

## 1) **Setting** (Exodus 18:1-12)

*Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, came to Moses, and after hearing his testimony, confessed the greatness of Yahweh, offering sacrifices to Him, and sharing a meal in God's presence with Aaron and all the elders of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup> [Now] Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and for God's people Israel when [Yahweh] brought Israel out of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> Now Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, had taken in Zipporah, Moses's wife, after he had sent her back, <sup>3</sup> along with her two sons, <sup>1.)</sup> one of whom was named Gershom ([G] because Moses had said, 'I have been a resident foreigner in a foreign land') <sup>2.)</sup> [S] <sup>4</sup> and the other Eliezer ([G] because he had said, 'The God of my father was my helper and rescued me from Pharaoh's sword').

<sup>5</sup> Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, along with Moses's wife and sons, came to him in the wilderness where he was camped at the mountain of God. <sup>6</sup> He sent word to Moses, 'I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons.'

<sup>7</sup> So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and then kissed him. They asked each other how they had been and went into the tent. <sup>8</sup> Moses recounted to his father-in-law <sup>1.)</sup> all that [Yahweh] had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, <sup>2.)</sup> all the hardships that confronted them on the way, <sup>3.)</sup> and how [Yahweh] rescued them.

<sup>9</sup> Jethro rejoiced over all the good things [Yahweh] had done for Israel when he rescued them from the power of the Egyptians. <sup>10</sup> 'Blessed be [Yahweh],' Jethro exclaimed, 'who rescued you <sup>1.)</sup> from the power of Egypt <sup>2.)</sup> [S] and from the power of Pharaoh. He has rescued the people from under the power of Egypt!' <sup>11</sup> Now I know that [Yahweh] is greater than all gods, [G] because he did wonders when the Egyptians acted arrogantly against Israel.'

<sup>12</sup> Then Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses's father-in-law in God's presence.

*Jethro worships Yahweh, and is validated by the elders.*

## 2) **Conflict** (Exodus 18:13-18)

*The next day, Jethro observed Moses judging the people from morning until evening, questioned his solitary role, listened to his explanation, and declared his method was not good because it was too heavy for one man to bear alone.*

<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses sat down to judge the people, and they stood around Moses from morning until evening. <sup>14</sup> When Moses's father-in-law saw everything he was doing for them he asked, [Q] 'What is this you're doing for the people?' [Q] 'Why are you alone sitting as judge, [T] while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?'

<sup>15</sup> Moses replied to his father-in-law, [G] 'Because the people come to me to enquire of God.'

<sup>16</sup> Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me, and <sup>1.)</sup> I make a decision between one man and another. <sup>2.)</sup> I teach them God's statutes and laws.'

<sup>17</sup> [C] 'What you're doing is not good,' Moses's father-in-law said to him. [E] <sup>18</sup> 'You will certainly wear out <sup>1.)</sup> both yourself <sup>2.)</sup> [S] and these people who are with you, [G] because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone.

Jethro recognises a faithful man doing a good thing in an unsustainable way.

### 3) Climax (Exodus 18:19-23)

Jethro advises Moses that to do his unique mediatorial and teaching role he should delegate the judging of the people's cases to qualified men who are able, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain.

<sup>19</sup> Now listen to me; <sup>1.)</sup> I will give you some advice,

<sup>2.)</sup> [S] and God be with you.

<sup>1.)</sup> You be the one to <sup>1.)</sup> represent the people before God [priest]

<sup>2.)</sup> [S] and bring their cases to him. [prayer]

<sup>2.) 1.)</sup> <sup>20</sup> Instruct them about <sup>1.)</sup> the statutes <sup>2.)</sup> [S] and laws, [doctrine]

<sup>2.)</sup> [S] and teach them <sup>1.)</sup> the way to live <sup>2.)</sup> [S] and what they must do. [life]

<sup>3.)</sup> [S] <sup>21</sup> But you should select from all the people <sup>1.)</sup> able men,

<sup>2.)</sup> God-fearing,

<sup>3.)</sup> trustworthy,

<sup>4.)</sup> [S] and hating dishonest profit.

