

MOSES: FULFILLING YOUR PURPOSE WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL WORTHY

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Prepare:

This study will examine Moses' fears and insecurities as he wrestled with God's call to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt. Participants will consider how they can fulfill God's purposes by placing their trust in him, even when they don't feel worthy.

Read: Exodus 1-4 in advance, paying special attention to chapters 3 and 4.

Highlight in your Bible, the selected verses the group will be reading aloud together.

Review the *Engage* section to determine if you would like to use one or both of the suggested activities. Make copies of one or both handouts, as needed.

Materials Needed:

Bible

Pen

Selected handouts.

Dry erase board, chalkboard, or large flip chart

Soft background music for Activity 2.

Immerse:

When we think about some of the most well-known biblical figures, we often marvel at their great faith and the ways in which God used them. We tend to remember them at the high points of their "careers." We think of Abraham holding a knife above Isaac, preparing to do the unthinkable because of God's command. We think of David taking the battlefield to stand up to the towering Philistine who taunted the armies of the living God. We think of Moses boldly storming before

Pharaoh, declaring "Let my people go!"

Certainly, we've read the stories where these same individuals failed in some way. We know Abraham slept with his wife's maid in an attempt to bring about God's promise on his own terms, and we know of David's indiscretion with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Yet, these same individuals are still remembered as great biblical heroes and pillars of faith. **We recognize how God was able to use them in spite of their failures to bring about God's purposes. Rarely, however, do we think God could do the same with us.**

Our inadequacies, insecurities, and failures are often all that we can see. We might wonder if we are good enough mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, or friends. We worry that we are not smart enough, pretty enough, or patient enough. We often think God is disappointed with us and know we could be much better disciples. We might even wonder if God can use us despite all of our shortcomings.

Perhaps, we think we are too old, too young, or too inexperienced to do big things for the Kingdom. Perhaps, we worry that we don't have the right background, personality, or resources to do what God has called us to do. **All these thoughts could be summed up in one persistent question: "Am I good enough?" *1**

One of our great heroes of faith had this very same struggle. Remember Moses going before

Engage:

1. As a group, take a few minutes to brainstorm some responses to the following questions. Encourage the group that there are no right or wrong answers. Compile the responses on a dry erase board, chalkboard, or large flip chart.

- What are some of the purposes to which God calls us or might call us? Consider our purpose(s) as Christians, as believers in this specific congregation or group, and even as individuals.
- What are some ways that we can begin to make the shift in our thinking from, “Am I good enough?” to “Is God good enough?” (i.e. How can we recall God’s goodness, faithfulness, provision, and power in moments of doubt?)
- Why do you think so many people struggle with feeling worthy? Is there a specific area of your life where you struggle with feeling inadequate?
- How might we be able to encourage other women (or men) who struggle with feeling worthy?

Pharaoh to demand the freedom of the Israelites? In that moment, we imagine him as strong, bold, and fearless. If we go back a few chapters in Scripture, however, we see that Moses did not feel worthy. He was not so sure that God could use him for such a monumental purpose. Let’s read together the call that Moses receives when he encounters the Lord in the burning bush.

Read: Exodus 3:7-11

DISCUSS: Moses does not seem very confident that he could do what God was asking him to do. Why do you think Moses questioned God’s call and asks “Who am I?” What do you know about Moses’ background that would make this a difficult assignment?

Possible Answers: He fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. He had grown up in the household of Pharaoh and is not sure how he will be received upon his return. He is not sure if the Hebrew people will receive him as their leader or believe he was sent by God. He does not speak eloquently. Perhaps Moses fears for his own safety. Perhaps he is not ready to leave behind the life he has established in Midian with his family.

These are all possible reasons why Moses questioned God’s choosing of him to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. Let’s take a look at some other places in these couple of chapters where Moses questions, complains, and pleads with God.

Read: Exodus 3:13; 4:1, 10, 13

These questions and complaints reveal something deep in the heart of Moses. He is overwhelmed by the task to which God is calling him. He has a great sense of his own inadequacy and doubts that anyone will listen to him. He even begs God to send anyone but him! He is asking, “**Am I good enough?**”

This question is something common to all human experience. We have all probably felt “less than” at some point in our lives. We may even be made aware of our personal shortcomings on a daily basis.

Because God had chosen Moses, we find several places in Exodus 3 and 4 where God provides answers to Moses’ questions and reassures him of his presence.

Read: Exodus 3:12, 14-15, 18a

Even though God promises to be with him and assures him that he will succeed in his assignment, Moses continues to doubt that the Hebrew people will listen to him. God then provides a miraculous sign so that the people will believe. Might this sign also have been provided to bolster Moses’ faith?

Read: Exodus 4:2-5

The Lord gave Moses a tangible reminder of his power and presence. God wanted Moses to know that he would go before him and make the way. God asks a simple question: “What is that in your hand?” Moses replies that he holds a staff—something he would have carried with him all the time as he pastured the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro (Exodus 3:1). Because God provided it as a sign, that staff was to become a reminder of God’s goodness, God’s faithfulness, and God’s provision. As Moses held onto the staff each day, he would also be holding onto God’s promises.

