

Biblical Prosperity: 'What's in Your Hand?'

(Editor's Note: This is Part 1 of a three-part series, "Steps for Biblical Prosperity and Success in '24." Watch Charisma Magazine Online for Parts 2 and 3, coming soon.)

The root Hebrew word translated in the Old Testament as "prosperity" can also have several alternate translations to suggest "safety, wellness, happiness, healthiness and peace." If we are faithful followers of Jesus, on our pathway of discipleship, we can expect to succeed and prosper in all the dimensions the word means. God's blessings flow from on high to our points and levels of need.

All emotional, physical, spiritual and material blessing that we may receive by God's gracious hand are to be stewarded and shared so that believers may also bless others as the hands of God. All promises and provisions of God require responsible actions on the part of those who would receive them and serve Him.

He desires such servants to be holy, happy and healthy. In this new year, God wants us to learn how to be even more generous in our stewardship of His blessings. Failure to do so robs or cheats God of the opportunity to bless us (Mal. 3:8-10).

Lessons From a 'Nobody'

Henrietta Mears, a prominent Christian educator of a few generations past, suggested Moses spent his first 40 years thinking he was *somebody* and the next 40 years realizing that without God he was *nobody*. Finally, he spent his last 40 years learning what God could do with a *nobody*.

The second segment of Moses' life is historically shared in both the Old and New Covenants. In the Old it begins in the book of Exodus at Chapter 2, verse 11, and then it is recounted in the New by the first Christian martyr Stephen in his sermon in Acts 7. Both accounts relate how Moses had to flee from the Pharaoh of Egypt and went to live in Median (Ex. 3), in the far or back side of the desert, near Horeb, "the mountain of God." This was a stark contrast to Moses' former status in the royal court of Egypt. Suddenly, the "somebody" was a "nobody."

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After nearly four decades of ignoble service as a shepherd for his father-in-law, he unexpectedly encountered the angel of the Lord, who spoke to him out of a burning bush, which did not burn up (Ex. 3:1-6). God also called to Moses from this burning bush and commissioned him to go to Pharaoh and "bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (v. 10b, NIV).

What Is in Your Hand?

After trying to dissuade God, Moses questioned what to do if the Israelites did not believe him or listen to him. The Lord asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?" Moses replied, simply, "A staff" (Ex. 4:2b). This was probably his shepherd's walking stick or rod, perhaps chosen with a crook at one end to help rescue sheep that may have fallen away from the path. God bluntly told Moses to "Throw it on the ground" (Ex. 4:3b).

This shepherd's staff would have been an important possession to Moses. He would have used it in his work to direct and herd the sheep. He would have also used it to protect himself and his sheep from any wild animal or a human enemy. When he was tired, he could have leaned on it for support or security. He would have naturally hesitated to give it up, but God said,

“Throw it down.”

When Moses obeyed, the staff became a serpent. He started running from it. Can you identify with this reaction and human reasoning? But God told Moses to now pick up the snake by the tail. I would have wanted to try to grab it behind the head so it wouldn't bite me. But when Moses obeyed God, “it turned back into a staff in his hand” (4:4c).

Later, in verse 17, something else very strange happened. God offered the staff back to Moses: “But take this staff in your hand so you can perform [miraculous] signs with it.” This was the same staff Moses had claimed as his own, which miraculously became a snake and then back into a staff, through Moses' steps of obedience to God.

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The Staff of God

It is almost as if God were standing before Moses, and offering the staff back to him. The *staff of Moses* had been changed into the *staff of God*, and now He offered it back to Moses as a divine symbol for the miraculous events that were about to unfold.

Verse 20 says, “So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt, And he took the *staff of God* in his hand” (emphasis added). Moses had kept the staff by his side as he talked to smelly sheep in the desert. Now he would have it with him as he boldly stood in Pharaoh's palace, and signs and wonders unfolded with each passing plague.

Throw It Down

Moses' staff was limited, but as the *staff of God*, it was unlimited and powerful. This blessed staff of God would turn the Nile River into blood and pile up the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to go through it on dry ground. It

would bring water from the rock when Moses struck it with this same staff of God. All of this happened because Moses first obeyed and threw down his own staff.

Moses entrusted himself to God. He released his control and dependence on his own skills, abilities and concerns and—instead—believed God for his every needed provision and protection.

How about you and me as we begin this new year? What if God asked us, “What’s in your hand?” God wants to know what we have in our means and control and whether we are willing to throw it down. Are we willing to release it and use all we are and possess for His kingdom? Will we say, perhaps again (as contemporary worship leader Jeremy Riddle does), “Jesus, Have it All!”

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