

Let me ask you a question.

Is there something you're not good at? I don't mean just not good at, but something you really fail at every time you try; as the kids say "epic fail", not just everyday ordinary fail.

As an example, I'm horrible at baseball; really horrible. I can't pitch, I can't catch, and I've only hit out of the infield once; in my life. My best position in baseball is left out. In high school, when they would pick teams for baseball in phys-ed, they'd leave me until last; after the girls. Really not good for a teenager's self-esteem.

I'm sure we all have things we're not good at; but for the most part we all still try to do them (well, except me and baseball). We know that old adage practice makes perfect, and we hope that it will apply to us, even though we are so bad that it's almost painful to watch.

Or maybe you're really good at something, but it just doesn't look possible; it doesn't seem like you're the kind of person that would be good at doing that. Calvin Murphy was an NBA player back in the 1970's for the Houston Rockets. Calvin, at 5 foot 9 inches, is the shortest player inducted into the NBA hall of fame, and he averaged almost 18 points per game.

God has a way of using what we feel we're horrible at, or what the world thinks we shouldn't be able to do. He does it to make a point – that He's the one in charge. Let's look at a few notable examples from the Bible.

When Moses talked to God in the burning bush, God told him He was sending him to Egypt to free the children of Israel. But Moses made excuses.

Exodus 3:11-15

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

12 And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you [plural] will worship God on this mountain.”

13 Moses said to God, “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?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

14 God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

15 God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’

*“This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.*

You’d think God sending you to do something, and talking to you directly would be enough to convince you that it’s something you should do, but Moses STILL was hesitant. He was kept looking for a way out. God gave Moses some signs to perform for the elders of Israel, so they’d believe him; turning his staff into a snake, and making his hand leprous and then healing it. But that wasn’t good enough for Moses. He had one more excuse.

Exodus 4:10-17

10 Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”

11 The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

13 But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

14 Then the Lord’s anger burned against Moses and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. 15 You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. 16 He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. 17 But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it.”

“Can you **PLEASE** send someone else?”

Of course we know what happened. Moses went and represented God to the captive Israelites, and to Pharaoh; and God sent 10 plagues on Egypt, each one worse than the last, and Moses warned Pharaoh each time beforehand. Finally he relented and allowed the Israelites to leave.

But what about the other category; something someone is good at but no one believes they can do it?

There are a few examples of that in the Bible, but let’s look at a really well known one: David and Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:12-37

12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul’s time he was very old. 13 Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shamamah. 14

David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

¹⁷ Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah [about 36 pounds] of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance [or some pledge of spoils] from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. ²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. ²³ As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. ²⁴ Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

²⁵ Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel."

²⁶ David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

27 They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

28 When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

29 "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" 30 He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. 31 What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."

And again, we know the rest of the story. David took five smooth stones from the stream nearby and killed Goliath with one stone from his sling. God blessed him with skill and courage, and he won the battle.

Another not so well known example is Gideon. Gideon was one of the Judges of Israel, after Deborah but before Sampson, around 1150 BC or so. What was so special about Gideon? Well, he didn't do anything specifically by himself, but God had him do something amazing with the Israelite army.

You see, the Midianites, the Amalekites and "other eastern peoples" decided to attack Israel, and God told Gideon to save Israel from them. Let's pick up the story in Judges 7.

Judges 7:1-8

¹ Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ² The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.' ³ Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

⁴ But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

⁵ So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink." ⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

⁷ The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home." ⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but

kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Ok, so God cut the number down to 300 men. How many Midianites were there? Well verse 12 says this:

¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

God used the Israelite army in an unexpected way to protect all of Israel from the Midianites and all the other bad guys that decided to join forces with them.

How does all this apply to us? I mean, these are all good stories, but we're not Jews, and we don't use swords or slings or fight battles like that.

Well, Paul sums it up like this in his first letter to the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written:

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." [Isaiah 29:14]*

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God

and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

I'm not saying we will always be able to do amazing things like David or Gideon, or perform signs and wonders like Moses. But what I am saying is that no matter what our personal abilities, or even lack of abilities, God uses us to send His message out to the people around us. We need to thank God for His making us worthy to be used to carry His message, and also we need to always try to BE worthy to carry His message. We can't succeed unless we try, and we never know if a particular situation may be God's plan for us to reach out to someone.

Questions

1. Who else can you think of in the Bible that tried to avoid doing what God wanted?
2. Can you think of any situations where you were like Moses or Jonah, not wanting to do what God clearly wanted you to do?
3. Can you think of other people in the Bible that had special gifts that didn't seem to fit with their outward appearance?
4. In what ways is Christianity "foolish" to non-Christians?