

## **Leadership Can't Be Done Alone**

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The Making of a Leader: Lessons Learned from the Life of Moses

Exodus 18

Several years ago I was in the Netherlands where I gave a television interview about Christianity in America. The Dutch found it really exotic that we had all these large churches in America and especially that one of them was led by a person of Jewish descent. While I was at the TV station a corporate executive shared with me a marketing study of over 100 nations and the social orientation of those nations. So, for example, they ranked nations based on that nation's view of authority. Some nations were extremely authoritarian and other nations tended to be very egalitarian.

One of the social scales that they measured people by was on individualism versus collectivism.

### Individualism vs. Collectivism

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 you or your children. Other nations are far more community oriented. The individual is subordinated to the good of the whole.

Well, you can guess where America ended up on this individualism vs. collectivism scale. We were #1! We were the gold medal winners in the global competition on individualism. No one in the entire world, according to this marketing study, was more me-centered than Americans.

Now, part of this may be our genetic history. Many of our ancestors came to this continent by leaving family, friends, and traditions behind. It took courage to sail across the ocean. Coming to America usually meant starting from scratch with very few resources. And whether immigrants arrived as explorers or pilgrims or refugees or slaves – everyone had to make their own way in a very challenging land where individualism and independence were life and death matters.

Following the Second World War as our nation became more prosperous, people became more mobile. Corporations began moving people around at an increasing rate. Employees of IBM used to joke that IBM stands for "I've been moved." More and more Americans became disconnected from neighborhoods and communities and extended families. Fewer children grew up around their grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins.

And then in the 1980's and 90's corporations began suffering layoffs and take-over's. Employees increasingly realized that no one in the company was going to look out for them or their careers that reinforce the idea that we just have to watch out for ourselves. We have to look out for #1, because if we don't, then no one else will.

Here's the deal, we take this individualism and we bring it into our understanding of Christianity and even our approach to the church.

Let me share with you a brief video clip.

### MeChurch Video

Some of you are saying, "Where's that church located?" The MeChurch. A few of you are googling right now on your iPhones.

The fact is we don't do well alone. As I've gotten older, I've noticed that I've developed an interest in reading articles about Alzheimer's and memory loss. Somehow those articles seem more relevant to me now than when I was 20. The most recent studies on memory loss suggest that being deeply involved in relationships significantly decreases your chance of getting dementia.

Just a month ago researchers at Harvard reported that active socializing in old age delays memory problems. They discovered that when someone has strong social ties through friends and family, and is deeply involved in volunteer activities they have less than half the rate of memory loss than those who are more isolated.

In terms of your physical health, it is a medical toss up whether you either a) choose to stop smoking, or b) join a church. Smoking is bad. But researchers have found that there is significant health improvement by getting deeply involved in church. But you are going to have these health benefits, and spiritual benefits and even intellectual benefits in terms of memory loss, not by merely sitting and watching the show. We need to understand church as a team sport in which you don't succeed if you don't participate and play.

When I think of team, I think of the old Chicago Bulls teams of the early 1990's. Until Phil Jackson came and molded the group that he had there into a team, even Michael Jordan's greatness could not win a championship for them. But the ultimate high point in terms of team play came in the 1994 playoffs. The Bulls were playing the Phoenix Suns and on the last play of the game, John Paxson fired this three-point dagger and won the game with no time left on the clock. John Paxson said that it wasn't until he watched the video tape that he realized every single teammate touched the ball on the inbound pass before he took the shot.

Let me read to you a reporter's record of the end of the game:

With 14 seconds left and the Bulls trailing by two, Jordan inbounded to BJ Armstrong, who passed the ball back to Jordan. Jordan dribbled up court looking for Scottie Pippen near the key. Pippen was supposed to catch the pass and then return the ball to Jordan flaring out on the wing. Except Charles Barkley, Pippen's man, lunged for the pass and missed setting Pippen in motion down the

lane. When Horace Grant's man, Mark West, stepped into Pippen's way, Pippen hit Grant to the left of the basket.

Grant was in a terrible shooting slump. He just had missed an uncontested dunk, so he redirected the ball to Paxson, who was wide open. Armstrong to Jordan to Pippen to Grant to Paxson to the history books. Team play.

John Maxwell has a little saying that team is an acronym.

**T**ogether  
**E**veryone  
**A**chieves  
**M**ore

I've been doing a series on leadership from the life of Moses, a series that I've called "The Making of a Leader." One of the things that we're going to discover today regarding leadership, one of the most important lessons that we are going to discover today, is that leadership is not a solo sport. It is not for Lone Rangers. Moses learned in Exodus 18 that leadership is a team sport. That is the title of today's message is "Leadership Can't Be Done Alone." Let's pray.

#### **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 that had gone with their mother, Zipporah, to their grandfather, Jethro. It may be that Moses sent the kids and his wife away during the confrontation with Pharaoh to protect the family. We don't know why the family was with Jethro.

