

Preparing For the Conflict **Exodus 3:16-22**

You serve the same God that Moses served.
You worship the same God that Moses worshipped.
You believe and trust in the same God that Moses believed and trusted.

You have on your side, the God of the Exodus.
You have watching over you, the God who sees, hears, knows.
You have access to the powerful God who is filled with compassion toward you.
You can talk to the God of the burning bush.
You can approach the unapproachable God who told Moses to take off his sandals.
You get to be loved by, cared for and protected by that God.

As we continue our series in the Book of Exodus, we are going to see an example of God's amazing ability to work in the hearts and minds of people. Some of these people are Jewish. Many are Egyptian. Either way, God demonstrates His ability to change hearts and change minds so that behavior changes.

It's easy to remember Exodus as the big story with big events. Burning bush, 10 plagues, 10 commandments, Red Sea, miracle after miracle and it's big and exciting and lots of action. But God is at work on the individual level and the national level at the same time.

What seems to us like a simple request – let us get away for a few days is actually outrageous. Let us stop working for a few days. Let us leave your sight and your control. Let us worship in a way that is offensive to you. Let us honor a deity that threatens you. Let us enjoy life and freedom. Let us show the Egyptians that you are weak. Let us declare our allegiance to our God.

This is crazy.

It's not a stretch to anticipate that Pharaoh is not going to like this. What is a surprise is that the elders of Israel are quick to jump on board. This is very risky. There's an even bigger surprise – the Egyptians will be favorably disposed toward the Israelites to the point of giving them their valuables...and God called all of this in advance.

Notice what God is able to call in advance.

V18 the elders of Israel will listen to you
V19 Pharaoh will not listen to you.
V21 the Egyptians will give to you

This is God working in the hearts and minds of people who don't know Him; don't pray to Him; don't follow Him. Ancient Egypt was a polytheistic culture. Even with that worldview, God was able to influence them toward the accomplishment of His will.

In this passage, God tells Moses to go through the elders.
Not new elders or a new structure but the existing elders within the existing structure.
Whatever Israel had, God can use.

Elders were very important to the welfare of the nation Israel.

As more and more of the OT history unfolded, we see elders engaged in important shepherding activities such as leading and sometimes exhorting God's people. They were responsible to know, teach and uphold God's Word.

According to the book of Joshua, Israel followed the Lord as long as they had elders who were faithful to God. As the leadership went, so went the nation.

Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel. Joshua 24:31 (NIV)

You should have on your prayer list – elders and staff. Pray for elders and staff.
We need to be a praying Church. Pray for your elders and staff.