

Exodus: What We Mean When We Say God
Part 11: Need Each Other

By Pastor David Fields

Exodus 17-18

Being God's People means we need each other. We need each other in the battles we face; need the wisdom of others; and need to share the load.

I. Need Each Other...In the Battles We Face

"It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." – Ephesians 2:8-9

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." – Ephesians 2:10

God saves you...then sends you

Just like God's people leaving Egypt, we too are "freed" so that we can serve God and God's purposes in the world. And so, we continue to rely on God's grace – his empowerment, his work *in us* – for the work he calls us to. But he does call us to get to work.

We are called to Participate *with God* in his work – his transformation of the world.

Like this Israelites, we are also called to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty with the business of pushing back the darkness. But we know, ultimately, it's God who wins all *his* battles.

Unlike this lionized imaged of the self-made, autonomous, "winner", the Scriptures tells us that we live out of God's grace; out of a sense of already being filled up by Jesus' love.

"When we boast we do so to create a self-esteem résumé to desperately fill our sense of inadequacy and emptiness."- Timothy Keller

But when we know how loved we are by Jesus, that addresses the inadequacy. His love fills the emptiness, so we don't need the resume!

Not Alone:

"When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset." – Exodus 17:12

Take Home 1: Maybe you need to let people know: "My arms are really tired...." Or maybe you can see it in someone else, and you just need to offer your help. Sometimes it's as simple as asking, "How are you doing, like, really?" And then letting there be enough space to listen.

II. We Need Each Other...For Wisdom

“What you are doing is not good. You and these people who are coming to you are going to wear yourselves out. “The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.” – Exodus 18:17-18

- Jethro is a great example of courteous truth-telling.
- Moses is a great example of humble learning.

Humility is generative.

It’s “generative” because it’s open to new knowledge; to new ways of seeing; to hearing the input of others. Like, we can’t learn or grow if we think we know it all already.

God uses an outsider – a non-Israelite – to bring his wisdom to his people.

Nowhere in the Bible is it assumed that its only through God’s redeemed people have a monopoly on wisdom, practical common sense, or managerial skills. The maxim, “All truth is God’s truth” is just...true. If someone who doesn’t know God says something true – it’s no surprise to God. He is, after all, the Source of all wisdom and truth, and we do well to be open, and discerning, about what we can learn from many people of many cultures. Of course, we bring it all into conversation with the wisdom God has revealed through scripture and through his Son.

So, this combination of persistent, loving, honesty – on Jethro’s part, and humility and openness on Moses’ leads to a rich, healthy approach to leadership.

Take Home 2:

So, what about you:

- Are you open to the helpful, honest feedback of wise voices in your life? Be open. Humility is generative.
- Are you seeing someone heading for disaster but are too afraid to speak up? Be bold. Courteous truth telling leads to flourishing.

III. We need each other.... For the Task of Making Disciples of Jesus.

The message of the Wisdom literature in the Bible – things like the Proverbs – is not “you live, and you learn,” but “you learn so that you can live.”

Listen to what Jethro says to Moses: “Teach them his [that is *God’s*] decrees and instructions and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.” – Exodus 18:20.

Rather than simply cleaning up messes, Jethro tells Moses to be proactive – to *teach people* how to live. And what does he teach? Not his own opinions. God’s decrees...his instructions.

To be disciples of Jesus means we pay attention to *his* Voice. The Voice of the one who made us, knows us, loves us, and knows how life works best.

Take Home 3:

- Parents, you have the beautiful role of instructing your kids in what God says.
- If you lead a Life Group or are part of a ministry team with our youth or kids, you have a share in this task.
- Every one of us, with the Spirit’s help, are to be friends who are capable of offering wisdom from God’s word to each other – to hold each other up.

Do you need help? Let others know it. Do you see someone’s hands trembling? Go hold them up. There are lots of practical ways to do that. Is someone heading down a road that will only end in ruin? With empathy and love, let them know what you see. Is someone with proven wisdom speaking that truth into your life? Listen. Weigh that advice. You might find it so freeing.

And know – because God lives in us, and forms us into his people, you will never be alone again.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up: In a 2017 study of women's health, it was reported that among the Millennial generation (those born between 1981-1996), 42% of women were more afraid of loneliness than of a cancer diagnosis.¹ Why do you think that is?

What about you? On a scale of 1-10, how afraid are you of being really and truly alone in life? Why do you feel that way?

Dig In: Read Exodus 17:8-13.

1. What does the fact of Moses' raised hands tell us about the intersection between the physical and the spiritual realm? How might that encourage you in your prayer life?
2. Whom in the community of faith might need you to be like Aaron and Hur for them right now? Whether in prayer, encouragement, or practical support? How will you reach out this week?
3. **Read Exodus 18:1-12.** Scholar Chris Wright calls the section "The Gospel according to Moses," since Moses announces how God has saved his people. Notice how Jethro responds to the news, and how they worship together after Jethro's confession of believing Yahweh, Israel's God, to be above any other. In what ways do we, as followers of Jesus, have this same kind of "preaching" ministry to Moses? What is the same? What is different?
4. Whom among your friends or neighbours do you need to be asking God for an opportunity to share what God has done in your life through Jesus?
5. **Read Exodus 18:13-27.** How might you be tempted, like Moses was, to take on too much? How might you need to "share the load" with others?
6. How might Jethro be an example of boldness and courtesy that you need to emulate?

Pray: Take time to pray for those who have significant, front-line ministry around you. Perhaps this includes the missionaries we support as a church, or that you personally support, or our church board and staff team. Pray for the needs of your group. Ask God for his help as you offer practical support for people in our community.

¹ <https://images.agoramedia.com/everydayhealth/gcms/Everyday-Health-State-of-Womens-Wellness-Survey-PDF.pdf>

