

## Exodus 4:1-17

### Introduction

For years I struggled with sharing the Gospel with others, in part because of my bad experience in college

1. Back in chapters 2 and 3 we learned that God had heard the cries of Israel, appeared to Moses at the burning bush, and commissioned him to go to Pharaoh and bring His people out of Egypt
2. However, rather than take up the call and head to Egypt, the rest of chapter 3 and the first 17 verses of chapter 4 portray Moses as reluctant, even unwilling to go
3. In these verses we see at least four objections, possibly five, that Moses gave to God to avoid having to do what He called him to do:
  - a. The first appeared in 3:11 with God's response in 3:12 (READ)
  - b. Some scholars see a second objection 3:13 with God's response in 3:14-17 (READ)
4. In our passage today we are going to see Moses present three more objections to God in an attempt to avoid doing what He called him to do
5. For years I used these same objections as excuses to not share my faith, and I know I'm not because I've heard the same thing from other Christians
6. As we go through the passage this morning, my hope is that you'll ask yourself whether you've used any of them yourself

### A. Objection #1: Moses doubted the people would believe him (READ 4:1-9)

1. Moses's doubt was three-fold (REREAD 4:1):
  - a. What if they didn't believe him?
  - b. What if they didn't listen to him?
  - c. What if they called him a liar (saying the LORD hadn't appeared to him)?
2. Moses's doubt was despite the fact that God had already told him that the people would listen to him, the elders would go with him to Pharaoh, that Pharaoh would let them go under compulsion, and that Israel would plunder the Egyptians as they left!
3. God responded to Moses's objection by providing him with three miraculous signs he could perform to convince the people that the LORD had appeared to him:
  - a. The first involved turning his staff into a serpent (RE-READ 4:2-5)
  - b. The second involved turning his hand leprous (RE-READ 4:6-7)
  - c. The third involved turning water from the Nile into blood (RE-READ 4:8-9)

4. It's important to note here that Moses was concerned that the people wouldn't believe him, but God responded in essence by saying that He would convince them through the miracles He would perform through Moses
5. Takeaway: Sometimes we are reluctant to share the Gospel or even own faith because we doubt others will believe or accept it:
  - a. It's true that just because we share the Gospel it doesn't mean people will accept it; in fact, many will not, others will reject it, and still others may even become hostile
  - b. One thing is certain, however: if we don't share our faith, how will others come to saving faith in Jesus? This is what Paul wrote in Romans 10:13-14 (READ)
  - c. Here's the thing: it's our job to share the Gospel—or at least give a defense and account of the hope that we within us (as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15)—but it's not ultimately our job to convince anyone
  - d. Sure, we can point people to the host of proofs and evidence God has provided to support His Word and the Gospel—historical, archeological, scientific, and even our changed lives—but it's ultimately His job to convince people
  - e. Listen to what Jesus said in John 16:8-11 (READ)

B. Objection #2: Moses claimed he wasn't eloquent (READ 4:10-12)
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1. Moses went to great lengths to convince God He just didn't have the necessary speaking abilities to do what God expected (RE-READ 4:10):
  - a. Moses said (lit), "**Please LORD, I am not (or I've never been) a man of words**"—and he added, "**neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant**"
  - b. There's been much debate over what Moses meant by this:
    - 1) One popular suggestion is that Moses was referring to a speech impediment, in part because he goes on to say, "**for I am slow (lit. heavy) of speech and slow (lit. heavy) of tongue**"
    - 2) Some believe Moses was referring to no longer being fluent in Egyptian since he had been gone from Egypt for 40 years
    - 3) Others claim Moses was simply displaying an exaggerated humility and self-effacement—in other words, downplaying his abilities to appear humble before God
    - 4) Probably the most popular interpretation is that Moses was referring to a lack of eloquence in public speaking or ability for persuasive speech:
      - a) This was something that was expected and valued in Egyptian culture
      - b) In Exodus 6:12 he expresses concern that the Pharaoh won't listen to him because he was of "**uncircumcised lips**" (NASB: "**unskilled in speech**")
      - c) The LXX translates 6:12 using a word that refers to a lack of capacity to reason or think properly
      - d) This suggests that Moses was afraid the Pharaoh would not listen to him because he found him to be unpersuasive, possibly due to his lack of eloquence

