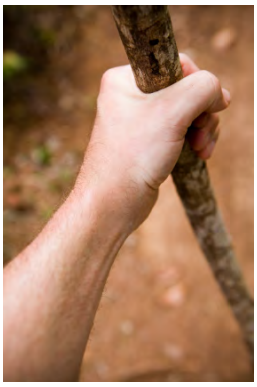
Look Closer:
Power for Change

At a Glance:



As he tended Laban's flocks Jacob watched to see when the strongest animals came for water. He put sticks with the bark partially peeled off into the drinking troughs at that time. As a result they gave birth to speckled and spotted young, which were his wages. Walking sticks, staffs or "rods" feature in many stories in the Word and always symbolize power. Students will read about these staffs and then discuss sources of power in our lives.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Power for Change* readings
- *Power in the Word* chart
- Word or Bible
- pen or pencil
- *optional:* a variety of objects to lift—e.g. items that are in the room

Directions:

1. *Optional:* Ask students "Who will volunteer to lift this object?" Ask the volunteer questions such as "How heavy is it? What part(s) of your body are you using to lift it?
2. Where does physical strength come from? What about mental strength?
3. In our story today, Jacob placed sticks with the bark partially peeled off in the drinking troughs when the strongest animals came to drink. This act had the power to make the animals produce spotted and speckled offspring that would belong to Jacob.
4. Read *Power for Change* aloud with the group and then discuss it.
5. Distribute *Power in the Word* charts. Assign each student a different incident when walking sticks, staffs of "rods" were used for powerful acts. Pick a few if you have a small group. Have students complete the chart using the Word or Bible.
6. Share answers and discuss the following:
    - In what way is doing the right actions and giving credit to the Lord different from doing the right actions and taking credit for ourselves?
    - The land of Canaan corresponds to heaven. Is it possible for people to go to heaven if they take credit for their good actions? Why or why not?
    - How can we access the Lord's power in our lives?
    - In what ways can accessing the Lord's power make us a stronger person?

© 2020 General Church of the New Jerusalem

Power for Change

Jacob became a wealthy man. After he finished working for Laban's daughters, Jacob asked for Laban's streaked and spotted animals as his wages. When the strongest animals approached the drinking troughs, Jacob placed sticks with the bark partially peeled off inside the troughs. As a result the strongest animals gave birth to speckled and spotted young. Eventually Jacob owned most of the strong animals, and Laban owned most of the weak animals. Once Laban's sons realized what had happened, they were deeply resentful of Jacob and felt he had taken their father's wealth.

The sticks or "rods" that Jacob used symbolize power. This is also true of other rods and staffs mentioned in the Word:

> A "rod" is frequently mentioned in the Word, and always signifies power, both from its being used by shepherds to exercise power over their flocks, and from its serving to support the body, and as it were for the right hand; for the "hand" signifies power. As this was the signification of a "rod," rods were used by kings in ancient times, and so the royal badge was a short staff, and also a scepter. Rods were also used by priests and prophets such as Aaron and Moses, and their rods signified the power that belonged to them. This was the reason why Moses was frequently commanded to stretch out his rod, and at other times his hand, when miracles were being performed; for Divine power was signified by the "rod;" and by the "hand." It was because a "rod" signifies power that magicians in Egypt used rods when they performed their magical miracles; and it is from this that magicians are now represented with wands in their hands (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4013).

The power that moves a staff is the power of a human hand—most often a person's right hand. Our hands do what our minds want—they serve, build, write, cook, comfort, play musical instruments, etc. Our hands are extensions of our mind that enable us to do what we intend.

When our hands do what the Lord wants, they act from the power of His love. We are not consciously aware that this power is from the Lord because He wants us to experience our actions *as if* they are our own (see *Divine Love and Wisdom* 68). As we grow spiritually we begin to see that all power is the Lord's. We acknowledge this as we say "Thine is the…power, and the glory, forever" (Matthew 6:13). We also ask for the Lord's power when we pray, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). Just as the rods in the Word gave power over nature and animals, the Lord's power enables us to put aside our selfish thoughts and emotions and welcome heavenly ones.

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but he was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan because of one miracle he did with a rod:



> Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron … said, "Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:9-13)

Moses could not enter Canaan because he claimed to have done this miracle by *his own* power, and not the Lord's power. The actions for which we claim personal ownership come from self-love, which is in direct opposition to the Lord's love.

Power in the Word

Many stories in the Word feature walking sticks, staffs or rods being used to demonstrate power. Use a copy of the Word to look up the following incidents and find out what happened.

Reference	Who used the rod?	Who owned the rod?	What happened as a result?
Genesis 30:37-43	Jacob	Jacob	He became wealthy because the flocks and herds produced speckled and spotted animals.
Exodus 7:8-10			
Exodus 7:11-13			
Exodus 14:21-29			
Exodus 17:1-7			
Exodus 17:8-13			
Numbers 17:1-8			
Psalm 23:4			
Isaiah 11:4 (see also 11:1-3)			
Revelation 19:11-16			

© 2020 General Church of the New Jerusalem

Power in the Word

Teacher Copy

Many stories in the Word feature walking sticks, staffs or rods being used to demonstrate power. Use a copy of the Word to look up the following incidents and find out what happened.

Reference	Who used the rod?	Who owned the rod?	What happened as a result?
Genesis 30:37-43	Jacob	Jacob	He became wealthy because the flocks and herds produced speckled and spotted animals.
Exodus 7:8-10	Aaron	Aaron	The rod became a serpent.
Exodus 7:11-13	Pharoah's wise men & sorcerers	Pharoah's wise men & sorcerers	Their rods became serpents.
Exodus 14:15-16, 21-29	Moses	Moses	First, the Red Sea parted, so the children of Israel could cross over on dry land. Then the Sea returned to its full depth, so the Egyptians drowned.
Exodus 17:1-7	Moses	Moses	Water came out of the rock.
Exodus 17:8-13	Moses	Moses	When Moses held up the rod the Israelites prevailed over the Amalekites.
Numbers 17:1-8	Moses	Aaron	The rod blossomed and produced almonds when placed before the tabernacle.
Psalm 23:4	The Lord	The Lord	The speaker is comforted even when facing scaring and hard issues (the valley of the shadow of death).
Isaiah 11:4 (see also 11:1-3)	The Lord	The Lord	This prophecy describes the Lord's battles against hells during His life in this world.
Revelation 19:11-16	The Lord	The Lord	The Lord will rule all nations.