

OVERVIEW

God sometimes calls us to things we don't want to do or experience, but he doesn't do it without wanting to hear from us. In today's passage, students will learn about when God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and Moses had a very human response: he wasn't quite sure he was up to the task. Students will read about Moses' honesty with God and how God answered him. They'll learn that honesty with God isn't something to be feared or avoided, but something that actually helps strengthen our relationship with him. It can even be a way to worship God. After discussing why vulnerability matters and what's hard about it, students will be challenged to take action and practice being honest in their own relationships with God.

TEACHING

OPENING QUESTION

- What's a question you've always wanted to ask God?

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

We've all probably grown up learning that we need to be honest and not tell lies. But honesty goes beyond just not telling lies. Sometimes, like Moses, we're put in situations that make us uncomfortable or doubtful. When God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and asked him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses had some confidence issues and doubted anyone would listen to him. But he was honest and brought his issues before God.

Read Exodus 3:1–15 and 4:1–17.

God can handle our heartfelt questions. God gave Moses some pretty specific instructions, and Moses basically responded with, "Okay, but . . .". Moses asked God three questions that reveal he honestly brought his doubt to God: *Why me?*, *By whose authority?*, and *How?* He doubted his qualifications, his authority, and his ability. Instead of zapping Moses dead or getting upset with him, God heard the need behind his objections and addressed them. God assured Moses of his presence, his words, and even miraculous signs to prove to others that Moses was God's spokesperson. After all of this, Moses still said no (v. 13). And it was only then that God got angry—he welcomes our honesty, but not our disobedience.

Honesty helps us draw near to God. Relationships require honesty. Every earthly relationship of any kind can only grow stronger when we are honest—about our questions, our affections, our doubts, or our shortcomings. It's the same with God. When we're real with God, we strengthen our relationship with him. If you're questioning or doubting, tell God. If you're thankful, tell God. If you mess up, tell God. In both good things and bad, honesty with God is key. And it's actually a way we can worship God. When we honestly praise God or confess sin, we are acknowledging that God is God and we are not—that's worship.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE: Moses wasn't the only person in the Bible to argue with God. Jacob actually wrestled (physically) with God in Genesis 32:22–32. The sermon "Guilt and Grievance, Part 2" by Pastor Colin Smith on the topic of grievances against God could be a helpful resource to dive deeper into this idea.¹

A SECOND LOOK

Pick one of these illustrations to bring the topic to life:

Option 1: Honest Expression

We've all read poems, and whether or not you fully understand or appreciate poetry, poems are often a way for someone to honestly express themselves. Odes, a specific type of poem, are often dedicated to one specific thing or person. The poet crafts their words to honor and praise their subject. Sometimes odes are expressions of love or appreciation, sometimes they're full of regret or longing. But no matter what the subject or tone of the poem is, the feeling and emotion is real. Through their honesty, poets can strengthen their relationship with whoever they're writing about and whoever reads their work. In the same way, we can grow closer to God when we are honest with him—whether that's real praise, real regret, or real doubt.

DISCUSS:

- When have you honestly expressed yourself, whether through a poem or otherwise?
- How is honesty with God similar and different to writing an ode?
- Why is it important to be real with God?

Option 2: Vulnerability in Relationships

Brené Brown is a leading researcher and best-selling author who deals with the topics of courage, shame, and vulnerability. In one of her TED Talks, Brown points out two truths: that connection is one of the most important things, and that, "In order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen."² Being honest and vulnerable is not a natural thing for humans—it's uncomfortable and scary. But the truth is that without honesty, without being real, we jeopardize our ability to build relationships with other people. And if honesty is that important in our human connections, how much more important is it in our connection with God! When we allow ourselves to really be seen by God (who already sees all parts of us and loves us anyway), we are allowing ourselves to draw nearer to him and strengthen that relationship.

DISCUSS:

- Do you agree with Brené Brown that we can't connect with people unless we are honest and vulnerable? Why or why not?
- Why does it matter if we're honest with God when he already knows everything about us anyway?
- How can you work on letting yourself be seen by God?

THE TAKEAWAY

Honesty in relationships is important. We can be real with God—he can handle it.