Place them over the people as commanders of <sup>1.)</sup> thousands,

<sup>2.)</sup> hundreds,

<sup>3.)</sup> fifties,

<sup>4.)</sup> [S] and tens.

<sup>22</sup> They should judge the people at all times.

[−] Then they can bring you every major case

[+] but judge every minor case themselves.

In this way <sup>1.)</sup> you will lighten your load,

<sup>2.)</sup> [S] and they will bear it with you.

[C?] <sup>23</sup> If <sup>1.)</sup> you do this, <sup>2.)</sup> [S] and God so directs you,

[E] <sup>1.)</sup> [I] you will be able to endure,

<sup>2.)</sup> [S] and [I] also all these people will be able to go home satisfied.'

Jethro advises Moses to delegate the manageable to focus on the indispensable.

#### 4) **Resolution** (Exodus 18:24-26)

*Moses obeyed Jethro's advice, selecting able men as hierarchy leaders so that they judged every minor case, leaving him the hard cases.*

<sup>24</sup> Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. <sup>25</sup> So Moses chose able men from all Israel and made them leaders over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>26</sup> They judged the people at all times; they would bring the hard cases to Moses, but they would judge every minor case themselves.

*Moses takes Jethro's advice, and it solves the problem.*

#### 5) **New Setting** (Exodus 18:27)

*With the new system in place, Moses let Jethro go home.*

<sup>27</sup> Moses let his father-in-law go, and he journeyed to his own land.

*Jethro goes home.*

**On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:**

**1. How has the author organised this passage?**

- a) An outline: The author's organisation (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organise the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

**2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

**3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

**4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**

What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.

**5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**

The one thing I intend to persuade my audience of. It will consider how the gospel connection amplifies the author's argument. If possible it should be articulated as depending on premises in question 3 in 15 words or fewer.

**6. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.**

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

**7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.**

**On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:**

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).

# Sermon preparation worksheet

**Passage:** Isaiah 40:1-11

## 1. How has the author organised this passage? a) An outline, b) Tools, c) The emphasis.

- a) 1) Setting (Exodus 18:1-12): Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, came to Moses, and after hearing his testimony, confessed the greatness of Yahweh, offering sacrifices to Him, and sharing a meal in God's presence with Aaron and all the elders of Israel.
  - 2) Conflict (Exodus 18:13-18): The next day, Jethro observed Moses judging the people from morning until evening, questioned his solitary role, listened to his explanation, and declared his method was not good because it was too heavy for one man to bear alone.
  - 3) Climax (Exodus 18:19-23): Jethro advises Moses that to do his unique mediatorial and teaching role he should delegate the judging of the people's cases to qualified men who are able, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain.
  - 4) Resolution (Exodus 18:24-26): Moses obeyed Jethro's advice, selecting able men as hierarchy leaders so that they judged every minor case, leaving him the hard cases.
  - 5) New setting (Exodus 18:27): With the new system in place, Moses let Jethro go home.
- b) The text type is narrative, and I used narrative plot theory to find the structure. The characters were introduced in the setting. The problem was discovered in the conflict. The solution was revealed in the climax. The solution was implemented in the resolution. And the story ended in the new setting.
- c) The lone leader's unsustainable workload is alleviated by the wise delegation of authority.

## 2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.

- a) In Exodus 17, the water at Massah, and war with Amalek, are resolved through Moses's unique intercessory role. In Exodus 19, Moses alone ascends Sinai to receive the Law confirming his intercessory and teaching calling. This matters because the delegation plan in Exodus 18 is not a rejection of Moses' leadership, but the wise structure to protect his unique, essential role from being buried under an unsustainable burden.
- b) Israel is in the wilderness, recently liberated from Egypt, journeying toward Sinai. The newly formed nation operates without well established civil structures. This matters because the crisis of judgment in Exodus 18:13-18 arises from this chaotic moment, and the solution provides the immediate judicial architecture necessary for national cohesion.
- c) Jethro's advice in Exodus 18:19-23 aligns with the well-established Ancient Near Eastern practice of heads of family and clans adjudicated disputes. This matters because Jethro uses a familiar cultural model, but radically re-aligns criteria for leadership from age, wealth, and lineage, to competence, spiritual vitality, trustworthiness, and integrity.
- d) Jethro comes because he has heard of all that God had done (Exodus 18:1), and Moses recounts all that Yahweh had done (Exodus 18:8). This grounds the entire chapter in the narrative of Exodus 1-17. This matters because it establishes that the leadership model revealed here is not secular management theory but the operational shape of a redeemed community.

