



SESSION 2

OBJECTIONS OVERRULED

▶ **The Point**

God will work through us despite our shortcomings.

▶ **The Passage**

Exodus 3:11-12; 4:10-17

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

My office is full of artwork, and I'm proud of my collection. Before you start guessing whether I prefer abstract, modern, renaissance, or cute Bible verse plaques, I'll give you a hint: I have three young children. The "artwork" that graces my wall is a compilation of squiggly lines, letters, pandas, and a drawing of yours truly flying with a cape. The amazing thing about children is that, no matter how their drawings look or how far outside the lines the colors go, they are always so proud of their work. (And so are their parents.)

When did we lose that pride in our work? When did we start comparing ourselves to others? Instead of being satisfied with what we can accomplish, we tend to measure ourselves against others, and we often conclude we're not capable. While our culture may value our appearance, the size of our bank accounts, and the trophies on our walls, God operates with a different standard. Instead of valuing us by what we can or cannot do, God accepts us as we are. As we see in the life of Moses, God takes us as broken vessels with blemishes and weaknesses, and He accomplishes what we never thought was possible.

▶ **The Setting**

Fleeing the Pharaoh of Egypt after murdering an Egyptian for abusing a Hebrew slave, Moses had settled in the land of Midian (see Ex. 2:11-22). While tending his father-in-law Jethro's sheep in the wilderness, most likely in the Sinai Peninsula, Moses encountered God at Mount Horeb (see 3:1-6). The Lord informed Moses He was going to send him before Pharaoh and use him to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (see vv. 7-10).

What does the Bible say?

This mountain (3:12)—Refers to Horeb, “the mountain of God” (Ex. 3:1; also known as “Sinai”), the mountain on which God met with the Israelites through Moses.

My mouth and my tongue are sluggish (4:10)—Moses protested that his inability to speak well disqualified him as a candidate for the mission to which God was calling him.

The Levite (4:14)—The Levites were the descendants of Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah.

Exodus 3:11-12; 4:10-17

^{3:11} But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹² He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.”

^{4:10} But Moses replied to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent — either in the past or recently or since you have been speaking to your servant — because my mouth and my tongue are sluggish.”

¹¹ The LORD said to him, “Who placed a mouth on humans? Who makes a person mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go! I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say.”

¹³ Moses said, “Please, Lord, send someone else.”

¹⁴ Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses, and he said, “Isn’t Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he is on his way now to meet you. He will rejoice when he sees you.

¹⁵ You will speak with him and tell him what to say. I will help both you and him to speak and will teach you both what to do.

¹⁶ He will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him.

¹⁷ And take this staff in your hand that you will perform the signs with.”

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



Notes

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 89 of the PSG: **“When have you accomplished something you didn’t think you could do?”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In the previous session, the optional activity encouraged you to give your group members a small taste of failure. Now you can help them accomplish something surprising. Write the following paragraph on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper,

but keep it covered. When you’re read, uncover the paragraph and ask for a volunteer to read it out loud. Surprisingly, it won’t be a problem!

The hamun mnid is amzinag. As lnog as the frist and lsat lettres in a wrod are crorect, msot poelpe can raed teh m scsusesuffly. Our bairns are albe to unsacrmlbe the mddile letrtes usng psat memroeis and cotnext.

Note: The actual content of the paragraph is not important. You can write your own message for your group members as long as you keep the pattern of having the first and last letters correct with each word.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 90 of the PSG. Introduce the truth that God accepts us despite our brokenness by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 90 of the PSG: **“God will work through us despite our shortcomings.”**

PRAY: Transition into the discussion by praising God for His faithfulness in your life despite your shortcomings. Pray for wisdom to understand and apply the Scriptures.

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Exodus 3:11-12 Commentary

God is with you.

[Verse 11] The Hebrews (Israelites) had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years (see Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6). Though he was born a Hebrew, **Moses** was raised in the Pharaoh's palace in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (see Ex. 2:1-10). About 40 years later, after killing an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew slave (see Ex. 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-29), Moses fled to the land of Midian. There Moses met a priest named Jethro and eventually married one of the priest's daughters. Moses then settled in to the life of a shepherd, taking care of Jethro's flock for about 40 years (see Ex. 2:15-22; Acts 7:29-30).

