

Lead Well

5.2.2021

Message 14

Exodus 18:1–27 (CSB)

18 Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and for God's people Israel when the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt.

²Now Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, had taken in Zipporah, Moses's wife, after he had sent her back, ³along with her two sons, one of whom was named Gershom (because Moses had said, "I have been a resident alien in a foreign land") ⁴and the other Eliezer (because he had said, "The God of my father was my helper and rescued me from Pharaoh's sword").

⁵Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, along with Moses's wife and sons, came to him in the wilderness where he was camped at the mountain of God. ⁶He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons."

⁷So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and then kissed him. They asked each other how they had been and went into the tent. ⁸*Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that confronted them on the way, and how the LORD rescued them.*

⁹*Jethro rejoiced over all the good things the LORD had done for Israel when he rescued them from the power of the Egyptians.* ¹⁰*"Blessed be the LORD," Jethro exclaimed, "who rescued you from the power of Egypt and from the power of Pharaoh. He has rescued the people from under the power of Egypt! ¹¹Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because he did wonders when the Egyptians acted arrogantly against Israel."*

¹²Then Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses's father-in-law in God's presence.

¹³The next day Moses sat down to judge the people, and they stood around Moses from morning until evening. ¹⁴When Moses's father-in-law saw

everything he was doing for them he asked, "What is this you're doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?"

¹⁵ Moses replied to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I make a decision between one man and another. I teach them God's statutes and laws."

¹⁷ "What you're doing is not good," Moses's father-in-law said to him. ¹⁸ "You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone. ¹⁹ Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and God be with you. You be the one to represent the people before God and bring their cases to him. ²⁰ Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do. ²¹ But you should select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating dishonest profit. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. ²² They should judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you every major case but judge every minor case themselves. In this way you will lighten your load, and they will bear it with you. ²³ If you do this, and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and also all these people will be able to go home satisfied."

²⁴ Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. ²⁵ So Moses chose able men from all Israel and made them leaders over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. ²⁶ They judged the people at all times; they would bring the hard cases to Moses, but they would judge every minor case themselves.

²⁷ Moses let his father-in-law go, and he journeyed to his own land.

Introduction: [The Bible can be brutally honest.](#)

A. One of my favorite sayings is that our lives have moments of brilliance followed by moments of abject failure.

1. That isn't exactly the case here, but it's still pretty raw.
2. Chapter 17 features a great example of cooperative leadership.
3. The victory over Amalek included multiple people using their skills to defeat the enemy.

B. Now, we are introduced to a time when Moses needed some outside perspective to correct a gap in his leadership strategy.

- a. I love Moses' approachability and accountability.
- b. He willingly listens to another elder who could see gaps that he could not.
- c. The result was the needs of people being met at a higher level.

1. One of the first things we should notice from this passage is Jethro's response to what God had done for Israel.

A. *Most of the nations heard about what God did and feared him.*

1. *Jethro heard and worshipped.*

2. It's hard to know exactly what kind of relationship Jethro had with YHWH.

- a. We know that Jethro was a priest of Midian.
- b. But this is before the priesthood of Israel had been established.
- c. Israel does not yet have any priests.
- d. So the relationship is a little confusing.

B. Too often, when we read the Old Testament, our perspective is too narrow.

1. We read as though the only actions God ever did were recorded in the Bible.

2. And we believe that all of God's activity was exclusive to Israel.

C. The reality is that **God has always been active among all of His creation.**

1. The Bible, however, is specifically focused upon God's actions through the family of Abraham.

2. But examples of God's expansive work are seen way back in Abraham's day, when we are introduced to Melchizedek, the priest of Salem who had a relationship with God.

3. Job lived at the same time as Abraham and knew God but was not, himself, Jewish.

4. John wrote in his Gospel that if all of Jesus' miracles were recorded, there would not be enough books to contain them.

