

## Sunday Morning Message

March 10, 2024

### *A Pattern for Leadership*

Text – Exodus 18:17 - 27

Congregational Reading – Exodus 18:17 - 27

## Introduction

### **Read Exodus 1:1 - 12**

In our text today, Moses is leading the people of God through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. It is very early in their journey and very soon after they had left Egypt. Moses is visited by his father-in-law, Jethro, who came to bring Moses' wife, Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom, and Eliezer, to be with Moses as they made their journey. Jethro meets up with Moses as they camped near Mt. Sinai where Moses received the Law from God.

Moses tells Jethro about all that God had done to the Egyptians through the plagues and in the Red Sea, and Jethro comes to the realization that Moses' God is greater than all the supposed gods or idols that were worshipped in the land of Midian where Jethro came from. Jethro offers up a burnt sacrifice and sacrifices to the God of Israel as a demonstration of his faith in God.

### **Read vs. 13 – 16**

While observing Moses going about his day-to-day responsibilities as leader of God's people, Jethro realizes that Moses needs help. Moses is trying to handle all the problems that the people have by himself. He is bogged down from early in the morning until late at night "judging" matters between people. Note – though this event is recorded in the Book of Exodus before the Law was given, beginning in chapter twenty with the Ten Commandments, it may have happened afterward because when Jethro observes Moses, he is making them "know the statutes of God, and His laws."

### **Read vs. 17 – 27**

In our text, Jethro gives Moses' some very practical advice. It is important to point out that this counsel that Jethro gives is from a new believer who does not himself know a lot about God and his ways, but he sees just does not make a lot of sense to him. He is very careful, however, in verse 23, to tell Moses' to check with God before he follows his advice. Jethro's advice is from a fresh set of spiritual eyes who sees something that does not make a lot of sense and offers up a suggestion that makes a lot of common sense.

Apparently, Moses was given the green light by God to implement Jethro's suggestion because just before the people are going in to enter the land of Canaan, Moses reflects on

this early time in their journey and mentions that he organized the leaders of the congregation to assist him in judging the people.

## Turn to Deuteronomy 1:1 – 18

### Transition

In verse twenty-one, Jethro explains the practical aspects of how this system would work:

#### I. The Who

Who was qualified to hold positions of leadership within this very large congregation? What leadership qualities did they need to possess?

##### A. Able Men

- Ability has to do with using the gifts that God has given you. Within the New Testament church body, God has uniquely equipped or gifted people to serve in specific capacities:

## Read Romans 12:1 – 13

## Read 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31

Each member of the body must discover his gifts and find his place within the body, and then use those gifts to advance the Great Commission within the local church.

- A good ability is availability. Some people are so busy doing other things that they do not have time to serve the Lord, which is the main thing.
- Another good ability is accountability. Someone who is willing to be accountable to others. To some degree that is what a local church is all about. We are members one of another.
- The best ability is dependability. Someone who faithfully does what he is supposed to do. He is on-time and is always in his place.

##### B. Men that Fear God

- People who fear the Lord are wise people.

*"28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28)*

*"10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." (Psalm 111:10)*

*"7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)*

- If you fear the Lord, you will also walk with the Lord daily; reading and studying His word and spending time regularly in prayer.
- If you fear the Lord, you will be faithful to Him.
- If you fear the Lord, you will want to obey Him.
- If you fear the Lord, you will love the people that He loves.

### C. Men of Truth

- They had to be men who knew the Truth, meaning they knew the commands of God:

*"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17)*

These men would have to be trained in the Truth. And, they would have to continuously study the Truth and learn how to apply it to contemporary situations.

Illustrate – One of the jobs of the minister is to accurately interpret the Scripture to determine what God was saying originally to the people that it was written to. The second task of the minister is to figure out how to apply that interpretation to the culture that he is ministering in. What is the passage saying to us today?

*"11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 **But speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

- They also had to be honest men.

*"25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (Ephesians 4:25)*

Illustrate – I recently received a check from Oceanview issued by mistake.

There is a serious lack of honesty in our world today.

One of the qualifications of the early church deacons was that they had to be honest.

*"3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3)*

## D. Men that Hated Covetousness

They could not be bribed, and they could not give more consideration to someone who could benefit them in some way.

*"1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; **not for filthy lucre**, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."* (1 Peter 5:1-4)

They could not be hirelings, just in it for the money (John 10:12 – 13).

### II. The How

The number of men in the congregation numbered around 600,000.

*"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children."* (Exodus 12:37)

The entire congregation of Israel probably numbered somewhere around two million people, and possibly more. This was a huge group of people. They were literally a large city moving through the wilderness.

Illustrate – Did you know that there are only four U. S. cities that are larger in population than Israel was when they left Egypt?

New York	8,089,669
Los Angeles	3,790,742
Chicago	2,599,059
Houston	2,325,324

Phoenix, Philadelphia, San Antonio, San Diego, Dallas, and Jacksonville, which finish off the top ten largest cities, all have less than two million.<sup>1</sup>

Consider the logistics that they faced; the sanitation problems; food; crime; transportation issues. Remember, they were constantly on the move. Imagine moving the entire population of the City of Philadelphia to Miami. That would be close to what Moses was tasked with.

Moses was going to need a lot of help in leading, organizing, instructing, and moving this huge mass of people.

Based upon a population of two million people, he was going to need:

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<sup>1</sup> Worldpopulationreview.com. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities>

2000 leaders of thousands  
20,000 leaders of hundreds  
40,000 leaders of fifties  
200,000 leaders of tens

Even if the numbers were reduced to just the men, it would still mean that Moses needed:

600 leaders of thousands  
6,000 leaders of hundreds  
12,000 leaders of fifties  
60,000 leaders of tens

There is no way that Moses could possibly know all these men. Remember, he was in the backside of the desert with his family and Jethro for the past forty years. He would therefore have to organize the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel to help him with this task.

The basic principle here is that people who needed help from Moses would first go to lower-level leaders and then it would be determined if the problem or issue required someone who was of higher authority to take the matter up.

Illustrate – It was somewhat like our court system today. Cases start out at a local level and if necessary, eventually advance up to district courts, state courts, federal courts, and in rare cases – the Supreme Court.

Jesus preached to and ministered to multitudes, but he primarily ministered with, taught, trained, and mentored the twelve. He took a small group from within the multitudes and focused on them.

## **Conclusion**

Within the local church, it is important that we break the larger ministry up into smaller groups who can more effectively and more intimately be ministered to.

This can be done through the Sunday School ministry, through adult Bible classes, through various other programs within the church.

One of the challenges that I have as a pastor is developing leaders from within the church and giving them the authority and freedom that they need to lead people, mentor them, and teach them. These men and women need to have the same qualifications that the men had to have back in Moses' time. Able men and women who fear God and who are honest and hate covetousness.

Your challenge is to accept the role that God would have you play within this local church. God has got a job for you. You need to discover what it is and do it for His glory.