

# ***“Who Are You, What’s In Your Hand, Where Are You Going, And Who’s Going With You?”***

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## **Who Are You?**

- Are you a leader of others in ministry?
- Are you a faithful part of a children’s ministry (CM) team?
- Have you devoted many years to get to where you are today in ministry?
- Have you had some amazing successes in ministry?
- Have you had some humbling “defeats” in ministry?
- Have you experienced, or are you experiencing, overwhelming challenges?
- Have you ever found yourself wondering if you should continue in ministry?



We often answer the question of “Who are we?” by describing what we do. “I am a teacher, mother, father, student, engineer, etc.” This is okay and very normal, but what happens when your job or occupation ends? What happens to your “identity” when you can no longer do what you used to do?

The answer to the question of “Who are you?” should include something about your relationship with God. If your “identity” is only about what you do, you may face significant confusion or depression when that thing you do is no longer a part of your life. Those whose identity is securely connected to their personal relationship with God will be more able to handle the shocking challenges that life throws at them.

## **Your Current Ministry Role**

Whether you are in leadership, or “simply” a life-changing influencer of children, you are where you are because God placed you there. If you’ve given Him control of your life, He took it! He wouldn’t place you in a position of influencing others if He knew you would mess it up!

- God is omniscient
- God is omnipotent
- God isn’t stupid!

He gave you the gifts and abilities you need to serve Him in your current ministry position. He has permitted you to have experiences that have shaped you into who He wants you to be right now. He has called you to be where you are, and to use what He has given you to lead others closer to Him! From His perspective, your place in ministry is “Good”!

- You are a child of the Most High!
- You are redeemed by Him!
- You are called by His amazing grace and mercy!
- You are empowered with His Holy Spirit to serve Him right where you are!



Does this mean that your ministry will always be easy? NO! Does this mean that you will never “wonder” about your calling? NO! Does this mean that you will never feel “drained” or exhausted by your ministry? NO!

## What's In Your Hand?

You are a human. You are not wholly supernatural...yet. God is still developing you! The Christian life is a journey. Maybe we will never be truly “transformed” until we enter Heaven! But, isn't it interesting and deeply scary that God has placed you in ministry while He is still “working on you”? You probably have many fears!

- *“What if I say something stupid?”*
- *“What if I do something that causes others to doubt God?”*

You may have doubts about your role in ministry. The longer you serve in ministry, the “clearer” you may see your own faults. Maybe you wonder:

- Did God really call you to do this?
- Should you really be influencing or leading others?
- What if God is watching you, and saying, “What are you doing? I never told you to do that!”?

You have needs! Just because you are serving in ministry doesn't mean that you no longer have any needs! You want people to like you. You want to serve God, but it would be nice to serve Him in some place that isn't so stressful. Maybe, deep down inside, you would rather do something that isn't so hard or challenging. Maybe you feel like Moses when God called him to free the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Moses was:

- Surprised (Exodus 3, 4)
- Worshipful, yet doubting (3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13)



Moses had to be “convinced” that God was really calling him. Because Moses was focusing on his own confidence or weaknesses, he challenged God three times:

- *“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”* (Ex. 3:11)
- *“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ What should I tell them?”* (Ex. 3:13)
- *“What if they do not believe me or listen to my voice? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’ ”* (Ex. 4:1)

After this, God became a bit frustrated with Moses and He asked him, “What's in your hand?” (Ex. 4:2) God knew what was in Moses' hand! God had to deal with Moses' fears, and He chose to make an object lesson with Moses' staff. A shepherd's staff was the shepherd's identity! It was the “tool of his trade.” When people would see the staff, they knew that he was a shepherd. When a shepherd had his staff in his hand, he felt “complete” and confident.

God told Moses to throw his staff down. This wasn't a comfortable thing for Moses to do! A shepherd wouldn't release control of his staff willingly! God was asking Moses to release control and submit to God. When Moses threw his staff down, God did amazing things!



