

# Moses Part 3 – Excuses, Excuses, Excuses! God Calls Moses



Exodus chapters 3 to 4

Moses was settled in the wilderness. For many years, he tended his father-in-law's sheep and adapted to life outside the privileges of the royal palace. God had other plans. In today's Bassline we'll consider the many excuses Moses gave when God called him to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptians. We'll think about whether we use the same kind of excuses and consider how Scripture can shift our focus from our perceived weakness to God's almighty power.

## **You will need:**

- 'Excuses, Excuses, Excuses' handout – cut into sets prior to the session
- Scripture references – cut into sets prior to the session



## **Beat**

### **Say:**

Today's Bassline explores what happened when God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses made many excuses as to why he shouldn't be the one to take the lead.

### **Leader's notes:**

The Beat activity gives the group the opportunity to make up a whole list of excuses. Split the group into two teams or into pairs, give each a piece of paper and ask them to number it 1 to 6. Read out the problems below one by one and ask the teams to come up with the best excuse they can think of. When you have been through all the scenarios, ask the teams for their answers one at a time. Award a point to the team you feel presented the best excuse for the situation. The winning team is the one with the most points.

1. You're late for class.
2. Your friends have asked you out to the cinema, but you don't want to go.

3. You haven't completed your homework.
4. A boy/girl you don't like asks you out on a date.
5. Your mum wants to know why your room is in such a mess ... again.
6. You got the worst mark in the class for your maths test.



**Ask:**

What's the best (or funniest) excuse you've ever heard or given? What was the situation?



**Leader's notes:**

If there are those in the group who have followed through the Moses series so far, then give them one minute to recap the story. We will try this activity every week, and it will get trickier to fit in all the facts as we move through the story of Moses.

**Say:**

We join Moses at this stage of the story at the grand old age of 80! Moses may have been ready for a relaxing retirement, but God had other plans.

**Read:**

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

<sup>2</sup> There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up.'

<sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'

And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

<sup>5</sup> 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' <sup>6</sup> Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

— (Exodus 3:1-6)

**Ask:**

- Why do you think God chose such a dramatic way to get Moses' attention?
- How did Moses react? How do you think you would have reacted?
- Place yourself in Moses' position. How would this scene impact your senses?
- How did Moses react to God's call?
- Why do you think God described who he was?

**Read:**

<sup>7</sup> The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey - the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

— (Exodus 3:7-10)

**Ask:**

- What had God seen?
- What had God heard?
- What did God say he was going to do about what he had seen and heard?

**Say:**

God chose Moses to bring the people of Israel out of slavery, but Moses had different ideas.

**Ask:**

- Read verse 11. How did Moses react to God's calling?
- Read verses 14-15. How did God reassure Moses?

**Say:**

We will explore the many different excuses given by Moses in our Sound Check section, but for now, we'll focus on what God was calling Moses to do.

**Read:**

<sup>16</sup> 'Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, "The Lord, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. <sup>17</sup> And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites - a land flowing with milk and honey."

<sup>18</sup> 'The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take

a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God.”<sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.<sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

<sup>21</sup> ‘And I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. <sup>22</sup> Every woman is to ask her neighbour and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.’

— (Exodus 3:16–22)

**Leader’s notes:**

Ask the group to imagine that they are summarising the main points of the ‘free the Israelites’ plan for Moses. Give them a couple of minutes to jot down the plan and then share it together.

**Ask:**

- In what ways did God reassure Moses that he was in control of the situation?
- Why do you think Moses was reluctant to follow the plan?

**Say:**

After continuing to doubt God’s calling on his life, Moses was given further reassurance by God.

**Read:**

<sup>2</sup> Then the Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’

‘A staff,’ he replied.

<sup>3</sup> The Lord said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’

Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to him, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.’ So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. <sup>5</sup> ‘This,’ said the Lord, ‘is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has appeared to you.’

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said, ‘Put your hand inside your cloak.’ So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous – it had become as white as snow.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Now put it back into your cloak,’ he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord said, ‘If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second. <sup>9</sup> But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.’

— (Exodus 4:2–9)

**Ask:**

Once again, place yourself in Moses’ position. Would these amazing signs and wonders have been enough to convince you to step up and follow God’s call? Explain your response.

**Say:**

After patiently reassuring Moses and listening to his endless excuses, God had had enough!

**Read:**

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.’

<sup>14</sup> Then the Lord’s anger burned against Moses and he said, ‘What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. <sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. <sup>16</sup> He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. <sup>17</sup> But take this staff in your hand so you can perform the signs with it.’

— (Exodus 4:13-17)

**Ask:**

Why do you think God was so angry?

