

Share the Load

7.8.18

Sunday Before General Council Vote

Exodus 17:8–16

Exodus 18:1

Exodus 18:13–27

1. We are in the midst of a move of God.

A. We have experienced God's presence and power in remarkable ways in the last 18 months.

1. In the past 9 months we have seen 29 baptized in water.
2. We have 50 more people than 2016 worshipping here every Sunday and 20 more than last year.
3. Financially, we have invested a hundred thousand dollars in this building in renovations and yet God still provides for the work and ministry here.

B. Equally as exciting, is what we believe God is going to do in the future.

1. And it isn't just me talking about this.
2. I love to listen to you all talk about bigger sanctuaries, buying properties, and how to accommodate the growth YOU believe is coming.
3. The pastor isn't the only one praying for the lost and the hurting.
4. I am just one of a hundred who are believing God for more.

C. What is it going to take for us to be ready for the ministry God has for us?

1. For the last few years, we have focused on buildings and property.

- a. This is important.
- b. This facility is going to be a great tool of redemption here in Licking, MO.
- c. Buildings don't do ministry, they host it.

2. For us to lead well in the upcoming days, we need to do ministry God's way.

- a. One area we are making that change is in the area of leadership.
- b. As we will see in today's passage, ministry and leadership were not meant for one person to do by themselves.
- c. Moses was at his best when He shared the load and at his worst when He did it all.

Exodus 17 and 18 offers some great lessons on leadership that will help us be healthier going forward.

2. The victory of Exodus 17 was a team win.

A. This battle against the Amalekites was the first battle for Israel.

- 1. Not many days before, they were all slaves in Egypt.
- 2. Then they were set free, escaped through the Red Sea, and were experiencing God miraculously feeding them in the wilderness.
- 3. They hadn't been a nation very long and now they are facing a very serious fight with a very determined enemy.

B. The result of the battle was a great victory.

- 1. Joshua led the army on the field in victory over the Amalekites.

2. Though the Israelites had never fought together, they had won.

3. But high above Joshua and the army, 3 men were up on the mountain.

C. Moses, Aaron, and Hur might not have been swinging swords but they were very crucial to the victory.

1. Moses was the leader of the people.

2. Aaron was the priest and main helper of Moses.

3. Hur was the leader of his family but held no special office.

4. But, on this day, Aaron and Hur played an important role in the victory of Israel.

D. Moses went to the top of the mountain and raised the staff of God above his head.

1. Why was this gesture important?

a. Exodus says that as long as Moses' hands were lifted up, Israel won.

b. When he grew tired and lowered his hands, Israel began to lose.

2. The uplifted hands of Moses was an expression of prayer to God.

a. Moses wasn't just lifting hands for no reason.

b. Moses was praying and interceding on behalf of the army down below.

c. The victory of Israel depended not upon the strength of Joshua and the army of Israel but upon the power and provision of God.

3. Without the ministry of Aaron and Hur, Israel would have lost.

A. Moses had a job only he could do.

1. He was the one called to intercede for the nation of Israel.
2. He was the one entrusted with the staff of God, to hold up to the Lord in prayer.
3. But that did not mean that Moses had to bear the burden alone.

B. Aaron and Hur went with Moses in case Moses needed help.

1. It is this picture of Aaron and Hur, lifting up the hands of Moses, that is critical for us today.
2. Moses needed their ministry.
3. Aaron and Hur couldn't do what Moses was called to do, but they could help.

C. Next weekend we are making a change in how this church is lead and governed.

1. We shall be a church led by pastors, assisted by deacons and the congregation.
2. The Lord has called me to lead this church, but He hasn't called me to do it alone.
3. Just as Moses needed Aarons and Hurs in his life, I need the ministry of others to help "lift my hands" in ministry.

D. Our new leadership structure reflects this:

1. Aaron was a priest, who was responsible for the sacred functions of the tabernacle and people.
 - a. In our context, these are the pastors the Lord has sent our way.
 - b. Pastors like Ben, Brandon, and Josh who have been called and gifted to lead people in the sacred functions of the ministry.
2. Hur was a respected member of the families of Israel.
 - a. He wasn't a priest or a military leader.

- b. He was a man who was called to help where he could.
- c. These are the deacons within the congregation.
- d. Men who are presently called to lift my hands through prayer, through service, through sharing the responsibilities of the congregation.