## What's In Your Hand?

Every one of us has something “in our hand.” As children of God, we have God’s gifts and calling in our hands, but there is so much more that might be in your hand:

- Your spiritual gift(s)
- Your interests
- Your talents
- Your experiences
- Your possessions
- Your money
- Your time
- Your smile
- Your eyes
- Your voice
- Your supportive touch
- Your care for children
- Your interest in their lives
- Your memory of their prayer requests
- Your love of those who serve under you
- Your position in the church or CM ministry team
- Your knowledge of God’s Word and how life works under God
- Your wisdom
- Your submission to the power and moving of the Holy Spirit
- Your creativity (God’s creativity)
- Your curriculum



## Throw it down!

Release all that is in your hand to God’s use, let it go! Tell Him that all you have is His, for whatever use He has for it.

Moses was called to do an impossible task! He angered God by doubting and being afraid! (Ex. 4: 14-17) Because of Moses’ hesitancy and doubt, God let Moses work with his brother, Aaron. Aaron did assist Moses, but Aaron became a “thorn in the flesh” for Moses. Maybe you feel like Moses: the work that God has set before you is “impossible.”

- Unrealistic administrators
- Unrealistic hours or expectations
- Lack of support or encouragement
- Not enough volunteers to do the job



Moses encountered high levels of resistance and frustration. He was constantly frustrated, and yet he “pushed through” by remembering what God had said. He stood strong and remained faithful despite repeated discouragements. Moses eventually saw God move, work, and accomplish all that He said He would do! Paul was also a great example of how to “press on” or “push through”!

*“...I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God’s heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:13, 14*

## Where Are You Going?

God told Moses to lead the people of Israel to the “Promised Land.”

*“The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the affliction of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, and I am aware of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...’” Exodus 4: 7, 8*

After many long weeks or months, the people of Israel were finally freed from the Egyptian captivity. God parted the Red Sea to rescue them from the Egyptian army who had come to either kill them or recapture them.

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the people of Israel were finally permitted to enter the “Promised Land.” Moses had died and his successor, Joshua, led the people through the Jordan river to enter the “Promised Land.” In Joshua 4, God instructs Joshua to build an altar on the “Promised Land” side of the Jordan with 12 large stones from the middle of the river. This was at a place called “Gilgal.”



At Gilgal, the people were told to remember all that God had done to free them, protect them, and to provide for them. They were told to return to Gilgal and remember Who God is many times as they took over the “Promised Land.”

As you “go” to where God has called you, you need to “return to Gilgal” and remember Who He is and what He’s done for you on a regular basis. Your “Gilgal” can be the memory of a time that you knew for sure that God had “moved” in your life. This can be a miracle, and answered prayer, a healing, or the time that you gave your life to Him. Mentally “return” to that place in your mind and remember:

- Who God is.
- What He’s done.
- What God has called you to accomplish in the children.

Do you have a special child who reminds you of the value of the work? We all know that we should treat every child equally, but there’s nothing wrong with having special ones. Jesus had 3 special disciples, Peter, James and John. He let them “in” to His inner feelings and life. Who is your special child who God uses to focus you and to remind you of the real reason you do the things you do?

### The Story of Sandy

My special child when I was serving as the Children’s Pastor at a mega church in Corona, CA was a second grader named Sandy. She was a vibrant, joyful child who was on our kids’ worship team and always volunteered to help whenever there was a need. She prayed for us all when we had times of prayer. We, as CM leaders, often talked about her as a reminder of why we did what we did.



On one particularly difficult Sunday morning, I was walking around the CM facilities checking on the rooms. It was the third service, and I was tired. I wasn’t even looking at the children in the rooms, I was simply looking at the adults in the rooms to verify that there were two adults in each room. I was “in the flesh” and just doing the work of the job without thinking about it as a ministry. I remember standing in the doorway of the 5-year old room when I felt a tug on my pant leg. I looked down and saw Sandy looking up



at me. I greeted her and then she spoke words that cut right through my exhausted heart. She said, “Hi, Pastor Steve, I love you.” After saying this, she skipped away with her parents. I stood there in tears and speechless! God had used this little girl to shake me and to remind me about of my calling and purpose. I continued on my walk around survey of the classrooms; but now I was looking at the adults AND the children.

Where are you “going”? What has God called you to accomplish at your current ministry site?

