

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

How God Uses
Less Than

Perfect People

TONY EVANS

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Less Than
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LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

Published by LifeWay Press®
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ISBN 978-1-4158-7245-1
Item 005475108

Dewey decimal classification: 231.5
Subject headings: GOD—WILL \ PROVIDENCE AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD \ CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing
LifeWay Church Resources
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234-0152

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THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Tony Evans is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He is a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation.

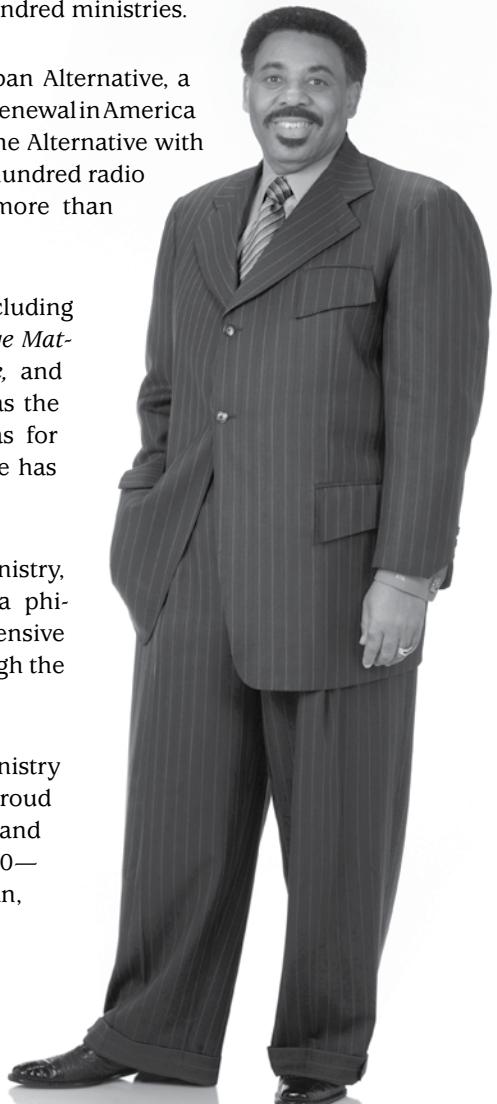
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Dr. Evans also serves as the president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in America through the church. His daily radio broadcast, "The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans," can be heard on more than five hundred radio stations throughout the United States and in more than 40 countries.

Dr. Evans has authored more than 50 books, including *Oneness Embraced*, *The Kingdom Agenda*, *Marriage Matters*, *Kingdom Man*, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, and *God's Unlikely Path to Success*. Dr. Evans serves as the chaplain for the NFL Dallas Cowboys as well as for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, the latter of which he has served for more than 30 years.

Through his local church and national ministry, Dr. Evans has set in motion a kingdom-agenda philosophy of ministry that teaches God's comprehensive rule over every area of life, as demonstrated through the individual, family, church, and society.

Dr. Evans is married to Lois, his wife and ministry partner of more than 40 years. They are the proud parents of 4—Chrystal, Priscilla, Anthony Jr., and Jonathan—as well as the proud grandparents of 10—Kariss, Jessica, Jackson, Jesse III, Jerry Jr., Kanaan, Jude, Joel, Kelsey, and Jonathan II.



THE GAME ISN'T OVER YET

At the midway point of every football game, both teams go to their respective locker rooms for a period known as halftime. This is a time for rest and assessment. It's a time to regather and reevaluate how things have gone thus far and to decide what adjustments need to be made for the remainder of the competition.

Although the first half of a football game is important, it's not determinative. It doesn't dictate what's going to happen during the second half. There have been numerous teams over the years that were ahead at halftime, only to lose the game. And there have been numerous teams over the years that were losing at halftime but turned things around by the end of the game.

UNTIL THE FINAL WHISTLE BLOWS, THE GAME'S STILL UP FOR GRABS.

The same thing is true in life. You might be in your first quarter, second quarter, or halftime. But if you're still here—if you're still living and breathing—the game isn't over. Your clock is still ticking. There's plenty of life yet to live. Not only that, but your first half doesn't have to determine your final outcome.

Maybe you've made mistakes and poor decisions. Maybe you've failed. Maybe you've experienced disappointments. Maybe life has dealt you a harsh blow. But you're still in the game.

In other words, it's not too late for God to take you straight to the plan He has for you. It's not too late for God to lead you into your glorious tomorrow.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

This member book includes content for both individual and group study. The best way to learn how God can still turn your life around is to engage in individual, daily devotions and to participate in a Bible-study group that includes video teaching and discussion.

Each week's study begins with a suggested process for a group experience. Each group session should follow this general outline.

START. Begin each session with a brief time of discussion that helps you and your group get to know one another better and discuss what the Lord has been teaching you during the previous week.

WATCH. Your group will watch a 30-minute teaching segment on DVD while completing the viewer guide provided in each group experience.

RESPOND. Use the suggested questions to discuss the truths presented on the DVD. Then close each group experience with prayer. Each session wraps up with a key verse of Scripture to memorize and a specific challenge to tackle the next week.

The teaching segment and group discussion will provide a foundation for your individual study throughout the week. Each day you'll read a devotion that fleshes out the Scriptures and ideas first presented in the group experience. You'll also complete personal learning activities that will help you move toward the life God has planned for you. That way you'll arrive at your next group session ready to begin another discussion based on the individual work you've done.

Throughout these six sessions you'll find a new perspective on some of the most talked-about characters in the Bible. I hope you'll also gain a new perspective on yourself. I hope you'll come to a better understanding of your past experiences and present circumstances so that you can move forward to a glorious future in Christ.

Because ...

**IT'S NOT
TOO LATE**

Week One

MOSES

THE MURDERER GOD USED



Have you ever lost your mojo? If you aren't familiar with that word, I'm talking about the particular spark, energy, and enthusiasm that make you who you are—that make you *you*.

Most of us start our adult lives with big plans and big dreams. We know what skills we have—what we're good at—and we have a vision for how to use those skills to make a difference in the world. We picture ourselves as balls of fire blazing through life with power and intensity, influence and impact.

But all too often the fire burns down to embers. Sometimes it's a single decision that knocks us off course in an instant and leads us down the path of regret. Sometimes it's the grind of facing the same problems day after day, week after week, year after year, until what used to be a flame becomes merely a flicker.

In other words, we lose our mojo.

If you've experienced that, you're in excellent company. The same thing happened to Moses, one of the great heroes of the Bible. Moses had great expectations. His life's calling was to lead millions of people out of bondage and into freedom. But the sting of a terrible miscalculation, followed by 40 years of babysitting sheep, left him uninspired, undecided, and uncertain.

Here's the good news: it wasn't too late for Moses. And with God's help, it's not too late for you to catch fire once again. ■



Week One

GROUP EXPERIENCE

START

Welcome to this small-group discussion of *It's Not Too Late*.

We love comeback stories in American culture—situations where victory is snatched from the jaws of defeat. These stories are found everywhere in our society, ranging from last-second victories in sporting events to movies featuring a bumbling hero who surges forward to save the day.

Start this discussion by talking about your favorite comeback story from sports, the entertainment media, or your own experiences.

What do you like best about the elements of Moses' story that you've heard from the Bible?

How does Moses' life qualify as a comeback story?

Share what you hope to gain from this study as a whole and from this session on Moses in particular.

To prepare to view the DVD segment, read these verses aloud.

“As the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father’s home. And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.” *Acts 7:17-22*

WATCH

Complete the viewer guide below as you view DVD session 1.

_____, Moses made the right decisions even though he was in a pagan environment.

Your _____ moment can also be your deepest disaster, and you can feel that it's too late.

If you want to make up some time that has been lost by _____ yesterday, hang out where God's hanging out—because you need an encounter with God.

When God is ready to change your _____, you can expect to see something happen in your life that doesn't make sense.

An encounter means you get to experience God face-to-face—because you can _____ _____ God and not experience Him.

You can go to church and still leave _____. You can hear other folks talk about God and still leave _____. You need a fresh encounter with God.

Moses tried to do a good thing with _____ methodology. He _____ God to achieve his own goal.

The word *holy* in the Bible means unique, _____, or special.

The _____ is always for development.

God can hit a bulls-eye with a crooked stick. He can take lemons and make lemonade—once you have a _____ with Him.



Video sessions available for purchase
at www.lifeway.com/itsnottoolate

RESPOND

Discuss the DVD segment with your group, using the questions below.

What did you like most about the DVD segment? Why?

Talk briefly about celebrities in recent years who, like Moses, have lost everything they worked to gain. What are the common denominators among those stories?

Tony said, “I don’t care how bad it’s been; I don’t care how long it’s been; I don’t care how hurtful it’s been; I don’t care how painful it is. When you mix God in the equation, it’s not too late.” What emotions do you experience when you hear those words? Why?

When have you been blessed by an encounter with God?

What obstacles present in today's culture commonly prevent people from enjoying a fresh encounter with God?

Which of those obstacles have disrupted your experiences with God in the past? Which are disrupting your experiences with God now?

What's the primary lesson we can draw from the full scope of Moses' story?

Application: Set aside a time (or several times) this week to intentionally seek a fresh encounter with God. As you approach this encounter, be sure to turn aside from the daily grind by focusing on prayer, spiritual disciplines, and the confession of sin.

Suggested Scripture memory for this week:

“This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” *James 1:19-20*

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group experience.

Day 1

THE MAKING OF MOSES

When Moses was 40 years old, he faced an important decision. When I say important, I mean *important*. This was more than a big decision. This was a momentous decision that had life-changing implications not only for Moses but also for the present and future security of God's people, the Israelites.

Specifically, Moses needed to decide whether he would associate with the culture of the Israelites or the culture of Egypt. In other words, he needed to decide who he really was—and who he was going to be.

List three difficult decisions you've had to make in recent years.

1.

2.

3.

What process do you typically go through when making tough decisions?

The roots of Moses' decision stretched back more than four hundred years to Joseph, an Israelite who was betrayed by his brothers and was sold as a slave in Egypt. After suffering many hardships, Joseph was given the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and to warn the king about an extended national famine that was about to devastate the land. Joseph's intercession saved not only Egypt but also many surrounding nations and people, including Joseph's own family.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Joseph's story is well known in our time, but it had apparently been forgotten in Moses' day:

A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land." Exodus 1:8-10

There were initially 70 Hebrews, not counting wives, who emigrated to Egypt at Joseph's request. After several hundred years, however, they had multiplied to a number large enough to threaten Pharaoh and motivate him to take corrective action.

Read Exodus 1:8-21. What do we learn about the Israelites in these verses?

What do we learn about God?

After all this back and forth, Pharaoh became tired of trying to deal with the Israelites. He decided to come down on the whole community, and he came down hard. He told the Israelites, "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive" (Ex. 1:22).

What happened next revealed God's ability to address even the darkest situation, turn it on a dime, and produce a blessing.

**Read Exodus 2:1-10. What do you like best about these verses?
Why?**

List three unexpected blessings you've received in recent years.

1.

2.

3.

Talk about a turnaround! Of course, now we're beginning to understand why Moses' decision to associate with his fellow Hebrews was so important—and so difficult. Moses was an Israelite by birth, but he was raised in an Egyptian home. In fact, Moses spent 40 years in Pharaoh's palace enjoying the very best that Egyptian culture had to offer. And it made an impact on his life. Acts 7:22 says, "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds."

We don't know how, and we don't know why, but at 40 years of age Moses made a spiritual decision to associate with the people of God rather than to continue living large in Pharaoh's house. He accepted the responsibility of serving as God's tool to rescue the Israelites from Egyptian persecution. In other words, Moses decided to reject the culture that surrounded him and to join a new kingdom.

Moses wasn't the only one who was forced to choose between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. You and I need to make that decision as well.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

How was your upbringing similar to what Moses experienced?

Read Matthew 6:24. What are some primary differences between the values of today's culture and the values of God's kingdom?

What are the benefits of making a spiritual decision to join God's kingdom, as Moses did?

If you've spent large portions of your life striving for material possessions, education, power, and influence, as Moses did, don't be discouraged. Don't give in to guilt and shame. With God in the picture, it's not too late to turn things around and begin working for the right kingdom.



In your prayers today ask God to reveal any of the world's values that are holding you back from fully embracing His kingdom.



Day 2

THE MAKING OF A MURDERER

Sometimes it seems as if our culture is obsessed with murder. Between books, newspapers, movies, TV shows, and the evening news, we spend countless hours immersed in the details of killers and victims, both real and imagined.

This obsession is a little morbid, but it's also understandable, given what's at stake. Unlike almost any other action, murder is steeped in finality. The consequences are permanent. When one person ends the life of another, the resulting wounds can't be healed, no matter how quickly the killer is brought to justice and locked away.

In recent months how have you seen the seriousness of murder reflected in news headlines, in movies, or on TV shows?

Exodus 2 tells the story of a murderer. Moses was rescued from certain death as a baby, and he grew up with all the luxuries and advantages of Pharaoh's palace. He lived a charmed life for 40 years, but it all came crashing down in the few seconds it took for him to make one decision.

Read Exodus 2:11-14. What surprises you most about this incident?

Do you think Moses acted appropriately or inappropriately? Why?

When police detectives investigate a murder, they want to answer three basic questions: who, how, and why. In other words, who committed the murder, how was the murder accomplished, and why was the murder executed in the first place?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

We can easily answer two of those questions from Exodus 2. Moses was the who. And the how was that he physically overpowered the Egyptian guard and buried him in the sand. That leaves the why. What was the motive?

Read Acts 7:22-25. In your own words, what was Moses' motive for killing the Egyptian?

The text says Moses “supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him” (v. 25). In other words, he was attempting to show once and for all where his true loyalties lay. He was attempting to label himself as a hero sent to deliver the Israelites from their oppression, and he expected his people to recognize the significance of his actions.

The only problem was, the Israelites weren’t buying it. Even worse, they openly talked about what Moses had done, so the Egyptians quickly discovered his guilt. So far Moses’ effort to deliver the Israelites wasn’t turning out very well.

Read Acts 7:26-29. What emotions do you experience when you fail to achieve an important goal?

Recall a time when you felt betrayed by one or more people you cared about. How long did you experience the repercussions of that betrayal?

It’s easy to feel sorry for Moses. After all, he seemed to be genuine in his desire to do the right thing and relieve the oppression of his people. But make no mistake about it: Moses knew what he was doing was wrong. Exodus 2:12 emphasizes that Moses “looked this way and that.” If you’ve ever seen children look around to check whether their parents are watching before they steal a cookie or punch their sibling, you know what Moses was doing.

He was about to act in a way that was morally reprehensible, and he wanted to make sure he didn't get caught in the act.

In addition, Moses was aware of the destructive impact murder has in a community, because he was descended from a long line of murderers—all the way back to Cain.

Read Genesis 4:1-16. What are the similarities and differences between Moses' story and Cain's?

Before we go any further, I want to make sure you don't check out by saying, "But Tony, I've never killed anyone!" According to Jesus, physical murder is not the only kind of murder.

Read Matthew 5:21-22. What's your reaction to these verses?

How can angry thoughts and words carry the same weight as the physical act of murder?

Jesus' words are frightening because anger can show up anywhere, not just in Egypt. It does its damage in the workforce, at home, in the church, or in the community in any number of ways. So my question to you is this: Has your anger at someone ever hurt or damaged them? If your answer is yes, then Moses' story applies to you from a spiritual standpoint.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

When was the last time your anger hurt or damaged someone you cared about?

There's a second way to apply Moses' story, because Moses did what many of us do: he used human understanding in an attempt to accomplish a divine goal. He correctly understood that God wanted to relieve the oppression of His people, but he used his own orientation and perspective to go after that goal. He went about it through his own wisdom and in his own way rather than in God's timing and direction.

Identify a time when you took action instead of waiting on God's direction or did something in your strength instead of in God's power. What was the result?

This mistake cost Moses everything he'd ever known. Moses went from the White House to the outhouse due to a single miscalculation. But as we'll see throughout this week, even then it wasn't too late for Moses. And it's not too late for you.



Pray that the Holy Spirit will make you sensitive to impulses to rely on your own wisdom and insight rather than God's direction.



Day 3

THE WILDERNESS

Take a moment to look at your shoes. (If you aren't wearing shoes, see if you can find a pair nearby.) Are they comfortable? Do they feel right when you put them on in the morning? Can you walk around for hours in them without your feet feeling cramped and sore?

If you answered yes to these questions, you're probably wearing an older pair of shoes.

See, new shoes look nice; they're shiny and unblemished. They even smell nice. But they don't *feel* nice—not at first. When you slip a new pair of shoes onto your feet, your toes get pinched. The sides of the shoes seem to squeeze too much against the sides of your feet. The backs of the shoes dig into your heels when you walk.

For those problems to go away, you must break in your new shoes. You've got to tie them onto your feet and then walk and walk and walk. When you slam the shoes against the ground over and over, the soles start conforming to the bottoms of your feet. The material on the sides loosens up and becomes more flexible.

In other words, new shoes need to be broken in before they become comfortable—before they become truly useful. In a sense, that's what Moses experienced in the desert of Midian.

Read Acts 7:20-22. Describe your impression of Moses, based on these verses.

Now read Exodus 4:1-13. Describe your impression of Moses, based on these verses.

How do you explain the differences in Moses' character and confidence as presented in those two passages?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Moses was 40 years old when he ran away from Egypt, and we learn from Exodus 2:15 that he “settled in the land of Midian.” Moses did more than camp there for a few days. In fact, he started a completely new life in Midian. He became a shepherd. He got married and had children. And we learn from Acts 7:30 that he remained in Midian for 40 years.

In other words, Moses moved on from the life he’d built in Egypt. He put it in the rearview mirror. And as far as he knew, he also moved on from the call God had placed on his life to relieve the oppression of His people.

How have you recovered from failure and disappointment in the past?

**When have you been tempted to walk away from an important task?
How did you respond?**

The wilderness is a recurring theme throughout the Bible, but it’s more than just a physical place. The wilderness is a lifestyle. It’s a state of mind. People who’ve entered the wilderness feel that they have something important to accomplish—a critical mission to make an impact in the world—and yet life has ground to a halt around them. Their circumstances have changed, and they no longer see any way of accomplishing the mission.

For Moses, the wilderness meant 40 years of babysitting sheep.

What has the wilderness looked like in your life?

What have you learned in previous wilderness periods of life?

The wilderness is almost always a frustrating place. It's uncomfortable. It's often boring. And yet God regularly uses the wilderness to break in His children to make them useful—to conform them to Himself and make them flexible, just as you break in a new pair of shoes.

Read Psalm 63 to learn David's mind-set when he fled from Saul in the wilderness of Judah. What's your reaction to these verses?

Read Matthew 4:1-11. What do you find interesting about these verses?

Why is it significant that even Jesus experienced a time in the wilderness?

After 40 years of leading dumb sheep through a barren wilderness, Moses probably thought it was too late to do anything significant—especially his long-lost dream of leading the Israelites to freedom. What Moses didn't know was that God was preparing him all along. First God gave him 40 years of "uptown" preparation in the luxury of Egypt. Then God gave him 40 years of "downtown" preparation in the isolation of Midian.

True, the second 40 years of preparation came about because of Moses' wrong choices. But that didn't stop God from using those years to prepare Moses for the task at hand.

What goal are you currently working toward in your life? Is it a long-lost dream like Moses'? What mission are you striving to accomplish?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

What's holding you back from realizing your dream?

What consequences have you experienced because you haven't been able to accomplish your purpose?

Moses endured real and painful consequences in the wilderness. He suffered through long days, nights, weeks, months, years, and even decades of monotonous waiting for something to happen. You may be enduring consequences too—stress, financial trouble, insecurity, depression, and more.

What we learn from the life of Moses is that God doesn't always relieve the consequences or erase the pain, but He's so big that He won't let even your mess mess Him up. He still has a plan and a calling for you. And if you seek Him, you'll find them.



As you pray throughout the day, engage God in a conversation about His calling for your life. If you don't have a clear picture of what He wants you to do, ask Him to show you. If you have a clear picture, ask Him to help you do it better and increasingly for His glory.



Day 4

WHO AM I?

Many dog owners today choose to keep their pets contained with an underground fence. If you're not familiar with that term, an underground fence is basically a wire that is strung along the boundary of the yard and then buried. The dog's behavior is influenced by means of a collar that beeps whenever the dog approaches the underground wire.

This beeping is a warning. It signifies that something worse is coming if the dog continues on its current trajectory. Sure enough, if the dog continues forward, it receives a minor electric shock through the collar. In a short amount of time, this combination of beeps and shocks teaches the dog to remain in the yard to avoid a painful experience.

Here's something else I've noticed about underground fences: the more powerful the shock, the faster the dog changes its behavior, and the longer it obeys the new boundaries.

Electricity excluded, list three ideas or experiences that caused you to change your behavior in the past.

1.

2.

3.

Take another look at Exodus 2:11-15. What emotions do you imagine Moses experienced during and after these events?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

At age 40 Moses went through a harrowing ordeal. After the exhilaration of physically standing up for his Israelites brothers, Moses was betrayed and rejected by them. Worse, he had to process that rejection at the same time he was dealing with his own failed expectations and the loss of his dream. And to top it all off, he was forced to run for his life and leave behind the only home he'd ever known.

Moses received a life-changing shock. And he was never the same again.

Read Exodus 3:1-10. Would you say this was a positive or negative experience for Moses? Why?

We can assume Moses, at 80 years old, thought it was too late for his dream—decades too late. He probably thought nothing was ever going to change. No doubt he believed that all of his tomorrows would be like his todays and that he was forever doomed to a miserable life shepherding his father-in-law's sheep.

But things did change. At 80 years old Moses had a fresh encounter with God. Even better, he had a miraculous encounter with God. And during that encounter he heard the words that invigorated him with the same passion and purpose he had felt 40 years ago: "Come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt" (v. 10).

In other words, God said, "Your dream isn't dead, Moses. It's not too late to do what I've called you to do."

Read Exodus 3:11-14. What words would you use to characterize Moses' response to God?

Given everything Moses had experienced, we'd expect him to jump for joy after hearing God's words. In reality he had exactly the opposite reaction. It's precisely those experiences that caused Moses to hesitate and shrink away from the opportunity. He'd received a powerful shock, and it created a formidable boundary in his mind. When he thought about going back to Egypt, he started hearing warning beeps all over the place: *Don't go there. You'll only get shocked again.*

Moses had also learned a powerful lesson. In Egypt he'd thought of himself as a superhero ready to tackle the Egyptian army one guard at a time. But 40 years in the wilderness had given Moses a more realistic perspective on his value. He asked, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" (v. 11). And he knew the answer: he was nothing. He wasn't up to the task.

In other words, Moses had learned humility. And it was that humility that enabled him to move forward effectively after he experienced a fresh encounter with God—and with the dreams God intended to fulfill.

How do you define *humility*?

Who among your family and friends has effectively modeled humility for you? What have you learned by observing those people?

I love verse 12 in this passage. After Moses asked, "Who am I?" God answered, "Certainly I will be with you." In other words, you're nothing, Moses. But that doesn't matter because I'll be with you. And I AM something.

Read Exodus 19:1-17. What do these verses say about God?

What changes do these verses reveal in Moses' character and behavior?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

How has your time in the wilderness changed you?

What has your time in the wilderness taught you about God?

If you've spent any time in the wilderness or if you're in the wilderness now, you need to maintain a proper perspective on your value. You need to be humble. But it's just as important that you maintain a proper perspective on God's value. Because when that fresh encounter with God finally comes, you need to be ready to move forward based on His worth, not yours, to accomplish what He's called you to do.



Make it a priority to spend time worshiping God throughout your day.

Praise Him for His power to bring you out of the wilderness
and to accomplish His purpose in your life.



Day 5

PERFECT TIMING

Let's take a moment to review what we've covered this week. First, when Moses was 40 years old, he made a spiritual decision to associate himself with the Israelites rather than with the Egyptians. Second, in the enthusiasm of that decision, Moses overstepped his role and murdered an Egyptian guard, ultimately causing the Israelites to reject him and causing Pharaoh to chase him out of town. Third, Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness before he heard from God again about liberating the Israelites.

There's a gap in the storyline when it comes to the Israelites in Egypt. What were they up to during the 40 years Moses spent in the wilderness?

Read Exodus 2:23-25. Write down the different verbs in this passage.

What do you notice about the Israelites from the progression of those verbs?

What do you notice about God?

Modern Bibles are divided into chapters and verses to help us read more easily and keep our place as we make our way through the text. That's a good and helpful thing, but it sometimes causes confusion because the original versions of the biblical text didn't include verses or chapters. Each book was handwritten on a scroll or piece of parchment as a single, unified manuscript.

Read Exodus 2:23–3:6 without pausing between chapters. What new insights do you gain by reading this way?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

At the end of Exodus 2 the Israelites cried out to God, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At the beginning of Exodus 3 Moses encountered God in a powerful way while shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. The timing of those events is vitally important because Moses' fresh encounter with God and renewed calling didn't come about until something else happened in Egypt.

Keep in mind that God is never just working with you. He's always doing more than one thing at a time. God was preparing Moses in the wilderness during his 40-year hiatus, but He was also waiting on an entire nation to cry out to Him before He answered His people's call for deliverance.

When have you cried out to God in the past? What was the result of your cry?

Essentially, the Israelites needed to *want* to be delivered before God would deliver them. Although they were slaves in Egypt, they'd apparently become too comfortable. But when they finally cried out, God heard them. Only at that point did He present Himself to Moses.

Read Luke 13:31-35. How do Jesus' words add to our understanding of the Israelites' situation in Egypt?

Is it a positive or negative thing that God often chooses not to rescue us until we cry out to Him? Why?

Just as it wasn't too late with Moses and the Israelites, it's not too late for God to redeem your situation and use you in a mighty way. Don't ever become satisfied with where you are in the wilderness, even if it was your mistake or sin that got you there in the first place. Cry out to Him and ask Him to hear you and remember what He's promised.

Read Psalm 22, preferably out loud. Record any words in the text that you consider poignant or powerful.

Do you find it easy or difficult to call out to God in the middle of difficult situations? Why?

Read Matthew 27:45-54. What's your reaction to the idea that even Jesus cried out to God?

If you are facing a difficult circumstance or situation, have you cried out to God about it? Is anything preventing you from crying out to God now and asking for His help?

God holds the all-time record for the most successful rebounds, but you need to position yourself in His presence to see the marvelous thing He's going to do. You need to seek a fresh encounter with God and be ready to turn and respond when He calls you by name.

When God does that kind of work in your life, you'll have what we used to call a testimony in the old church down home. Like Moses, you'll have a testimony of what God can do when it looked as though nothing else could be accomplished at all.

Because it's not too late.



Read Psalm 22 again but this time as a prayer. As you read sections of the psalm that offer praise to God, raise your hands as a physical expression of that praise.

As you read sections of the psalm that make requests of God, hold your hands in front of you as a reminder to wait and receive His answer.



IS THERE LIFE AFTER FAILURE?

Moses. Rahab. Jacob. Esther. Peter. Sarah. Each one possessed significant character flaws or committed sins that seemed to threaten their usefulness in God's kingdom. Yet God used these less-than-perfect people to do incredible things.

In this Bible study, pastor and author Tony Evans chronicles God's sovereign work in the lives of these six biblical characters to redeem their failures and make them useful for His purposes. God wants to do the same for you. No matter what mistakes or poor decisions you've made, God can redeem your past and set you on the path to a glorious new future.

For every mistake there's forgiveness. For every false start there's a new beginning. For every failure there's hope.

Because with God it's not too late.

ALSO AVAILABLE: IT'S NOT TOO LATE LEADER KIT includes resources for leading a six-session group study: one workbook, one *God's Unlikely Path to Success* book, and two DVDs that feature Tony Evans teaching the study. ITEM 005475107

ISBN 978-1-4158-7245-1



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