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Leadership Lessons from Father Jethro

Exodus chapter 18 opens sharing a few things about Jethro. He is a priest of Midian, the father of Zipporah Moses wife, father-in-law of Moses and grandfather to their two sons. He is aware of what God has done for Moses and the children of Israel and now he along with his daughter and grandsons have come to visit Moses in the wilderness. They greet each other warmly and then while the two men are inside Moses reminisces retelling everything they went through including what God did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians to free His people from Egypt. Jethro, excited about all that God has done offers sacrifices up to God while Aaron and all the elders of Israel join them in a meal together.

The next day while Moses is sitting as judge before the people listening and giving them instructions regarding their conflicts, Jethro watches and becomes concerned about what he sees. The people are many and the time it takes for Moses to address their problems take way too long lasting all day with many unheard. Jethro tells Moses, it is not good for him to try and help the people with their issues by himself because it leaves him and them very weary. Then he offers him a better way to get the job done that would make the load lighter for him while getting more accomplishing. Moses listens, implements the plan and it works out for all involved.

What we learn about Jethro is that he cared about family and was a Priest to his family first, looking out for the longevity of his son-in-law and daughters' family. We are told in Exod.18:2 that he takes care of his daughter and grands when Moses sent them away. Jethro

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believed in giving respect and following protocol, as seen in verse 6, he does not show up without sending word to Moses that they are coming. He was a respected leader and father-in-law whose words held credence, seen by the way Moses greeted him in verses 7-8 and took his advice in verses 19 and 24. Jethro was not ashamed of his belief in God and was quick to recognize, speak, and offer gratitude to God publicly, as seen in verses 9-12. He demonstrated wisdom by asking for an explanation of what he saw being done before offering advice. Jethro knew the importance of having the people learn Gods laws personally, seen in the advice he gave Moses in verses 21-23. He was able to tell Moses he was wrong, showing the humility of Moses to receive counsel even though he was called by God to lead the people. It also showed his great respect for his father-in-law and the calling on his life as a priest. I must also note, Jethro was not trying to benefit personally by giving Moses' advice, nor held it above Gods instruction.

Jethro tells Moses, he was trying to do too much by himself, when God had other people within the camp who had good reputations and feared God. People he could trust to help him and not misuse the power assigned to them, nor take advantage of the people or seek prestige for themselves. He tells Moses to bring the people's concerns before God, seek Gods' direction on their behalf, then teach the people Gods word and instructions. Doing this will help them personally understand how God wants them to live and behave on a day-to-day basis. I think Jethro believed if the people knew Gods' word and commands for themselves this would cut down on some of the issues brought before Moses. Jethro then tells Moses to look among the people and select honorable God-fearing men to come along side of him and help with settling disputes. Appoint them as leaders over a set number of people according to their abilities to deal with the small matters, leaving the more difficult matters for Moses. Jethro also tells Moses, if you do this and God gives His blessing for you to continue doing it accordingly, it will be better

for your health and the people as well. It will eliminate long lines of people waiting to be seen, their issues will be addressed in a timely manner causing the people to be satisfied that they were heard.

What Moses was doing wrong was trying to fill all the roles himself and, in the process, making the people dependent on him alone. He was also not allowing those God had gifted with the ability to counsel to use their gifts to help the people. He was in danger of believing only he could do the work or give a word from God. If he had continued doing what he was doing he would have burn himself out completely, tiring the people even more, leading to more discontentment and quarrels. Moses's time spent with his own family could have suffered as well had he not adjusted his time. And it may have also encroached upon the time he needed to be in the presence of God hearing from Him and getting strength and instructions.

I gleaned from this story the importance of seeking God first for everything and knowing the word for myself. Knowing my calling and giftings but also being able to hear and receive sound counsel from other trusted leaders. I must know when to delegate and to whom, while being aware of the criteria for leadership. I must also be willing to acknowledge I am not the only one God can use. We as believers are better together joining our giftings and abilities to make the load lighter and work more efficient. I must understand the importance of following leadership, stepping up to serve when needed without having selfish motives and realizing some will be given more work than others depending on their capability and willingness to serve. Sometimes, outside eyes may be needed to help me asses what I am doing. I should never think I am so anointed or needed in ministry that God can only use me and not raise up others to do what he wants done. Ultimately, I must know the word, be able to celebrate the successes God has accomplished using others, strive to do my part with excellence and follow Gods leading.