While shepherding the flocks in the wilderness, Moses encountered **God** through a burning bush at Mount Horeb (see Ex. 3:2). God introduced Himself as the God of Moses' ancestors (see v. 6). God noted He was aware of the suffering of the Israelites, His people (see v. 7). God informed Moses that He had a plan to deliver the **Israelites** from bondage (see v. 8). God then commissioned Moses to go back to **Egypt** to free the Israelites (see v. 10).

Moses, however, didn't seem convinced this was a good plan—at least not his involvement in it. Most likely he had no desire to return to the place where there was a possibility he could be brought to justice and put to death. So Moses protested God's call: **"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"** This could have been a simple expression of his humility (Num. 12:3) or could have reflected a poor self-identity.

[Verse 12] For this objection and every other objection Moses would raise, God had a response. Rather than save the best for last, God immediately promised, **"I will certainly be with you."** This word came from the God who created all things (Gen. 1-2), who powerfully destroyed almost all of humanity in the flood (6-8), and who delivered His people, the Israelites, during the great famine several centuries earlier (45-47). The presence of God would guarantee the success of the mission. However inadequate Moses may have felt, God's presence would provide all the support, encouragement, and assistance Moses would need.

Based on Moses' next question (Ex. 3:13), however, it may have been that Moses wasn't quite certain about this promise from God—or about God Himself. Moses may have known about God from his ancestors, although after 400 years of slavery the Israelites may have wondered if God really cared for them or if He even existed. It seems Moses did not know God very well. Moses could not see or touch this God—he only heard a voice from a bush that was on fire but was not burning up.

Even so, God made another promise to Moses. It would be a **sign** to confirm both God's call to Moses and the success of his mission. This sign would be given one day in the future, after Moses had brought **the people** of Israel **out of Egypt**. God promised that Moses would return again to that very place. But he would not be alone. Both Moses and the Israelites would return to the **mountain** of Horeb (or Sinai) and **worship God** there. All the people of God would gather in that place to praise Him for His deliverance.

Exodus 4:10-12 Commentary

God created you just as you are.

[Verse 10] Moses went through more question-and-answer sessions about God's identity and what Moses was to tell the Israelites about God, what the Israelites would experience as they left Egypt, and how Moses would respond to any objections from the Israelites (see Ex. 3:13–4:9).

God's responses, however, still didn't seem to be enough for Moses. The reluctant shepherd had another objection. Part of Moses' mission was to meet with the Hebrew elders as well as the Egyptian king and speak God's words to them. Moses had a great concern about this aspect of the task. He protested, **"Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent."** Bible scholars have long debated the meaning of this objection. Did Moses have a physical speech impediment, some emotional issue, was there a language barrier, or was this simply another expression of his humility?

Moses referred to his whole life (**the past and recently**) as he downplayed his speaking ability. He noted that not even his current encounter with the Lord (when God had been **speaking** to him through the burning bush) had changed the reality that **"my mouth and my tongue are sluggish."** These words, along with God's response, seem to validate the physical or emotional aspect of Moses' objection.

[Verse 11] Despite the continued objections Moses raised, God did not take offense. God did, however, remind Moses of an important fact: He is the Creator. God **placed a mouth on humans**. It is God who gave human beings the ability to speak, to express themselves through verbal communication. He is the one who also makes people **mute or deaf, seeing or blind**. This is not the place to delve into questions about whether God intentionally causes people to have disabilities. *[Note: Leaders should be sensitive to those dealing with issues regarding the question of human suffering. The question of "Why did God allow this to happen to me, or to the one I love?" is one that every believer ultimately wrestles with and ultimately God alone can answer.]*

God created Moses and knew all about him. Neither his strengths nor his weaknesses were the primary issue in fulfilling the calling God had given him.

[Verse 12] God wrapped up the conversation when He commanded Moses, **"Now go!"** Essentially God was saying, "I've heard enough of the objections and protests. Be on your way." Even so, God added another promise to the commission: **"I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say."** Our weaknesses do not override what God can—and will—do through us to accomplish His purposes.

God had never planned to leave Moses alone in his task; the Lord would accompany him. If Moses had a communication problem, God would work in it or despite it so Moses' message would be clear and understandable. God would give Moses the right words to say to the Israelites as well as to Pharaoh. Moses really didn't have to worry about anything—God had taken care of everything.

