

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Talk about excuses in general and why Moses was making his excuses
- Talk about how God responds to Moses' excuses
- Talk about how prayer is the main delivery system of God's support and encouragement for Moses

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *MacFarland USA*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Print out the "excuses" (located at end of lesson) and cut them into separate pieces of paper.

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps "warm us up" for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we're going to do that now.
- So here's the opening question for today's class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- ***Here's this week's question:*** If someone was going to tell you to do something that you didn't think you could or would want to do, who in your life would be most likely to convince you to do that thing and why?

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- We're wrapping up our session on Bible stories about prayer.
- We talked about prayer in the garden of gethsemane and then we talked about the Lord's prayer.
- Today, we're going to shift to the Old Testament and read a pretty well-known story: Moses and the burning bush.
- In that story, we'll see that Moses has a conversation with God.
- In that conversation, Moses makes a lot of excuses.

- But before we find out what happens, let's get warmed up for today's story and discussion with an opening activity involving excuses.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- I have six excuses printed out, here.
- And I'm going to put each one of them face up on the table
- Next, we're going to gather around the table, and put our hands behind our head
- I'll then read a situation that you won't be able to do...because of a certain excuse that I've put on the table, here.
- The activity, then, is that you slap the excuse for why you weren't able to do the thing in the situation.
- Each situation has a best excuse.
- First person to slap the "best" excuse gets a point.
- If you slap an excuse first, but it's not the best excuse, you lose a point.
- After six rounds, the person with most points win.
- Any questions?

Do ACTIVITY

Action to read: I'm going to be late to school because...

Matching excuse: ...the alarm didn't go off.

Action to read: I couldn't finish my homework because...

Matching excuse: ...I had too much homework in other classes.

Action to read: I didn't write my book report because...

Matching excuse: ...the movie wasn't on Netflix.

Action to read: I can't play in the soccer game today because...

Matching excuse: ...I have the flu.

Action to read: I can't get to the movie theater tonight because...

Matching excuse: ...I don't have a ride.

Action to read: I can't make the family reunion this year because...

Matching excuse: ...I'm going to Disney world!

ASK / TELL

- Well done, all, with your ability to make excuses!
- So...what do you think is the difference between an excuse and a reason? (an excuse is *usually* about avoiding responsibility, but *sometimes* a reason and an excuse can be the same thing)
- What are some reasons, do you think, that we make excuses? (don't want to get in trouble; couldn't actually do the thing but don't want to admit it; whatever happened wasn't actually your fault)

- So, like I said earlier, in our scripture story, we're going to see Moses making excuses during a conversation with God.
- Some information that might help before we read the story:
 - Today's scripture story takes place 40 years after Moses left Egypt
 - His people, the Israelites, have been and still are enslaved in and by Egypt
 - Moses left Egypt because he tried to free his people from the Egyptians in his own way. A violent way. And it didn't work.
 - So he ran away and made a simple life for himself as an outcast.
 - By the time this story is happening in Moses' life, then, he's 80 years old and living in the wilderness as a shepherd.
- Let's see what happens

READ Exodus 3:1-15; 4:1-5, 10-13 (*recommendation: Have class read it aloud; one person per verse*)

3:1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." 4When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

11But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this

mountain." 13But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

4:1 Then Moses answered, "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" 2The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." 3And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. 4Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail" —so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand— 5"so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

10But Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11Then the Lord said to him, "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." 13But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else."

ASK

- Verse 1: Where was Moses? (beyond the wilderness, at mount Horeb)
- Verse 2 and 3: What catches Moses' attention? (a burning bush that is not consumed)
- Verse 4: What does God do, once God sees that Moses is paying attention? (God speaks to Moses)
- Verse 5: What is the first thing that God has Moses do? (take off his sandals)
- Verse 6: How does God introduce God's self? (by association – "I'm with these people" If this seems strange, remember that at that time, the idea of there just being one God did not exist)
- Verse 10: What does God want Moses to do? (bring the Israelites out of Egypt)
- Sounds pretty good, right!? In verse 11, though, what does Moses think/say about that offer? (mmm no thanks)
- Verse 12: Does God respond to this concern? (Yes, by saying, "If you do this thing, you'll know it because it'll have happened")
- Verse 13: Is Moses convinced? (Nope)
 - Verse 14-15: Does God respond to Moses' concern? (Yes)
- Ch 4 v1: Is Moses on board with God's plan, yet? (Nope)
 - Ch 4 v2-5: Does God respond to Moses' concern? (Yes)
- Ch 4 v10: How about now – is Moses convinced he's the one to do God's plan? (Still no)
 - Ch 4 v11-12: Does God respond to Moses' concern? (Yes)
- Ch 4 v13: Is Moses convinced *now*? (Nope)

