

# Gods Calling

by Joe Focht

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*God's calling is a high and holy calling that involves giving ourselves to Christ and His purposes, and it requires surrender and trust in His power to transform our lives.*

**Duration:** 33:19

**Scripture:** Exodus 4:1

**Topics:** "Gods Calling", "Surrendering To God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Moses and his encounter with God. Moses expresses doubt and fear, believing that the people will not believe him or listen to his voice. God responds by asking Moses what is in his hand, and instructs him to throw it on the ground. The object, which is a rod, transforms into a serpent. The speaker then relates this story to our own lives, urging us to surrender what is in our hands to God and allow Him to give it life. The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving our lives to God's purposes and the desperate times we live in.

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## Transcript

We are looking at the first three verses, but then we will back up and look at it together of chapter four, and Moses answered and said, he's talking to God, but behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee. The Lord said unto him, what is that in your hand? He said, a rod. He said, cast it on the ground, and he cast it on the ground, it became a servant.

Moses fled from before it. The Lord said unto Moses, put forth thine hand and take it by the tail, and he put forth his hand and he caught it, and it became a rod in his hand. A picture of Moses as God is slowly working him along, convincing him of the calling that he has on his life.

I believe that's a slow process in all of our lives, by the way. God has a calling on all of our lives. It tells us in 2 Corinthians 3.6 that he has enabled us to become ministers of the New Testament, all of us, speaking to the church, to all of us.

I'm not the minister, the servant, you are all servants, you're all ministers. Again, it tells us in 2 Timothy 1.9 that God has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his grace and his purpose, which was in Christ Jesus before the world was formed. That God has called us according to his grace.

Romans chapter 12, I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God to present yourselves a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service. And all of us are called to give ourselves to Christ. That is the payment, that is the taking up of our cross, that he has given his life for us so we are to give our lives in return to him, to his purposes.

And that is a high and holy calling, it is on each of our lives. And it is very much against the same kind of backdrop that Moses found himself against. And we looked at that some last week.

It was a backdrop of desperation of the people of God, of a nation that was corrupt, Egypt, of the difficulties that they faced. And we certainly are much in the same situation. We are in desperate times.

We live in an era of violence. There have been more people gunned down in our cities this century by handguns than casualties in the wars that we fought. More dangerous to walk the street here in this nation.

Again we mentioned a few weeks ago that there are more adult bookstores right now than three times more than McDonald's restaurants in the United States. Statistically the most dangerous time for a human in the United States is between conception and birth. Statistically 34 million in the last 20 years.

Statistically the most dangerous time for an American is the nine months of his mother's womb. If you made it that far you stand a better chance of getting along in life at least for some years. That's the backdrop that Moses faced as the children of Israel were putting their sons in the Nile River.

Desperate times. And yet God had a calling on his life. And God brings him to this place where he is speaking to him saying Moses I'm going to send you to the children of Israel and to Pharaoh.

Chapter 3 verse 18 and God says they will surely hearken unto you when I send you. But here where Moses now speaks Moses says to God but you've never said that to God have you? But behold they will not believe me or hearken to me. God just said now you would think that if God appeared to you in your bedroom or he appeared to you in a burning bush in his glory and the angel of the Lord's presence Jesus Christ standing in the midst of the flames and said to you I'm sending you and you're going to go and when you go they're going to listen to you and they're going to hear what you have to say.

You know you wouldn't think that you would say but and behold he's saying behold to God which means did you ever think of this? He's saying to God but consider this they will listen to me and they're not going to believe me. Now has he had a bad experience in the past with burning bushes and appearances of God? I mean God says to him Moses what is that in your hand? He says Zerod it is a reminder daily of my failure. It is a constant reminder of my life being lived out in mediocrity.

It is a constant reminder that I tried in my own strength to accomplish the purposes of God and I am left here to live out my life without anybody ever knowing who I am or having any impact on the things of God. I thought I would deliver Israel from Egypt as the commander in chief of the Egyptian army, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and lying to be Pharaoh with the political clout and power and education God had given me. Certainly I thought this is a great plan.