**Say:**

Moses was out of excuses and returned to Egypt to save the people of Israel from their oppressors.



**Ask:**

What would God have to do to get your attention to take on a new mission for him?

## Sound Check

**Leader’s notes:**

For the Sound Check activity, the young people will reflect on the five excuses Moses gave to avoid God’s call and relate them to their own faith experience today. You can complete this activity as a whole group or in smaller groups, feeding back at the end of the Sound Check section. You will need a sheet of flipchart paper, the ‘Excuses, Excuses, Excuses’ handout cut up into sections and the Scripture references cut out in advance of the session.

**Step 1:**

Ask the group to read through the five excuses given by Moses and stick the cut-up sections around the piece of flipchart paper. After they have stuck down the headings, ask the young people to write examples of what these headings may look like in our modern-day church setting. For example, we may be asked to say a prayer in front of a group and make an excuse because we’re not sure what to say.

**Here are the five headings:**

**Feeling that we are not enough.**

**<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’**

— (Exodus 3:11)

**Feeling like we don’t have the answers.**

**<sup>13</sup> Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” Then what shall I tell them?’**

— (Exodus 3:13)

**Feeling that we will be rejected.**

**<sup>1</sup> Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The Lord did not appear to you”?’**

— (Exodus 4:1)

**Feeling insecure about speaking in public.**

**<sup>10</sup> Moses said to the Lord, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’**

— (Exodus 4:10)

**Not wanting to do what God has asked us to do!**

**<sup>13</sup> But Moses said, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.’**

— (Exodus 4:13)

**Say:**

When we are feeling insecure and afraid, we can turn to God’s word for courage and comfort. Moses focused on his own shortcomings instead of focusing on the God who had called him.

**Step 2:**

Give each group a set of Bible references to explore and assign to the different headings. The full Bible verses are shown below and assigned to the different headings, but the verses may link to more than one heading. They may also think of other verses that they can add to the flip chart.

**Bible Verses Linked to ‘Excuses, Excuses, Excuses’.**

**Feeling that we are not enough.**

**<sup>9</sup> But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in**

**weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.**

— (2 Corinthians 12:9)

**<sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.**

— (Psalm 139:14)

### **Feeling like we don’t have the answers.**

**<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.**

— (James 1:5)

**<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.**

— (Psalm 119:105)

### **Feeling afraid that we will be rejected.**

**<sup>10</sup> Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.**

— (Galatians 1:10)

**<sup>9</sup> I took you from the ends of the earth,  
from its farthest corners I called you.**

**I said, ‘You are my servant’;**

**I have chosen you and have not rejected you.**

**<sup>10</sup> So do not fear, for I am with you;**

**do not be dismayed, for I am your God.**

**I will strengthen you and help you;**

**I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

— (Isaiah 41:9-10)

### **Feeling insecure about speaking in public.**

**<sup>6</sup> ‘Alas, Sovereign Lord,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am too young.’ <sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am too young.” You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. <sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘I have put my words in your mouth.’**

— (Jeremiah 1:6-9)

**<sup>11</sup> When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, <sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**

— (Luke 12:11-12)

### **Not wanting to do what God has asked us to do!**

**<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’**

— (Isaiah 6:8)

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.**

— (Romans 12:1)

### **Step 3:**

Share what the group has discovered and discuss how God’s word can help us when we are tempted to make excuses. If the young people have their phones, then they could take a picture of their group’s flipchart paper to refer to at home.

### **Bridge**

#### **Say:**

Billy Sunday, an American professional baseball player who became an evangelist, said the following about excuses:

**‘An excuse is the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.’**

— Billy Sunday

#### **Ask:**

What do you think he meant, and do you agree/disagree?

### **Selah**

#### **Leader’s notes:**

In the Selah section, the young people will reflect on the five excuses given by Moses. Discuss with the group which excuses they tend to use in response to God’s call in their own lives. How do the related Scriptures encourage them to step out in faith for God?



Spend time either in silent or group prayer together, asking God to take away the excuses and empower the group to respond to whatever he is calling them to do.

## **Coda**

### **Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

### **Ask:**

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from the events in today's story?

### **Leader's notes:**

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





**Feeling that we are not  
enough.**

**Feeling like we don't have  
the answers.**

**Feeling that we will be  
rejected.**

**Feeling insecure about  
speaking in public.**

**Not wanting to do what  
God has asked us to do!**



**2 Corinthians 12:9**

**Isaiah 41:9-10**

**Psalms 139:14**

**Jeremiah 1:6-9**

**James 1:5**

**Luke 12:11-12**

**Psalms 119:105**

**Isaiah 6:8**

**Galatians 1:10**

**Romans 12:1**