The staff was a reminder to Moses to ask a different question. Instead of, “Am I good enough?” the question should be, “Is God good enough?”

Is God good enough, true enough, and faithful enough to do what he says he will do? Do we believe that God will make a way for us to fulfill his purposes regardless of our doubts, fears, failures, and inability? Is God good enough? We should be able to answer with a resounding “Yes!” *2

It can certainly be difficult to take our eyes off of our weaknesses and focus on God’s strength. Not only did God give Moses the staff as a sign for the people to believe, God also gave Moses two other signs. He could put his hand into his cloak, remove it, and it would be leprous. Repeating the sequence, the hand would be restored. God told Moses he could also take water from the Nile, pour it out on the ground, and it would become blood. These signs were demonstrations of the power of God, and nothing Moses could have done on his own. But even with these two signs, Moses continued to protest.

Read: Exodus 4:10

And God had a response.

Read: Exodus 4:11-12

DISCUSS: Did God actually disagree with Moses about his speaking abilities? Explain.

Possible Answers: He didn’t deny Moses’ claim that he was a poor speaker, but it didn’t matter. It was irrelevant. The power was God’s, the authority was God’s, and Moses was to be a conduit, a vessel of God’s saving grace. God’s power transcends all those places where we don’t measure up.

In whatever way you feel your own inadequacy, God can make a way. God did not deny that Moses had a weakness, but he was going to use him anyway! Paul explains this concept in 2 Corinthi-

Engage:

2. While it might be easy to intellectually assent to the idea that God is good enough, how difficult do you think it is to switch the focus of our thinking from ourselves to God? Why?

Engage:

3. When we think of what God wants to accomplish through our lives, we often see ourselves as empty-handed. It simply is not true! God will provide and equip us for the work he wants us to do. Often, God's provision and God's equipping look quite ordinary...like a staff. Imagine God asking you, just as he asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?"

In a time of quiet reflection, perhaps with soft music playing in the background, invite participants to prayerfully consider how God has uniquely shaped them to fulfill his purposes. Encourage them to reflect on the questions below. If time permits, allow participants to share responses as they feel comfortable.

This activity could also be given to participants to take home and reflect on throughout the week.

- What personal experiences have you had that would allow you to relate to others and bring hope to the hurting?
- What skills, gifts, and resources do you have that can be of service to the Body of Christ?
- How has God uniquely shaped your personality to share life and share Christ?

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Read: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Am I good enough? Probably not. Is God good enough? Yes, his grace is sufficient for you, for me, and for all of us!

Don't misunderstand. You are valuable, you are made in God's image, and he wants you to follow him, but none of us can do that in our own power. Whatever doubts we have, we must surrender them to him.

Sadly, it seems Moses can't get past his doubts. In Exodus 4:13, Moses says, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will" (NASB). Moses is essentially saying, "Anyone but me!" *Even then*, God does not give up on Moses. He does not say, "Fine, I'll choose someone else." He does, however, provide Aaron to serve as Moses' mouthpiece (Exodus 4:14-16). You have to wonder, though, if Moses missed out on some blessing because he didn't fully believe that God was good enough to use him in spite of his weaknesses.

We must remember that God uses the weak to confound the strong. When we don't feel worthy, let's turn the focus away from ourselves. Even when we have significant doubts, God still wants to use us. And why does he want to use us?

He wants to use us because his children are crying out in the bonds of slavery today, even as they cried out to God from the deserts of Egypt. He wants to send *us* to set them free. When we would sooner abandon our mission than go on even with our doubts, we must pick up the staff, the reminder of God's goodness.

With each step, we must tell ourselves, "He is good enough. He is faithful enough. He can use me. He loves me. He loves them. He will make a way. He is with me!"

As Moses finally accepts God's commission, he goes to his father-in-law to say goodbye. Let's take a look at what the Scripture says.

Read: Exodus 4:20

Moses took the staff of God in his hand! The staff of God, with which he would perform the signs, was a powerful symbol of God's power and presence. We, too, must cling to God's promises.

Maybe you sense God calling you to do something or to fulfill a specific purpose, but you have doubts. You might think, "I'm not smart enough, I'm not holy enough, I'm not caring enough, or I'm not dedicated enough. I don't have the right background, the right skills, or the right heart. I don't think I have what it takes." We ask

ourselves over and over again, “Am I good enough?” *3

Whenever these doubts creep in and whenever you’re tempted to ask, “Am I good enough,” let the story of Moses remind you to ask a different question. Is God good enough? He certainly is, and he will equip you to accomplish the purposes he has for you! Rest in the knowledge today that God’s grace is sufficient for you.

Close in prayer. Thank God for his goodness and faithfulness in allowing and equipping us to fulfill his purposes.

Engage:

3. *(continued)*

- Who are the people walking beside you—encouraging, affirming, and helping you discover and work out your God-given purpose?