God has put me in a specific place at a specific time to deliver the children of Israel. I set out in my own flesh and my own abilities. I failed miserably and here I am in the back side of the desert with a flock of sheep and this rod in my hands.

And I know it well. I have carried it for 40 years. I know every knot in this rod.

I know where the grain curls. The top of it has become shiny from my hand rubbing against it and from the lanolin from the sheep. I know exactly where I like to grab it.

I can feel it without looking at it. I like the knot going before my first finger and my thumb. I know it completely.

I know it as well as I know myself. I don't even look at it. Yes, Moses knew it completely but he didn't know it at all.

I think as God challenges us and says what is in your hand, we look at our lives and there are so many things that we are surrounded with in the humdrum of life and we think that we know or we understand or we're familiar and we may be completely missing what it is that God is saying to us. Now, by the way, as God asked him this question, what is in your hand, it is defined by two questions he had asked earlier that are important. Chapter 3 verse 11, when God said to Moses, I'm going to send you and you're going to go, Moses asked the first question, who am I that I should go? Very important question.

God said, never mind who you are. I'm going to go with you. I'll certainly be with you and you'll go.

You speak to Pharaoh and you bring the children of Israel back here to the back side of the desert to Horeb as a sign unto you, Moses, that I've spoken to you. Moses said to God, now there's a second question. Well, when I go and they say to me, who sent you? What's God's name? What should I say? So then he says to God, who are you? I don't know who I am.

I don't know who you are. What's your name? God says, and you know, sometimes as I look at this, I think, you know, here's the deliverer, one of the greatest men in the Old Testament. Doesn't know who he is.

Doesn't know who God is. No wonder God says, what's in your hand? Let's start with basics. A rod.

Good. We're making progress now. You know something.

Moses said, who should I say sent me? And he says to Moses, I am that I am. And thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I am has sent me. And again, last Sunday night we looked at this.

There isn't really a better way to say what the language says. Many of you with more modern translations have different things written there. Many commentators have tried to say and paraphrase what this means.

But altogether, there is no better way to say what God said to Moses than to read what he said in the way we have it translated, I am that I am. Lord, who should I say sent me? Who are you? I am that I am. I am completely separate from any definition that you could place upon me.

I am the Holy One. Again, I exist and everything else that exists is not me. I am God.

Everything else is not. I am the creator. Everything else is the creation.

Satan, fallen angels, heavenly angels, spiritual realms, the universe, man, the animal kingdom, all of that is distinctly separate from me because I am creator and it is creation. I am God and it is not. What is your

name? I am that I am.

And some define this in the sense of I am the becoming one, that there's an inference there. And I think that there is. But I think that is related to the first question, who am I? Moses asked that, who am I? Well, God defines himself to us in light of need, in light of the first question.

God says I am that I am. I am whatever I need to be in relationship to what you are and what you need. That's how God defines himself to us.

It is in light of our need. You know, Moses said, who am I? And when we interpret our rod or whatever's in our hand, whether it's a wife or a husband or children or our job or employees or an employer or parents or a hammer or a chisel or a paintbrush or an instrument, what's in your hand? And if you try to define what that is by who you are, who am I, Lord, it really doesn't amount to a whole lot. Even if it's commander in chief of the Egyptian army, even if it's a Ph.D., whatever it is, if interpreted in light of who we are, because we are part of what we live in, and that is a desperate nation.

And without Christ, we can do nothing. We are depraved, except for his grace. We are grace in the new creation of Christ in our hearts by the power of his spirit.

If we interpret the rod in our hand by who we are, it doesn't really amount to anything. It is as we interpret it in light of the next question, but who are you? And God defines himself to us and to what we hold in our hand in light of the need. He would reveal himself to Abraham as he went to sacrifice Isaac upon the mountain.

And it was the most desperate need at that moment in the life of Abraham as he would offer his son. And God stopped that and said, no, my name is Jehovah Jireh. I am or I am become your provider.

