

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Please open up your bibles to Exodus 18 –

A few years ago, I was in a group study and the following question was asked – I am going to ask the same question to you.

Who is the Christian that has influenced you the most???

Now, before you answer – I want you to think about it for a moment.

For me, it was my coworker Ed Pena.

He was the individual that God used to bring me to the Lord.

He was the individual that took me to church.

He was the individual that reminded me every day that he was praying for me.

He was the individual that provided me with a glimpse of what a godly home looked like.

He was the individual that showed me the importance of reading the Word of God and walking it.

Many of us have our own Ed Pena's – whether God brought them into our lives for a short time or a life time – the Godly wisdom that they provided made an impact on our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now, if Moses had been asked that question, he might have answered, “Jethro.”

His father-in-law.

You see, in our text this morning, God is going to bring a visitor into Moses' life at the precise time and he will provide godly wisdom to Moses – in order to influence him in his work and in his walk.

Let's pray...

We are continuing on in our journey through the book of Exodus and now as we come to chapter 18 – we see that the Children of Israel have now reached Mt. Sinai.

This is where they are going to receive the Ten Commandments, this is where they are going to receive instructions for the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant – this is where they are going to remain until the book of Numbers.

[Exo 18:1-27 NKJV] 1 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.

Back in chapter three, we were introduced to Jethro –

His name means “his abundance” – he also goes by Reuel, which means “friend of God”

The flocks that Moses tended for the 40 years when he was in exile were Jethro’s flocks.

So here in verse one, we are told that Jethro was a priest of Median.

We don’t even know what type of priests Jethro was – up to this point, the only time we see the word priest in the scriptures, it was in reference to Melchizedek and to the pagan priests that were in Egypt during the times of Joseph.

The Midianites were the descendants of Abraham’s second wife – Keturah.

So Jethro might have known Yahweh from the stories that Abraham had passed down to the children that he had with Keturah.

So, Jethro gets word of the work that God was doing in the life of Moses and the Children of Israel

He hears stories of the plagues that came upon Egypt

He heard the story of the Red Sea parting

He heard about the manna and the water flowing from the rock at Horeb.

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."

You may remember that after the burning bush moment, God commanded Moses to return to Egypt to deliver the Children of Israel out of bondage.

And on the way back to Egypt, there was an incident where Zipporah circumcised her son – that was back in chapter 4 –

We haven't heard from Zipporah until now.

We don't know if Moses sent them back after this incident or she and her son were sent later on when the plagues started occurring in Egypt.

So Jethro sends word to Moses that he is coming to meet Moses and he is going to be reunited with his wife and children.

And just like any other in-law, he is also going to bring him some advice.

7 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.

I want to draw your attention to how Moses greeted Jethro – he bowed down and he kissed him.

Even though Moses was the leader of a nation, a mighty man, a man who was exalted chief over two million people, he humbled himself to his own family member.

Moses could have easily said, “I am the leader of a nation – you are just a wealthy farmer in the middle of nowhere – you bow down to me”

Moses doesn't do that – he honors Jethro, he shows deference toward him.

So Moses here, he brings Jethro in and he starts filling in all the details of what had occurred.

Notice also, that Moses kept the emphasis on God.

He spoke of “all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh,” and “how the Lord had delivered them.”

When we tell our story – when we give our testimony, we need to make sure that we bring the Lord into them and give Him the honor and the glory.

Many times, the focus is on what we did or what we are doing, when the emphasis should be on the work that He has done or He is currently doing.

Notice that Moses tells him the good things as well as the bad things.

He gave Jethro an honest report – he just didn't tell him about everything that was great – he didn't just talk about how wonderful the manna was – he told Jethro about the hardships, the trials and the difficulties and how God remained faithful through 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.

In verse 11, I had you make a note where Jethro declares – Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods.

I believe that Jethro knew God already – however, we must remember that he lived in the midst of a culture that was given over to idolatry.

It was a culture where they had a god for everything – we looked at some of them when we went over the plagues.

So when Moses provides this report of God's deliverance, it helped Jethro conclude that yes – Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel – He is the Lord; He is exalted above other gods.

So this declaration, leads Jethro to offer up a burnt offering to God.

The "burnt offering" was supposed to be a picture of complete consecration to God.

The animal was to represent the individual that was offering it as the worshipper.

