

# 13. Godly advice from a heathen

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One time, I lost my wallet and I had to get my driver license reissued. I walked in the DMV office in Green Valley and looked around and sighed. Because there was a long line. Some people have to wait for hours before they get waited on. It is no wonder why the Arizona State is willing to pay \$5.00 if you waited more than an hour. The people who have to wait for their turns and the employees who work from the other side of the counter both dread the long endless line.

It seems that there have to be a better way to do this. That is the reason why I renew my car registration through the DMV web site. It is 24/7 and don't have to wait.

If we thought waiting for our turn at the DMV office was bad, we have not seen the line of people who wanted to present their cases to Moses at the Hebrew camp in the wilderness. There was one judge for two million people. So, the number you are going to take for this morning at the Hebrew camp is 62,348. A long, long waiting.

Our society is filled with workaholics, soccer moms and stressed-out dads trying to do too much, too fast. Usually, we end up exhausted, frustrated, angry, confused and lonely.

Bible scholars disagree as to the interpretation of this chapter, whether Jethro's advice to Moses was of the Lord or of the flesh. But I interpret this chapter as godly advice from a heathen. Can that happen? Why not? God used a donkey to speak to a prophet, why not a heathen. But we need to be careful with what kind of advice we receive from them.

## A. FAMILY REUNION

*Exodus 18:1-6 And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people--that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3 with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") 4 and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"); 5 and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."*

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law who was a Midian priest brought Moses' wife Zipporah and his two sons Gershom and Eliezer to him in the wilderness. Apparently Moses sent his family back to Midian at some time, perhaps during the plagues of Egypt. Wow, they had a family reunion without any argument or fight. What a concept!

## B. A HEATHEN PRIEST GIVES GLORY TO GOD

*Exodus 18:7-12 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. 8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom*

*He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10 And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.*

When Jethro heard of God's great works over the gods of Egypt, it brought this truth to him more clearly than before. And he couldn't help himself but to give glory to the God of Hebrew.

We must notice another very important thing here about Jethro. He was not jealous about how well Moses did in Egypt against Pharaoh, nor Moses became the leader of two million people. He was simply happy for Moses and gave glory to the Lord.

How often within the Christian circle we find one Christian bad mouthing about another person who just received great blessings from the Lord? We need to understand that God is not here for us, but we are here for God's glory and pleasure. We are working for the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita nor whatever yours is. Let's stop being so selfish and narrow minded.

### **C. AN EVALUATION OF MOSES**

*Exodus 18:13-16 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. 14 So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."*

Among such a large group there would naturally be many disputes and questions of interpretation to settle. Apparently Moses was virtually the only recognized judge in the nation, and the job of hearing each case occupied Moses from morning until evening.

Did you notice the length of Moses' workday? "Morning until the evening." Some of us are thinking, "It sounds like mine." He was staying at the office too long, over-working himself. When Jethro saw all the work and time Moses was putting in, he asked two simple, direct questions: "Why you? Why alone?"

Let's give Moses a break. He'd never had a two million congregation church to lead. But then again, who had? I sure don't want to. Moses didn't know how to organize and how to delegate works. It was an enormous job, and Moses was doing his best to fulfill his calling.

### **D. GODLY ADVICE FROM A HEATHEN**

*Exodus 18:17-23 So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. 18 Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. 19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the diffi-*

*culties to God. 20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. 21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.”*

Jethro’s words to Moses were more than advice on how to delegate. They remind us that Moses’ limitations point to God’s all-sufficiency. Moses could lead the people to the Red Sea, but only God could get them across. Only God could make bitter water sweet, provide manna and quail, bring water gushing from a rock – not Moses, whom the people were constantly grumbling against.

During the battle with the Amalekites, he grew weary and needed two people to hold up his arms. Judging the people, he grew overwhelmed and needed his father-in-law’s wisdom and the help of many others. Only God is all-powerful and all-wise. And Moses, though a strong and faithful leader, had imperfections that only point to the need for our perfect Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jethro gives two pieces of advice to Moses regarding this matter:

**1) Represent the people before God and teach them His Word**

By returning to the primary role God had called him to, Moses could provide leadership for the whole group much better than he could when he was trying to address their needs individually.

