

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

SAY: “In our last session, we looked at the way Jesus restores us when we fail. Today we look specifically at how God works through us despite our shortcomings.” Invite members to turn to **page 3** in the **Personal Study Guide (PSG)** and review session titles.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture (**PSG, p. 104**) as you introduce **Question #1: When have you accomplished something you didn't think you could do?**

OPTION: IN ADVANCE, to introduce the topic of excuses, play the Nike® “No Excuses” commercial featuring Matt Scott. Afterwards, share that Scott played wheelchair basketball on the college level and competed on the U.S. Paralympic Basketball team. A link to this clip can be found at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra.

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).

Exodus 3:11-12

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

KEY WORDS

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

God is with you.

The Hebrews (Israelites) had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years (Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6). Born a Hebrew, **Moses** was brought up in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter (Ex. 2:1-10). Later he became a wanted man after killing an Egyptian he observed “smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.” Moses fled that country and “dwelt in the land of Midian,” where he met a priest named Jethro and married one of his daughters, Zipporah. “Moses was content” to live as a shepherd, staying in Midian and taking care of Jethro’s flock for about 40 years (Ex. 2:11-22; Acts 7:23-30).

As “Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law,” one day “he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb” (Ex. 3:1). At Mount Horeb “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (v. 2). “God called unto him,” saying, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (vv. 4,6). God acknowledged He had “seen the affliction of [His] people” (v. 7). God informed Moses He had “come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians” and lead them to a good land where they would be free (v. 8). God commissioned Moses to “go unto Pharaoh” to “bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt” (v. 10).

Moses, however, didn’t seem convinced this was a good plan—at least not his involvement in it. After he killed the Egyptian taskmaster, the pharaoh at that time had “sought to slay Moses,” and the Hebrew had become a fugitive (2:15).

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 105)**. Highlight the author’s illustration of his children’s artwork and their pride in their accomplishment. Make the point that as we grow up, we may forget that God takes us as we are—broken vessels who “color outside the lines.”

Reinforce the importance of making ourselves available by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 105): God will work through us despite our shortcomings**.

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us focus on making ourselves available to be used by Him. Thank Him for involving us in His great mission.

STUDY THE BIBLE Exodus 3:11-12



10 minutes

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

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 3:11-12.

GUIDE: Use **Bible**

Commentary **1** and

KEY WORDS on page 109

(PSG, p. 106) to give more background on Mount Horeb (Sinai).

SUMMARIZE: Point out the scenarios that could have caused Moses to have “issues” (PSG, pp. 106-107).

- You were separated from your mother as an infant because a death sentence hung over your head.
- Your birth mother nursed you, but then you were handed over to a different woman who adopted you and brought you up.
- You committed murder then fled to a foreign country where you took on a whole new way of life.

What’s amazing is that God wants to work through us despite our shortcomings and failures. He is looking for those who will walk with Him in faithfulness and humility. Obedience to God, trust in Him, and willingness to go trumps our own competence and talent.

Whether Moses knew 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. He likely had no desire to return to the place where there was a possibility he could be brought to justice and put to death.

Verse 11. So Moses protested God’s call. His objections, however, initially took the form of questions to God. Moses first questioned his adequacy for such a role: **Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?** In the previous 40 years he had gone from being a prince who 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. As for leadership, his only skills in this area were leading sheep in the wilderness.

Verse 12. For this and every other objection, God had a response. Rather than save the best for last, God immediately promised, **Certainly I will be with thee.** This word came from the God who created all things (Gen. 1–2), who destroyed almost all of humanity in the flood (Gen. 6–8), and who delivered His people during the great famine several centuries earlier (Gen. 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.

Moses’ question in verse 13 may have revealed uncertainty about this promise from God—or about God Himself. Moses may have known about God from his ancestors, but after 400 years of slavery the Israelites may have wondered if God really cared for them or if He even existed. 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.

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

Exodus 4:10-12

10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

KEY WORDS

slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (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 continued to question God concerning His identity and what Moses was to tell the Israelites about God; and later, what the Israelites might expect to experience as they left Egypt, and how Moses would respond to any objections from the people (Ex. 3:13–4:9).

2 ▶ None of God's responses, however, seemed to be enough for Moses. The reluctant shepherd had yet another objection. Part of Moses' mission included meeting with the Hebrew elders as well as with Pharaoh and speaking God's words to them. Moses was greatly concerned about this aspect of the task. He protested, **O my Lord, I am not 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? Did he have some emotional issue—perhaps he suffered from *glossophobia*; that is, extreme 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 Middle Eastern culture when being considered to lead such a great mission (see Acts 7:22)?

Moses referred to his whole life as he downplayed his speaking ability. He also noted that not even **since thou**

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

(Alternate: *When have you especially felt God's presence?*)

TRANSITION: “Moses had more excuses in the next verses, but God had an affirming response for him.”

STUDY THE BIBLE Exodus 4:10-12



10 minutes

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Exodus 4:10-12.

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** on this page and page 112 as well as **KEY WORDS (PSG, p. 108)** to explain the expression *slow of speech and of slow tongue*.