He would say to the children of Israel, Exodus 15, in the wilderness, none of the diseases that I put upon the Egyptians shall come upon you, because I am for you, Jehovah Rapha. I am become your healer. He would say to Moses in battle with Amalek, against all odds, I am Jehovah Nissi, Exodus 17, I am your banner, I am your victory.

He would say to Gideon, as Gideon realized the Lord had appeared to him and thought that he would die, he said, you name this place, Jehovah Shalom. I have become your peace. He would say to David, Jehovah Ra, the Lord has become my shepherd.

I shall not want he maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He would say to Jeremiah in the midst of a nation turned away from God, my name shall be Jehovah Sidkenu. I am become your righteousness.

He would say to Ezekiel in chapter 48, as he saw the temple established in God's presence, my name is Jehovah Shammah, the Lord. I am become ever present. And ultimately, he would say to Gabriel, tell Mary and Joseph, my name is Jehovah Shua, I have become your salvation, Joshua Jesus.

Moses said, who are you? He said, I am that I am. I am whatever I need to be. There is no human definition that you can place upon me because it would restrict me.

I am not restricted by your needs. I am not restricted by the desperation of your nation. I am not restricted by the darkness of the backdrop that you live against.

I am not restricted by the need for revival in the church. I am not restricted by your resources and what you can do and what you can accomplish. I'm not restricted by defining what's in your hand by who you are.

What's in your hand, Moses Arad? And I know it well. Do you, Moses? You don't know it at all because you haven't defined it in light of who I am. You've defined it in light of who you are.

What's in your hand? Is it a ram's horn? I'm a priest of the tribe of Levi. I've carried this shofar my entire life. I know it well.

It makes a sound. Do you know it well? When you interpret it in light of me, do you know that the walls of Jericho will fall to the ground when you blow that thing at my command? What's in your hand? The jawbone of an ass. Do you know that it'll slaughter a thousand Philistines, change the course of a nation? What's in your hand? A pitcher, a clay jar.

Gideon, do you know there's 135,000 Midianites against 300 of you? You have a trumpet and a clay pitcher. Gideon, throw it down in front of me. I'll give it life.

What's in your hand? Nothing. Slingshot. Know it well.

Use it to draw the drive off jackals, wolves from the sheep. Grown up with it. Pretty good shot.

Let's interpret it in light of the fact that the enemies of God are defying the God of Israel. David, take that thing. It's a giant killer.

It's not a shepherd's tool. It will change the course of our nation. What's in your hand? Three loaves, two fish.

Means nothing. In light of the need. Really? That's because you've interpreted in light of who you are.

Jesus would say, give it to me. The multitudes may be fed. What's in your hand? Nothing.

I'm a mom. Continual pile of wash. Kids in the terrible twos, terrible fours, terrible tens, terrible fifteens.

My heart is angry half the time. It's insincere. Really? Give it to me.

Put it in my hands. What's in your hand? Two mites. That's all I have.

Isn't worth anything. I'll throw it in the treasury while no one's watching. Only God would say this poor widow has cast in more than they all.

And how she would change the lives of thousands who would read the scripture. Interpreted in light of God, he was a much greater sustainer than those two mites would ever have been. What's in your hand, Moses? It's no mistake.

It's taken me 80 years to put it there. You are a stubborn man. You are a stubborn man.

It's a rod, Lord. God says, Moses, throw it down in front of me and I'll give it life. Let go of it.

What is it? It's a reminder of my failure, my struggle. Good friends of, not good friends, friends. Live in Europe.

Right after they were married here in the United States, they're missionaries. They were in Connecticut. Car broke down just as they crossed a bridge.

Back road, no lights, dark. They get out of the car. They didn't realize they were kind of backed up right against the wall.

It was a 40-foot drop. Didn't realize it was there because it was dark. And as another car came by, they went to step backwards.

She fell off the wall, new bride. Broke her back, broke her neck. Now, there happened to be, happened to be, in the town, a doctor who had been at D-Day and had treated several hundred broken backs from the invasion.

Men jumping in the water in the waves with backpacks that weighed 50 pounds. He strapped her on a board where she was at the bottom of the wall, strapped her head down, strapped her chest down, strapped her legs down, strapped her onto a board, carried the board to the hospital bed and did not take her off the board for three months. And she went from there to a wheelchair to walking.