5. Therefore, God has filled the universe with encounters, experiences, and expressions of His love.

6. So even though we don't know the how, we can believe that Jethro knew of YHWH in some form or fashion.

D. And because of the testimonies of Moses, Jethro declares YHWH to be greater than all gods.

1. Because of what God had done for Israel, Jethro was convinced of God's power and supremacy.

2. When God does a good work in your life, you have a responsibility to share it with others so that they, too, might believe.

a. Testimonies of God's goodness result in deepening faith and increased obedience to God's plan.

b. I would encourage you to be part of our Wednesday nights where many people share of what God has done for them in the past.

2. The main problem in Exodus 18: Moses didn't know how to share the leadership load.

A. The Bible can be brutally honest.

1. The Bible shows people at their best and their worst.

2. This is not Moses' worst moment.

a. Moses' anger that killed an Egyptian is far worse.

b. Moses' disobedience in striking the second rock instead of speaking is the moment that kept Moses from the Promised Land.

B. The picture we have of Moses is of someone who genuinely cared for people.

1. He wanted to make sure the needs and disputes of the people were handled correctly.
2. Therefore, Moses took the burden of the people upon his own shoulders.

C. We often believe that we are the only people capable of handling the job.

1. There are times when you are the best person to handle that problem or job or opportunity.
2. Other times, you are not the right person.
3. **A leader's insistence to do it all results in missed opportunities for people to be blessed.**
 - a. Sometimes it is your turn to fight.
 - b. Sometimes it is your turn to lead.
 - c. Sometimes it is your turn to serve.

3. Exodus 18 is an extremely valuable text for Leadership.

4 Key leadership principles from Exodus 18

A. Leadership is never a solo mission.

1. In the last chapter, Moses is leading in a team.
 - a. He has Aaron and Hur with him to share the load.
 - b. Joshua is leading the army.
 - c. Moses has a part to play, and he is doing that 1 part.
2. The next chapter shows Moses trying to do it ALL.

- a. Moses was new to this.
- b. Moses wasn't a bad person or a bad leader.
- c. But no one had prepared him for serving and leading millions of people and all that involves.

3. Jethro advises the inclusion of capable and able men to help share the load.

a. **A leader is only as strong as the people around him or her.**

b. Poor leaders and corrupt company will corrupt other good leaders.

c. It was vital that Moses didn't chose just anyone, but those who were capable to lead.

1. Not just leaders, but men with integrity and character.

2. A phrase around here is that I look for 3-C's.

a. Character

b. Competency.

c. Chemistry.

4. For myself, I don't look for people who have the time but for those who have the anointing.

a. *If you are in a leadership position, be careful who you give voice to.*

b. Be careful of who is speaking into your life.

c. Be careful who you give voice to in your kid's lives and employees.

5. There will be seasons where you are not called to lead, you are called to serve and do.

- a. If you are called to serve in this season, serve with excellence.
- b. We should stop viewing leadership positions as a “step-up” but as more responsibility.

B. Leadership has many levels.

1. Jethro advised Moses to break down the “crowd” into more manageable parts.

- a. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.
- b. How do you help millions of people, by serving them in much smaller groups.

2. Part of the new structure was to have leaders or judges set over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

a. The more responsibility, the more important it is to have God’s anointing.

b. **As the calling increases, the anointing increases.**

1. You need more of God’s anointing to lead a thousand people than you do leading 10 people.

2. I can assure you that it takes a lot more for me to pastor 150-200 people than it did to pastor 20.

3. However, the anointing to pastor the people has grown as the opportunity has grown.

4. **Jesus is always the same. But my need and my capacity that changes.**

5. “Lord, increase my capacity for your presence!”

c. Not everyone is suited for leading hundreds of people, or thousands of people, or even a nation of people.

d. The requirements and responsibilities change drastically the more people you lead and serve.

3. **We must never let our platform outgrow our character.**

- a. In this age of self-promotion, YouTube, and social media, it is easy for us to create platforms that we were not meant for.
- b. We can manipulate opportunities and people to the degree that we find ourselves in positions that God never intended for us.
- c. When we do, we often realize that our platform is bigger than our character.

