

Series: Leading Well	Reference: Exodus 18:15-26	Title: Delegate	Date: 06.09.2019
Website Writeup: Moses learns a great lesson in leadership from his father-in-law, Jethro. One in which we also must employ in times of transition as God takes us further into His vision for us as a church!			

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Our question today is, how do we find God-called volunteers & leaders who'll take us into the future, multiplying & spreading the Gospel? Over the next four weeks, we'll look at leadership lessons from some of the most unlikely leaders whom God shaped into starting movements of people activated for ministry.

Today we get our first leadership lesson from Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and we'll see...**Good Leaders Delegate to Able People**. This story is found in Exodus 18:15-26...a little background...the Israelites have been delivered from Egypt, crossed through the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds), it's after the provision of Manna & Quail & the famous battle with the Amalekites, in which the Israelites won as long as Moses held up his hands during the battle. Remember all that from Sunday School?

Now, this marks a new chapter in the life of Israel - a settling in so to speak & finding a greater identity as the people of God. It's just after this Moses receives the Ten Commandments, and all the ceremonial & civil law. They're growing in number & complexity. There's a lot to do & during this time Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes to visit & observes how Moses sits from morning until evening as judge over all the disputes of his people.

This alarms Jethro & he asks Moses in v14, *"What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?"* Good question, since Moses might just wear himself out!

Let me preface by saying, it's very natural for **Leaders to Own Their Problems** as we'll see in Moses' life in vs. 15-16. Leaders are typically responsible passionate caring people who own what's going on under their lead. A good leader's concerned for the people they oversee. Without that, they'd be a power-hungry tyrant, or an indifferent sluggard. However, Moses cares, shown by his response to Jethro...¹⁵ *Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. ¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties & inform them of God's decrees & instructions."*

Moses was busy for the Lord's sake, that's good. He was the natural connection between the people & God, he gets his hands dirty in daily ministry. He's a guiding healthy force for people, but it's getting to be too much. Up until this point, this is how it had to work. But as the nation grows in size & complexity, Moses' leadership style has to transition into something new - he has to add to his leadership to be able to accommodate this

growth & complexity. As the entire nation had plodded through the wilderness before, Moses had encountered major organizational issues as he tried to lead these people through the desolate wilderness. His situation now must've been reminiscent of the wilderness where he shepherded for 40 years, having little to no help & it was beginning to drain him.

Six:Eight's been around over 10 years now. Do you realize, very few church plants last past the first two years? And if they do, the majority of them don't get past the 125 barrier, while many others stay at 50-75, many lower still. There can be many attributing factors to this, beyond control of leadership. However, sometimes it IS because leaders haven't learned the lesson Jethro's about to teach Moses. Sometimes a leaders reluctance to adjust leadership style holds a church back from growth.

Somewhere along the way, Six:Eight turned the corner of being a church plant, to being a church. We've gone through all the very normative pains of transition as that's happened. Each stage brings new challenges; we've done well through them all & there's no reason to think we won't continue. We've grown in number & depth of faith. It's not bad to want to grow big, it's a godly attribute of a healthy church - **the Great Commission call (Mt28:18-20)... 'Go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'**

We want for as many people as possible to know & walk with Jesus in barrier breaking faith & full life! We invite & plan for growth here at Six:Eight, hence the construction you see going on downstairs - we're planning & making decisions to accommodate the future of our church life & witness!

Moses' desire was to genuinely bless & love people, teaching them God's statutes & laws while helping organize disputes which arose from a mobile nation in the wilderness. Because wherever you have community, you have conflict - the trick is to stay at the table working it out. His decision to step in & be an intermediary to help solve crises is a sign of a qualified & capable leader, who feels & intuits when the people need direction & help. This is common & normal, but as we'll see, it's not always the best solution for him to do it the same way as before, as things grow in size & complexity.

So, leaders delegate to able people, own their problems, but we also see, **Leaders Need Mentors to Grow & Expose Weaknesses** as we see in vs. 17-18...¹⁷ *Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You & these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.*

Imagine sitting in the hot sun all day waiting to get an audience with Moses! The toll it would take on you & him would be unbearable! It had become inefficient. He needed outside input into his leadership style & decision making. He couldn't do it all alone. The same father-in-law, with whom he'd worked 40 years, was also a wise counselor &

mentor to this over-worked leader. Moses was putting out fires without thinking through the big picture.