In the process, met Johnny Erickson and sat and talked with her. Johnny said, you know, I'm blessed that God is working in your life and it looks like you're going to be up and around again. But he's given me this wheelchair.

It's my pulpit. I've spoken to millions of people because of this thing. I remember seeing Johnny Erickson at the Rochester Crusade, quadriplegic, sitting in a wheelchair, looking at the crowd, her face glowing, and saying, you know, you're handicapped.

You have disabilities. As the Bible says, there are many who have eyes but they don't see and they have ears but they don't hear. And they don't understand what God has done for them.

She said, you look at me in this wheelchair and you think I'm handicapped. She said, I'm not. Because my eyes have beheld the glory of God and the gospel of Christ.

My ears have heard the good news. My body awaits a day when I'll be leaping and jumping for joy in his presence. But you, she said, many of you, disabled, eyes but they don't see, ears but they don't hear.

And I sat there weeping and thought, boy, Billy Graham's going to be an anti-climax after this. What's in your hand, wheelchair? What's in your hand, Moses? A rod. Throw it down, Moses.

Give it to me. I'll give it life. It's just a rod, is it, Moses? It'll turn the Nile River to blood.

It will turn the earth to lice so that the magicians of Egypt are confounded and say this is the finger of God. Moses, is it just a rod that you know so well it will part the Red Sea? Moses, you'll strike a rock and it'll bring forth water for a nation. Moses, is it just a rod? Is it the hand of God? Are you belittling it? Do you despise the day of small things? What's in your hand? Just a dead stick, is it? Moses, it will bud forth and bring forth branches and flowers and almonds.

Moses throws it down. You know the story. Turns into a snake and the deliverer flees in his bare feet running across the desert.

God's got to yell, yo, get back here. He hadn't taken his sandals off, he just takes off. Take it by the tail.

And he took it by the tail and it turned into a staff again. He thought he knew that well. Was there a snake trapped in that thing all those years? And God's saying to some of you, what's in your hand? Put your life down in front of me and I'll give life to it.

Moses at this point has no idea, even though it's turned into a serpent and turned back again in a staff, he has no idea what will still be accomplished as his life is in the hand of God. What's in your hand? Husband? Are you willing to put your life down in front of Christ and be a Christian wife? Christian husband? Christian parent? Your business belong to him? Your life? The hammer that you hold? Your instrument? Is it something that you're so familiar with and you think you know so well that if you're not careful you might live your life out in mediocrity in some senses? You know, Moses could have said, you know, no thanks. I mean, I'm happy here.

A couple sheep. Zephora's, she's okay. Think what he'd have missed.

The power of God. The Passover night. The parting of the Red Sea.

Eighty days on the mountain of God so that he comes down with his face shining from God's glory. The presence of God passing in front of him. God putting his hand over Moses.

See his hind parts standing on the transfiguration with Elijah and Jesus. Is it just a rod? Is God beckoning you to give your life into his hand? Are you saying, but did you ever think of this? We're like that. Or are you running from it as God says, give it to me, throw it down in front of me, I'll give it life? I look at the passage and I think, Lord, you have written this in here for us, no doubt.

And it's because the things that are in our hands, sometimes we look at them and we think they're there because of failure. They're there because of a mistake. No, it's taken 80 years of God's design to put that thing in his hand.

But God's waiting for Moses to throw it down in front of him. You know, God essentially has one message and that is, to a lost world, you are mine. And how can he send someone who is not his to spread the message that men and women can be his? Moses comes to the point of a surrendered life and God won't use someone with an unsundered life to go to an unsundered world.

God will not use an unsundered man or woman to reach an unsundered generation. Because he desires to make our life part of our message. Moses, what's that in your hand? You know, I think, boy, what are in our hands? Are you a grandparent? You know, it's interesting.