3. Moses needed ministry, and so do I.

- a. The four deacons I have asked to serve are men who have proved their willingness and help the past several months.
- b. Through floods, late nights, early mornings, and lots of sweat, these are some of the men who have worked with me, prayed for me, and constantly check to make sure I'm healthy and taking necessary breaks.
- c. They are not deacons to represent people, to hold a special power, or assert control.
- d. Deacons serve.
- e. They serve the Lord by serving the pastor and serving the church.
- f. **If the leadership isn't healthy, the church won't be healthy.**
- g. When the leader stumbles, so do the followers.

E. Here in Exodus 17, Moses demonstrates the wisdom of bringing along people to share the burden.

- 1. But it doesn't take long to see that Moses did not apply this leadership principle to his everyday life.
- 2. The very next day, after the sounds of battle had died out, Moses is found leading Israel alone.

Exodus 18:13–23 (NIV)

¹³ The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. ¹⁴ When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"

¹⁵ Moses answered him, "Because the people come to **me** to seek God's will. ¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to **me**, and **I** decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."

¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law replied, "**What you are doing is not good.** ¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³ If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

4. Moses had great responsibility.

A. Moses had the responsibility to hear from God.

1. In that day, the Lord didn't speak to everyone.
2. He only spoke to Moses and Moses was to share the word of God with the people.
3. **If Moses didn't hear from God, the people didn't hear from God either.**

B. But Moses spent His days listening to the complaints of the people instead of the Word of God.

1. What Moses was doing was noble.
2. What Moses was doing was needed.

3. But it was not good and it wasn't healthy.

C. When Moses alone served the people, he wore himself out and he wore his people out.

1. Moses' father-in-law gave Moses the best advice a father-in-law has ever given.

a. And it started with Jethro saying, "What you are doing is not good."

b. That phrase "not good" is loaded.

2. When something is not good, what does that mean?

a. It means it is not of God.

b. It means it is not God's will.

c. It means that it is leading you in a direction away from God.

3. God had more for Moses and more for Israel.

a. Neither would experience the fullness of God's plan if Moses kept doing what he was doing.

b. Most of us are guilty of allowing good things to keep us away from the best things.

D. Jethro didn't simply tell Moses what he was doing was wrong, but he gave him a God-inspired plan.

1. Moses was to train and then delegate authority to other leaders who could handle almost all of what Moses was doing.

2. This freed Moses up to do what only he could do.

a. Many of us spend too much time identifying problems and not enough time providing solutions.

b. I get a lot of advice on a regular basis.

c. Most of the advice consists of telling me what the problems are.

d. What I need is not problem identifiers but problem solvers.

3. Before you go to your boss, spouse, or pastor with a problem will you first ask God to give you the wisdom and solution for the problem?

5. The #1 reason we overwhelm ourselves is....selfishness.

A. Jethro told Moses what he was doing was not good.

1. Moses responded with a long list of pronouns:

¹⁵ Moses answered him, “Because the people come to **me** to seek God’s will.

¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to **me**, and **I** decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and instructions.” ¹

2. I completely understand Moses’ response.

3. When you are tasked with leadership, you will feel the pressure of leadership.

4. The pressure of leadership causes us to carry all of the burden ourselves.

B. When the leader carries all of the burden, the leader is actually being selfish.

1. Wasting others talents is selfish.

2. Destroying your health is selfish.

3. Making people wait on you is selfish.

4. Jethro was right: Selfish leadership is not good.

C. Ultimately, solo-leadership is not healthy.

1. Not healthy for the leader.

2. Not healthy for the pastor.

3. Not healthy for the congregation.

D. The Lord wants us to be healthy, I want us to be healthy, and you want to be healthy

1. This morning, we are going to take several steps towards the health of this body.

2. There is going to be a pastor portion, a congregation portion, and a God portion.

6. Pastoral Confession:

A. Exodus 18:24 says that Moses listened to his father in a law and did everything he said.

1. This morning, I want to confess my sins of leadership to you.

2. *James 5:16 (NIV) ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

B. Let me confess to my pastoral staff for a moment.

1. I am not good at allowing others to help me.

2. Part of this is due to Julie and I's story.

3. When we came here almost 8 years ago, almost all of the responsibility fell on Julie and me.

a. The Sunday we tried out, we were immediately asked to lead worship, receive the offering, and preach all the services.

b. Our first week of pastoring we found out that it was our job to mow the church, answer several months of mail, AND we were told that we had nursing home service that day at a place we didn't know existed.

c. Then the week we moved here, we did two funerals in the same weekend for people we didn't know, in a place that wasn't yet home.

d. We led this way for several years and it creates a sense of loneliness and independence.