- 1. When we see business and church leaders fail, this is often a reason why.

- 2. It is easy to allow the lights, and the praise, and the access, to go to our head.

- 3. What goes to our head will eventually go to our heart.

- 4. When pride goes to our heart our downfall has already begun.

- 5. Proverbs 16:18, "Prides goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

4. My advice: Let God promote you.

- a. Don't promote yourself.

- b. God's anointing often comes BEFORE His timing.

- c. David was anointed king long before he became king.

- d. David had years of lessons to learn before his character would be ready for the platform.

- 1. There may be bears, lions, and giants you need to kill before you are on the platform God has for you.

- 2. For Moses, there was anger to overcome, sheep to lead, and trust in God that needed to be established before he could lead Israel to the Promised Land.

e. Pastor Jim Bradford said: "God puts things in your heart before he puts them in your hands."

C. **The best leaders know where to focus and what to delegate.**

1. Moses' role was to represent the people before God, and to instruct them in God's laws and statutes.

2. But Moses couldn't do that if all of his time was focused on petty squabbles and fights.

a. The leaders of 50s, 100s, and thousands were most valuable when they freed Moses to do what only Moses could do.

b. I'm thankful we have people around here who understand this concept: JUST A FEW EXAMPLES

a. Big thanks to Everett Perkins for mowing yards. That used to be my responsibility at the old church.

b. Mike Klotz general contracted the building of this retaining wall. He is much better qualified to lead that than I am and his willingness to serve in that capacity freed me to focus upon other responsibilities.

c. Terri Moncrief is one of the most dependable people we have, picking up nursery shifts when others can't and I've never heard her complain once.

d. The women's event last week featured a team of women doing incredible ministry that I could never do.

e. There is no way I can show honor do to everyone that serves around here.

f. **The volunteers we have at Licking A/G is the envy of so many of my pastor friends.**

g. The reason why we don't have to hire full-time staff is because you all serve faithfully.

c. Sometimes our greatest value is not in what we do, but what we free others up to do.

a. Example: Our nursery staff are unsung heroes around here.

b. They commit their time to love on kids and care for them well.

c. But they also provide opportunity for moms to worship, refresh, and to take a break.

d. When deacons mow the yard so that I don't have to, it frees me up to do what I am here for.

d. **Servant leaders are willing to look beyond the task and see the ultimate goal; a goal far bigger than the individual parts.**

e. Servant leaders do not demand others to delegate their calling.

D. The best leaders plan to endure.

1. Very few people finish what they start.

a. One of the most important skill-sets today is the skill of finishing what you start.

b. This applies to home projects, jobs and careers, education, and ministry.

2. Statistics on ministry:ⁱ

a. 90% of clergy will not stay in ministry long-enough to retire.

b. 50% of ministers starting out will not make it to year 5.

c. 1 out of every 10 ministers will retire in ministry in some form.

d. **Most spiritual leaders have no plan for finishing well.**

3. Jethro advised Moses: If you do this plan, you will be able to endure...

a. My question: What kind of plans do you have to endure and finish well?

b. What kind of plan do you have to raise your kids and transition them to adults?

c. What kind of plan do you have to stay in love with your spouse?

d. What kind of plan do you have to stay in love with Jesus?

e. If you don't plan to endure, you will not endure.

f. **If you don't plan to finish, you won't finish.**

Close: How are you leading?

A. I've outlined several concepts that will help us lead well.

1. Now is time for us to ask the question:

2. How am I leading?

B. Are you leading:

1. Yourself well.

2. Your family well?

3. Do you have a plan for your relationships to endure?

C. How are you leading?

1. If you fail to lead yourself, you can't lead others.

2. If you lead others well, but fail at home, you have failed.

3. If you lead well at church, but don't lead yourself, you are not fulfilling your responsibilities.

ⁱ <https://shepherdswatchmen.com/browse-all-posts/why-pastors-leave-the-ministry/>