

Today I want to think a little about walking with God in 2017.

So, it's New Year. How many of you have set some resolutions? Anyone care to share what you've decided to do?

I read a bit online about people making resolutions: one person said, I cannot believe that it has been a whole year since I didn't become a better person; another, I am going to work out every day. Or at least think about it every day. My resolution for 2016 is to accomplish all the goals I set in 2015, which I should have done in 2014 because I planned them in 2013.

As I was preparing this, I was reading an article in a psychology journal that actually was talking about why many people do not set resolutions and the reason people typically won't do that is because of fear. It's a fear of not finishing what they tried to start.

Today I want to look at the life of Moses and how important it is simply to get started. Regardless of our age, everybody has something we need to start. Maybe it's time for you to get fit and healthy, or to restore a relationship, or to be more generous with your time or money. Maybe it's time to stop being a slave to your schedule and start making a difference in other people's lives. In order to help us think about it, I would like you to fast forward to the end of your life. Forget the resolutions for 2017 and go right to the end, imagining that we are at your memorial service. What do you want people to say about you? What would you hope they would see in you that was worthwhile? In your answer you might just find where you need to get started in order to become that person.

When it comes to Moses, in Hebrews 11:24-26 ²⁴ *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.* ²⁵ *He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.* ²⁶ *He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.* What a thing to be said about you. What a powerful statement.

And that's where Moses ended. But it wasn't where Moses began. Moses was a young Hebrew boy who was born in Egypt. The problem was it was during a period when the Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians and because the population was growing Pharaoh instructed that all the Hebrew boys should be thrown into the River Nile in order to control the population. Moses mother put him in a basket on the river and he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and brought up in Pharaoh's household. He was very privileged and was well educated but he never forgot he was a Hebrew. One day he killed an Egyptian

who was beating a Hebrew man and Moses had to flee into the desert where he became a Shepherd for 40 years.

During this time he has a son whom he calls Gershom which means *I'm a foreigner in a foreign land*. Moses whole life had been one where he didn't quite fit in. And then one day out in the wilderness he meets with God when he sees a bush that appears to be on fire but is not burning.

God explains that he is to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free. That's a huge thing because it's the entire slave labour for Egypt. Understandably, Moses is not too keen on the idea but this is essentially where his ending starts. So what do we find out?

The 1st thing is this: **start where you are.**

As Moses thinks back to the man he killed, that mistake plays on his mind and he says to God that he is not worthy to go and lead his people. God said something to Moses that he still says to his people today, 'I will be with you.' Many people discount what God could do through them because of their past and the different mistakes that they've made. We need to understand, just like Moses, that God promises to be with us and when we understand who it is that is with us it should give us confidence to do things that we would not otherwise do. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter what you've lost, and it doesn't matter how good the past has been. God says to you today I am with you and we're going to do things together, for my glory. I once heard a preacher put it this way, if you're not dead you're not done. It doesn't matter what age you are, God has something to do in you and through you and we all have to start where we are.

The 2nd thing is: **use what you have.**

Despite God's promise of his presence Moses still argues that he is not the right person to send for this task. He asks what will happen if they don't believe him or if they don't listen to him and as he speaking God says to him, 'what's in your hand?' Moses replied, 'a staff'. It's easy to read the story and miss the importance of this. Moses had a staff because he was a Shepherd. He didn't have the staff because it was particularly special or because he wanted to present it to God for him to use. It's in his hand because he's a Shepherd. And God uses that staff to do extraordinary things. At God's direction Moses performs miracle after miracle with that staff. What is in **your** hand? You might say I have no talent, no skill, nothing of any use. Can you make soup? Can you knit a scarf? Can you make tea and coffee? Can you use a computer? Have you experience of dealing with money? You might think these things have little value but when you give them to God you can bless a family who are struggling by giving them a pot of soup. You could help someone to learn how

to budget. You could give a couple of hours to the church office. Simple things, but things through which God can be glorified. That thing that might seem so ordinary to you can become extraordinary with God. That neighbour who would never consider crossing the door of the church might be willing to discuss the gospel over a cup of tea and a biscuit. What is in your hand? Use what you have, because what you have, is exactly what God uses. You've got to start where you are. It doesn't matter where you are when you know who you're with. Just use what you have, because what you have is exactly what God uses.