4. Unfortunately, this became our default mode of ministry.
 - a. When times are hard, when time is short, and something must happen I reach in and not out.
 - b. I also recognize that this is my full-time job, and too often I view servant opportunities as burdens on your time and not opportunities for you to use your gifts.
 - c. Please accept that I'm learning and I ask for your forgiveness and grace in this.

C. To the congregation:

1. You are truly some of the most wonderful people I have ever met.
2. But I must confess that I too often serve you from a position of fear and not faith.
 - a. I'm fearful of losing you, being hurt by you, disappointing you, or (at times) being fired by you.
 - b. This leads me to find my identity, self-worth, and value not in who I am in Christ, but in how well the church is doing.
 - c. In this respect, I am a lot like Moses whose confidence wavered with the mood of the people.
 - d. It also means that, like Moses, I take on too much.

D. Here is what I am doing to move to a place of health:

1. As this building project slows down, I will be investing more time in training and equipping my pastors and deacons.
2. This means that there will be times when one of the pastors or deacons are called upon to serve you instead of me.
3. Hopefully, more of the work of the church will be shared with others freeing up more time for me to preach and lead this congregation.

4. Just as Moses was called to be on top of the mountain, interceding for the battle below, part of my calling is to lead this congregation by hearing from the Lord and implementing what He says.

5. I am not called to do this alone.

a. The Lord has put multiple people in my life to both lift my hands when I am tired and to handle ministries and opportunities without my input.

b. I have grown in this area, but have much more to learn as the Lord leads us to be a church of several hundred people.

7. What I need from the Congregation:

A. Allow others to minister to you.

1. Ephesians 4 says the gifts of pastors and teachers are given to the church to EQUIP the saints to do the work of the ministry.

2. The expectation within the church has always been for you all to minister to each other.

a. You need to be willing to receive ministry from each other.

b. You need to be willing to receive ministry from someone other than me.

c. This is the biblical model, and when we do ministry God's way He always blesses it.

B. Don't assume leadership knows what you are good and what you are willing to do.

1. Most problems between people happen because of unmet expectations.

2. And most unmet expectations are due to unspoken assumptions.

3. If you are willing to help, want to help, feel called to help, then TELL me, Julie, a Deacon, or one of the staff.

4. We need your ministry and support, but we aren't mind readers.

C. When you have a problem, handle it biblically.

1. One of the most frustrating things I face as your pastor is when people have problems or issues and don't share it in a biblical manner.

2. Matthew 18 gives explicit directions on how to deal with conflict:

a. Go to the person first (if you go to someone else it's gossip).

b. Then if that doesn't work, bring in a leader/pastor as a witness or for counsel.

c. Then, if that doesn't work, then bring it before the church by bringing it to the pastor.

d. If you bring something to me before you have prayed about it or talked to the other person about it, then you haven't handled the matter in a biblical way.

3. If you have an accusation against a leader, bring it TO ME, not to someone else in the congregation.

a. For the health of the church and the health of me as your pastor, don't go to someone else who can't do anything about your problem.

b. There is a powerful, spiritual principle found in Exodus 18 about leadership that is ALSO found in the movie "Saving Private Ryan".

c. That's the principle that gripes and complaints go UP the leadership ladder, and not down.

d. When you take your problem up (to pastors, small-group leaders, deacons) you are entrusting your concerns

with people you will pray with you and for you and will help you bring your needs before the Lord.

e. When you take your concerns to someone else, you are gossiping.

f. When I have someone say, "well there are some people who don't like"... I ask for names every time.

g. But I don't act on anything until someone tells me in person.

D. Help me take a day off.

1. I only take one day off a week, and most weeks not even that many.

2. That means I have at least 52 days off a year less than if I was working a 5 day a week job.

3. A Sabbath is biblical and I have a hard-enough time disciplining myself to take a Sabbath.

4. I need your help in keeping a day holy to the Lord.

5. I've been trying to keep Fridays as a Sabbath, so on those days would you consider connecting with Pastor Josh or Brandon on those days (especially if it isn't an emergency).

8. God moment

A. In just a moment, we as a congregation are going to pray for our new deacons and for our pastors.

1. We are going to pray that the Holy Spirit will anoint them to serve.

2. We are going to speak blessings over them for healthy bodies, finances, relationships, and ministries.

3. We are going to pray for all of these men to have the wisdom that God WANTS them to have to help lead this church forward.

B. Then we are going to receive communion as a whole body.

1. We are pulling the kids in here too so they can receive communion also.
2. I wanted the kids to participate as a sign that we are ONE body, ONE church, and we have ONE future together.