I have many of these wise mentors in my life. People who've travelled down the road I'm currently walking. You guys aren't privy to all the conversations & prayers I have about this church with other church leaders, both within & outside Six:Eight. You may not know I have a monthly meeting with a Spiritual Director who helps me to think through God's direction for me. I do that because I need it! I feel competent in my role, but I have a healthy distrust of my own personality, especially in certain areas... I regard this distrust as wisdom.

I've had stellar people around me for 10+ years advising me. Other pastors, missionaries & church leaders outside Six:Eight. As well as internal good people who serve us faithfully - System Heads, Community Group leaders & our Pastoral Council! Amen to that! God bless you all, for all your service to the kingdom of God!

Moses had to be humbly open about his struggles to receive good feedback. Humility & transparency helped expand his narrow focus on the problem in a way which allowed Jethro to process a solution with him.

Sadly, many pastors can't get past this point - the point of moving beyond being Shepherd to becoming Rancher. A shepherd walks around with his sheep, attends to each one in whatever problem there is. That's fine when there aren't too many. But sheep multiply! It becomes unwieldy! He can't do it all & the sheep suffer. Some pastors are addicted to the sense of need from people. They chase sheep down, and bring them back into the fold if they can. It's the pastoral heart, an honorable gift. But when it gets too large & they involve themselves in every little issue, the end result is, they suffer & the sheep suffer. But a rancher employs others, they shepherd other herders - much more manageable & healthy for all involved.

Right now we have somewhere in the range of 120-150 people in this church. We have about 40 kids ages 10 & under in our Children's Ministry alone. We have more visitors all the time, more than do other churches. Our retention rate's higher than normal, we're growing. God's graciously growing us at a sustainable rate. AMEN! God's blessing us as we move forward!

So, leaders delegate to able people, own their problems, need mentors to grow & expose weakness, and **Leaders Succeed by their Growing Ability to Raise Up Leaders** as seen in vs. 19-22a...¹⁹ Listen now to me & I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God & bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them his decrees & instructions, and show them the way they are to live & how they are to behave. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain - and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties & tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times...

Jethro helps Moses see & commit to his core calling to represent the people before God, as well as to instruct & teach. Often leaders getting into the details aren't operating out of strengths & aren't fulfilling the ministry to which God's called them. We need to be reminded of our core calling & commit to the few simple things Jesus calls us to, raising up leaders to fill gaps.

Jethro helps Moses develop a plan to delegate to other qualified leaders. Judging the people was important, but that wasn't what God was calling Moses to do with his time, energy & abilities. Moses needed to raise up godly leaders to minister & judge the people. By diversifying the load & focusing on his core calling, Moses had a team of people to bear it with him.

As leaders grow through barriers, others must as well. Transition's difficult for some more than others, but is necessary. Transitioning leadership means we empower others with new responsibilities. It takes time for some to get used to doing things differently. During seasons of transition you'll often hear people say, "We've never done it that way before?" Or, "I'm uncomfortable." Sometimes you have to repeatedly tell someone, "Remember, we're doing it this way now. You shouldn't be doing that anymore, you should be doing this." It's understandable, we're creatures of habit, but an organization's like a person, it can't stay in the infant, toddler, or adolescent stages - it must grow onto maturity.

These leaders Moses put into place weren't just anyone either, they had to be able, God-fearing, trustworthy men who hated bribes. Qualified people, who shared his same passion & vision from the Lord for the community. In so doing, Moses would be able to raise them up to be righteous fair judges who served the people better than just always coming to him. **Over time it looks something like this (Explain the Chart).**

It's not just about leaders, it's about all of us - being an active member of church adds incredible value to life. Every little moment & task matter (expound). Everyone gets to play! It takes a lot of people to lead a healthy church. God made you on purpose, for a purpose. We want you to know God, find freedom in life, discover your purpose & make a difference in this world for the sake of God's kingdom! Even small opportunities of serving build into you more & more of what God can do through you. One church growth guru says, a typical church has 40% of its people in some volunteer role. A healthy church has about 60%, which can even be higher. We have about 60% now & are moving higher! Amen!

Lindley's putting together a class for the fall which explores our spiritual gifts, a healthy step in understanding how God's gifted you to serve this church & its vision to reach others. We're adding to our current structure & developing growth initiatives as well. It's an exciting time!

