

## GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

**DISCUSS:** Draw attention to the picture on **PSG, page 104** as you introduce **Question #1:**

**When have you accomplished something you didn't think you could do?**

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG, page 105**. Highlight the author's statement that God takes us just as we are—broken vessels with blemishes and weaknesses and accomplishes what we never thought was possible.

**SAY:** "Today we look at how God works in our lives in spite of our limitations."

Reinforce that God wants us to be available to Him despite our limitations by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 105): God will work through us despite our shortcomings.**

**PRAY:** Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask for God's guidance to see how He might use us just like we are for His purposes.

## SESSION 2

# OBJECTIONS OVERRULED



### ***The Point***

God will work through us despite our shortcomings.

### ***The Bible Meets Life***

We don't have to look far to find someone who can do something better than we can. Because our culture puts a lot of value on talents and skills, we can be tempted

to make comparisons and think we are not as important or significant. God doesn't judge by such standards. He doesn't need whatever we consider our assets nor is He concerned about whatever we consider our limitations; He just wants us. Our weaknesses do not override what God can—and will—do through us to accomplish His purposes.

### ***The Passages***

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

### ***The Setting***

Fleeing the Pharaoh of Egypt after murdering an Egyptian for abusing a Hebrew slave, Moses had settled in the land of Midian (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 (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 (vv. 7-10).

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## Exodus 3:11-12

**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.”

**KEY WORDS:** **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.

### *God is with you.*

**Verse 11.** The Hebrews (Israelites) had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years (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 (Ex. 2:1-10). Later he became a wanted man after killing an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew slave (Ex. 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-29). Moses fled that country and went to the land of Midian, where he met a priest named Jethro and married one of his daughters. Moses then settled in to the life of a shepherd, taking care of Jethro’s flock for about 40 years (Ex. 2:15-22; Acts 7:29-30).

While shepherding the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, one day Moses “led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God” (Ex. 3:1). At Mount Horeb Moses encountered **God** through a burning bush (v. 2). God introduced Himself as the God of Moses’ ancestors, “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (v. 6). God noted He was aware of the suffering of the Israelites, His people (v. 7). God informed Moses that He had a plan to deliver the **Israelites** from bondage and lead them to an abundant land where they would be free (v. 8). God then commissioned Moses to go back to **Egypt** to “lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt” (v. 10).

Moses, however, didn’t seem convinced this was a good plan—at least not his involvement in it. He had been a fugitive in Egypt. The Egyptian Pharaoh at the time had tried to kill Moses after the homicide incident (2:15). Whether Moses knew that the previous Pharaoh had died was unimportant (v. 23). He now had a family and was living the free life of a shepherd in another country. Most likely he had

## STUDY THE BIBLE

### Exodus 3:11-12



10 minutes

**SUMMARIZE:** Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on **page 108**.

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG page 106**, to the bulleted list of reasons why Moses might have had “issues.”

- *Separated from his mother as an infant because a death sentence hung over his head.*
- *His birth mother nursed him, but then handed him over to a different woman who adopted him and raised him.*
- *He committed murder, then fled to a foreign country where he took on a whole new way of life.*

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read Exodus 3:11-12.

**SAY:** Moses' response to God, "Who am I . . .?" may have been an expression of humility or a reflection of poor self-identity."

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 1** for more information on God's promises, "I will certainly be with you," and the sign He would send him, to confirm that He would lead the people to this very place to worship God.

**GUIDE:** Refer members to **Key Words** on page 109 and in **PSG, p. 106:** *This mountain,* for more information on Mount Horeb (or Sinai).

**DISCUSS: Question #2 (PSG, p. 107):** **When have you felt inadequate to do something God wanted you to do?**

*(Alternate: When have you felt certain that God was with you?)*

**TRANSITION:** "In the next verses Moses offered excuses as to why he was the wrong guy for the job."

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. His objections, however, initially took the form of questions to God. Moses began by questioning his adequacy for such a role: "**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 (which is noted in Num. 12:3) or could have reflected a poor self-identity. In the previous 40 years he had gone from a prince who once had it all to a shepherd who had very little. He certainly had no clout or influence with Pharaoh, perhaps the most powerful man on earth, and probably had very little with anyone else but his wife and son. As for leadership, his only skills in this area were leading sheep in the wilderness.

**1 ▶ Verse 12.** For this and every other objection, 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 destroyed almost all of humanity in the flood (chs. 6–8), and who delivered His people during the great famine several centuries before this (chs. 45–47). God's presence would guarantee the success of the mission. However inadequate Moses may have felt, God would provide all the support and assistance Moses would need. This promise should have been the end of the conversation and answered all of Moses' concerns about responding to God's call.

