

Trusting God

Lesson 5

Unit Two: Self-Esteem

Scripture: Exodus 4:10-16

Life Focus: God loves you! Why not love yourself?

Celebrity Insecurity

Oscar-winning actor Johnny Depp has said, "My self-image still isn't that all right. No matter how famous I am, no matter how many people go to see my movies, I still have the idea that I'm that pale no-hoper that I used to be. . . . Tomorrow it'll be all over, then I'll have to go back to selling pens again."

Educators of adolescents have long recognized that poor self-esteem is the root of many serious problems among their students. In the story of Moses, we find the answer to healthy self-esteem. We need to *look up* rather than *look in*.

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Today's Challenge

How do you feel about the person you see in the mirror?

Participate in these activities and see if those feelings change!

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Discuss factors that lead to either self-confidence or insecurity.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Explain two principles of self-esteem found in this story of Moses.

Step 3

Making It Real

Apply these principles of self-esteem in present-day settings.

Step 4

Living It Out

Decide to look to God for confidence and self-worth.

Hide It in Your Heart

Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.

—*Galatians 6:4*

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead kids in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *Young Teen Resources* CD.

Exodus 4:10-16

¹⁰Moses 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."

¹¹The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" ¹²Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

¹³But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."

¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. ¹⁶He 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."

Encountering God's Word

LOOK IN Exodus 4:10, 13

Once Moses had been a big shot. Raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter in Egypt, he was highly educated, rich, and important. But that was 40 years earlier. In the third chapter of Exodus, things had changed—Moses was just a shepherd, with little thought of ever leading anything more than a flock of sheep.

Then one day at a burning bush, all that changed again. God spoke to Moses. God had heard the cries of His people in Egypt, and He was ready to deliver them. "I am sending you," God said, "to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:4-10).

Poor self-esteem results when we see only our own imperfections.

Moses was afraid to tackle the job. But each time he protested, God brushed away his excuse. Moses complained that he did not have the status to

go to Pharaoh, and God promised to go with him (vv. 11, 12). Moses wanted to know God's name to authorize his words, and God responded (vv. 13, 14). Moses protested that he had no way to demonstrate God's power, and God gave him two miracles by which to do so (4:1-7).

Then Moses raised his final objections (vv. 10-16). "I have never been eloquent. . . . I am slow of speech and tongue." Moses felt incapable of performing this task alone. And for good reason—by himself he was incapable of it! Seeing only his own abilities in the esteem equation caused Moses fear, doubt, and self-loathing.

It is no wonder that even celebrities, such as the actor mentioned earlier, struggle with issues of self-worth. Their value in their careers is so tied to their looks and their performance. This attitude often leads to despair because too much is never enough! "I know I'm not ugly, but I don't think I'm a pretty girl," says actress Drew Barrymore. Pop icon Jessica Simpson recalls, "I was 102 pounds, and people at the record label were telling me that I needed to lose weight." Former pop star and Spice Girl, Melanie C, has a point when she says, "There definitely must be an insecurity that lies beneath someone who wants to be successful and adored by other people." Looking inward to find reasons for self-worth is a losing proposition.

LOOK UP Exodus 4:11, 12, 14-16

Yet God would have none of Moses' excuses. It was God who had made Moses' mouth, so God could very well help Moses use it. In fact, all the human faculties were designed and given by God. Since God was the designer of all these abilities, He knew exactly what Moses was capable of. "Now

go," God insisted. "I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (v. 12).

When Moses tried to shift the mission to someone else (v. 13), God was angry. He told Moses to get his brother Aaron, who could speak very well (v. 14). With Aaron as his spokesman and with God empowering both of them, Moses could do the job God demanded.

Moses would put words in Aaron's mouth (v. 15), and Aaron would speak to the people for Moses (v. 16). Interestingly, Aaron was a useful spokesman in the first meetings with Pharaoh (5:1), but later Moses himself found the courage to speak for God (8:9).

Our self-esteem and self-confidence are not derived from what comes from within ourselves, but from God! Paul taught this same lesson in 2 Corinthians 3:5. Though Paul himself sometimes shook with fear when he spoke for God (1 Corinthians 2:3), he had great confidence. He knew that the Lord had taken feeble men with glaring weaknesses and had made them into powerful apostles. God made them competent as ministers of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6).