## 3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?

For God's people to thrive Moses must protect his unique role by sharing authority with God-fearing men.

## 4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The standard is set. Able. God-fearing. Trustworthy. Hating dishonest gain. Who can match up? The Law condemns. And striving exhausts. Our self-rule fails us. But the gospel answers. Christ is the able One. The God-fearing One. The trustworthy One. The honest One. He fulfils the standard we cannot. He bore the burden we deserved. Alone. On the cross. And now by His Spirit He builds His church. He makes us new. He gifts His people. He qualifies the unqualified. So the wise design of Exodus 18 finds its true home in Him. And through Him. Not in a wilderness camp. But in the blood bought body of Christ. We thrive together under delegated leadership because we are forever dependent on Him.

## 5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?

We thrive together under delegated leadership dependant on Christ.

## 6. What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

- a) Because Christ has borne the ultimate burden of your acceptance before God, you are freed to share lesser burdens with others.
- b) Relinquish your failed self-rule and trust yourself to the perfect leadership of Jesus, who bore the penalty for your rebellion on the cross.

## 7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

- b) The end of going it alone
- a) 1) The leader who worships (Exodus 18:1-12)
- 2) The leader who burnt out (Exodus 18:13-18)
- 3) The leader who shares (Exodus 18:19-23)
- 4) The leader who obeys (Exodus 18:24-27)

# Pray

## Read Exodus 18:1-27

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard about everything that God had done for Moses and for God's people Israel when Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> Now Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, had taken in Zipporah, Moses's wife, after he had sent her back, <sup>3</sup> along with her two sons, one of whom was named Gershom (because Moses had said, 'I have been a resident foreigner in a foreign land') <sup>4</sup> and the other Eliezer (because he had said, 'The God of my father was my helper and rescued me from Pharaoh's sword').

<sup>5</sup> Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, along with Moses's wife and sons, came to him in the wilderness where he was camped at the mountain of God. <sup>6</sup> He sent word to Moses, 'I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons.'

<sup>7</sup> So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and then kissed him. They asked each other how they had been and went into the tent. <sup>8</sup> Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that confronted them on the way, and how Yahweh rescued them.

<sup>9</sup> Jethro rejoiced over all the good things Yahweh had done for Israel when he rescued them from the power of the Egyptians. <sup>10</sup> 'Blessed be Yahweh,' Jethro exclaimed, 'who rescued you from the power of Egypt and from the power of Pharaoh. He has rescued the people from under the power of Egypt!' <sup>11</sup> Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods, because he did wonders when the Egyptians acted arrogantly against Israel.'

<sup>12</sup> Then Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses's father-in-law in God's presence.

<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses sat down to judge the people, and they stood around Moses from morning until evening. <sup>14</sup> When Moses's father-in-law saw everything he was doing for them he asked, 'What is this you're doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?'

<sup>15</sup> Moses replied to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to enquire of God. <sup>16</sup> Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I make a decision between one man and another. I teach them God's statutes and laws.'

<sup>17</sup> 'What you're doing is not good,' Moses's father-in-law said to him. <sup>18</sup> 'You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone. <sup>19</sup> Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and God be with you. You be the one to represent the people before God and bring their cases to him. <sup>20</sup> Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do. <sup>21</sup> But you should select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating dishonest profit. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>22</sup> They should judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you every major case but judge every minor case themselves. In this way you will lighten your load, and they will bear it with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this, and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and also all these people will be able to go home satisfied.'

<sup>24</sup> Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. <sup>25</sup> So Moses chose able men from all Israel and made them leaders over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>26</sup> They judged the people at all times; they would bring the hard cases to Moses, but they would judge every minor case themselves.

<sup>27</sup> Moses let his father-in-law go, and he journeyed to his own land.