So, Start where you are, Use what you have and the 3rd thing is this: **do what you can.**

Moses comes back again and says to God that he is not fit to go because he is not eloquent and his speech is poor. God asks him to remember who gave human beings their mouths and that he will help Moses speak, and also teach him what to say as he goes.

I don't know if it's just me, but do you feel a little bit of tension? God's like, are you serious Moses? Go. I need you to get started. It's a little bit like when you have children and you try to get them to bed. They have every excuse in the world why they don't need to go. They could be absolutely exhausted but as soon as you mention bed it's as if you've given them a huge cup of coffee and they are wide awake. It's could you read me a story; I'm not tired; could I get a drink of water? I need a new plaster. My pyjamas are itchy. Could you tell me a story? I'm scared of the dark. I can't find my Teddy.

I sense a little bit of that with God here. Moses continues to make excuses and God is saying, just go! For some of us in 2017 God is going to put his foot to our backsides and tell us to get on with it. Today is the day to get started. We are going to start where we are, wherever that is and whatever we have done. It doesn't matter where we are because we know who we are with. We are with the creator of the universe and he wants to do something through you that is going to be extraordinary. Give him what you have: the simple, ordinary things and allow him to make them extra ordinary as you walk with him. Just do what you can to get started. God says he'll teach you what to say and what to do. None of us know the future. None of us have all the answers. None of us have everything sorted to the extent where we feel capable of doing whatever is God has called us to do. That's not how it works. God isn't going to give us everything so that we feel equipped before we step forward. He's going to teach us as we go. There will be people here today thinking they need to be more educated or biblically literate before going and the truth is most of us are educated and biblically literate far beyond our level of obedience. We simply need to get going, using what we have. Can you heal that broken relationship today? Probably not. But you can apologise for the part that is yours. Can you

get out of debt today? Probably not. But you could plan a budget and arrange a 1st payment.

Sometimes what happens is we look down the road and we think God is taking us in a particular direction and we don't like it. We look at the steps ahead as we see them and decide that step 28 is too hard, so it's better to stay where we are. But God's saying, you need to get moving, because *what you don't know* is that you never going to get to that step, because I have something better for you. And what you'll find, is as you walk in step with God, you must start where you are. You use what you have and you do what you can. God takes this journey that you think you're on and maybe you think it's going to be a certain way, and he does something totally different. That little ordinary journey you were on, becomes extraordinary.

God wants to take your ordinary thing and turn it into something extraordinary. When you get worried about step 28 – well, don't worry about step 28, you just take step one and as you walk, God will teach you what to say and what to do. You've just got to get started. You be you. You let God be God. Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.

Our reading mentions some well known characters from the bible, along with some we are not even named. What it also reminds us is that '*their weakness was turned into strength*'. You can look on at your situation and what you think God may be calling you to and you become overwhelmed. Mother Theresa said it this way; if you can't feed 100 people, just feed one. In other words, just get started. Do something. Acknowledging your weakness and trusting in God allows him to make you strong. Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can because you're never going to finish something you don't start.

When you read the story of Moses you see how God fulfilled his promises. God takes this man and does an incredible work through him. Hebrews 11:26-27 *²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.* He persevered because he saw God. Yes, he had a life changing experience at the burning bush, but that wouldn't have carried him very far once things got really difficult. Moses needed a deeper and more intimate relationship with God, but it was one he had to develop. During their journey from Egypt Moses set up a 'tent of meeting' where he went to spend time with God and Exodus 33:11 *The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend*

We might not see God in a burning bush – but we can see him in his word and experience his presence in prayer and worship. Like Moses, our relationship with God is something we need to continually develop. What if, when people were sitting around eating sandwiches and little sausage rolls talking about you after your memorial service is done, what if they said about you, by faith, when they grew up, they refused to simply be a product of their environment.

This was someone who pursued God for all they were worth. When they walked into a room it was as if God himself had arrived. This was someone who was willing to give God all they had, and look at the result. This was someone who put their faith into action because they were looking ahead to their reward and they knew God.

We have one shot at 2017. In fact, we got one shot at life. We're never going to finish something we don't start. It's time to get started on that new thing with God. When we do, and persevere, we'll find that we leave a legacy beyond our imagining.