The meat wasn't just cooked until it was done, it was to be completely burned up in the fire.

It's as if the worshipper himself is on that altar being completely consumed by the fire and is giving himself/herself completely to God.

We also see that besides the burnt offering, a peace offering was made – the partaking of bread with one another was what the peace offering was all about – a meal with each other and with God.

Fellowship with each other and with God.

They didn't just have a meal, they invited God.

I find it interesting that up to this point, the scriptures do not mention of any burnt offerings or peace offerings made by Moses or the Children of Israel to God as they left Egypt.

13 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.

Whenever you have a large group – it is inevitable that there will be disputes between some of the people.

That was the case with the Children of Israel.

- Your kids broke my pots
- The sheep you sold me was already sick
- People not getting along
- People breaking the law
- People bringing lawsuits against one another

And the people would bring these disputes so that Moses would be able to preside over them.

So after his morning coffee – Moses would go outside his tent, sit in his lawn chair and listen and judge the people's disputes all day.

The people didn't make appointments – they didn't have a numbering system – they just got up early and lined up outside his tent.

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."

The reason that the Children of Israel came to Moses was because they had no way system of laws or a way to judge for themselves on what was right and what was wrong.

In Egypt, their taskmaster were the ones that dictated what was right and wrong.

Out here in the wilderness, they do not have the written law yet – they will get that in the next chapter.

So they had no standard of right and wrong.

There is no precedence as to what they should be doing.

So Moses tells Jethro that he know the law of God.

He knows the specifics and the principles.

In other words, he knows how to apply the law of God so therefore, he listened to their dispute and he was able to settle them.

17 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.

Jethro tells Moses that he is doing it all wrong.

The job was simply too big for Moses to take care of by himself.

First of all Moses, you are putting a tremendous strain on yourself by having to do this by yourself.

Secondly, you are cheating the people. Because here they are waiting for justice to occur and you are making them wait. Some of them will not get any justice based upon the time they have to wait.

Here is an example -

If someone stole my sheep and it is going to take a year for me to get before Moses – that sheep might be dead by then

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 difficulties 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.

Jethro was suggesting a better way of doing the tasks assigned to Moses.

He would still be the guy tasked with standing in the gap for the people; he would still bring their difficulties before God; he would still teach them.

Before he even tells Moses to delegate some of his responsibilities – he tells Moses to pray for the people and to teach the people the word of God.

You see, by teaching the congregation the law of God, they would then be able to resolve some of the disputes themselves.

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.

Jethro tells Moses to select able men from among the Children of Israel.

So he tells him to start delegating some of the work he is doing -

And he defines the qualifications of these able men.

This is very similar to the qualifications that Paul tells Timothy and Titus to look for as when choosing elders for the church.

It all has to do with maturity.

They were supposed to be God fearing men –

Men of truth - men who knew God's word and who actually lived it.

Notice that it doesn't simply say men who spoke truth but men of truth.

Those who hated covetousness were men of honor – men who were not selfish, those who wouldn't take bribes.

They don't base their decisions on what they're going to get out of it.

One of the big steps of maturity is coming to realize that I need to be more concerned about doing what's right than I am with what I'm going to get out of it.

And Jethro tells him to appoint some over smaller groups and some over bigger groups.

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.

What this amounts to is a system of lower courts and higher courts –

The lower courts would hear smaller matters that had to be addressed while the great matters would be heard by the higher courts.

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."

"And God so commands you" was Jethro's way of telling Moses to consult the Lord about this plan.

“Moses, I want you to take this to God in prayer and I want you to discern this for yourself – if this is what God wants you to do”

Jethro didn't assume that just because he said it – Moses should automatically adopt it as being from the Lord.

Church, I think this is true even today –

Sometimes God will guide us from unusual outside sources and when if He does – we have to confirm it by prayer to the best of our ability.

It made sense; it was full of wisdom; it didn't contradict anything; but it must be approved by God through prayer.

And once God approved and he enacted these recommendations, these changes would help Moses endure.

Remember, Moses' ministry was going to continue on for another 40 years – one of the reasons that he was able to endure was by implementing the recommendations of Jethro.

24 So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

If Moses “heeded” the voice of his father-in-law, then he certainly did take Jethro's plan before God.

And it appears that God green lighted the plan.

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.