# Introduction

Can one man carry what belongs to many?

A Roman general stands before his legion. Ten thousand legionnaires. His authority is absolute. His responsibility is total. Yet he does not sharpen every spear. He does not cook every meal. He does not fight every skirmish. He delegates. He trusts his capable centurions. His tribunes. And His prefects. He shares the burden. The mission could never depend only on him. But on a structure of shared, qualified leadership.

This is not mere military strategy. This is wise design. Our mission at Benoni Baptist Church is clear and straightforward. Reach Benoni with the gospel, and equip all for life. Our mission will not advance by the solitary efforts of a pastor on a stage. God's work is done by God's people under God's delegated authority. Our text today from **Exodus 18** reveals this timeless truth. We thrive together under delegated leadership dependent on Christ.

We will see this truth unfold in the life of Moses. We will meet the leader who worships. We will witness the leader who burns out. We will hear the leader who shares the load. We will follow the leader who obeys the rules. Four portraits from the wilderness. One enduring principle for our church.

So we begin where all faithful leadership must begin. Not with a strategy. But with worship.

## 1) The leader who worships (Exodus 18:1-12)

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, heard. He heard about everything that God had done. He heard of plagues and Passover. He heard of a sea parted and an army drowned. He heard of bread from heaven and water from rock. He heard. And so he came <sup>5</sup> along with Moses's wife and sons. Meeting in the wilderness where he was camped at the mountain of God.

<sup>7</sup> So Moses bowed down. And then kissed him. A very Ancient Near Eastern way of greeting a friend. Don't try that in Benoni, Boksburg, or Brakpan! And they went into the tent. <sup>8</sup> Then Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, had done. To Pharaoh. And to the Egyptians. For Israel's sake. All the hardships that confronted them on the way. And how Yahweh rescued them.

<sup>9</sup> Jethro rejoiced. He rejoiced over all the good things Yahweh had done for Israel. He rejoiced over how he rescued them from the power of the Egyptians. Then he confessed. <sup>10</sup> *Blessed be Yahweh. Who rescued you. Who rescued the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Now I know. Yahweh is greater than all gods. Because he did wonders when the Egyptians acted arrogantly against Israel.*

<sup>12</sup> Then Jethro worshipped. He brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron came. With all the elders of Israel. And they ate a meal. Together. In the presence of God. A shared table under a watching heaven.

I remember when Liezl and I first got married. And my parents came up from PE for a visit. Liezl spent the week before the visit cleaning out the cupboards. Cleaning out the fridge. Throwing out the trash. She nearly threw me out. There was a great deal of excitement over the visit. And then they arrived. There were hugs. And stories. And catching up. That's what's happening here. An in-law has come for a visit. And stories have been shared. And this priest of Midian has believed. And has worshipped Yahweh as his God.

Hearing led to testimony. Testimony to confession. Confession to worship. Worship to community. Jethro heard of greatness. Moses told of greatness. Jethro confessed greatness. Then they feasted in the presence of greatness. The story of Exodus became the ground of their gathering. The mighty acts of God became the reason for their joy.

In summary, Jethro worshipped Yahweh after hearing Moses testify to God's great deeds. This section establishes that the leadership model to follow flows from a community. And that community is rooted in the worship of the redeeming God.

But does worship prevent weariness?



## 2) The leader who burnt out (Exodus 18:13-18)

Well, the party ended, and the work week started. Worship ceased. <sup>13</sup> The next day Moses sat down to judge the people. They stood around Moses. From morning. Until evening. A weary queue of human need.

<sup>14</sup> Moses's father-in-law saw everything. He saw the faithful work. He saw the endless line. He saw the solitary judge. And he probed. *What is this you're doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge? While all the people stand around you? From morning until evening?*

Moses gave his reasons. Good reasons. <sup>15</sup> *Because the people come to me to enquire of God.* I stand in the gap. I mediated. <sup>16</sup> *Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me. And I make a decision between one man and another.* He adjudicated. *And I teach them God's statutes and laws.* He instructed. Here is Moses' threefold job description. Intercessor. Judge. Teacher. One man. Doing it all.