Based on Moses' next question (Ex. 3:13) 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. ◀

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## Exodus 4:10-12

**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.”

**KEY WORDS:** **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.

**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 (Ex. 3:13–4:9).

**2** ▶ 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—such as stuttering—that would have hindered his communication? Was there some emotional issue—perhaps extreme introversion accompanied by a fear of speaking in public? Was there a language barrier—maybe Moses had forgotten either the Hebrew or the Egyptian language that would have been essential for conversation? Or was this simply another expression of his humility—more of the “I am unworthy” objection that seemed to be prevalent (and somewhat expected) in the Middle Eastern culture when being considered to lead such a great mission (see Acts 7:22)?

## STUDY THE BIBLE

### Exodus 4:10-12



10 minutes

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read Exodus 4:10-12.

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG, p. 108** to the bulleted list of possible explanations of Moses’ speech problem:

- *Maybe it was psychological.*
- *Maybe it was educational.*
- *Maybe it was a speech impediment.*

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 2** on this page and **page 112** to explain some of the possible explanations of why Moses described himself as not eloquent his mouth and tongue being sluggish.

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **Key Words** on this page and in **PSG, p. 108:** *My mouth and my tongue are sluggish*, for explanation of this phrase.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 3** to provide more information on God's response to Moses' excuse.

**DISCUSS: Question #3**  
(PSG, p. 109): **How do these verses help us understand the way God uses us to accomplish His plans?**

*(Alternate: Why might people feel they are beyond the point of usefulness in God's kingdom?)*

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: IN ADVANCE,** prepare two wood 2 x 4s by screwing two Phillips head screws halfway into the wood. Provide two screw drivers (1 flathead and 1 Phillips). Ask for two volunteers to compete to see who can be first to drive a screw all the way into the wood.

Conduct the contest. Ask the contestants to describe their experiences.

Explain that using the wrong tool can be frustrating. Each tool was uniquely created to be used for a specific task.

Say: "In the same way, God uniquely created each of us for a specific task."

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. Maybe his heavy mouth and heavy tongue (the literal meaning of the Hebrew words) actually made verbal communication difficult for him and his listeners. ◀

**3 ▶ Verse 11.** Despite the continued objections Moses raised, God did not take offense. With His rhetorical questions 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 which 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.**" God's words are a reminder of the old adage: God is concerned about our availability, not our ability. 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. ◀

Sometimes we are so confident of our abilities that we ignore God and think we can easily carry out a great task on our own. Yet when God calls us to a mission we often feel (and perhaps protest to Him) that we don't have what it takes to carry out His will. Yet if we go with His commission and are accompanied by His presence (which is always the case), just like Moses we have everything we need.

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## **Exodus 4:13-17**

**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."

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

**God equips you with all you need.**

**Verse 13.** Moses had ended his objections. Depending on one's perspective, he either had no more ritual protests or no more excuses to offer to God. With his words in this verse, however, Moses seemed to reveal what was really in his heart. As politely as he could, Moses replied, "**Please, Lord, send someone else.**" He may have felt someone else—perhaps a natural, outgoing leader or an articulate and persuasive speaker—would have been better suited to lead God's mission. In any case, it is evident Moses didn't want the responsibility. So he effectively but respectfully refused God's call and rejected His will.

**TRANSITION:** "Next, Moses took a different, more direct approach in his response to God."

## **STUDY THE BIBLE** **Exodus 4:13-17**



**15 minutes**

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read Exodus 4:13-17.

**LEADER PACK:** Point to **Item 9: Responses to God's Call.**



**SAY:** "Most followers of Jesus have responded to God in each of these ways at some point in their discipleship journey. What about you?"

**DISCUSS: Question #4**  
**(PSG, p. 110): When have you felt like asking God to send someone else?**

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 4** to give further explanation to the phrase “the Lord’s anger burned against Moses.”

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **Key Words** on **PSG, p. 110 (Leader Guide page 113): The Levite**, to explain Moses and Aaron’s family heritage.

**GUIDE:** For more information about Aaron, refer group members to “**Digging Deeper**” on **PSG page 110: “Aaron: Moses’ Older Brother.”**

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 5** to give further explanation about Aaron, and the term *Levite*.

**4 ▶ 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 found almost 300 times in the Old Testament. It is used to describe the anger both of God and humans. When applied to God, *anger* is never unpredictable or unjustified. Rather, it is 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. This was the original sin in the garden of Eden, where both Eve and Adam decided to trust their own thinking (which was prompted by the serpent) rather than the truth God had told them. Moses followed their example, trusting himself and his own thoughts instead of God and His word. 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. God’s grace, however, didn’t relieve Moses of the responsibility to carry out the mission. ◀

**5 ▶** The Lord then 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 (Ex. 2:4), this is the first time Scripture mentions **Aaron**, who we later learn was three years older than Moses (7:7). Like Moses (2:1), Aaron was a **Levite**, which refers to a descendant of Levi (Jacob’s third son, 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. Where Aaron had been previously is unknown, though most likely it was in Egypt. Likewise it is unknown how he was able to leave Egypt assuming he was a slave like all the other Israelites. Certainly God could have brought about his escape or release to meet with Moses and play an integral part in the deliverance of His people. Later in the chapter when the meeting between Moses and Aaron is described, it is also revealed that Aaron’s seeking Moses was not by Aaron’s own desire, but was at the command of God. “Now the LORD had said to Aaron, ‘Go and meet Moses in the wilderness.’ So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him” (Ex. 4:27). ◀