I look at a generation and I think some of the grandparents around today came from a different generation. And though the generation after them has failed in so many ways, I thank God for grandparents because there are a lot of kids who are not getting from their parents, because of failure of my generation, but are getting from their grandparents the news of Jesus Christ and who knows who they will be. What's in your hand? Children? Husband? Talents? Job? Do you know your circumstance so well that you think, yeah, this is the humdrum of life.

Nice and church today. Tomorrow back to work. The whistle blows.

I become a robot again. Put on the hard hat. Or are you perceptive enough? You know, if you've turned aside from the pace of all that to seek his face, are you willing to listen? And if he says to you, you know, take all of this and throw it down in front of me.

Let me give life to it. Surrender it. It's not by mistake, Moses.

It's taken me 10 years or 20 years or 80 years to get you in life to the circumstance you're in. And there is a spiritual, sovereign tapestry that is woven to bring you to where you are today in your circumstance. Do you despise the person you're married to or the children you have or the boss that you work for or your health or your condition? Do you look around you and think this is mediocrity? This is a constant reminder of my failure and of my mistake and it could have been the scepter of Egypt and it's this rotten shepherd staff in my hand? Do you know it at all? Have you only interpreted life in light of who you are? And you know we're so self-centered, that's how we interpret most things, in light of who we are.

And if he says to you, throw it down in front of me, your life is not by mistake, surrender it, so that I can reach an unsundered world and set people free from an unsundered world. Are you saying, but? Did you ever think of this, God? Look over in verse 20. Very interesting.

Moses finally on his way. He's on his way to the desert. Moses took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass and he returned to the land of Egypt and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

You know, what was it like for him to write this? He wrote the Pentateuch. What was it like for Moses remembering back to that day when he finally got his marching honors and he finally went and he looked at that thing that he had carried for 40 years and thought, what did he think? Did he think boy, I hope this works in front of Pharaoh. What if I say watch this and I throw it down and it goes clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk and Pharaoh looks at me like, Moses, in hindsight is writing and he left and he took the rod of God in his hand.

It had always been there. He hadn't seen it. He hadn't interpreted it in light of God, he interpreted it in light of himself.

I say that we live in a desperate generation. A generation that seems hopeless. And I say that most of us look at our lives and we think it really doesn't matter, it's really not ever going to come to be anything, it's just a shepherd's staff.

Lord, my life is a good life and my life, Lord, I try to do the best I can and I am involved in this or that, but Lord, I'm going to live this life. I'm never going to be, Lord, a Billy Graham or a Chuck Smith or I'm never going to be a Mother Teresa or an Esther. Who knows if God has saved you for such a time as this? And you know, if you can walk away and say to me, well, I don't think what you're saying is true because my life is completely surrendered and I'm not seeing what you say, well, let me tell you something, my life is not completely surrendered so I'm not going to believe you, thank you.

Because if you come up to me and say your life is completely surrendered, there's an area of pride that isn't. God is beckoning us. This isn't the only story in the Bible, it's one of many and it's a record of how God deals in the lives of men and women and here with Moses, calling him, Moses, you don't know who you are, you don't know who I am, what's in your hand? Let's start there.

Moses, is it your shepherd's staff? Let it be mine, it will become the rod of God. Moses made a decision. I encourage you today to make a decision too.

Now, again, if you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, are you willing to throw your life down in front of God? Take up your cross. If you do, he'll give life to it. The Bible says if you seek to save your life, you'll lose it.

You hear people saying that, don't you? I feel like I'm losing it. They are. They're losing it because they're trying to hold on to it.

No matter what I do, I can't get ahead and the cat throws up on the floor. I feel like I'm losing it. You are losing it.

Let go of it. If you let go of it, how can you lose it? You already let go of it. Jesus said, if you let go of it, you'll find it.

If you lose your life, for my sake and for the gospel, you'll find it. Some of you here, maybe you've been coming and you've been putting it off and you know in your heart you need to be saved and you've been wrestling with God and you've been saying what Moses is saying here, but, but God, did you ever think of this? And God is saying to you that he wants your life. You're saying, but God, I had an abortion.

How could you ever love me? I use drugs, Lord. I rip people off. I don't even like church.

God is saying, just put it down in front of me. I'll give it life.

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