Jethro listened. And then he spoke the hard truth. <sup>17</sup> *What you're doing is not good. Not beneficial. Not sustainable.* <sup>18</sup> *You will certainly wear out.* The word is nābēl. To wither. To fade. Moses, you're going to fall apart. *Both yourself and these people. The task is too heavy. You can't do it alone.*

Here's the diagnosis. A faithful man. Doing good things. In an unsustainable way. Moses is not rebuked for the work. But the method. His unique role as mediator was essential. But his attempt to carry every minor case was impossible. It would destroy him. And the weary people waiting in the sun.

The McDonald's brothers had a popular takeaway restaurant. But their system was slow. Cars waited. Orders backed up. They were doing a good thing. In an unsustainable way. So they invented a new system. The Speedee Service System. A food assembly line. The good thing was preserved by a changed structure. They didn't invent burgers. They perfected a system. So it was with Jethro. He saw the bottleneck at the tent of meeting.

God-given calling requires a God-honouring structure. This crisis exposed a truth. Redeemed community is not sustained by the heroic endurance of one man. Not even a Moses. His unique role was threatened by the burden it created. The people would not thrive if their mediator wore out.

In summary, Jethro declared Moses' solitary judging unsustainable. For it would exhaust both him and the people. This crisis reveals that for God's people to thrive, Moses's unique role must be protected. From his own faithful exhaustion.

What then must be done? Can one man bear what belongs to many?

### 3) The leader who shares (Exodus 18:19-23)

<sup>19</sup> Now *listen to me* said Jethro. *I will give you some advice.* *And God be with you.* This isn't suggestion. This isn't strategy. This is spiritual wisdom.

First, clarify your unique role. You *represent the people before God.* You *bring their cases to him.* Here is the non-negotiable core. Moses alone is the mediator. The priest. The intercessor. You are the primary teacher. <sup>20</sup> *Instruct them about the statutes and laws.* *Teach them the way to live.* *What they must do.* Moses alone is the teacher. The prophet. The revealer of God's will. These two tasks are indispensable. They are the weight of glory Moses must carry.

Now, address the crushing burden. <sup>21</sup> *select from all the people.* The word is ḥāzâ. To look for. To choose with discernment. Do not appoint by default. Choose by design. Select *able men.* Men of capacity. Skill. Competence. They can handle the work. Select *God-fearing* men. Men of reverence. Spiritual vitality. Their awe of God governs their use of power. Select *trustworthy* men. Men of integrity. Their word is their bond. They are reliable. Select men *hating dishonest profit.* They despise the bribe. They loathe the crooked advantage. Their hands are clean. Behold the qualifications. Not age. Not wealth. Not lineage. Competence. Character. Conscience.

*Place them over the people.* *As commanders.* *Of thousands.* *Hundreds.* *Fifties.* *And tens.* This is order. This is structure. This is delegated authority with clear responsibility. <sup>22</sup> *They should judge the people at all times.* Their authority is constant. Not occasional. *They can bring you every major case.* *but judge every minor case themselves.* The hard matters ascend. The routine matters are resolved. The system filters the burden. *In this way you will lighten your load.* *They will bear it with you.* The weight is shared. <sup>23</sup> *If you do this you will be able to endure.* *And these people will be able to go home satisfied.* The outcome is clear.

An incompetent judge is a farce. A corrupt judge is a tyrant. You would not trust your case to a fool. Nor a thief. These qualifications are not bureaucratic. They are protective. Able men ensure justice. God-fearing men, holiness. Trustworthy men, stability. Men hating dishonest gain, purity. Moses's unique role could only be preserved by sharing judicial authority. The design was not to diminish his calling. It was to defend it.

In summary, Jethro advised Moses to delegate judging to men of ability and integrity. This prescription provides the structure needed to protect Moses's unique mediatorial role. Enabling God's people to thrive.

But will the man who speaks with God face-to-face, listen to his father-in-law?

#### 4) The leader who obeys (Exodus 18:24-27)

<sup>24</sup> Moses listened to his father-in-law. And did everything he said. No debate. No hesitation. No defence of his former method. The man who spoke face-to-face with God submitted to the counsel of a Midianite priest. His humility was his wisdom.