- c. Whatever the correct interpretation is, it's clear in the passage that Moses was using it as an objection to doing what God called him to do
2. Moses wasn't alone; the Bible has other examples of people who felt they lacked the skills or qualities necessary to do what God called them to do:
    - a. Gideon felt inadequate to deliver Israel because he was from one of the smallest tribes and the youngest in his family (READ Judges 6:14-16)
    - b. Jeremiah felt inadequate to be a prophet because he was a youth and, like Moses, didn't feel he could speak well (READ Jeremiah 1:6-9)
  3. But, in each of these cases God promised to be with them just as he did Moses (RE-READ 4:11-12):
    - a. He was the one who created the mouth
    - b. He was the one who makes one mute or deaf, seeing or blind
    - c. Therefore, He would be with Moses's mouth and teach him what he was to say to the people and to Pharaoh
  4. Takeaway: sometimes we are reluctant to share the Gospel or our faith because we feel like we don't know what to say or that we won't be able to communicate it effectively:
    - a. But, listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)
      - 1) When Paul first preached the Gospel to the Corinthians, he didn't rely upon superiority of speech or persuasive words of wisdom
      - 2) Instead, he focused on the simplicity of the Gospel—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—because he believed it (not his skills and abilities) had the power to lead people to salvation
    - b. What can we learn from this?
      - 1) We don't need to be great theologians, brilliant intellectuals, or skilled speakers to share the Gospel or tell people about our own relationship with Jesus
      - 2) We simply need to understand the simple Gospel, share it, and trust that it truly is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe it
      - 3) It's not hard to memorize a handful of passages that reflect the Gospel and use those when talking with others; do this and trust God's promise to Isaiah (Isaiah 55:11): **“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”**
      - 4) You can even start with sharing your own personal testimony like Peter suggests in 1 Peter 3:15: **“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...”**

C. Objection #3: Moses pleaded with God to send someone else (READ 4:13-17)

1. Most other English translations render this as a plea to send someone else which captures the intent well (ESV): **“Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”**
2. This objection is very different than his previous four:
  - a. The first four focused on Moses’ shortcomings in carrying out the monumental task—Who am I? What shall I say? What if they don’t believe me? I’m not eloquent.
  - b. However, this objection was an outright rejection of God’s call; Moses didn’t want to go so he pleaded with God to send someone else
  - c. And this is reflected in God’s response (14a): **“Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses...”**
3. This is the first time we seen God get angry with Moses over his objections, but even so He remained patient, didn’t let Moses off the hook, and even provided Moses with a helper:
  - a. Moses was apparently still fixated on his lack of eloquence from the previous objection even though God had promised that He would be with his mouth and teach him what he needed to say
  - b. So, God provided Moses with help:
    - 1) According to v. 14b, Moses’s brother Aaron could **“speak fluently”** and he was coming out to meet Moses (God sent him per v. 4:27)
    - 2) Moses was to speak to Aaron all the words the LORD had spoken to him, and the LORD would even help Moses do that (15): **“I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.”**
    - 3) Aaron would then speak to the people and Pharaoh on Moses’s behalf (READ 4:16)
    - 4) We see this fulfilled in 4:27-30 (READ) and with much of the interaction between Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh
    - 5) Though, Moses’s confidence must have been strengthened by this because he spoke directly to the Pharaoh at times instead of always through Aaron
4. Takeaway: we may not want to preach the Gospel or share our faith with others (for whatever reason), but that’s no excuse; God has called us to this purpose:
  - a. We are members of the Church and the Church’s mission is to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-19): **“And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...’**
  - b. We may be like Moses and not feel up to the task, but just as God gave Moses a helper in Aaron, He gave us a Helper as well and one of the reasons is to help us witness:
    - 1) John 15:26: **“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will**

**testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”**

- 2) Acts 1:8: **“but, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”**
  
- c. Rather than being unwilling to share our faith—for whatever reason—we should be more like Peter and John in Acts 4:19-20 after they were arrested, jailed, and dragged before the corrupt religious leaders: **“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”**

Conclusion
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1. God called Moses for a purpose and it’s clear he didn’t feel up to the task and didn’t want to do it
2. So, he made excuses and objected, but God didn’t let him off the hook
3. Instead, with each objection God responded with patience and providing everything Moses needed to move forward in faith and obedience
4. The same is true with us—Jesus has called us to be salt and light, to be His witnesses by sharing the Gospel and giving a defense for the hope we have
5. And, he’s given us everything we need—including the Holy Spirit who dwells within us
6. Ultimately, we need to remember that when it comes to sharing the Gospel it’s not about our abilities or skills but the power of the Gospel

Jon sharing the Gospel with his driver—if Jon can do it so can we
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