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Giving God Room to Work in Your Life

Exodus 3:1-11, 4:1-5

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(Incorporating some thoughts by Kirk Nowery)

At one of our churches Leigh and I wanted to help a friend anonymously. We thought a couple hundred dollars was what it would take. But then realized it would take a couple thousand dollars! I balked, but Leigh said, "If we can trust Him to provide us with the hundreds, then we can have faith to trust Him for the thousands." (I married Miss Right! I just forget her first name is "Almost Always!") We were able to do it, we got more people involved, and the blessing grew. Not only were we blessed to help this friend, but others got in on the act too, and God's blessing multiplied.

If we can trust God for a few hundred people, can we not trust Him to provide a way for us to reach out to thousands of unconnected people in our area? What would we dare to try that we knew would fail apart from God's intervention? How about a church that invests in youth? What if we showed youth in this region how God sees them in a way so they could experience it too? Think that could change lives? It's simply up to us to steward it—to care for it and manage it, with wisdom and care and diligence. Please understand:

- I'm not interested in growing a big church.
- I'm interested in serving a big God.
- I'm interested in Jesus making a big difference in people's lives.
- I'm interested in people experiencing His best for their situations.
- I'm interested in people experiencing healthy relationships and love. Imagine the healing that could take place in people, marriages, relationships, and lives?
- I'm also not interested in playing it so safe anymore.
- I'm interested in God's adventure for our lives and for our church.

After all, who else will we call upon to do it? The government? The school system? Congress? The courts? The police? Neighborhood associations? No. It's up to us, because only the local church has been entrusted with the message of Jesus Christ. The Gospel isn't ABOUT Jesus Christ, the Gospel IS Jesus Christ! If we're to experience God's blessing, we've got to give Him room to work. Not just in our church and community, but in our lives.

I know, you are thinking "Okay, we've been in this campaign 3 weeks. When's he gonna get around to talking about the money part?" Here it is: God has given us some amazing blessings, and as more and more people are coming to faith in Christ here, the blessings are growing. The ministries are growing, and the mission of our church is growing, and the needs are growing. Our church isn't a church with missions, our church is the mission: And our mission was given

by Jesus Himself: "Go into all the world and make disciples." We're to share the message of the Gospel. We're not talking about church growth. We're talking about church health. And healthy organisms grow.

In order to see God, we've got to give God room to work. We've got to attempt something that will fail unless God comes through for us. We are praying that we will become a regional equipping center for Christ-focused life transformation for the unconnected 1000s. In order for us to do this, we are praying to raise \$1.5 million dollars over 3 years. This is in addition to our annual giving. This will enable us to pay down our debt in order to meet the growing needs of our church and community through additional staff, programming, ministry, and building. A week from Tuesday, on May 10th, the leaders of this church will gather for dinner and worship, and a time of commitment. Then, on May 15th, the entire church will turn in a commitment with an amount to be given over the next 3 years. This is for those among us who are captured by Christ and committed to caring for His mission here. If you are new, or only curious or blending in with the crowd, we're not asking you for your money. Just hang in there with us. But, if you want to experience God and try living outside the box, God is faithful and you will experience Him beyond what you've known before. It's a lot. It will take all believers among us to see God's will and work happen here. But the impact God can make through us in our area can make eternal differences in people's lives. Some amazing things are already happening in our lives, as people are praying about giving sacrificially.

You may be thinking "Giving God room to work? I can barely think beyond my kid's schedule today! Or I can hardly think beyond the pain of what I'm going through right now. Or I've never done anything like that before. Or don't look at me! I'm no spiritual giant, let alone financial giant!" I know. I've felt all of those emotions. But if you give God room to work in your life, those emotions won't paralyze you, and by faith you'll see God do amazing stuff right here.

He tends to do that. Listen to this encounter with a washed-up Egyptian prince who gave up the life of royalty...*NIV Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey-- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"*

4:1-5 Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers-- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-- has appeared to you."

What an encounter! Like Moses, we may be too accustomed to the day-in, day-out regularity of life to see God. Moses lived as a prince in Egypt from birth till age 40, then as a shepherd in the desert from age 40-80. He had fled Egypt, running for his life after a misguided attempt to identify with his own people that ended in murder. In the desert Moses must have brooded over that failure every day for those 40 years. He had to have felt hopeless about the Hebrew nation. The fact was, they weren't really a nation so much as an unorganized mob of slaves in Egypt. But then it happened: God is going to intervene and calls Moses to join him and give God room to work in *his* life. Wow!

