

WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HAND?

Exodus 4:1-5

How would you like to teach the youth Sunday school class? The question could have been put more accurately as a blunt statement: “We’re desperate for somebody to teach the youth Sunday school class, and you’re the only person available to do it.” Sandy had never taught Sunday school before, but she had a good relationship with the high schoolers in our small church, so she said yes.

The youth class turned out to include everybody in the church from roughly age twelve to twenty-two. There was no curriculum suitable for such a wide age range, so Sandy turned to what she had: a pretty good knowledge of the Bible, lots of paper, and the church mimeograph machine (she was the church administrative assistant). For two years she cranked out weekly lessons, each lesson based on the discussion of the week before. Those ink-blotched experimental lessons eventually became the basis of our decision to go into full-time writing.

When a need arises, sometimes you have to use what you have on hand. When Moses met God at the burning bush, God told him to use what he had *in* his hand—his ordinary shepherd’s staff. That staff went on to play a significant role in the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.

Group Discussion. When have you felt inadequate?

Personal Reflection. When have you felt inadequate to do something you felt God was calling you to do?

Moses, child of Hebrew slaves in Egypt, was rescued from certain death and raised as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. As an adult he tried

to intervene for his people and had to flee into the Sinai desert, where for the next forty years he worked as a shepherd. God met him in a flaming bush and commissioned him to return to Egypt and lead his people out of slavery and into the land of promise. Scan Exodus 3. Note especially God's summons to Moses in Exodus 3:10. Moses raised several objections, which the Lord answered (Exodus 3:11-15). *Read Exodus 4:1-5.*

1. At this point what was uppermost in Moses' mind (v. 1)?
2. How did the Lord unexpectedly change the focus of Moses' attention (v. 2)?
3. What is the logical connection between Moses' objection and God's question?
4. To Moses at that moment, what was the significance of his staff?
5. God ordered Moses to do a simple act of obedience: "Throw it on the ground" (v. 3). How was the result different from anything Moses might have expected to happen?

6. When God told Moses to pick up the snake by the tail, what probably went through Moses' mind?

7. What was the purpose of the demonstration with the staff (v. 5)?

8. When have you seen the Lord use ordinary objects or circumstances to do something remarkable, perhaps even miraculous?

9. Identify some ordinary everyday "staffs" you have "in your hand." Some possibilities could be: material possessions, financial resources, schedule flexibility, talents and skills, space (home or yard), vehicles, friends or family or church networks, special sensitivities, or latent interests.

10. Which one of your "staffs" would be hardest for you to throw down and release control over?

11. We know now what a significant part Moses' staff played in the exodus and in the wilderness journey, but at this point the Lord did not reveal any of that to Moses. He only promised that the Israelites (not even the Egyptians yet) would believe that the Lord had really appeared to Moses. Moses was still very much in the dark about where all this was going. But he did throw down the staff and pick up the snake by the tail. This week, what will you figuratively throw down and let God take control of?

Identify specific steps you will take in order to do that.



Pray that you will recognize and surrender the resources the Lord has given you and let him use them to carry out his will.

NOW OR LATER

Study other places in Scripture where ordinary objects become the means of God's miraculous working:

- Salt in a new bowl (2 Kings 2:19-22)
- Morning sun on water (2 Kings 3:1-23)
- Jars of oil (2 Kings 4:1-7)
- A sundial (Isaiah 38:1-8)
- Handkerchiefs and aprons (Acts 19:11-12)