



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 3

We are continuing this week in our series, It All Belongs to God. We learned about God's tendency to use whatever resources we have available to accomplish God's purposes. We typically think that we don't have enough to make a difference for God and therefore we end up protecting and preserving what little we have in our possession. As it turns out, God can use even the difficult struggles that we carry around. Spend this week considering your answer to God's question, "What is that in your hand?"

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: EXODUS 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?'"

² *Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?"*

"A staff," he replied.

³ *The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground."*

Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. ⁴ 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. ⁵ "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."

- Most of us have experienced moments when we experienced a nudge from God to act in a particular way. It is human nature to ask questions when the request seems difficult or unlikely. God isn't surprised when we air our questions before Him, but God is likely to point out that we already have everything we need to respond faithfully. **When was the last time you felt a nudge (or strong directive) from God to act? Did it require you to think differently about the items you possess or the struggles that seem to possess you?**

- *God, give me eyes of faith to see that the things I am carrying around are exactly what you need in order to accomplish your will through me. I will give them to you today. Amen.*

TUESDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 1.26-29

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.

- This is a key emphasis of Paul's teaching. His original audiences were also hearing from teachers who spoke with great eloquence but did not yield powerful results. We can gain wisdom and find worldly strength in it, but God chooses the humble, foolish, weak and lowly so that no one may be confused about where true strength comes from. You may not be in line for a worldly throne, but God calls you to live for him with the power he gives you. **Have you ever felt like you could be of more use to God if you only had more power or strength?**
- *God, I don't often highlight my own weakness, but let me boast in my foolishness if it points others to you. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: 1 SAMUEL 17.40, 45-49

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

⁴⁸*As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.⁴⁹ Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.*

- David gives us another example of God using the tools in a person's possession to accomplish his will. David was carrying around his staff and sling, and a bag of rocks and those are the physical things that it took to bring down Goliath. But he also carried around courage and a sense of right and wrong. God took all of that and set David up for victory. **How have you been answering the question, "What is that in your hand?" What are you carrying around that God might be able to use?**
- *God, I offer up all that I carry around. My physical gifts, my personality traits, my time. Use me once again for your glory today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: 1 KINGS 17:12-15

“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

¹³ *Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.”* ¹⁴ *For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’”*

¹⁵ *She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.*

- In this incredible story (1 Kings 17:7-24), a widow is called upon to provide water and bread for the prophet Elijah. She is being truthful when she says that she does not have any bread, and she plans to make one last meal for herself and her son before they both die due to the drought. Then God causes the little bit of flour and oil that she has remaining to replenish and provide for the three of them until the rains return. In this short passage, the woman goes from scarcity to plenty all with the same supplies. Because of her obedience to God, what she already had was enough. **Have there been seasons in your life where you experienced scarcity? Have you ever been called to give out the little bit you had?** Later in the story, the woman’s son dies, but God responds to Elijah’s pleas and restores him to life. God can save even in the most devastating of circumstances!
- *God, I know that you have brought me to salvation through your Son Jesus. When I have been most desperate, you have preserved my life through your miraculous provision. Amen.*

FRIDAY: JOHN 6:9-13

“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

¹⁰ *Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there).* ¹¹ *Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.*

¹² *When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”* ¹³ *So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.*

- Like the widow in Thursday’s reading, in John 6 a tiny “not-enough” offering of food became more than enough for the crowd gathered to listen to Jesus. What the little boy had in his hand was all God needed. You can see how the *struggle* became the *story* we still tell today, and how the little boy’s *stuff* became a sign of God’s provision. **What are the things God has used to create a story that you still tell today? How does that story point to the goodness of God?**
- *God, I lift up the signs of your faithfulness in my life. It all belongs to you and it all points to you. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ISAIAH 55.8-12

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.*

⁹*“As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

¹⁰*As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,*

¹¹*so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

¹²*You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.*

- God will pour out what God wants on our lives, and the promise we have in Isaiah 55 is that what God pours out will always produce a harvest. The rains water the earth and produce a harvest that proves to be what we need for nourishment. God’s word produces what God wants as well. When we delight in the gift of God’s word we will find joy and peace. God’s creation will rejoice right along with us! **Can you think of a specific moment when you took delight in the word of God?**
- *God, continue to pour out the rain and the snow to water the earth. Send also your word to water my soul. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob said,

**Your struggles become places for God’s power to be seen.
Your story becomes a testimony to what God has done.
Your stuff becomes the way that others are provided for.**

- What are your current struggles?
- How does your story testify to what God has done?
- How have your possessions turned into blessings for others?