APPLICATION

DISCOVER

- When have you taken the risk of being honest with someone, and how did you feel about your decision after the fact?

THE BIBLE IN YOUR LIFE

God tells Moses to risk his life by going back and ordering the release of the Israelites—and Moses was petrified. Moses laid out his fears, asked questions, and was brutally honest with God, and in the end, he obeyed. We can follow Moses' example of being real with God, bringing our doubts and our praises to him in honest worship.

Read Exodus 3:1–15 and 4:1–17, then answer the following questions.

DISCUSS:

- How did God handle Moses' objections (both his honesty and his disobedience)?
- Have you ever asked God any heartfelt questions? What happened?
- What's encouraging about the truth that you can be real with God?
- In what areas of your life is it hardest to be honest with God?

APPLY IT

In the previous discussion, you just identified areas of your life where it's hard to be honest with God. Pick one area to focus on this week. How can you draw near to God by being completely honest with him?

BE SPECIFIC:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

PRAYER

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks.

A QUOTE TO THINK ABOUT

"If we can't bring our real selves to the real God, who else can we turn to? He will hold us and be near."
– Rend Collective³

THE TAKEAWAY

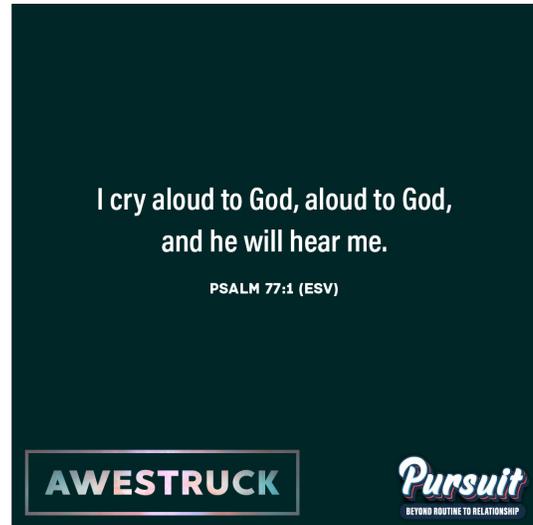
Honesty in relationships is important. We can be real with God—he can handle it.

WAYS TO FOLLOW UP

Here are some tools that you can use to follow up with your students throughout the week. For example, send any of the graphics included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

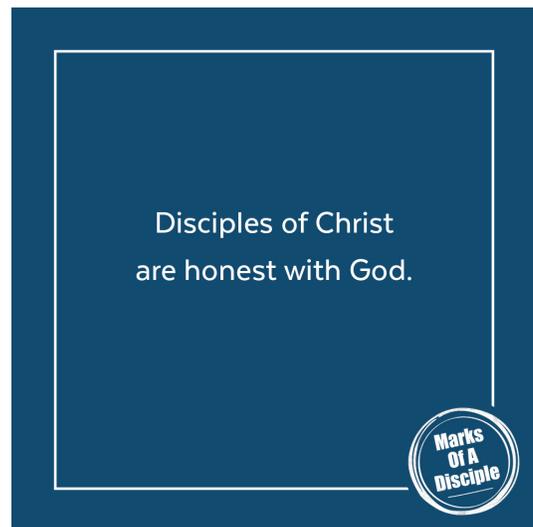
MEMORY VERSE

"I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me."
Psalm 77:1 (ESV)



MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Marks of a Disciple are a great way to figure out whether your students are growing in their understanding of God's story and how to connect it to their daily lives. As Scripture impacts your students' hearts, they'll begin to live differently and these Marks of a Disciple are a great guidepost to help them grow more Christ-like. Periodically check in with your students about one or two of these Marks of a Disciple that seem to be speaking to them specifically in this season.



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¹ Colin Smith, "Guilt and Grievance, Part 2," *Unlocking the Bible radio program*, February 6, 2020, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://unlockingthebible.org/broadcast/guilt-grievance-2/>.

² TED, "The power of vulnerability | Brené Brown," YouTube video, 20:49, Posted [January 3, 2011], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>.

³ Rend Collective, "HE WILL HOLD US & BE NEAR," Rend Collective, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://rendcollective.com/blogs/good-news/he-will-hold-us-be-near>.