

This teaching is especially intended for leaders in the Body of Christ whether pastors, elders, or anyone overseeing a group of people, even as few as two or three. If you have a flock under your care, this message is for you.

God's View of Stiff Necked People

Exodus 32:9-10 (ESV):

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.’”

When God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, He already knew the kind of people Moses would be dealing with. Moses may have assumed he was delivering a grateful and humble people. But the reality was far from it.

Despite witnessing astonishing miracles like the parting of the Red Sea, manna falling from heaven, water coming out of a rock, and the pillar of fire guiding them at night the Israelites still hardened their hearts. They crafted a golden calf and declared,

“This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (*Exodus 32:4*).

They grumbled, gossiped, rebelled, and even formed factions against their God appointed leader.

Every True Leader Will Face a Similar Test

At some point, every genuine servant of God will face a season like Moses did leading people who seem ungrateful, rebellious, and resistant to spiritual authority.

Many leaders reach a breaking point and say, *“If this is what ministry looks like being betrayed, misunderstood, and repaid with rebellion then I might as well quit.”* If you’ve thought that, it simply means you’re not alone, but it doesn’t mean you should quit.

God knew what kind of people Moses was dealing with *“a stiff necked people.”* And yet, He still gave them a shepherd. Even Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, yet He still allowed him to walk closely with Him and be counted among the twelve.

What Does It Mean to Be Stiff Necked?

To be “stiff necked” is to be stubborn, resistant to correction, and unwilling to submit. It’s like an ox that refuses to accept the yoke from its master. These are people who, even after seeing great signs and wonders, still cling to gossip, pride, disobedience, and rebellion. And yet God entrusts such people to shepherds.

Moses dealt with idolaters, complainers, and those who quickly forgot the goodness of God.

How Did Moses Respond?

Instead of abandoning them, Moses interceded for them. Even when God was ready to destroy the people and start over with Moses, Moses pleaded for mercy.

Exodus 32:32 (ESV):

“But now, if you will forgive their sin, please do; but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”

This is true leadership. A godly leader does not abandon their flock

when they fail but goes to God in prayer, asking for grace and restoration.

A true shepherd is even willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of those under his care just as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Spiritual Leadership is About Grace and Truth

True leadership is not about leading perfect people. It's about leading imperfect people toward a perfect God. A faithful leader balances **grace** and **truth** (John 1:14).

Yes, Moses interceded, but not always. There were times he allowed the judgment of God to fall. When the golden calf was made, Moses called for those on the Lord's side to separate themselves and those who remained in rebellion were judged by the sword (Exodus 32:25-28).

This teaches us that **sin should never be tolerated in the house of God**. At times, correction and even separation must take place for the health of the church. Just as Paul taught:

1 Corinthians 5:13 (ESV):

“Purge the evil person from among you.”

Yet, through all this, a true leader must remain prayerful, patient, and courageous correcting in love, but also standing firmly for righteousness.

The Reward is Worth the Pain

Ministry comes with hardship, rejection, and pain but the reward outweighs the cost. Leading God’s people is one of the highest honors and the greatest expressions of love toward God.

Proverbs 14:4 (KJV):

“Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.”

Yes, the pen is messier when oxen are present, but they bring increase. Likewise, shepherding people is messy but it brings great eternal fruit.

To every pastor, leader, and overseer: Don't give up. Lead with grace. Intercede like Moses. Correct when needed. And love the flock even when they have stiff necks.

This is what it means to be a faithful shepherd.

1 Peter 5:2-4 (ESV):

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you... And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

May the Lord strengthen you to shepherd His people faithfully.

God bless you.

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