<sup>25</sup> Moses chose able men from all Israel. Deliberate selection. Strict criteria. Able. God-fearing. Trustworthy. Hating dishonest gain. He did not appoint cronies. He did not deploy cadres. He chose qualified men.

Moses made them leaders. Commanders of thousands. Hundreds. Fifties. Tens. He established the structure. Distributed the authority. Created a visible, functioning hierarchy of justice.

<sup>26</sup> They judged the people at all times. Their authority was constant. The system was operational. They would bring the hard cases to Moses. The perplexing matters. The weighty disputes. But they judged every minor case themselves. The burden was filtered. The load was shared.

Jethro left. <sup>27</sup> Moses let his father-in-law go. He journeyed to his own land. Jethro's departure proves the system is self-sustaining. Moses no longer needed him. The structure now protected Moses' role, enabling the people's flourishing.

The crisis of solitary burnout was solved by structured plurality. The leader was preserved. The people were served. The mission continued. Moses's unique role as mediator and teacher was not buried under an avalanche of minor disputes.

Consider the Roman legion. Its strength was not in the heroic charge of one centurion. It was in the century. The cohort. The legion. Each unit with a clear commander. Each commander accountable. Authority was delegated down a chain of command. The general led. But he did not fight every battle alone.

Or consider Eisenhower in World War 2. He bore the ultimate burden of command. But he did not plan every airborne drop. He did not chart every naval course. He entrusted qualified men. Montgomery, Bradley, Patton. Giving them vast authority. Trusted competence secured a shared victory.

The thriving of God's people was secured not by Moses's solitary heroism. But by his humble obedience to a wise, shared structure. His greatness was demonstrated in his willingness to share power.

In summary, Moses' humble obedience secured his unique role. By sharing judicial authority, he was freed to focus on mediation and teaching. Ensuring God's people would thrive under protected leadership.

Who can meet this standard? Not Moses. Not me or you. There is Only One.

## Connect to the gospel

Which leads us to the inescapable, glorious conclusion. We thrive together under delegated leadership dependent on Christ. This is the gospel reality. We are no longer defined by our solitary striving, but by our union with Christ. Our thriving is forever dependent on His finished work. **Exodus 18** reveals a standard. God's men are to be able. God-fearing. Trustworthy. Hating dishonest gain.

**Who can match up?** The Law exposes us all. Pastors. Elders. Deacons. Members. You. We all fall short. Even our striving to meet the standard exhausts us. Our self-righteousness fails us. This is a standard we cannot meet. A burden we cannot bear. This is the diagnosis of every human heart and every flawed leadership structure.

**Exodus 18** cries of our failure. But the gospel answers its call. Jesus Christ is the able One. The perfectly competent Redeemer who accomplishes what we cannot. Jesus Christ is the God-fearing One. Whose entire life was lived in reverent submission to the Father. Jesus Christ is the trustworthy One. The faithful and true witness whose Word never fails. Jesus Christ is the honest One. Who despised the shame of sin and loved righteousness.

Jesus fulfils the standard we could not. Jesus bore the ultimate burden we deserved. Alone. On the cross.

In His death and resurrection, He did not just model perfect leadership. He accomplished a perfect redemption. And now, by His Spirit, He builds His church. He makes us new. He gifts His people. He qualifies the unqualified. And He does this by appointing and gifting able, God-fearing men within His body. Not to replace His leadership, but to extend it through a shared, delegated structure of grace. He takes weary soloists and places them in a symphony.

So, the wise design of **Exodus 18** is a structure of shared, qualified authority. Protecting a unique calling. Finding its true home and power in Jesus. And through Jesus. Not in a wilderness camp, but in His blood-bought body. The church.

