



WESTMINSTER
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**Questions on the
Mind of God:
What is in Your Hand?**
Dr. Bruce Lancaster

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Exodus 4:1-5

If there had been a reality TV show looking for Egypt's most wanted, Moses would have been featured on it. He had murdered one of Pharaoh's servants and fled to the desert.

Dog the Bounty Hunter would have ridden his chariot out into the Midian desert and filmed from there, pointing to the empty landscape and shouting, "Moses, we know you're out there, and we will find you."

But Moses had hidden himself well, had gotten married, was a father, had carved out a predictable, probably a very satisfying routine as a shepherd tending the flocks of his father-in-law.

When all of a sudden his life was changed! A voice, out of a burning bush, called him by name, "Moses, Moses, Moses!"

God was ready to free his people from the darkness of slavery in Egypt, and God was calling Moses to lead them to the promised land.

God is always calling you and me to be something, to do something, and yes, it can be quite overwhelming!

Moses must have thought so, look at what he did. He made excuses to get out of it!

There's his theological excuse, a good place to start if it's God calling you: "Down in Egypt they have many gods, and they'll want to know who's sending me, and I don't think I caught your name..."

Then he gives a credibility excuse: “They won’t believe me...they’ll take one look at me and say, ‘Who do you think you are to stand up to Pharaoh?’”

Neither of those excuses worked, so he comes up with the availability excuse: “I’m really needed around here and get away right now, and maybe you could find someone else up north...”

What makes God really mad is when Moses gives the ability excuse: “I just don’t have what it takes to do what you want. I’m not a good speaker...”

Stories like this reinforce my belief that the scriptures are true, not a matter of science or history, but the truth of God working with people like you and me.

Because if this story wasn’t true, why would they tell this kind of story about one of the greatest men in the Bible making excuses.

The fact of the matter is that Moses was uniquely well qualified to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt.

He knew his way around Pharaoh’s palace; he was brought up there; he knew the important people; he knew how things worked on Capitol Hill.

For leading the Hebrews through the desert, he had been living in the desert and was familiar with the challenges of desert life

You might say, though, that Moses wasn’t making excuses. He had a firm grasp of the obvious; these were not excuses,

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but perfectly good reasons that Moses was not a perfect choice!

But what Moses would soon learn from God was that God was not looking for Moses' perfection; God was making a promise to be Moses' partner.

Another way to say it: When God asks you and me to do something for God, "God's will will not take us where God's grace will not sustain us."

We are in a partnership with God. Let me say it again: "God's will will not take us where God's grace will not sustain us."

The ingredient missing in Moses' accepting his call was not opportunity. The opportunity to accept the call was there.

Capacity was not missing. As I said, Moses was uniquely qualified.

What was missing, according to the story, was willingness. Moses was reluctant, unwilling. So, he made his excuses.

That's when God asks the question: "What do you have in your hand?"

Moses looks down, "A rod, a shepherd's staff."

It's a lifestyle answer, he's a shepherd. Of course he has a shepherd's staff.

God calls us by name to do something for God and asks the question: What's in your hand?

I think when we answer this question honestly and faithfully, we answer our question of what does God want me to do with my life.

Whether it's a time when the people are enslaved in Egypt or a time of crisis throughout the world, or in the ordinary time of a daily routine, God asks, 'What do you have in your hand to do what I need you to do?'

It's a lifestyle answer. Let's start with the obvious lifestyle answers: car keys, house keys, smart phone, computer mouse, remote control to the TV, texting-tweeting, throwing up your hands in despair or disgust or just don't know or maybe even a clinched fist!

D.T. Niles, the great missionary, once said, "It is irresponsible...to think that Christians can find time and money and strength for everything that everybody else does, but that they can serve God's kingdom with spare money, in spare time, with spare strength."

Look a little closer at what we hold in our hands, because we all have giving hands, sharing hands, supporting hands, sacrificing hands...those are the hands of the people who claim Jesus Christ as Lord.

Working hands: Working to see that all people have a place to live and can live in peace to enjoy the life God desires for all creation, through education and health and justice; healing hands, helping hands, that's what we have in our hands as disciples of Jesus Christ.

It's a lifestyle answer, and in a few moments...hold that thought as we prepare for the Lord's Supper.



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