

ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 13,
2019

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



How to Destroy a Leader – Moses

(Exodus 18; Numbers 20:1-13) by Kyle pope

Most husbands have felt the pressure of a father-in-law's scrutiny of their life-choices and care for his daughter. Imagine being the one called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt—how would a father-in-law evaluate the conditions that imposed upon his daughter? In the case of Moses, his father-in-law, Jethro was a priest (Exod. 3:1). That undoubtedly gave him a spiritual perspective that influenced his appraisal of Moses.

When Moses was first called to return to Egypt, he respectfully asked the permission of his father-in-law and took his wife and sons with him (Exod. 4:18-20). At some point, however, Moses sent Zipporah, his wife, with Gershom and Eliezer, his sons, back to Jethro. Perhaps it was during the stressful days of the plagues. Rabbinical traditions preserved by Rashi believed it happened after Moses first met with Aaron upon his return to Egypt when Aaron warned him of the suffering among the Israelites (Exod. 4:27-28). Whenever it occurred, after the Exodus Jethro heard about all God had done for Israel and brought Zipporah and his sons to Moses as the Israelites encamped at Sinai (Exod. 18:1-6). This was a touching reunion. More is said about the meeting of Moses and Jethro than is said about the reunion with his wife and sons! There was respect, affection, and rejoicing, with praise and worship of God (Exod. 18:7-12). Yet, it was

after this that the scrutiny of a father-in-law observed the unique work of this unique son-in-law.

Moses had a busy schedule. From morning until evening the people came to Moses for judgment and inquiry before God (Exod. 18:13). What a daunting task that must have been! Six hundred thousand, not counting women and children left Egypt (Exod. 12:37)—but there was only one Moses. Seeing this, Jethro declared, “...**The thing that you do is not good. 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 per-**

form it by yourself” (Exod. 18:17-18, NKJV). Jethro then offered the wise advice to teach others how to make judgments in accordance with the Laws of God and delegate to them in graduated jurisdictions over different groupings the responsibility to judge the people. This would ease his burden, leaving only the most difficult cases for Moses to judge (Exod. 18:18-23). Fortunately, Moses listened to his father-in-law’s advice (Exod. 18:24-27). This not only helped Moses, but offered a model still followed in our own legal system of lower, higher, and supreme courts.

Let’s consider some lessons this situation can teach wise leaders and note the serious dangers this had posed to the leadership of Moses.

1. Be willing to listen to advice. What if Moses had been unwilling to listen to Jethro’s advice? What if he had allowed his pride to lead him to resent the offering of this advice? This was his father-in-law! No one wants to look bad to the in-laws. Moses might well have worn himself out. If so, his leadership would have suffered. The godly soul will be “**swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”** (Jas. 1:19). Good advice is good advice regardless of its source!

2. Set bounds on responsibilities you accept. It is very easy for good leaders to take on more than they can handle.

This isn’t arrogance. They want to help. They want to serve. The respect they earn from godly service naturally leads many to look to them for help, advice, guidance, and direction. Godly souls are not lazy or idle—“**diligence is man’s precious possession”** (Prov. 12:27), but it is not lazy to recognize our limits. James warned against presuming we have time we do not have (Jas. 4:13-15). Each of us can only do so much with the limited time we have. May God, “**teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom”** (Ps. 90:12).



3. Don't imagine you're indispensable. There was no one like Moses! Certainly, in Israel there was no **"prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face"** (Deut. 34:10). How easy it would have been for Moses to say to himself, "no one can do what I can!" That may have been part of his problem at Kadesh. As the people again complained in their need for water (Num. 20:1-7), God told Moses to **"take the rod"** and **"speak to the rock before their eyes"** in order to bring forth water (Num. 20:8). Even though, in a similar situation God had previously commanded him to **"strike the rock,"** that wasn't what God commanded at Kadesh (Exod. 17:6). Moses didn't listen carefully. Moses assumed his will was God's will. He struck the rock, declaring **"Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"** (Num. 20:9-11). Because of this arrogant disobedience, Moses would not enter the Promised Land. He should have remembered Jethro's advice! As important as Moses was, God was not dependant upon him, nor should the good leader today think he is indispensable to the work God wants done.

4. Be willing to share the work. One reason it's hard for leaders to delegate work is a desire for excellence. Certainly, all of us must offer spiritual sacrifices to God of the best we have (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5; Num. 18:12, 29), but the best for one person may not be the same for another. I'm not talking about sin. I'm not talking about disobedience to any principle or command of God. I am talking about the skills and gifts that God has given each child of God. The good leader must recognize that the good work others can do, may differ from their own, but it is still acceptable before God. Certainly, Moses had a stronger skill-set in some areas than the judges he appointed, but thanks be to God that Moses agreed to share the work. God wants all to

serve. Good leaders encourage work, they do not assume it all for themselves.

5. Don't forget you're a servant. How could Moses imagine at Kadesh that he could be counted together with God as the source of bringing forth water for Israel? Paul would include himself among those who were **"workers together"** with God (2 Cor. 6:1), but he also insisted that he and the others be considered **"servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God"** (1 Cor. 4:1). The most important and influential leader in the Lord's kingdom is still a servant, not a master. When Jethro came to Moses he moved him to recognize the role he played in the Lord's work. At Kadesh, he lost sight of that. The good leader never forgets that leadership is stewardship.

6. Leaders must also be followers. No one will ever be a good leader who has not first demonstrated a humble willingness to follow. Even



when one is entrusted with the work of leadership, how important it is to keep the heart of a follower. Peter taught that elders must not act as **“lords over those entrusted to you”** but to humbly serve as **“examples to the flock”** (1 Pet. 5:3). In the important work that Moses did, sadly, at Kadesh he forgot his personal responsibility to listen to and follow God. God gave Israel water, but He said to Moses **“you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of**

the children of Israel” (Num. 20:12). When leaders refuse to listen to and follow God it demonstrates unbelief. It treats God as unholy rather than hallowing Him and sanctifying Him before those they should lead.

Scripture records that Moses accepted the wise advice of Jethro when he might easily have exhausted himself early on in his leadership of Israel. He didn't put on the defensive pride a son-in-law might well have felt in response to a father-in-law's scrutiny. By the time he came to Kadesh, he didn't choose the same path of wisdom and good judgment. Had pressures begun to build again? Did this compromise his leadership? We don't know what led him to this disobedience and sin. We do know that his examples of success and failure in leadership provide us with both warnings and wisdom good leaders today will do well to heed.



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