant people to accomplish His will and do extraordinary things. Almost every great leader and model of faith in the Bible had a serious character flaw in their life but God chose them to display His glory through. It's almost as if God specifically picks **"losers"** (by the world's standards) to use because then nobody would believe that they could have accomplished something great on their own – it had to have been God doing this.

Remember, at one time the **apostle Paul was Saul** and an avid persecutor of Christians. In fact he was on his way, with a contingent of Israeli soldiers to arrest and hopefully kill Christians when Jesus appeared to him and asked him why he was persecuting him. And when Saul finally came to meet with the leaders at the Jerusalem church, everybody was afraid of him and that this might be a trap. It was only after Barnabas stepped forward and put his neck on the line and met with Paul and then introduced him to the leaders of the Jerusalem church that they'd meet with him. How absurd by God to pick Paul and yet how consistent of God to choose the most unlikely candidate for the display of His glory.

You see this when God chose **Mary and Joseph** to give birth to his son in the obscure town of **Bethlehem**.

Bill Gates once said: “*Success is a lousy teacher. It makes smart people think they can't lose.*”

God says, I'll use the common and the ordinary person to show my glory. And I'll use common ordinary things for the display of my glory.” God can use whoever you are and whatever you have in your hand for the display of His kindness and love and grace to whoever you come into contact with.

The key is to constantly make ourselves and our possessions available to God for His use

Paul states this principle very well in **2 Corinthians 4:7-12 (NIV)** *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*

Did you catch what Paul's life principle is here? It's to continually die to yourself so that Christ might live in and through you. Every day saying to Jesus – today is a brand new day and I want you to live your life and desires through me – wherever I go and with whoever I'm with.

It could be by buying lunch for someone, or using your hands to mow a neighbor's lawn, or to use your hands to shake and greet someone or to give a much needed hug. It could be making yourself available to a neighbor lady whose husband suddenly passed away.

What do you have in your hand or life that God can use. Have you made it available for Him to use?

I doubt if any of you have ever heard of **Austin Gutwein**. Austin loved playing basketball and at 9 years old he hoped he'd be picked for his school team. But unfortunately that dream didn't happen. But one day he saw a video by World Vision about kids in Zambia, Africa, who were orphaned because their moms and dads had died from AIDS. Austin couldn't stop thinking about what it would be like to have no parents. It made him sad to think about kids how had to do everything for themselves – find food and cook it, clean up after themselves, put themselves to bed, try to keep their younger siblings alive day after day. Austin told his mom and dad that he wanted to somehow make a difference – even though he was only 9 and really didn't have much money. But they contacted World Vision and came up with a plan. They decided that on World AIDS Day of that year, Austin would shoot a free throw in honor of every child whose parents would die that day of this awful disease. People sponsored Austin and he raised more than three thousand dollars. Spurred on by this success, the next year he convinced 1,000 of his friends to join him in shooting hoops and raising money. That was the year that the charitable organization **Hoops of Hope** was born. Later Austin was interviewed about his success and he said: “*I think that there is nothing at all special about me compared to somebody else. Everybody can make a difference. They just have to be willing to try.*” Hoops of Hope in the first 5 years raised over one million dollars. The money has been used to build schools, medical clinics, and orphanages to help kids in Africa. All from having a dream and a basketball in his hands.

It says in Scripture that God has a wonderful plan for everyone of our lives and He's equipped each and every one of us to live out that dream in ministry and service to and for Him.

Christian singer, Josh Wilson recently came out with a new song entitled ***Dream Small***.

It's kind the inspirational story of how his own family tries to live their lives by daily making a difference in the lives of those around them.

DREAM SMALL Lyrics by Josh Wilson

It's a momma singing songs about the Lord
It's a daddy spending family time that the world said he cannot afford
These simple moments change the world
It's a pastor at a tiny little Church
Forty years of loving for the broken and the hurt
These simple moments change the world

*Dream small
Don't bother like you've gotta do it all
Just let Jesus use you where you are
One day at a time
Live well
Loving God and others as yourself
Find little ways where only you can help
With His great love
A tiny rock can make a giant fall
Dream small*

It's visiting the widow down the street
Or dancing on a Friday with your friend with special needs
These simple moments change the world
Of course, there's nothing wrong with bigger dreams
Just don't miss the minutes on your way, your bigger things
'Cause these simple moments change the world

Keep loving, keep serving
Keep listening, keep learning
Keep praying, keep hoping
Keep seeking, keep searching
Out of these small things and watch them grow bigger
The God who does all things makes oceans from rivers

So let me close by asking you: what do you have in your hand or in your mind or heart that God can use to show His love and message of salvation to someone you come in contact with? He wants to use you for His glory and what an incredible privilege that is.

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God’s answer:

2. Who are _____? (vs. 13-14)

God’s answer:

3. “What if they don’t _____? (4:1-3)

God’s answer:

4. “I’m not a good _____ (4:10-12)

God’s answer:

The Key = make anything we have _____ to be used by God.

God specializes in using the _____ and _____ things
and people for the display of His glory.

Bill Gates: “*Success is a lousy teacher. It makes smart people think they
can’t _____.*”

Application:

Who or what has God used to show you His love and glory?

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How has God used what’s *in your hand* to show His glory in touching
others?

Prayerfully ask if there’s anything in your life that you’re unwilling to
let go of and let God use.

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