So, leaders delegate to able people, own their problems, need godly mentors for growth & identification of weaknesses, grow in their ability to raise up other leaders, and **Leaders Last by Developing their Ability to Judge the Hard Cases** as seen in vs. 22b-23...*but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³ If you do this & God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.*"

Leaders need to personally develop to handle the important & difficult cases. This is why sabbaticals, retreats & time off are so important. You guys have been awesome towards my family. You've given me whole months to lose myself in the wilderness, backpacking through God's creation to repair my soul. You've cared for us in a myriad of other ways & pray for me too! This is why Kim & I are backpacking a 100 miles in Montana's *Glacier National Park* this July! God bless you & thank you!

The character & personal growth of a leader matters greatly when faced with leading through challenging times & through difficult circumstances. You may, or may not know, I'm in a Spiritual Mentor class along with 11 others here. Our readings reinforce my desire to walk with Jesus well. The question of 'How is my soul?' is vital, since I know I can hurt people without marinating in Jesus. In the busyness of ministry, *I want to kill hurry & operate out of Romans 15:13...May the God of hope fill you with all joy & peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

All leadership at Six:Eight's growing towards this measure. We press into it strongly. I think one of the great signs is, so many of them have been serving a long time without burnout, carrying burdens which would deplete others who aren't filled with the Spirit of God. Imagine ourselves as an inner-tube on a bicycle. Pump it up with air, ride around for a time, but if we neglect to go back to the pump at times, we lose pressure. Good leaders go back to the pump daily & get consistent little spurts of filling of the Spirit to sustain good leadership out of a healthy soul - they know they need more Jesus to lead humbly & well.

As Moses becomes the specialist, he's able to support the other judges under his authority & bless the people with knowledge acquired through careful study & time with God. I remember being a young leader in a ministry at a large church. I began as a Community Group Bible Study leader, as time went on I began heading up the Small Groups ministry. I encountered a big problem with one of my leaders. I brought it to the pastor by phone, a good friend. I told him the issue. Naturally, I thought this an issue for the pastor, not me. I wanted to leave it in his hands.

He listened & asked, "What would you do in this situation?" He tweaked my thoughts & just before he hung up he said, "Good...now go do that." I was in a panic! But it was the perfect move, he couldn't field everything, he had to rely on my growing ability & created opportunity for my development.

What a blessing it is when a leader comes to me & says, “I’m struggling with this issue.” We discuss it. Then at the end of the conversation, when we were smaller I’d say, “Do you need me to go do this?” And when they answer, “No, it won’t be fun, but I should be the one, I’ll take care of it.” AMEN! I then offer further support, if needed...but it’s so nice to see leaders take responsibility in difficult ministerial situations, since leaders need to be willing to take on tough jobs.

Although some things in a church a Pastor will still need to get involved in. It can be very tempting, especially when you have multiple layers of competent staff & leaders to let others deal with the hard cases. But, God calls us to be willing & qualified to step in & handle difficulty. When the temptation arises to avoid, a true leader rejects that temptation!

Over the 31 years of my ministerial life I’ve been involved in a lot. There’s no teacher like Experience! Some situations which would make your toes curl, but many of which came out wonderfully - seeing people face the walls in life we spoke of last week from Joshua, overcoming them in faith through the Holy Spirits direction! Ministry, although difficult & sometimes heartbreaking, is worth it. I know Moses saw his share of issues which sometimes didn’t work out no matter how hard he tried & others which made him smile. Ministry’s an honor, as a leader I cherish every moment.

Moses was able to stay connected with some of the more marginalized of his people by stepping in & judging the hardest cases. He doesn’t pull totally away, he only delegates tasks to qualified people, and still involves himself to the extent it’s necessary in these matters so he can move forward with other issues of teaching & training people in righteousness.

And our passage ends today on a positive note revealing a transitioning community, sharing the load of ministry for a growing future! *²⁴ Moses listened to his father-in-law & did everything he said. ²⁵ He chose capable men from all Israel & made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties & tens. ²⁶ They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.*

So, we’ve learned Good Leaders...

- Delegate to able people.
- Own their problems well.
- Need mentors for growth & identification of weaknesses.
- Succeed by their growing ability to raise up leaders.
- And, last by developing their ability to judge the hard cases.