

SESSION 1: EXODUS 1:6-10, 22; 2:1-10



Teaching point

God had a plan for the whole of Moses' life and used the most difficult situations to bring it to fulfilment.



Group aim

That the members would understand that God has a purpose for their lives.



Equipment

- Paper
- Pens
- Bibles
- Jigsaw pieces for each member
- Work-out sheets
- Journals for each member
- Images of details of household objects

Freedom to live



LEADER'S GUIDE



As you prepare this session, take some time to pray for each of the members of your group, asking God to show something about their particular gifts and talents. Pray that you will be aware of the ways in which God is already using them so that you can encourage them that God is at work in and through them.

Bible background

More than 400 years have passed since Jacob and his household had migrated to Egypt, where his son Joseph had gained a position of huge influence (**Genesis 37–50**). For many years the Israelites experienced peace in their adopted home and their numbers increased greatly. The king of Egypt became fearful of the success of this 'migrant community' and initiated a cruel oppression to halt their increase: forced labour and selective genocide with a decree that all boys born to Israelite families must be thrown into the Nile. Moses was born into this situation. By luck or good fortune?



STARTING IT

As each member arrives give him or her a large jigsaw-puzzle piece. Ask them to keep it in a safe place throughout the session. You will be asking them to write on it.

*** Consequences

Give each member a piece of paper and a pen. Play the old game of consequences using the following headings:

- the name of a person
- place of birth
- father's occupation and mother's occupation
- a childhood event
- the result of that event
- his/her adult occupation
- what people said of them when they died

The game works best if you all sit in a circle. Ask everyone to write their person's name at the top of the sheet (for example, 'HM the Queen' / 'Aristotle MacSplinger' / 'Deirdre Sink-Plunger'). Now ask them to fold over the top part of the paper so that the name is hidden – and then pass their paper to the person on their right. Repeat for each category, encouraging some healthy eccentricity in the writing. Work in pairs if you wish.

When you've completed the seventh category, pass on one more time and prepare for the reading aloud of these surreal masterpieces. The basic script is as follows:

(Name) was born in *(place name)* to a *(father's occupation)* and a *(mother's occupation)*. When s/he was a child *(event)* and as a result *(result)*.

He/she grew up to be a *(occupation)*. At his/her funeral *(what they said)*.

This activity will prepare members for a subsequent activity on the life of Moses.

✪✪ Do you know what it is yet?

Collect pictures showing close-up details of a variety of familiar and not-so-familiar everyday objects. It's easy to find such pictures via Google Images. Have fun!

✪ Game of Life

Why not play the board game 'Game of Life'? You'll need to consider the size of your group, the amount of time available and whether or not you can borrow enough sets of the game.

Discovering God's plan for our life is all about looking for 'the big picture'.

✪✪ Whaddya up to?

Change/transformation can happen very quickly if we are prepared for it. God often takes aspects of our life, which we think are insignificant, and uses them for great benefit.

This activity is about giving and accepting offers, transforming one another's actions into something completely different. The group forms a circle with one person in the middle (PM). That person must start by miming an activity (e.g. playing tennis).

Anyone from the circle can come into the middle and must ask PM: 'What are you doing?'

PM must claim to be doing something completely different from their mime: for example, 'I'm eating a bag of chips.'

The other person (OP) must now mime this activity.

PM now asks: 'What are you doing?' and OP must say something completely different from his/her mime: for example, 'I'm singing in the bath.'

This exercise continues until one of the pair makes a mistake. Someone else from the circle can then jump up and have a go.



Try to play this game at a fast pace. When it breaks down the people around the outside should be competing to be the first to get up and have a go.

🌀 Sketch idea

Split into groups of four or five and discuss how God can make positive use of the ordinary things in our lives.

Choose a character or example from the Bible of where God has taken an ordinary person and used him or her for his glory: for example, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Joseph, Jonah, Mary, Stephen. Alternatively, ask the members to use their own stories or experiences to devise a short sketch.

▶ TEACHING IT

As you start this new series it would be good to sketch the background of the story of Moses and the Israelites.

Read together **Exodus 1:6-10, 22** and **Exodus 2:1-10**.

Moses' life could read a bit like the consequences game played earlier. Invite group members to form pairs and write it up as per the game. It should read something like:

'Moses was born in Egypt to unnamed parents (at this point anyway, they are not named until **Exodus 6:20**). When he was a child his mother hid him in a basket in the Nile to save him from death. The pharaoh's daughter found him and fortunately his sister was standing near by so she offered to take him home and look after him, so returned him to his mother. He grew up in the house of Pharaoh but later went on to lead the Israelites out of slavery. When he died people said he was a great leader and a friend of God.'

It would be easy to read Moses' life story and think, 'What amazing good luck!' Who would have thought that such coincidences could happen with all those people being in the right place at the right time, and ending with such a great result?

But is that really what it was? Just coincidence? It's also worth remembering that Moses lived many years before he was used to deliver the people of Israel.

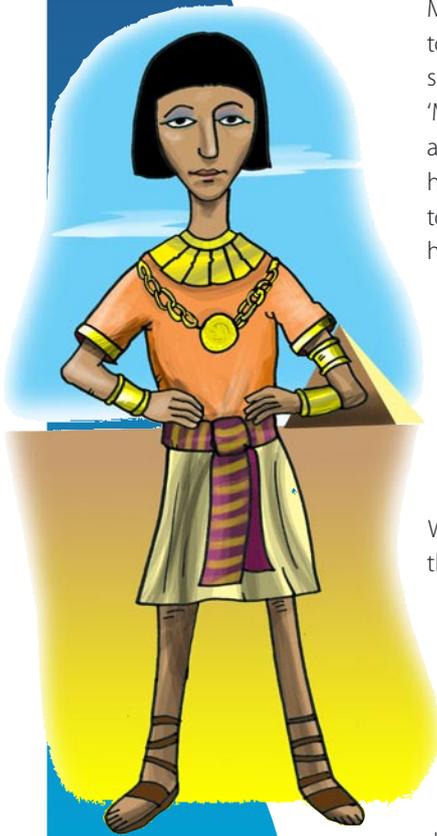
In groups look at **Hebrews 11:23**.

What does this tell us about Moses' parents' actions?

According to the writer to the Hebrews this didn't just all happen by chance. Moses' parents were followers of God and they believed that he had a role for Moses to play. Imagine the joy that there must have been in their home when Moses was returned to them – they would have known that God was totally involved in their situation.

Still in small groups, discuss:

- How do you view your life? A series of coincidences? Random events? Lucky breaks? A sense of God being involved? A belief that God working it all together?



- How would it alter the way you live if you knew that God had a role for you to play? What would that difference be?
- How have you seen other people's lives change as they've become aware of this?

Gallery of the unknowns

Moses' parents were not named in our opening passage – they're just described as a Levite man and woman. We do not learn their names until **Exodus 6** – and that's all that we learn about them.

Very often God uses people who are 'unknowns' – not all were born into distinguished families, no fanfares to announce their arrival – just people who are willing to trust him and follow his lead.

History is crowded with such people who were from unknown backgrounds but achieved great things. You will find four such people featured in the mini-biographies on the Work-out sheet.

It's worth noting that most of these people were still teenagers when they heard God's call.

God may not call us to work overseas, to face physical attack or to devote our lives to setting up children's homes. But he does have a plan for each of us to use our lives to demonstrate his love to others. And that starts right now, right where we are with the people around us. We don't become Christians just so that we can go to heaven when we die – it's also about taking the good news of God to other people and living the greatest adventure we will ever know.



Jesus focus

In small groups read **Luke 4:14-21**.

- What, according to Jesus, was he here to do?
- What do you think that meant?
- How can we continue that work?



Slave trade

Moses may have looked back in later years on his miraculous escape from death and thought: 'God really did have a purpose for me!'

John Newton (1725-1807) went to sea as a child and remained a seafarer for many years, eventually serving on board slave ships.

Late in life, he recalled two occasions when God's hand had clearly moved to protect him. The first occasion was when circumstances caused him narrowly to miss embarking on a particular ship. The vessel subsequently sank.

At the time, although grateful to be alive, Newton failed to realize what God had done for him.

In 1748 his ship was caught in a terrible storm. He found himself praying wholeheartedly to God. He was saved, although many sailors died. He committed his life to Christ and some years later became involved in the movement to abolish the slave trade.