SUMMARIZE: Use the bulleted comments from **PSG pages 108-109** to further explain what Moses might have meant by saying he was “slow of speech, and of a slow tongue”:

- **Maybe it was psychological.** *A lot of people can relate to that. They don't like to speak in public; in fact, many are terrified at the idea of saying something in front of others.*
- **Maybe it was educational.** *Even though Moses grew up in the house of Pharaoh, maybe he didn't feel he could talk on their level anymore. Maybe after 40 years in the wilderness, Moses felt his skills with the Egyptian language were too rusty.*
- **Maybe it was a speech impediment.** *Moses may have had a stutter or other limitation that made him anxious when speaking in front of others.*

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 3** on this page and page 113 to remind group members that God is not concerned about our *ability* but our *availability*.

hast spoken unto thy servant through the burning bush had the reality changed that he was **slow of speech and of a slow tongue**. 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. ◀

Verse 11. Despite Moses' continued objections, God did not take offense. With His rhetorical questions God did, however, remind Moses of an important fact: He is the Creator. God **hath made man's mouth**. It is God who gave human beings the ability to speak, to express themselves through verbal communication. He also made **the ... deaf, ... the seeing, and the blind**. [Note: This is not the place to delve into questions about whether God intentionally causes people to have disabilities. Leaders should be sensitive to those dealing with issues regarding human suffering. The question of “Why did God allow this to happen to me (or to 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.

3 ▶ Verse 12. God wrapped up the conversation when He commanded Moses, **Now therefore go**. Essentially God was saying, “I've heard enough of your objections and protests. Be on your way.” Even so, God added another promise to the commission: **I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt 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. ◀

Exodus 4:13-17

13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

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, **O, my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.** 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.

Verse 14. At this admission of his unwillingness to heed God's call, **the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.** The Hebrew word for *anger* in this verse is found almost 300 times in the Old Testament. It is used to describe

DISCUSS: Question #3
(PSG, p. 109): **What do these verses teach us about our place in God's plans?**

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

TRANSITION: "We'll see that Moses continued to protest in the next verses, but God remained firm in His response."

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



15 minutes

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

DISCUSS: Question #4
(PSG, p. 110): How would you summarize the root of Moses' objections throughout these passages?

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 4** to describe Aaron, his relationship to Moses, and why it was significant that he was a Levite.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 5** on page 115 as well as **DIGGING DEEPER** on **PSG page 111** to describe the significance Moses' rod would play in God's mission.

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.

4 ▶ The Lord then reminded Moses of his older **brother**, whom he likely had not seen in some 40 years. We knew from Moses' birth narrative that Moses had an older sister (Ex. 2:4), but 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 been acquainted with his brother, God knew all about him; for example, God told Moses Aaron could **speak well**. God also revealed that Aaron **cometh forth to meet** Moses, and would **be glad in his heart** when he saw his brother. Where Aaron had been before that time is unknown, but it most likely was in Egypt. Likewise, we don't know how he had been 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. When the meeting between Moses and Aaron is described later in the chapter, the writer also revealed that Aaron's seeking Moses was not by Aaron's own desire, but was at God's command. "The LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him" (Ex. 4:27). ◀

Verse 15. God went on to reveal that His mission would come about exactly as He had planned. And while Moses would be there to see it through, because he had hesitated to accept God's call, his role would be a bit different from what God had originally described. In God's grace, Moses still would be the leader, but Aaron would accompany him

and help him by serving as his mouthpiece. As God’s prophet, Moses would first hear the word from the Lord. Then Moses would **speak unto Aaron and put words in his mouth**, and Aaron would do the talking. God promised **I ... will teach you what ye shall do**.

Verse 16. God reiterated the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Moses had questioned whether the elders of the people would believe God’s message as Moses related it to them. Now that would be a moot point because Aaron would **be ... spokesman unto the people** and relay God’s message as received by Moses. Aaron would serve as Moses’ **mouth**.

The Lord then noted that Moses would **be to him instead of 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.

5 ▶ Verse 17. Moses had been holding his **rod** 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. God told Moses to throw his rod on the ground. When he did “it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it” (Ex. 4:3) Then God instructed him to grab the snake by the tail; when he did so, “it became a rod” again. God instructed Moses to use the staff in a similar manner to confirm to the people that God indeed had sent him (vv. 1-5).

As their conversation drew to an end, God told Moses to be sure to **take** his staff on the mission. Moses would use it to **do 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. ◀

DISCUSS: Question #5
(PSG, p. 112): **How has God used others in your life to accomplish His purposes?**

(Alternate: What steps can we take to support one another in following God?)

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 9: Responses to God’s Call**. Ask a volunteer to read the elements of the poster aloud. Challenge group members to evaluate their own level of readiness to obey God’s call.



DO: Invite volunteers to share responses to the activity on **PSG page 112: “Equipped for Service.”**

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 again that God is far more concerned about our availability than our ability.

PRAY: "Father, help us to see where You are at work and to make ourselves available to be used by You for the advance of Your kingdom."

NOTE: Remind group members that **PSG pages 6-9** are there to journal one another's prayer requests.

LIVE IT OUT

It's easy to approach God with a posture that asks: "But, what if?" or "But, what about?" Choose one of the following applications instead:

- ▶ **Deal with the past.** Moses' past sins affected his outlook and posture in life. What temptations tend to come up repeatedly for you? Ask the Lord to free you from those chains.
- ▶ **Focus on the present.** When you wake up, 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 help keep you accountable. This is one of the key attributes to being a follower of Jesus—building relationships with others and living unashamed.

Knowing that God uses us as we are takes the pressure off. When He calls us, He equips us to do what He needs done for His glory!

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 Renenutet; 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](http://GroupsMinistry.com) blog.

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry