

Leadership Together - Exodus 18

Intro

I read a marketing study of over 100 nations in which they measured how individualistic or collective people were. Some nations exalt the individual. It is all about my rights. I need to express myself. It doesn't matter whether what I say or do affects other people. Other nations are far more community oriented. The individual is subordinated to the good of the whole. Well, you can guess The UK and US were top of the charts, gold medal winners in individualism. The most me-centred countries.

So what's the problem? The problem is we take this individualism into our faith and the church, where we expect everything to revolve around Us. ME, me, me Yet A more helpful way of understanding church, is that it's like a team sport in which you don't succeed if you don't participate and play. The leadership Expert John Maxwell has a little saying that team is an acronym. **Together Everyone Achieves More. Together Everyone Achieves More.** We're looking at the book of Exodus 18, and in Moses we discover that Christian leadership is done together.

Let's pray. (pick some extracts)

Exodus 18:1-4 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her 3 and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land"; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

The Bible says that Moses had two sons with Zipporah-Gershom and Eliezer. Now in many ways, a leader's life alternates between Gershom and Eliezer. Gershom, "I am all alone; nobody really understands me; no one really gets what I'm trying to accomplish; I feel disconnected; I am a stranger in a strange land." And the opposite pole - Eliezer, "God is my helper; I am experiencing God; I have discovered how to find resource in the Lord while I am in this difficult place."

I am alone. A leader is at their worst when they are Gershom. We see this in the prophet Elijah too, who at his lowest point in *1 Kings 19* (Sarah MacGillivray wedding) runs away from God, the people, and curls up under a tree depressed, and wants to die.: I am alone. Full of self-pity. Why is this so dangerous?

Martin Luther, said: "Solitude produces melancholy. When we are alone the worst and saddest things come to mind. We reflect in detail upon all sorts of evil. And if we have encountered adversity in our lives, we dwell upon it as much as possible, magnify it, think that no one is so unhappy as we are, and imagine the worst possible consequences. In short, when we are alone, we think one thing and another, we leap to conclusions, and we interpret everything in the worst possible light. On the other hand, we imagine that other people are very happy, and it distresses us that things go well with them and evil with us."

We were not created for isolation. The normal way of being blessed by God is through other people, where we receive wisdom, love and forgiveness and correction and also find help when struggling with addiction or depression or grief or cancer If you want

to find God in the midst of your problems, you need to be in the game., find help.. (Prayer Chain, lifegroup, Prayer ministry, friends on team with you – build trust)

A common need anywhere in the world is cosmic loneliness. When you get right down to it, everyone feels loneliness for God., it's why the first of our 4 words is **connect**.....we're here to reconnect people, to God, His church, and our place in the world. Only God can fill my life with the acceptance that my life craves.

Together in weakness and suffering

But Moses had a second son named Eliezer. One of the greatest objections to faith in God has always been the problem of human suffering. But it's wonderful When you hear a story of An Eliezer coming into their lives when we're suffering. God is our helper and the help God has sent has led us to faith in Jesus Christ. I wonder who has been an Eliezer to you? Or who is God calling you to be an Eliezer to?

Remember, that's what Jesus has done for you and I. What the son of God endured so we could receive God's help. Despised and rejected a man of sorrows, who went to the cross for us experiencing rejection and loneliness so that we would never have to be alone. That you and I could always have God with us, because of the suffering of Jesus, He is our help. We worship a God who came to be with us., *I can trust in a God who walks alongside me, who becomes for me Eliezer, my helper.*

Together in worship

Exodus 18:5, 8-11 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them. 9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly."

There's this lovely dynamic between Moses and Jethro here and the importance of bearing witness in all our relationships. *In verse 8* we find the perfect summary of what bearing witness is all about. It is not arguing a person into faith. Each of us has a personal testimony about what you have seen God do in your life and in the lives of people around you and God's saving work and we're called to share it.

Jethro's statement in *v 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods* It's common to meet people today who say that all religions basically teach the same thing. But is there really anyone who really believes that all religions are equally valid? Jesus said in John 14:6: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In the Bible there are these odd people who come along outside of the covenant community, who were also worshippers of the true God – people like Jethro and Naaman who God has revealed himself to; It is interesting that they say *v:11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods*. The way to God is only through faith in Jesus.. Our faith focuses a laser on the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world – He unites us

Together in work and ministry

Exodus 18:13-18, 23 "The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people..... 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "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?" 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 and inform them of God's decrees and instructions." 17 Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

We see this problem of control and non-delegation everywhere you go in the corporate world and the church. So many see it as a badge of honour rather than recognise their own limitations and the gifts of others. Much of the problem of non-delegation and control comes back to ego. And the fact is when we don't delegate and release control, the result is *v18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.* We wear ourselves out and people aren't satisfied. The load is for sharing, we all need to contribute and play our part.

If no-one else is really good enough or up to your standards to delegate to and release control to, Then the question might be asked, "What really is the driver for your perfectionism? Is it really that you don't feel acceptable? –The cross of Christ needs to get to work in the area of your superiority complex and see ourselves as fallen and broken, and see the need for stature and adequacy met in God seeing you as perfectly acceptable in all that Christ has done for you, rather than in your perfectionism success or overwork. At the cross, God says, "I accept you as you are." God says, "You can get release control to others and you don't have to be afraid of what others think about you.

Conclusion

The gospel gives us resources to break the patterns of control, to delegate, work together, develop others, Build teams and empower others. There's nothing more satisfying for a leader than seeing other people fly
We are not alone. God is with us, we all have a part to play.....Let's join in and work together.**Let's pray.**