Newton, who was ordained in 1764, served in a country parish and later in the City of London. He wrote the famous hymn 'Amazing Grace'.

As an old man he said: 'I forget much, but two things I remember: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Redeemer.'



DOING IT

It's always easier to see how God can use other people in great ways but when we look at ourselves the response can often be:

- I don't see God working in my life
- I'm just an ordinary person
- I've not got any great gifts.

*** The invitation of God

In every generation God uses people to bring about his kingdom. The invitation to become a Christian is God's invitation to the most amazing adventure you'll ever know – and an invitation to be free to be all that you can be.

Want to know God's will for your life? Then answer this question: What ignites your heart? Forgotten orphans? Untouched nations? The inner city? The outer limits? Heed the fire within! Do you have a passion to sing? Then sing! Are you stirred to manage? Then manage! Do you ache for the ill? Then treat them! Do you hurt for the lost? Then teach them! As a young man I felt the call to preach. Unsure if I was correct in my reading of God's will for me, I sought the counsel of a minister I admired. His counsel still rings true. 'Don't preach,' he said, 'unless you have to.' As I pondered his words I found my answer: 'I have to. If I don't, the fire will consume me.' What is the fire that consumes you?

Max Lucado, *The Great House of God*, STL



Invite the young people to think through some of these questions. They may find it helpful to write, sketch or doodle in their journals.

- What is it that you can't help but do?
- What can you start to do about it now?

Invite the young people to answer the following questions to find out what their **SHAPE** is:

What are your **S**kills?

What is the fire in your **H**earth?

What **A**ttitudes do you have that stand out?

What is your **P**ersonality like? (outgoing/shy etc)

What **E**xperience have you had so far?

Once the group have had some time to think, invite them, if they'd like to, to write on their jigsaw piece (given out at the beginning of the session) what it is that they feel God is asking them to be part of. Pray together offering the pieces to God. If your group enjoys singing, then songs that pick up this theme would be good to use. For example, 'I will offer up my life!'



Putting it into practice

Before the group leave ask them to write in their journal one or two ways that they are going to start putting into practice what it is they feel God is asking of them.



Tip

Some groups don't like singing. If your group is like this, don't push them to sing. As an alternative play a relevant Christian song in a contemporary version on CD. You could make a PowerPoint that synchronizes with the music, featuring either images that fit the words or with slides picking out the main words in the song.

WORK-OUT

Gallery of unknowns



Florence Nightingale

In 1837, aged seventeen, Florence experienced what she described as her divine 'calling'. She heard God calling her to do his work, but at that time she had no idea what that work would be. Florence developed an interest in the social problems of the day, made visits to the homes of the sick in local villages and began to investigate hospitals and nursing. Her parents opposed her wish to become a nurse. In the mid-nineteenth century it was not considered a suitable profession for a well educated woman.

Florence eventually trained as a nurse in Germany and later played a hugely influential role in raising the standards of nursing care in the military hospitals of the Crimean War.



Amy Carmichael

As a child Amy had felt the call to help poor people. In 1886, when she was nineteen, Amy knew what God was asking her to do.

She was at the Keswick Convention with her family. During one of the sermons she realized that there could be nothing more important for her than living her life for God. In her case, this meant travelling to Dohnavur, India, and serving God there for the next fifty-six years of her life. A major part of her work there was rescuing children who had been dedicated by their families to be temple prostitutes. More than a thousand children were rescued from neglect and abuse during Amy's lifetime.



Dr Barnardo

Thomas John Barnardo's campaign to rescue street children became one of the best known social interventions of late-Victorian Britain.

Within forty years Barnardo established a network of homes and had rescued and housed some sixty thousand homeless boys and girls.



Jackie Pullinger

Jackie Pullinger has spent her life working alongside drug addicts and gang members in Hong Kong's infamous Walled City.

Jackie decided that she wanted to become a missionary while she was in Sunday School. Later as a student she had a dream: 'I saw a woman holding her arms out beseechingly as on a refugee poster. I wondered what she wanted: she looked desperate for something. Then words moved past like a television credit: What can you give us?' Missionary societies rejected Jackie's offers of help. Eventually she went alone to Hong Kong. You can read her extraordinary story in the book *Chasing the Dragon* (Hodder).