

There is a retired pastor by the name of Cliff Schimmels who has written a delightful book titled "All I Really Needed to Know, I Learned in Sunday School". In that book he tells the story of a father who asked his son, "What did you learn in Sunday School today?"

With a shrug, the young boy said, "She told us about Moses crossing the Red Sea."

"Oh, what did she say?" the father asked with eagerness.

The boy paused only for a second and said, "Well, it seems like this fellow Israel had a whole bunch of children who were being held hostage by this guy named Pharaoh. Well, old Moses got mad about that and went to this guy Pharaoh and gave this ultimatum. He said if you don't let those children go, you will be in big trouble. So Pharaoh said, 'Okay, you can leave.' Then Moses loaded all Israel's children in big buses and started off.

"Well, old Pharaoh thought about what he had done and changed his mind. He called out his army and tanks and half-tracks and big guns and began chasing Old Moses.

"When Moses and all those children got to the Red Sea, they knew they were trapped and had to do something. So they decided to sandbag that old Sea. They sandbagged two sides all the way across. Then they got centrifugal pumps and pumped all the water out so they could go through on the seabed.

"But they weren't finished. They put big explosives all through those sandbags, and when Pharaoh's army and machines started down through the sea, the Children of Israel detonated those explosives with this remote device over on the other shore. They blew up the sandbags and destroyed Pharaoh's army.

"Wait a minute," the father protested with deep concern, "Is that they way she told the story?"

"Naw," said the boy. "But if I told the story the way she did, you'd never believe it."

I like that. There are some messages that we hear out of the Bible that, frankly, we have a hard time believing. One of those messages comes from our scripture for today. This scripture of the calling of Moses reminds us that *we are called to make a difference for God in this world.* We

hear that message. But in all honesty it is not an easy message for us to hear.

We hear the message that God wants to make a difference in the world through us and the one of the first things we do is that we begin to do what Moses did in this scripture when God called him. We begin to say, "Wait a minute. Hold on. What are you talking about?"

We are called by God to make a difference for God in this world, but one of the first things *we have to deal with is our own doubts about our abilities.* No one knows, better than us, how much we struggle with just believing in ourselves.

When I look in the mirror, I am often reminded of the shortfalls of simply being me. I am well aware of the limitations of me and of the doubts I carry around in my life. When I was in high school, I was offered a summer job, here in Wisconsin. All of the people who had previously done this job were in seminary, a good 6 - 7 years older than I was.

I remember going to a trusted friend, one of the vice-principles of my High School. I told him about the position I had been asked to take. I told him of my fears, my doubts. I came up with many reasons why I should not take the job.

He patiently listened. Then he said to me, "Scott, sometimes we get asked to do things, because of the gifts others see in us, even if we don't see those gifts in ourselves."

His words stuck with me. They actually helped me work through what I was going to do. I didn't take the job that summer. But when it was offered to me a couple of years later, I jumped at the chance and it was a wonderful experience. But my fears and my doubts almost caused me to miss out on an incredible opportunity to be involved in ministry.

God wants to work through you. God is calling you to make a difference in this world. Are you willing to face your doubts about your abilities?

*Sometimes, we struggle with understanding what influence we can really have.* When God called Moses, he struggled with whether he could really have any influence. He said, "When I meet with the elder of Israel, and they ask me, 'Sure, God called you! What is God's name?' what do I say?"

Moses was wondering if he would or could have any influence in the lives of the leaders. Sometimes we wonder the same thing. Will my presence make a difference? Will anyone believe me? Will anyone be influenced by what I have to say?

What I want to tell you is that your presence really does matter. If you choose to say yes to God, it will make a difference.

Once a teacher in New York decided to try and experiment by telling the seniors in her class what a difference they made in her life. She called each one to the front of the class one at a time. She told them what a difference they had made in her life and to the class. Then she presented them with a blue ribbon that stated, "Who I am makes a difference."

Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what a difference recognition would make on the larger community. She gave each student three blue ribbons and told them to take them and tell one person what a difference they had made in their lives. Then she asked them to give them the remaining ribbons and ask them to contact someone who had made a difference in their lives. They were to pass this on, until all the ribbons were gone. They were to follow up in a week to see what had happened.

One of the boys went to a Junior Executive in a nearby company who had given him guidance and some career planning advice. The youth offered him the blue ribbons to see if the Junior Executive would find someone to honor as well.

The Junior Executive went to his boss, who had a reputation for being kind of crabby. But he told his boss that he really admired his boss for his wisdom in running the company and for being so creative. He even called him a creative genius. He gave his boss the remaining ribbons. He asked him to keep one and to pass the other on to someone else.

That night, the boss went home and after thinking all day about whom he was going to honor, decided to give it to his 14-year-old son. When he saw his son, he told him about how honored he had been that day, by the things this Junior Executive had said. He went on to say, "as I have thought and thought about whom I should honor and who had made a difference for me, I realized that I wanted to honor you.

"I am often busy. I don't get to spend the time with you that I would like to, but I love you so much. I love the life you have brought to me.

I love the fun we have together. I just want you to know that you make life worth living for me. You make a difference for me. You mean the world to me."

Upon hearing this, the son started to cry. The father was shocked at first, wondering what he might have said wrong.

Then the son said, "Do you really mean all of this?"

The father, still surprised said, "Of course I do. Why?"

The son said, "I didn't think I mattered at all to you or to mom. You are both so busy. I decided that I didn't want to go through life wondering if I mattered to you, so I had written a note to tell you how much I loved you and that I was sorry I had taken my life. You see, I was going to commit suicide tonight."

The father, the mother, and the son spent time crying and hugging that night. But that night changed things, the father stopped being so grumpy at work. The Junior Executive continued to be motivated to help young people starting out. The high school student and the son realized that they mattered. That they made a difference.

Ultimately, God is reminding Moses, and us, that our needs, our hurts and the hurts of this world matter to God. And that God wants to do something about those hurts. That is why God invites us to respond to make a difference for God in this world. And God promises us, that when we work to make a difference in this world, we will not be left alone. But God will continue to walk with us, to love us and to help us make a difference.

May God help us live lives that are faithful.

Amen