**This is the gospel reality. We are no longer defined by our solitary striving, but by our union with Christ. Our thriving is forever dependent on His finished work.**

**Which leads us to the inescapable, glorious conclusion for us today. We thrive together under delegated leadership dependent on Christ.**

## Believers

Hear this, people of God. The burden of your acceptance has been borne by Christ. Alone. On the cross. Your striving is over. Your performance is irrelevant. You stand before God in the perfect righteousness of His Son. This is your freedom. Therefore, you are now freed. Freed to share lesser burdens. Your church is not a platform for solo performance. It is a body for shared service. You are called to this. Identify one burden you carry alone. **Is it a ministry task? A pastoral care? A family decision?** You hoard it to your own exhaustion. You think it proves your devotion. It does not. It ignores the body of Christ. This week, share it. Delegate it. Ask for help. Submit to counsel. Trust a qualified brother. Entrust a capable sister. Your unique calling is not diminished. It is protected. You are not surrendering your role. You are defending it. By sharing the burden, you proclaim the gospel. You declare that the Ultimate Burden-Bearer lives, and His people thrive together. Do this. Let your home be a testament to shared grace. Let your church be a symphony, not a solo. For those who have no task to delegate, it's time to find a ministry team you can partner in. A burden you can help carry. A place where you can serve. It is the intention of the Spirit that we be busy about the work of ministry in this place. And so find the niche where you can exercise your gift in this church together with others.

## Unbelievers

You rule your own life. You bear your own burdens. You sit as judge of your own case. And you are weary. You know the standard. Be capable. Be honourable. Be trustworthy. Be pure. And you know your failure. Your self-rule is a failed regime. Your striving exhausts you. Your conscience accuses you. The sentence hangs over you. What you need is not a better system. You need a perfect Saviour. Behold Jesus Christ. He is the able One who accomplished what you cannot. He is the God-fearing One who obeyed perfectly. He is the trustworthy One whose promise never fails. He is the pure One who despised sin. He bore the ultimate burden of God's wrath against your rebellion. Alone. On the cross. He died for your failed self-rule. He rose to offer you a new life under His perfect leadership. Your part is to relinquish. To surrender. To abdicate the throne of your own heart. Trust yourself to Him. Today. You do this by speaking to Him. In your own words. Tell Him you are weary of your own rule. Confess your failure to meet His standard. Thank Him for bearing your penalty. Ask Him to be your Leader. Your Saviour. Your King. That prayer is the end of going it alone. It is the beginning of thriving under the leadership of Christ, in the family of God. Do not delay. Your burden is too heavy. He stands ready to take it.

## Conclusion

Thus, we return to the Roman general. His mission demanded more than his own two hands. It demanded a legion. A structure. Shared leadership. This is the enduring truth of **Exodus 18**. Our mission is greater than any one person. Reach Benoni with the gospel, and equip all for life. This work was never meant to rest on one set of shoulders. It is a shared burden under delegated authority. Therefore, the principle stands. We thrive together under delegated leadership dependent on Christ.

We have walked with Moses. We saw the leader who worships. Rooted in the redeeming acts of God. We witnessed the leader who was on the cusp of burn out. Faithful yet faltering under a solitary burden. We heard the leader who shares. Wisely distributing authority to qualified men. We followed the leader who obeys. His humility preserving his unique calling. Four portraits. One path to thriving.

This is not ancient history. This is our present calling. At Benoni Baptist Church, we are stewarding this truth. We are developing leaders. Men on Wednesdays. Ladies on Saturdays. We are preparing for deacon nominations. We are testing future elders. **Why?** Because the mission rises and falls on the back of called, qualified, and recognised leaders. Not a personality. Not a solo act. A shared, delegated structure.

**So what must we do?** First, pray. Pray for your leaders. Pray for wisdom. Pray for endurance. Pray for godliness. Second, participate. If you sense God's call to lead, speak to Liezl or to me. Explore the path. Leadership here is about availability. Faithfulness. Service. Third, and most vital, look to Christ. He is the perfect Leader who bore the ultimate burden alone. On the cross. For you. In Him, your striving ends. Your failed self-rule finds its merciful end. Trust yourself to Him. Thrive under His leadership, in His family.

Thus, the call echoes from the wilderness to Benoni. Lay down the solitary burden. Take up the shared mission. Pray for your leaders. Prepare to lead. Look to Christ. For here is the glorious, inescapable conclusion. We do not go it alone. We thrive together under delegated leadership dependent on Christ.

May the Lord raise up the leaders His mission requires. For the good of His church. And the glory of His name.