Exodus 4:13-17 Commentary

God equips you with all you need.

[Verse 13] Moses said to God, **“Please, Lord, send someone else.”** Moses didn’t want the responsibility. So he effectively but respectfully refused God’s call and rejected His will.

[Verse 14] At this admission of his unwillingness to heed God’s call, **the LORD’s anger burned against Moses.** The Hebrew word for **anger** in this verse is used in the Old Testament to describe the anger both of God and humans. When applied to God, this “anger” is never unpredictable or unjustified. Rather, it’s always directed toward sin and evil, which are absolutely opposed to His will. In this case, God’s anger was raised because Moses would not trust Him. Despite the Lord’s promises and assurances, Moses wouldn’t take the first step of faith. Yet in His anger, God didn’t destroy Moses. Instead, He showed grace to the stubborn shepherd. Even so, God’s grace didn’t relieve Moses of the responsibility to carry out the mission.

The Lord reminded Moses of his older **brother**, whom he probably had not seen in 40 years or more. While we know from Moses’ birth narrative that Moses had an older sister (see Ex. 2:4), this is the first time Scripture mentions **Aaron**, who we later learn was three years older than Moses (see 7:7). Like Moses, Aaron was a **Levite**, which refers to a descendant of Levi, Jacob’s third son (see Gen. 29:34). While Moses might not have known Aaron very well, God knew all about him. God noted that Aaron could **speak well**. God also revealed that Aaron was en route to **meet** Moses, and would **rejoice** when he saw his brother.

[Verse 15] God went on to reveal what would happen in the future. As God’s prophet, Moses would first hear the word from the Lord. Afterward, Moses would **speak with** Aaron and **tell him what to say**, and then Aaron would do the talking. God promised to **help both** of them **to speak** and **teach** them **what to do** as they gave leadership to God’s mission to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

[Verse 16] God reiterated the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Moses had earlier questioned whether the elders of the Israelites would believe God’s message as Moses related it to them. Now, that would be a moot point because Aaron would **speak to the people** and relay God’s message as received by Moses. Aaron would **serve as** Moses **mouth**. The Lord then noted that Moses would **serve as God** to Aaron, telling his brother what to say and do.

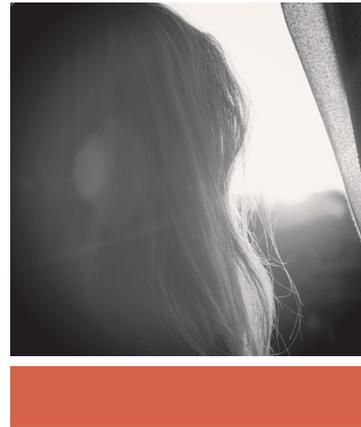
[Verse 17] Moses had been holding his **staff** when he first encountered God on the mountain. One of Moses’ earlier questions related to what he would do if the Israelites didn’t believe him (see Ex. 4:1). God told Moses to throw his staff on the ground. When he did, it became a snake. Then God instructed Moses to grab the snake by the tail; when he did so, it became a staff again. As the conversation drew to an end, God told Moses to be sure to **take** his staff on the mission. Moses would use it to **perform the signs** God promised—miracles that would convince the Israelites of his authority from God and confront Pharaoh with God’s command that he release the Israelites from captivity.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 96 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider these ways to respond to God’s continued call:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Deal with the past.** Moses’ past sins affected his outlook and posture in life. What temptations tend to come up repeatedly for you? What sins do you often commit? Ask the Lord to free you from those chains.
- ▶ **Focus on the present.** When you wake up each morning, start your day by submitting yourself to God and His plans.
- ▶ **Be accountable.** One of the best ways to overcome your shortcomings is by sharing them with others and inviting others to keep you accountable. In fact, this is one of the key attributes to being a disciple of Christ—building relationships with others and living unashamed. Who can you ask to keep you accountable in your walk with Christ?

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 96 of the PSG:

You and I have shortcomings. It’s true. Even so, you and I are valued members of God’s kingdom. We have the chance each day to work for Him as He equips and encourages us to make a difference.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking God for the grace He has shown in your life. Pray that you and your group members will embrace God’s call both now and in the future.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

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