God taught Moses by someone from the outside, and when Moses listened and took it before the Lord and implemented it – it was good.

It was good for Moses because he could focus on the most important thing for him to do and not be overwhelmed –

It was good for those that were tasked to be the rulers of tens, the rulers of fifties, the rules of hundreds and the rulers of thousands – as now they were blessed with a meaningful ministry to do and bring God more glory.

It was good for the congregation, because as they were prayed for by Moses and taught by Moses, they were able to settle some of the things for themselves – and when they needed someone to preside over a disagreement, the system was already in place to provide the justice that they sought.

Turn with me to Acts 6 –

I want to show you some parallels that see in the New Testament.

[Act 6:1-7 NKJV] 1 Now in those days, when [the number of] the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of [good] reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. 7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

We find a similar problem in the early church – Peter, John, James and the disciples were overwhelmed – they needed to focus on prayer and the teaching of the word – so they delegated some of the work to able men (men of reputation) to do.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul writes,

[2Ti 2:2 NKJV] 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

And the last parallel I want to provide is Jesus Christ.

I see Jesus Christ as the ultimate delegator.

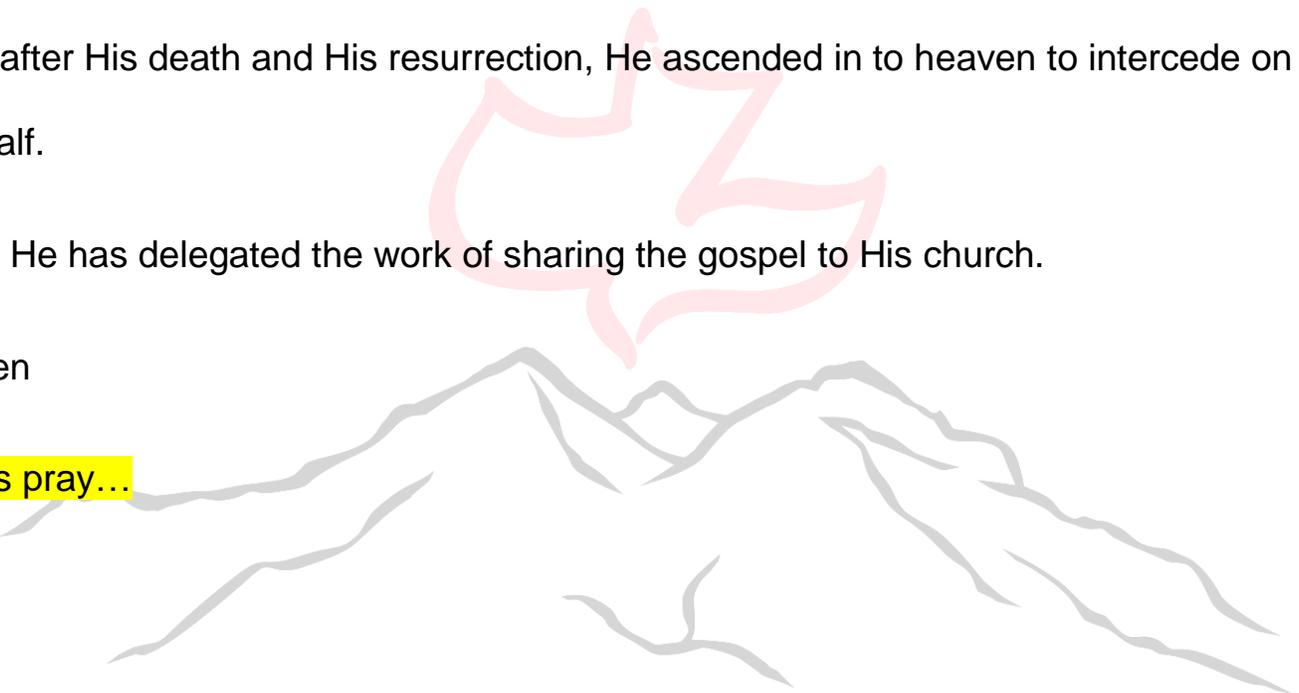
He did a work that only He could do – and that was the work on the cross. Nobody was able to do what He did – and for that I am thankful.

But after His death and His resurrection, He ascended in to heaven to intercede on our behalf.

And He has delegated the work of sharing the gospel to His church.

Amen

Let's pray...



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