

The Burden of Leadership and the Wisdom of Order

Exodus chapter 18 is a passage that speaks right to the heart of how we live out our faith in the community of believers. You see, life as a Follower of Christ was never meant to be a solo flight. God has designed us to function together as a body, each part doing its share.

A Family Reunited

As we open to the first few verses of Exodus 18, we find Moses out in the wilderness. Word has reached Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, about the incredible things the LORD had done—how He had smashed the power of Egypt and brought His people out with a mighty hand.

Now, there's a bit of a technicality in the Hebrew here; the word for "father-in-law" can sometimes mean "brother-in-law." We know Moses' father-in-law was called Reuel earlier, so Jethro might be another name for him, or perhaps a close relative. But the point is, family is arriving.

Jethro brings with him Zipporah, Moses' wife, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. You might remember that things got a bit "salty" between Moses and Zipporah back in Exodus chapter 4 during that incident with the circumcision of their son. It seems Moses sent her back to her father for a season while he went down into the heat of the battle in Egypt. But now, in God's timing, the family is reunited at the "mount of God."

The Testimony of God's Power

When they meet, Moses doesn't talk about his own brilliance or his leadership skills. He tells Jethro about **the LORD**. He speaks of the travail, the hardship, and how the LORD delivered them.

Look at Jethro's response in verses 10 and 11:

"Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh... Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods."

Jethro, a priest from a different background, recognizes the supremacy of Jehovah. This is a beautiful picture of a heart being drawn to the truth. He offers a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. It reminds us that even before the Law was fully given at Sinai, there were those who recognized the one true God and sought to worship Him in spirit and truth.

The Danger of "Majoring in the Minors"

The next day, Jethro watches Moses at work. From morning until evening, Moses sits to judge the people. Can you imagine the line? There are hundreds of thousands of people, and every time someone has a dispute over a broken shovel or a stray goat, they go to Moses.

Jethro watches this and says, essentially, "Moses, what are you doing? You're going to kill yourself, man! And you're going to wear out the people, too."

Moses' heart was right—he wanted to help the people know the statutes of God. But he was caught in a trap that many of us fall into today: doing the "good" at the expense of the "best." We see this in the early church in Acts chapter 6. The apostles were getting bogged down in the daily distribution of food. They realized it wasn't right to leave the Word of God and prayer to serve tables. It's not that serving tables isn't important—it's vital! But God had called them to a specific priority.

The Blueprint for Ministry

Jethro offers a solution that is both practical and spiritual. He tells Moses to:

1. Teach the people the Word: Show them the way they must walk.
2. Appoint capable men: Delegate the responsibility.

Notice the qualifications for these leaders in verse 21. They weren't looking for the most charismatic or the most wealthy. They looked for:

- Men who fear God: They have a healthy reverence for the Almighty.
- Men of truth: They have integrity; their "yes" is "yes."
- Men who hate covetousness: They aren't in it for what they can get; they aren't looking to build their own kingdom.

When a church has men and women like this—who aren't looking for a "hype" ministry but are simply faithful to the Word—the whole body thrives.

Practical Application: Setting Your Priorities

Are you "majoring in the minors" today? Sometimes we get so busy with the "mechanical" things of life—fixing the "broken studs" of our daily schedules—that we lose our time for the Word of God and prayer.

The enemy loves to wear us out on piddling little things so that we have no strength left for the things of eternity. Take an inventory of your "line." What are you holding onto that someone else could—and should—be helping with?

A Challenge for the Believer

I want to challenge you: Are you a person of the Word? Moses' primary job was to teach the statutes. Your primary job is to know them. Don't rely on a "middleman" for your spiritual life. Dig into the Scriptures yourself. Be a person who fears God and hates covetousness. Let your life be defined by the Truth, not by the latest trends or the "hype" of the world.

An Invitation to New Life

Perhaps you're like Jethro was—standing on the outside, hearing about the great things God has done, but you haven't made it personal yet.

You see, the reason we study these Old Testament shadows is because they point us to the Light. Jesus Christ came not just to be a judge, but to be our Substitute. He shed His precious blood on that cross to pay for every sin, every failure, and every bit of "travail" in your life. When He rose from the dead, He declared once and for all that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You don't have to stand in a long line to get to God. You can come to Him right now. If you're tired of trying to judge your own life and carry your own burdens, Jesus says, "Come to Me... and I will give you rest."

God's Word tells us that "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." It isn't about a religious formula; it's about a heart turning toward the Creator who loves you.

Jesus didn't just give us a set of rules to follow; He gave His life. When He shed His blood on that cross, He took the judgment that we deserved upon Himself. And when He rose from the grave three days later, He proved forever that He is God, Savior, and Lord over all.

Let's talk to Him right now. You can pray these words from your heart to His:

"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I cannot save myself. I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for my sins, shedding Your blood to wash me clean. I believe You rose again, and You are alive today. Right now, I turn from my old life and I open the door of my heart to You. Come in, Lord Jesus. Be my Savior, my Lord, and my Friend. Thank You for forgiving me and for giving me the gift of eternal life. Help me to walk with You from this day forward. In Jesus' name, Amen."

A New Beginning

If you prayed that and meant it, the Bible says you are a new creation! The old things have passed away, and all things have become new. You don't have to be "perfect" to start this journey; you just have to be willing to follow the Shepherd.