

limitations. We may choose one of two options. We can allow it to paralyze us. Then our excuses justify us to try nothing. Or we can let our limitations lead us into a greater dependence on God. This is what Moses chose to do. He took seriously God's promise to be with him and began to follow God's call, one step at a time.

What is that in your hand? God wants to use whatever resources are already in our hand to bring hope and healing to a hurting world. God whispers to us, "As I promised to be with Moses, so I promise to be with you. My presence and power will always be available to you. No difficult experience can separate you from me. And whatever you bring in your hands, I will use." We may speak with God about what we bring in our hands. We may find our abilities and offer them to God. We may tell God about the pain we have gone through. Finally, we will find the resources to do the important things that God has for us to do.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your favorite excuse to avoid the challenges of trying to make the world a better place?
2. Name one ability that others value and appreciate in your life.
3. Describe one resource that you bring to others because of your unique life experience.
4. How would you like to have God use you to make a creative difference in our world?

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Questions God Asks Us (1)
What Is That In Your Hand?
Exodus 4:1-5
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

I was told a Christian legend that God sends each one of us into the world with a special message to deliver, with a special song to sing to others, and with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can bring your message, sing your song, or offer your love. Only you can. This legend reminds us that each of us has something that can make this world a much better place.

When we are challenged to make a creative difference, we often put forward excuses why we cannot. Our excuses vary and revolve around the lack of abilities or resources. 'I don't have enough money.' 'I don't have the available time.' 'I don't have the needed skills.' 'I don't have significant influence.' 'I don't have adequate knowledge.' 'I don't have the required energy.' We justify our lack of action and try to escape our personal responsibility in building a better society and ministry.

In many respects we are like Moses. In Exodus 3 God called him to free the Israel people from their oppression. Before Moses said yes, he refused God's calling with a whole list of excuses. They sound like our excuses when God calls us. Here is today's version of his five excuses: 'I am nobody.' 'I don't know enough about God.' 'What happens if I fail?' 'I don't have what it takes.' 'Someone else could do it better.' Can you recognize any excuse from your own experience?

In the midst of all these excuses, God asked Moses, "*What is that in your hand?*" (Ex. 4:2). It was a question to help Moses recognize that he already had all the resources to fulfill God's calling. At that moment Moses was holding a staff. God wanted to use this simple stick to rescue the Hebrews from Egypt. When we make available

to God whatever we hold in our hands, we will always be amazed by what God can do with it.

What is that in your hand right at this moment? God wants to use what's in our hands for God's calling and ministry. You may not be sure of what's in your hand. But every one of us has three things in our hands right now.

All of us have certain abilities in our hands. They happen to be: running a business, using the computer, managing projects, resolving conflicts, coaching sports, offering hospitality, and so on. God is able to use them for the sake of His kingdom. We need to acknowledge what we do well and invest whatever it is in God's work.

There is nothing too small for God to use. As a pastor preaching a sermon and leading worship service is one of my job descriptions. So I have to be in front of you and talk to you every Sunday. Even though I have been doing this for almost thirty years, I am always nervous every Sunday. It requires much energy and creates a lot of tension for me. I am an introvert. So I don't like to talk in front of people. I am a listener rather than a talker. I am more comfortable when I listen to others' stories. My listening skill becomes a helpful element in my ministry, especially when I have a pastoral visit.

What ability do you have in your hand? We don't need to compare it with other people's abilities. God has gifted us for a specific purpose. Each of us already has what God wants us to use to bless others. When we use whatever is in our hand, we will make a difference in our society.

As we learn from many Bible stories, the way God uses us is often related to the ups and downs we have gone through. Moses' life illustrates this truth. Why did God choose him? He seemed an unlikely candidate for the job God wanted done. Moses killed an Egyptian and escaped from Egypt. For forty years he hid in the

desert looking after sheep. Someone else might have been better qualified. However, when we carefully look at Moses' life experience, we realize why God called him.

First of all, there was Moses' childhood experience. When Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the Jewish male babies, Moses' mother hid him where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. The princess found him, and he grew up in Pharaoh's household with all the privileges. He received an excellent education. He got to know an insider's understanding of what was going on in Pharaoh's court. His experience in Pharaoh's court was helpful when he went to Pharaoh and confronted him with God's demands.

Then, there was Moses' experience as a shepherd in the desert for forty years. He must have acquired many survival skills. He used those skills when he led the stubborn and resistant people in the desert.

Third, Moses had the spiritual preparation of solitude in the desert. Shepherding has always been a lonely occupation. Solitude has the power to transform. It provides space for personal reflection, self-examination, and an encounter with God. During his time alone in the desert he developed a keen spiritual sensitivity that would strengthen him in the difficult years ahead.

Can you see how Moses' life experience prepared him for God's use in an amazing way? It is the same for us. From the moment we were born, through all the troubles and tensions of growing up, through the adventures of young adulthood, through all our different jobs, and through all the joys and sorrows, God has been forming us to be a difference-making member of the human family. What we have to do is offer God the life experience we bring in our hands.

All of us have our own limitations. The tasks to which God calls us often seem impossible. What matters is how we deal with our