TELL

- There's a lot that happens in this story (as is usual in most of the Bible stories we read)
- But for this lesson, I want to focus on three things: Prayer as conversation, Moses' excuses, and how God responds to Moses' excuses.
- Let's start with the excuses.
- First, let's all agree that God is asking Moses to do a big thing. And a very difficult thing.
- And second, let's also agree that at least at one point in Moses' life, this (freeing the Israelites) *is* something that Moses wanted to see happen.
- So, why does Moses make excuses now that he's offered this opportunity? (any thoughts?)
- Those are all good responses – thank you for sharing your thoughts about it.
- Since the story doesn't tell us, we don't *really* know why Moses was making excuses.
- What's impressive, though, I think, is the 2nd thing to focus on today: How God responds to Moses' excuses.
- Despite Moses' excuses, God just keeps offering words of support and encouragement to Moses.
- And in those responses of support and encouragement, God is also addressing whatever fear and doubt that is driving Moses to give excuses in the first place.
- And the way that Moses receives these responses of support and encouragement is through prayer.
- Which is the third thing I want us to focus on.
- I know the story makes it sound like it is just two people talking, but I hope you choose to think of this as a story about prayer.
- Because, a lot of important things happen in Moses' prayer.
 - a) First, Moses receives / hears a task and direction that he is to embark upon (should he chose to listen).
 - b) Second, Moses gets a pep talk.
 - c) In that pep talk, God reminds Moses of who God is AND that God thinks Moses can do the task before him.

- Now, I know pep talks may not seem all that important, so to help remind us how helpful (and powerful) a pep talk *can* be, let's watch a movie clip.

INTRO TO VIDEO CLIP

- The movie clip we're going to watch is from MacFarland USA – it's based on a real-life story
- In it, a struggling coach found a job with a struggling school district and started a boys cross-country (running) team.
- The runners are from migrant families, who help their families with the farming when they aren't in school, so they don't have much time to give to running.
- The families are suspicious of the coach throughout the season and offer the coach little support.
- The school had no history of having a cross-country team and didn't give the team any money or help to get started.
- Despite all these barriers, within their very first year, the team made it to the California state championship
- The clip for today takes place just before they start their race for the state championship.
- They are pretty nervous and overwhelmed by the situation.
- But coach has something to tell them.
- Let's find out what it is.

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

TELL

- Sometimes, we don't know what we are capable of and sometimes we forget what we are capable of
- And sometimes, other people are there to remind us.
- But God is there to remind us *all* the time – and wants to remind us.
- And the way we hear what God wants to tell us about us, is by listening for God in prayer
- The listening part of prayer is the part of prayer that we haven't really talked about yet.
- For instance, if you think about the Lord's Prayer, we talked about what we should say
- But in that prayer, we also ask God that we would be able to do God's will. But how can we do God's will if we aren't listening for it? How can we receive God's help and our daily bread, if we're not listening for God's help to do that?
- And, if we have doubts about something, how do we hear God's encouraging and supportive words?
- The answer: By listening to God in prayer for those things!
- So yes, it is good and important to say words where we ask God for help.
- But it is also good and important to *listen* for God's response.
- Unfortunately, we don't have time in today's lesson to talk about *how* to listen in prayer, that's for another time.
- But, I hope that you leave class today knowing that listening in prayer is a real thing
- AND, that the things God is wanting us to hear are things we might actually *want* to listen for.
- That God is offering us words of encouragement, wisdom, and insight about ourselves and the situations we are facing.
- And that's the good news for today.

CLOSING PRAYER

Excuses for activity are on next page (to print out)

...I overslept.

...I have the flu.

**...I had too much
homework in other
classes.**

...I don't have a ride.

**...the movie wasn't on
netflix.**

**...I'm going to Disney
world!**