I find three things Moses and us who lead other must do. I am not just talking to the leaders of the church or companies, but also you moms and dads.

- *Stand before God for the people:* Pray for the people
- *Teach them the statutes and the law:* Instruct them through the Word of God
- *Show them the way:* Lead them by your example

Many pastors think that they should do a lot of counselings for their congregation’s spiritual needs. So they spend a lot of time in counselings and less in studying the Word of God. Consequently, the congregation needs more counselings because they are not fed from the Word of God. In other words, they are malnourished of spiritual food.

I am opposite of that idea. I’d rather spend a lot more hours in studying of the Word of God and bring you the message from the Lord. While I teach, the Holy Spirit speaks to you individually that I don’t need to do many counselings.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not against Christian counselings. Some people need them. But I’d rather see you having the Word in your hearts and obey what it says. Then you really don’t need counselings. Tell me one subject in counseling that the Word of God does not cover. You can’t. No counselor can give you better advice than the Word of God.

Many times, I find that people want to justify what they want to do and get an approval from their pastors on their actions and decisions. Let me tell you this: If what you are doing is against the Word of God, don't come see me to get my approval. Because my approval doesn't mean a thing, but God's does. And don't think that the loving God will let you get away with whatever the sin you are planning to do or doing. If that is the case, you are forgetting that the same God who is so loving is also absolutely holy, righteous and despises sins of men.

## **2) Delegate authority by choosing qualified men to help you lead the people.**

Delegation fails if the job is not put into the hands of able, godly men. Only particular men were fit for this job:

- *Able men* - Men of ability
- *Fear God* - Men of godliness
- *Men of truth* - Men of God's Word
- *Hating covetousness* - Men of honor

Again, this principle not only applies in ministry, but also it applies in any leadership role. It is so important to delegate work to the right people.

For Moses to effectively delegate, he must still have oversight and leadership over those under him. Delegation is the exercise of leadership, not the abandoning of it.

What would there be the rewards for delegation?

- *You will be able to endure* - Moses can have a life too.
- *All this people will also go to their place in peace* - That means no more long lines.

I need to give you two concepts of managements. Many of you already know about these, but for those who don't know or don't practice, hear me please:

- **Micro-management:** If you are practicing this style of management, you are not only driving everybody under your command crazy, but also you are not using your people's potential to the maximum. You are going to have ulcer because of your insecurity and bring frustration to the people who work for you.

How do you know you are this type of person? If you are checking your people's work very often and telling them what to do for every move, then you are a micro-manager. Please stop. You need to back off and give them room to make mistakes and to grow.

- **Macro-management:** To do this, you need to find a right person for a right position. Then you give them a long leash to do what they need to do. Offer them to come to you if they need help from you. You give them guidelines to work with and let them report to you periodically. You will bring out the best of your people.

## **E. A NEW WAY TO HANDLE**

*Exodus 18:24-27 So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.*

Much to Moses' credit, he was teachable and secure in his position as God called him. When Jethro said the thing that you do is not good, Moses listened to him. Moses knew how to not bow to the complaints of the children of Israel, but also knew how to hear godly counsel from a man like Jethro.

Does it mean we just take any advice from anyone? No, when we hear advice from others, we must put it against the Word of God.

*1John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

## **G. APPLICATIONS**

Whether our job is to lead a church, corporation, care for our children or do our homework, we can learn a few things from this chapter:

### **1) In every responsibility, two factors are present-the essential and the additional.**

The essentials are the areas of our calling from God. The additional can be something from somebody who couldn't do that ends up our laps or we just have a hard time saying, "No." We cannot do it all.

We need to prioritize our tasks. The first thing, spend time with God through the Bible and prayer, then ask God to help you prioritize your day. You will be surprised how much you can get done.

### **2) As the workload increases, wise leaders restrain their involvement and involve others more.**

We need to do what we do best to the best of our abilities-and if it's possible, delegate the additional. Even if that means giving tasks to others who will do them differently, or, heaven help us, less "perfectly" than we do them! That is how we've learned, because someone was gracious enough to allow us to try it with many mistakes.

### **3) If you can't do everything you feel that you need to do for that day, it will still wait for you tomorrow in most cases.**

Not everything has to be done today. That is how we drive everybody around us crazy. Do your best and rest well in the Lord.