- How can you inspire and introduce more children to Jesus?
- What choice-making strategies do you need to teach the children?
- How can you help the parents “train up” their own children?
- What has God called you to accomplish in the ministry team?
- Do you have a children’s ministry team member who needs special help?
- What do you want to accomplish through a thriving children’s ministry team?
- What has God called you to accomplish in the leadership team?
- What are your “dreams and visions” for the ministry?



There are few things that compare to the joy of seeing God develop leaders from the ministry team. Who is on your current ministry team who might be willing or be called to “bump up” to a leadership position? How will you be used by God to see that happen?

## Who Is Going With You?

No matter how large or how small the CM is, you shouldn’t lead it alone. Yes, you have God leading you and supporting you, but you also need fellow leaders to support you and encourage you. You need others to share the load of the ministry. As the ministry grows, you will not be able to fully handle the responsibilities of the job, while also supporting the CM team.

Moses discovered the challenge of leading a large group of people, while also caring for their needs. He was ready to quit! God spoke through his father-in-law and gave him some wise counsel.



*“The next day Moses took his seat to judge the people, and they stood around him from morning until evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, ‘What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone as judge, with all the people standing around you from morning till evening?’*

*‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God,’ Moses replied. ‘Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me to judge between one man and another, and I make known to them the statutes and laws of God.’*

*But Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘What you are doing is not good. Surely you and these people with you will wear yourselves out, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their causes to Him. Teach them the statutes and laws and show them the way to live and the work they must do.*

*Furthermore, select capable men from among the people—God-fearing, trustworthy men who are averse to dishonest gain. Appoint them over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.*

*Have these men judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you any major issue, but all minor cases they can judge on their own, so that your load may be lightened as they share it with you. If you follow this advice and God so directs you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people can go home in peace.’’ Exodus 18: 17-23*

This passage describes God’s plan for an administrative “flow chart.” The principle of adding leadership help is definitely scriptural. In Moses’ situation, there wasn’t any “pay” for these judges. In today’s world, it may be difficult to find godly people who will be willing to give you leadership time and effort for free. You may have to start with very limited responsibilities and then build the leaders up over time. If you can afford to offer part-time pay, that is always a great way to start.

How is your leadership team? Do you have age-based coordinators who serve under you? Do you have any other people who can assist you in the leadership of the ministry? Jesus was a great example of how to build a ministry team!

### Jesus’ Team Building Style

- He hand-picked His team members. (John 1: 47-50)
- He personally “cast his vision” to them. (John 5)
- He affirmed His support and belief in them. (John 14)
- He asked them to sacrifice for Him and for the “cause.” (Matthew 16: 24-27)
- He prepared them for what they would face. (Matthew 5: 11, 12)
- He spent many hours with them before He expected them to “perform.” (John 6: 1-3; Mt. 13: 10, 36)
- He ate with them. (Mt. 9; 12; Mk. 14; John 21; Luke 5:27; 7:34; 9:10-17; 10:38; 14; 19; 22)
- He defended them. (Mt. 12: 1-8)
- He showed them how to treat people. (John 8: 1-11)
- He prayed with and for them. (John 17)
- He taught them privately. (John 6: 1-3; Mt. 13: 10, 36)
- He confronted their weaknesses.
- He sacrificed for them.
- He gave them hope.
- He let them fail and encouraged them afterward.
- He went on trips with them. (Matthew 17: 14-21)
- He empowered them and gave them responsibility and authority. (Luke 10)
- He gave them challenges, and sometimes let them fail. (Luke 9; John 6: 1-15; Mt. 14:22-34)
- He explained things, they were comfortable asking. (Mt. 13: 10, 36, 51; John 11:1-15; 16: 17-33)
- He gave them freedom to leave and confronted them. (John 6:66-60)
- He withdrew and spent “intimate” time with them. (John 11:53,54)
- He served them sacrificially and visibly. (John 13: 1-17)
- He used “teachable moments” to teach them. (John 13: 1-17)
- He prayed for them in their hearing. (John 17)

Build your leaders, lighten your load,  
strengthen the team and ministry.  
Serve with faithful passion!