It was not wrong for Paul to proclaim his competence as an apostle, because the credit went clearly to God. We should not try to compare ourselves with other people; this is not how God's people gain self-esteem (Galatians 6:4). Rather, all of us can take pride in what we do when Christ is living in us (2:20) and working through us (5:22-24).

When we have low self-esteem, we do not believe we can do anything for God. The problem is not excessive humility; the problem is lack of faith in God. Because of who God is, all His children are important people. Because of how powerful God is, all His children have incredible potential. Healthy self-esteem, then, does not come from thinking highly of ourselves—it comes from thinking rightly of God.

All of us, from the unpopular teen to the in-demand celebrity, can learn an important lesson from Moses. Our aptitudes do not determine our altitude. Our talents, our looks, and our abilities are never enough to give us lasting value. That comes from a God who loves us so much that He purchased us with the blood of His Son.

Healthy self-esteem results when we look at God's power available to us.

Life Focus: God loves you! Why not love yourself?

Use one of the following activities to help your students discuss factors that lead to either self-confidence or insecurity.

QUICK STEP "Friends?"

Ask your students to be thinking of factors that contribute to either self-confidence or insecurity as they listen to a skit. Play the second track from the CD, the skit entitled "Friends?"

After listening, discuss the following: **What are some things you heard that contribute to insecurities?** (comparing themselves to supermodels, getting cut from a team, being put down by others, not being good at something, etc.) **What are some factors you heard that contribute to self-confidence?** (good friends, your own good attitude, compliments, etc.) **What things cause you or your friends to feel insecure? What things make you feel confident about yourself?**

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Today we're going to look at the life of Moses and discover what causes bad self-esteem and what can offer lasting, good self-esteem.**

Feeling Insecure

Turn with your students to page 20 in the student book. Listed there are quotes from celebrities about their own insecurities. Read the quotes together. Then discuss the following:

- **Are you surprised to see that these celebrities have felt or currently feel insecure? Why or why not? Do you think celebrities have more or fewer problems with self-esteem than non-famous people?**
- **How does it make you feel, knowing that celebrities have self-esteem issues just like you? Don't we sometimes imagine that being famous would take away such insecurities? Why can't fame do that?**
- **Which of the quotes do you identify with? What things cause you or your friends to feel insecure? What things make you feel confident about yourself?**

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Today we're going to look at the life of Moses and discover what causes bad self-esteem and what can offer lasting good self-esteem.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on a current events, download The Scene online. Go to <http://www.21stcc.com/> and click on "Downloads." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.



Time
10 minutes

audio skit

Materials

Young Teen Resources CD, CD player

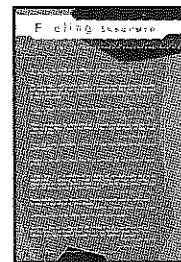


Time
10 minutes

discussion

Materials

Young Teen Student



news



Step 2 Searching the Word

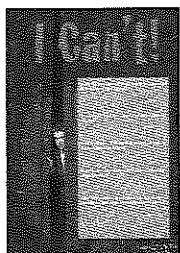
Life Focus: God loves you! Why not love yourself?

Use one of the following activities to help your students explain two principles of self-esteem found in this story of Moses.

Time
20 minutes

research

Materials
Young Teen Student, Bibles, pens



Time
20 minutes

drama

Materials
Bibles, pens, paper

QUICK STEP I Can't!

Divide students into groups of three to five and give each group student books and Bibles. Ask each group to read Exodus 3:1–4:16 and then discuss the questions on page 21 of their student books. As groups discuss, move among them, helping them as needed. The following suggested responses and *Encountering God's Word* will help you.

List some reactions of Moses when he was asked to lead Israel out of Egypt. (Who am I? What if they ask Your name? What if they don't believe me? I am not a good speaker.)

What seems to be the underlying theme of these excuses? (I don't have the abilities to do God's will by myself.)

Look at Exodus 4:11, 12. How does God answer the self-doubts of Moses? (Who made your mouth? Who gives sight? I will give you the ability to speak and will teach you what to say.)

How would you summarize God's response in a single sentence? (God will give His servants the abilities needed to obey His commands.)

Read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3:5. Can you paraphrase that verse, making it Moses' words? (Not that Moses was competent in himself to claim anything for himself, but Moses' competence would come from God.)

Reassemble the class and allow groups to report their findings. Lead into the next section of the lesson with these words:

Moses almost let his poor self-image keep him from doing the job God asked him to do. Until he realized God was in control and would help him, Moses did not have the self-confidence to take on the job he was commanded to do. Now let's discover how such an understanding helps people today.

Soliloquies

Divide students into three groups, ask them to turn to Exodus 3:1–4:16, and give each group one of these character assignments: Group one: Moses; Group two: Aaron; Group 3: God. Groups are to look at this Scripture from the point of view of their character, and then prepare a soliloquy (one-person speech) on behalf of their character, describing what they experienced and how they felt as a result of this incident. As students work, move among the groups, helping them prepare as necessary. Refer to *Encountering God's Word* to help you.

When groups are done, ask them to perform their soliloquies. Comment as necessary to make sure that both main points of this passage (see the headings in *Encountering God's Word*) are made clearly and completely.

Close with these thoughts: Moses almost let his poor self-image keep him from obeying God. In 2 Corinthians 3:5 Paul writes, "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God." Until Moses realized God was in control and would help him, he did not have the self-confidence to take on the job he was commanded to do. Now let's discover how such an understanding helps people today.

Life Focus: God loves you! Why not love yourself?

Use one of the following activities to help your students apply these principles of self-esteem in present-day settings.

QUICK STEP "The Girl Who Sings"

Divide the class into groups of three to five students each. Pass out copies of this week's issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* and have the groups read the story entitled "The Girl Who Sings." Then have the groups be prepared to report on the following questions:

- Today we looked at the imperfections Moses saw when he looked at himself. Compare the personal issues of Moses and the main character of this story, and note how those issues negatively affected each of them.

- What changed the character's perspective? What did she notice about her self-esteem? If you had been her friend at the time, how would you have encouraged her?

After students finish, have the groups share their thoughts. Then ask: Do you know anyone like the character in this story? When have you had similar thoughts? Why do you think people today have self-esteem issues just as Moses did? Lead into the last lesson step by asking: Do you have days when your self-esteem is pretty low? Let's find out how you can apply today's lesson to your own life.

Insecurity

Have your students break into small groups and turn to page 22 in their student books. All groups should read the scenarios and come up with responses to these two teens who have self-esteem problems. Groups should write letters of encouragement as if they were friends of these two teens. In the letters they should share what they've learned from today's Scripture that would help these two teens have more confidence.

After students finish, have the groups share their letters. Then ask: Do you know anyone like Leslie or Corey? Why do you think people today have self-esteem issues just as Moses did? Lead into the last lesson step by asking: Do you have days when your self-esteem is pretty low? Let's find out how you can apply today's lesson to your own life.

Time

20 minutes

reporting

Materials

ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* for each student



Time

20 minutes

creative writing

Materials

Young Teen Student, pens, paper



Step 4 Living It Out

Life Focus: God loves you! Why not love yourself?

Use one of the following activities to help your students decide to look to God for confidence and self-worth.

Time
10 minutes

prayer

QUICK STEP My Worth

Lead your students in this prayer activity:

Moses met God while he was going about his normal, day-to-day activities. Imagine yourself going about some part of your daily life. What are you doing? Tell God what you are thinking about yourself.

Imagine that a burning bush appears nearby. How does that make you feel? Tell God.

From that bush, the voice of God speaks to you. What tasks might He call on you to perform?

You begin to make excuses to God, telling Him you are not qualified to do what He asks of you. What are you saying?

Listen for God's response.

Allow students to pray quietly. Then close by praying aloud for them.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

Time
10 minutes

art

Bumper Stickers of Confidence

Post (or project) Sheet 3 so that it is visible to all. The poster is the back of a VW-type bus with several blank bumper stickers on it.

Say: **Today we've learned that our confidence should come from the fact that God loves us as we are, made us as we are, and is with us in the things we do. So we should go out with our heads held high with good self-esteem—as believers, we have the God of the universe in our hearts! But we all know there are days when we feel bad about ourselves. And it's on those days that we need a reminder of today's lesson.**

Have students think of things they can write or draw in the form of bumper stickers that would remind themselves to get their confidence through God. Then let students write their phrases or draw their designs on the blank bumper stickers on the poster. (If you have projected the poster, let students write on self-stick notes.) Encourage their creativity. Then close in a time of group prayer, praising God for the great group of students you have, who should feel confident in their value and worth.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.



Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- "New Year, New You"
- "The Value of Turtles . . . and Babies"
- "The Girl Who Sings"

Materials

Young Teen Resources Sheet 3 and dry-erase markers (or *Young Teen Resources* CD, projection equipment, self-stick notes, and markers)

