



WHAT ARE YOU HOLDING?



We use our hands every day. From putting on clothes, brushing your teeth, eating, drinking, working, scrolling, picking things up, putting things down, the list can go on and on. We use our hands constantly throughout the day for nearly every task, making them our primary tools for manipulating the environment. Our hands are engaged from morning to night leaving them rarely at rest.

Have you ever thought about what people in the Bible held in their hands? Let's look at a few of those people in the Bible.

- The first person I think of is the boy with the 5 barley loaves and 2 fish in John 6. Here we have a boy walking home carrying just enough food for his family. He was minding his own business when Andrew, Simon Peter's brother stopped him and took him to Jesus. The boy who had a small amount of food in his hands ended up feeding thousands because he gave it to Jesus.
- Then there is the group of people that were carrying the body of the widow's son in Luke 7. These people were helping a widower take her dead son to be buried. As they

were walking to the grave side, Jesus touched the bier that they were carrying. (A bier is a movable stand or framework used to support a coffin or corpse, typically before or during a funeral.) The dead man sat up and began to talk when Jesus spoke to him.

- There was the widow in 2 Kings 4 that used her hands to gather all the oil that was being poured out to her. The Bible does not say how many jars she filled during that time. We do know that she used God's blessing to help her and her son get out of debt. I like to think that maybe she also shared some of that oil with her family and friends. Which in turn she took God's blessing and passed it on.
- We have a shepherd boy named David in 1 Samuel 17. In his hand he had a sling. Just an ordinary piece of rope with a strip of leather. He had to spend a lot of time training himself on how to use it. I bet his first attempt at hitting a target he probably couldn't hit the side of a barn. But with God and determination he used his hand to hit the mark the first time against Goliath.
- We have Moses in Exodus 4, who had a staff, a long walking stick. In his hands it was just that, a walking stick. Something to help him guide and protect his flock. But with God that same staff later became a snake, it was used to turn the water of the Nile into blood, and it was used to separate the waters of the Red Sea.
- There was Pontius Pilate in Matthew 27, who washed his hands in front of the crowd of people who wanted Jesus crucified. He didn't want to take any responsibility (whether good or bad) for the actions towards Jesus. He appeased the crowd to protect himself.
- Then in John 19, we have the Roman soldier who held in his hand the flagrum (a harsh whip with multiple leather strands with sharp metal, bone and glass braided in it). This horrific punishment was designed to tear flesh and muscle away, causing immense anguish and massive blood loss.
- There were many laying of hands like Jesus did to heal the sick in the book of Mark
- The passing of the torch when Moses laid his hands on Joshua in Deuteronomy 34
- There was physical labor that Paul instructed Christians to work with their hands in Ephesians 4 and in 1 Thessalonians 4.

So, throughout scripture we see people's hands sharing, helping, receiving, training, obeying, washing, hurting, healing, encouraging, and working. All these people had something in their hands that God used for His Kingdom and to bless others.

So are we using our hands today like those I just spoke about?

- Do we have something that God can multiply to help others? 1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of

God's grace in its various forms." If we give God what we have He will use it to bless others.

- Do we help those around us that are carrying the "dead things" of this world around with them? Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." When we carry the dead things of this world it will weigh us down, but when we stop and let Jesus, He will bring those things to life and remove them from our shoulders.
- Are we open to receiving the blessings from others when they are told by God to help us? I have a close brother that had a hard time with this. He is great at blessing others but when someone blessed him, he struggled with accepting it. Proverbs 11:25 "The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered." Be open to what God wants to give you. When we accept compliments / gifts from others we are not only being blessed, but the giver is also. With God it's a two-way street.
- Do we train ourselves by practicing and honing in the talents that God has given us? Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's workmanship, created for good works that He prepared in advance for us to do." For us to know our talents we must be using them. We must know them and build a better understanding of how to use them. We can't just expect to hit the target if we keep them on the shelf.
- Are we obeying God and using what He has placed in our hands? James 1:22 "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." To obey means to follow commands, carry out instructions, or act in agreement with established rules and laws. If we don't do what God asks us to do, then our staff is just a stick!
- Today are we washing our hands of Jesus just to please the crowds? Galatians 1:10 "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." Do we allow the crowd around us to dictate our actions?
- Are we hurting the people around us with what's in our hands, things like our actions and words? Ephesians 4:31-32: "*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*" How many times do we let our actions, our anger, our words rip into other people? A small stone can cause a ripple to travel a far distance in the water. It is just like that with our words and actions.
- Are we encouraging and building up the next generation of warriors? 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*" When was the last time we used our hands to help the people in our communities and our church? We need to be building people up in Christ.
- Are we working daily to keep advancing the Kingdom of God? 1 Corinthians 15:58: "*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the*

Lord is not in vain. God is needing us to be on guard, to stand firm, and to act like men. Men do hard things. We get our hands dirty, we get blisters on them, while at the same time we are gentle enough to care for those around us.

So, what are we doing with what we have in our hands? When we use what God gave us we have the power to build up the Kingdom of God. But, when we decide not to use it then we are letting the enemy tear it down. So let's grab our swords in our hands and fight daily with God to defeat the enemy! God will use us if we just give Him our everything.

2 Corinthians 9:10 "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."