But as we can see, Moses wasn't exactly thrilled. He was mostly discouraged and instantly overwhelmed with doubts about himself and how the Hebrew people would react to *his* taking a stand for them. Moses felt inadequate for the mission and unfit for the task. You can't blame him: In order for Moses to go where God was going to work, Moses had to make major adjustments in his life, face unknown dangers, and give control over to God. At that point, God asked,

“Moses, what is that in your hand?” Today, no other question could be more relevant to our own lives, because God wants to take whatever we have and turn it into an instrument of His power.

It was his staff, a simple wooden stick. Moses’ staff was the tool of his trade as a shepherd. It represented who he was—an ordinary man with ordinary equipment. When Moses threw down the staff, it became a snake; and when he picked it up it became a wooden staff again. There was nothing in the staff or in Moses’ experience to equip him in any way for the job of leading an entire nation out of bondage. And yet, God *wanted* to use that shepherd’s staff to make a vital point. (Now hear this): God’s will is to use weak things to confound the powerful things. God’s will is to transform an object of little value into an awesome weapon that can break down walls of oppression and opposition.

Moses laid down even the simple thing of his life. He surrendered even the little things to God. He gave it up. When it became a snake, Moses ran for it. (I would have too!) But God called him back and told Moses to pick it up again (by the tail.) By faith, Moses did what God told him, and the snake instantly became the rod in his hand once again. But *this* time, something was different. The staff, which symbolized Moses’ life, had been surrendered for God’s use. It became Moses’ instrument for God.

From that day on, Moses realized that simple wooden stick in his hand was representative of an infinite power, one that would capture the attention of millions of people. And because of what was in *his* hand, Moses knew that *he was in the hand of God*. (Do you have that—confidence of knowing that the Creator of the universe has you in the palm of his hand? Because He does, whatever Pharaohs in your life you may be facing.)

And look how God blesses—not just Moses, but millions of people, then *and* down through the ages: That staff no longer belongs to Moses, because it has been surrendered to the Lord and is endued with His strength. The staff is in Moses’ hand when God brings judgment on Egypt in the 10 plagues. It is lifted high as God splits the waters of the Red Sea. It is the rod which strikes the rock at Horeb, bringing streams of water from a boulder.

The first question I want to ask you about Giving God Room to Work in Your Life is what God asked Moses: *“What is that in your hand?”* If you’re like me, you have a paralyzing tendency to think that only those people who have incredible skills and brilliant minds are the truly useful ones in God’s service. But God is asking you today: What is that in YOUR hand? (And think of what your life could be in HIS hand?)

It’s wrong to think that you could serve God more if only you were more articulate, more intelligent, more wealthy, or more gifted than someone else. That fact *is* that God loves you and wants you *just as you are*. He sees in you not only what you are, but what you can be *in His hand*.

Jesus himself called 12 rag-tag guys to be his disciples: smelly fishermen, a crazy zealot, a hated tax-collector, and a few more to round out his motley crew. But that bunch of weak losers turned the world upside-down (Acts 17:6)! Do you see? No person is more useful in God’s service than any other person who has placed their life: time, talents, and treasure in God’s hand. What *we* may view as limitations or disabilities count for nothing in God’s economy. God is asking you this highly personal question “What is in YOUR hand?”

In the same way that God called upon *Moses* to give everything he had, God calls *you and me* to do the same. He wants us to willingly offer ourselves in His service and for His purpose. The fact is that **WHAT** any one of us actually has to offer to God is inconsequential. Through God’s miracle, our very lives become His. We simply steward them for Him.

And if God can use a stick for His good will and purposes, I dare to think God might even use a fools like me and you! Don’t you know there are people in our area whose only dream is winning the Lotto? We’ve *got* to Give God Room to Work! People around us are in bondage every bit as much as the Hebrews in Egypt You have a role to play in God’s eternal plan, and God’s doing it right here through this church.

Now, like Moses, *we have to sacrifice*. In order for us to go where God is taking us, we too will have to make major adjustments in our life, face unknown dangers, and give control over to God. But that’s what it will take for us to fulfill our role in God’s story. Giving God room to work is imperative. God is calling us to take *our* ordinary stuff and lay it at His feet. In His hands any sacrifice we make will be magnified by His power and love, as we give God room to work in our lives.