**6 ▶ Verse 15.** God went on to reveal what would happen in the future. God’s mission would come about exactly as God had planned. And while Moses would be there to see it through, because of Moses’ hesitancy to accept God’s call,

his role would be a bit different from what God had originally described. Moses would be the leader, but Aaron would serve as his mouthpiece. This was God's grace to Moses—he would have a human companion who would accompany him and help him. 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. While the mission began as God said, where Moses told Aaron what to say, Moses later took the lead and spoke to Pharaoh and the Israelites on his own. Even so, Moses lost the honor of initially being recognized as God's spokesman to the Israelites. ◀

**Verse 17.** Moses had been holding his **staff** when he first encountered God on the mountain. This long, smooth stick was unique to the shepherd's vocation and, along with the club-like rod, was one of the most important tools the shepherd used. It was carefully carved and fashioned to fit the owner; thus it personally identified the individual shepherd. The staff often had a slight crook on the end. This staff was the shepherd's constant companion—it served as his walking aide, was used to gently guide the flock, and to pull or lift a sheep from danger or difficulty.

One of Moses' earlier questions (protests or objections) about God's call related to what he would do if the Israelites didn't believe him (Ex. 4:1). God told Moses to throw his staff on the ground. When he did it became a snake and Moses ran away from it. Then God instructed him to grab the snake by the tail and when he did so, it became a staff again. God noted that Moses could later use the staff in a similar manner to confirm to the people that God indeed had sent him (vv. 2-5).

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.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible**

**Commentary 6** on page 114 and this page to explain the way Moses and Aaron would function as a team, with Moses as leader, and Aaron as his mouthpiece.

**DISCUSS:** **Question #5 (PSG, p. 112): How has God helped you do something you didn't think you could do?**

*(Alternate: What are some fears that tend to paralyze you?)*

**DO:** Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity **"Am I Available to God?"** on **PSG page 112.**

## LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

**GUIDE:** Emphasize **The Point:**  
**God will work through us despite our shortcomings.**

**REVIEW:** Review **Live It Out** (PSG, p. 113; see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

## WRAP IT UP

**GUIDE:** Emphasize that God knows everything about us: our past, strengths, weaknesses, failures, bad habits, etc. He still chooses to call us and use us for His purposes.

**PRAY:** "Father, help us to be ready and willing to respond to You by saying 'Yes, I'll go, I'll do whatever you ask me to do' whenever You call on us to serve You."

## LIVE IT OUT

It's easy to approach God with a "But, what if?" or "But, what about?" posture. Consider applying the point of this session by doing one of the following.

- ▶ **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 praying something like, "Lord, here I am. I ask that You would use me today. Please speak to me and through me today. I offer up to You the work that I need to accomplish, as well as every interaction I have."
- ▶ **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. Whom can you ask to keep you accountable in your walk with Christ?



BIBLICAL  
**ILLUSTRATOR**



Snakes were objects of worship in ancient Egypt. Sandstone relief showing Setau, viceroy under Ramesses II, making an offering to the serpent goddess Renenetet; dated to the 19th Dynasty, about 1279–1213 B.C. When Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, his staff became a snake and ate the snakes of the Egyptian magicians.

Amram and Jochebed had three children that we know by name: Aaron, Miriam and Moses (Ex. 2:1; 6:20; Num. 26:59). The text calls Aaron “Moses’ brother” 11 times, probably revealing that Aaron owed his position primarily to his relationship to Moses.

Aaron was called Aaron “the Levite” (Ex. 4:14), probably not meaning “from the tribe of

Levi” because Moses was also. The term “the Levite” seems to indicate that Aaron was already serving in a priestly capacity even before the exodus. As “the Levite” Aaron was probably the preeminent Levite, the apparent and recognized leader of the Levites. The Bible describes Aaron as having impeccable Levitical credentials (6:14-25), and Yahweh spoke to him directly (4:1-2).

Aaron was to gather manna to be placed “before Yahweh” in the sanctuary before the ark (16:33-34). Aaron and his sons were to keep the lamps burning in the tent of meeting. Yahweh instructed Moses of the steps to ordain and clothe Aaron as the high priest. For all of his flaws, Aaron is still highly significant in God’s redemption story. He inaugurated Israel’s formal priesthood and served faithfully as its first high priest.

The excerpt above is from the article “Aaron: Moses’ Older Brother” (Spring 2016), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*People often respond to God’s offer of salvation with objections. The good news is that God overrules our objections with His love.*

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, “Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All,” on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.

**GROUPS  
MATTER.**

Grow with other group leaders at the **Groups Ministry blog.**

[LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry](http://LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry)