

Deliverance

*Be careful when you say "I could never" or "I would never."
God might just call you to do the very thing
you are sure would never show up on the radar of your life.*

Introduction

All through *The Story* we will meet people who did not believe they had what it took to serve God. But, over and over again, God continued to use surprising people to accomplish his Upper Story plan down in this Lower Story world of ours.

He still does.

At seventeen years old, Joni Eareckson Tada unknowingly dove into shallow water and had her whole life change in a moment. She became a quadriplegic, no longer able to use her arms or legs. At that point she could have given up on life and rejected God. Instead she opened her heart wider and embarked on a path of passionate service. Through the pain, struggle, sense of inadequacy, and relentless challenges, Joni followed God's call on her life.

Over the next four decades this woman of faith learned to paint beautiful pictures by holding a brush in her teeth; she has written books, hosted a radio program, founded an organization to help people with disabilities, served on the Disability Advisory Committee for the U.S. State Department, and spoken at conferences around the world. Imagine what the world would have missed if Joni allowed her "limitation" to stop her from following the extraordinary call of God.

Talk About It

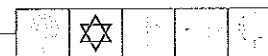
Tell about a person you know who has overcome obstacles and accomplished surprising things. What about that person encourages you?

3. How did Moses see himself and his abilities and how did God see him (Exodus 4:10–12; *The Story*, pp. 46–47)? Tell about a conversation you had with God that may have sounded something like the one Moses had in this passage.
4. While God saw Moses as the perfect person to face Pharaoh and speak the word of the Lord to the leader of Egypt, Moses saw himself as a political fugitive and a poor communicator who had no business facing the king. Give examples of how God can see us one way and we can see ourselves very differently. What can we do to increase our ability to see ourselves from God's perspective?

In the Lower Story Moses isn't qualified for such an important task. But in the Upper Story God sees Moses' weakness as the best channel for his strength. When Israel is successful in being freed from the Egyptian oppression, everyone will see God.

5. Randy suggested that the best thing we can do is to say yes to God, even when we do not feel adequate for the task ahead. Tell about a time when you dared to say yes and followed God, even when you were afraid. How did God show up and lead you?

6. God always was, is, and will be; he calls himself "I AM," the self-existent one (Exodus 3:14; *The Story*, p. 46). How can embracing the reality that the God we worship is the eternal "I AM" help you face the challenging moments of a normal day?
7. What is one area of your life where you tend to focus more on your limitations than God's ability to work through you? How can your group members pray for you and encourage you as you seek God's leading in this area?
8. How is Passover (Exodus 12:1–24; *The Story*, pp. 51–52) an ancient sign pointing to the death of Jesus on the cross as the final Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world?
9. Read movement 2 of *The Story* (p. 11 of this participant's guide). How does God unfold his story in this second movement and how does this connect with your story?



Closing Prayer

As you take time to pray, here are some ideas to get you started:

- Thank God that he uses limited, ordinary, and even broken people to accomplish his purposes in this world.
- Ask God to help you see yourself through his eyes more than through your own eyes.
- Confess where you have refused to follow God out of fear and pray for greater courage in the future.

Between Sessions

Personal Reflections

We all have our “I could never” and “I hope God never asks me to ...” moments. Where are the places you tend to resist God’s call? What things are you sure you could never do? As you honestly reflect on these questions, place them before the Lord, one by one. Admit your fear and resistance. Ask for new courage and boldness to follow God, even when you feel that you have nothing to offer or that your past disqualifies you. Commit to follow God, as best you can, no matter what he calls you to do.

Personal Action

Part of faith is taking action. If you feel prompted by God to sing in the church choir or play an instrument on the worship team, open your schedule and start practicing.

If you feel God calling you to the mission field, surrender and commit to follow. In addition, contact some mission organizations, talk to the missions leader in your church, go on a short-term mission trip, or take some other kind of action that will help you prepare.

You get the point. Surrender to the leading of the Lord, but also take action. God will do his part, but we need to do our part. God called Moses, but Moses had to head back to Egypt and stand before Pharaoh.

Read for Next Session

Take time before your next small group to read chapter 5 of *The Story*.