

NOON BIBLE STUDY: EXODUS 3 & 4

Exodus 3:16-22 - Moses' Instructions

God gives instructions to Moses about how he should speak to Pharaoh and also a preview about how Pharaoh will respond. Just because the LORD was going to be with Moses didn't mean the assignment was going to be easy. God doesn't promise Moses that Pharaoh will cooperate. In fact, He tells Moses the opposite! But He also assures Moses that Pharaoh's resistance will not prevent God from accomplishing His purposes.

God is telling Moses about some of the challenges he will face ahead of time. And maybe most comforting in this exchange, God tells Moses how it is going to end. Pharaoh will let the people leave and the people of Israel will take the wealth of Egypt with them! From sojourners, to slaves, to salvation! The nation of Egypt is about to see the powerful hand of the true God.

“God tells Moses not only that Israel will be brought out of Egypt but also that they will plunder the Egyptians. The description must have seemed inconceivable to Moses. Plundering in the ancient Near East was what victorious armies did to cities they defeated. God describes a situation in which Israel will not only be released from the most powerful nation in the region, but the people will also be given the spoils of Egypt by each woman of Israel simply asking for them from her neighbor.” (ESV Study Bible Note, Exodus 3:22)

Exodus 4:1-9 - Signs

God gives Moses these signs so that the Israelites might believe that Yahweh has truly appeared to him. But I wonder if these signs also serve

to strengthen Moses' own confidence. Remember, he is currently speaking back to a bush that is engulfed in flames and yet not being burned up. That might have convinced some of us in and of itself. But God is working with Moses, and is not put off by Moses' doubts or weaknesses.

"The three signs indicate the extent of the Lord's power and prefigure the realms of the plagues to come: creatures of the earth (staff to a serpent), people (Moses' hand becoming leprous), and the elements of nature (water to blood)." (ESV Study Bible, Exodus 4:3-9)

Exodus 4:10-17 - Another Hesitation

Just when you thought Moses would have been ready to go back and be God's redemptive agent, Moses hesitates again: "I'm supposed to be your spokesman but I don't talk good." God responds with a powerful truth that he can handle any speech impediments that Moses has because He has "made man's mouth (4:11)." God promised to be with Moses & now promises to be with his mouth too!

I hope at this point you and I would be filled with the confidence we needed to go and stand for God...but not the great leader Moses! Moses responds to God's promise to be with his mouth like this:

Exodus 4:13 (NLT) - But Moses again pleaded,
"Lord, please! Send anyone else."

Eventually God gets angry with Moses and agrees to let Moses' brother Aaron do the bulk of the talking. God would speak to Moses and Moses would speak to Aaron and Aaron would speak to Pharaoh. And with that Moses begins his journey back to Egypt.

Exodus 4:18-23 - Moses Departs With A Mission

After an extended back and forth with the LORD, Moses finally “departs” for Egypt. This phrase “Moses departed” (4:18) is the same word used of Abraham when he “went forth” from his homeland towards Canaan. It is this action of “departing” that indicates that Moses, though with lingering questions or doubts, believes that Yahweh will be with him and is taking his first step of faith.

After receiving Jethro’s permission, God tells Moses that the men who were looking to kill him have died and that it is time to return to Egypt. Moses returns with the “staff of God” in his hand, the very staff through which God had demonstrated His power earlier in the chapter. It serves as a tangible reminder that Moses is not going in his own strength but with God's authority.

As Moses departs, God reiterates the message that Moses will speak to the people *and* the fact that Pharaoh will not let Israel go. God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart. This is an important theme that we'll return to as the story unfolds. But for now, notice that Pharaoh's resistance is not something that catches God by surprise. We even get a foreshadowing of the final judgment that will come to Pharaoh's house; because Pharaoh will be unwilling to let Israel, God's “firstborn”, go, God will kill the firstborn of Pharaoh.

This underscores what Moses is about to face. This is not a cutesy musical number he's about to perform - this is going to be an intense spiritual battle between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt.

Moses will become one of the most important figures in the Bible and in the history of salvation in general. He will represent Yahweh to Pharaoh, he will deliver and lead God's people from Egypt. He will shepherd the nation through the wilderness and be the one who will directly receive God's words to His people. And yet, the story of his call is filled with his pleas to God for someone else to go instead! He responds to God raising him up with excuses for why he can't do the job! What does this mean for us? One thing for sure that it teaches us is that God loves to work with

and through people who think they “can’t”. He loves working through *unlikely* candidates.

In fact, God does some of His best work through unlikely people. Why? Because people who recognize their need for God are more likely to give Him the glory. They know that what God accomplishes through them could never have happened by their own strength!

Old and barren Abraham and Sarah, will be the father and mother of many nations. Excuse-giving Moses, who can’t speak well and is filled with fear is going to be God’s spokesman and redeemer. Young David isn’t even invited to the battle but will kill Goliath with a slingshot. Virgin teenager Mary will give birth to the long-awaited, promised Messiah. Jewish Pharisee Saul of Tarsus will be the apostle to the Gentile world.

So, think about where you feel like you don’t have what it takes, where your shortcomings are standing in the way of you living for God. When we feel like we are inadequate to do what God is calling us to do for him, we ought not look at who we are but who He is! Moses asks “who am I that I should go...” and God replies with “I will be with you.” What sweeter promise is there?!

As we learned, God’s name of Yahweh means that He is, that he exists. This is an important truth in contrast to the gods of this world which are dead and do not interact with or have relationship with their worshippers. But this understanding of who our God is, is bigger than just that he is all around us in a general sense. And this is what enables and empowers Moses. Yahweh, the God who *is*, would **be with** Moses. God would not just exist in time and space, but would be present with and working through the inadequate and ineloquent man he had called.

You and I may not be called to face down a king and redeem a nation of slaves, but God is calling us into His service. God chooses to use our hands to accomplish His work! And while we feel like our hands aren't strong or skilled enough to do what God calls us to do, God always empowers those he calls. He never leaves us or forsakes us; how could he? He is Yahweh, "the one who is, who was, and is to come (Revelation 1:4, 8)."

So today, don't look at what you lack, look at what God supplies. Don't look at what you have still to do, look at what God has already done. Don't look at who you aren't, look at who He is and who He is calling you to be. When Moses said "I can't...", God didn't respond, "yes you can" - he responded with "I will be with you." That's how we can do and be what God is calling us to today - not because of what we lack or even what we have - but because He is.