But Moses had two sons. Here is what we read in verses 3 and 4:

#### **Exodus 18:3-4**

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."

Now in many ways, a leader's life alternates between Gershom and Eliezer. Every leader is Gershom, "I am all alone; nobody really understands me; no one really gets what I'm trying to accomplish; I feel disconnected from the organization; I feel disconnected relationally; all the responsibility is on me; I am Gershom; I am a stranger

in a strange land.” And that feeling alternates with 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.” And to some degree, I would say that every life alternates between these two poles of Gershom and Eliezer – between the feeling of disconnect and aloneness, Gershom, and a feeling of great joy and gratitude that we know the Lord.

A leader is at their worst when they are Gershom – I am alone.

I am alone

We see this in the life of the prophet Elijah when he was at his lowest point:

**1 Kings 19:10**

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

**1 Kings 19:14**

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

Literally, verse 14 says:

And I survived – I alone – but they are attempting to take my life.

I can’t think of a clearer statement of a situation of Gershom - than this statement: I alone. I am alone. No one really quite understands what I’m going through. I tried to talk with my spouse, but they don’t get it. I feel like I don’t have any support at all. I feel like I’m drowning. And despite my pleas for help, no one hears me. I alone.

The great Reformer, Martin Luther, said this in his famous *Table Talks*:

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.

A leader is never more in danger than when they are isolated and alone. I read an article some years ago about avoiding the Scarlet A of Ministry. The article was not simply about avoiding adultery as a Christian leader, although it certainly talked about that. But the article talked about three other A's that take leaders down: addiction, arrogance, and aloneness. This psychologist said that a leader is never more in danger than when they are alone.

And I would expand that and say this to each person here. You are never more in danger than when you are doing life alone! At the beginning, God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." The normal way that God interacts with us is through other people. So if you are struggling with addiction or depression or grief or cancer, the normal way that God will heal you and minister to you is through a support network of other people. If you want to find God in the midst of your problems, you must get in the game. You can't sit in the bleachers and watch the church. You have to join in, discover relationships here in a small group, volunteer in a ministry, meet other people.

The normal way you will receive wisdom and love and forgiveness and correction and acceptance is through other people. All the things that God wishes to give you come to you mainly through God's activity through other people. That's why you really can't ever get the benefit of this church simply by listening to teachings on Sunday mornings because that won't address your aloneness.

If you say, "I've been coming to this church and I recognize that I am in a place where I do need support in a hard situation I'm going through with my kids, or a divorce, or an illness," or "I'm struggling with an addiction," you can meet God through one of our groups. You can find out what groups we have by simply going online at,

[www.vineyardcolumbus.org](http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org) and click on "Get Connected"

You say, "I just recognize that I need fellowship. I am new in this church [or I've been here for a while] but I'm just sitting in a crowd and I don't really know anyone. I would like to find relationship with people like me – my age group; my situation in life." You can find out about our groups by going online at [www.vineyardcolumbus.org](http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org) or by going out to the lobby and checking out our small group wall.

Billy Graham was once asked how he preached the gospel so successfully for so many years. And one of the things Billy Graham said was when he goes out to proclaim the gospel, whether it is on a street corner in Nairobi, or in Seoul, Korea, or in a tribal situation in the Congo, or in a large stadium in NY City, he said,

I know there are certain things that are true about everyone. There are certain psychological or spiritual factors that exist in every human being. [And when he preached, he said] I'm trusting the Holy Spirit to strike a responsive chord in my hearers.

One of the things Billy Graham said that is relevant in regards to what we've been talking about is that everywhere he goes in the world; he knows that hearers are experiencing loneliness. Some people call it cosmic loneliness. He quoted a friend, a psychiatrist and theologian, and he asked his friend, "What is the greatest problem of the patients that come to you for help?" He thought for a moment and he said, "loneliness." He went on saying,

When you get right down to it, everyone feels loneliness for God.

It may never have occurred to you that you are lonely for God. You may never have put it this way, but you almost certainly have felt this loneliness. You can be in a crowd of people even at a party and suddenly with everyone around laughing, a wave of loneliness will sweep over you. There is a loneliness inside all of us that can't be met by other people – not your spouse, or a new romance, or a great friend. There is a cosmic loneliness. There is a feeling of loneliness in the suburbs. There is a feeling of loneliness in high rise buildings in the center of New York. There is loneliness in Latin America, Africa, and China. There is a loneliness that only God can fill. To a certain extent, every human being is Gershom. I am a stranger in a strange land. I am cut off from the deepest kind of love and acceptance that I crave. Even when I am among people, I don't feel love in the way that I need to feel love. I don't feel accepted in the way that I need to be accepted. There is a part of my heart that never is quite satisfied. I don't feel connected. All of us are Gershom.

But Moses didn't just have one son. He had a second son named Eliezer. Moses discovered at another point in his life that God was his helper.

We are not alone in weakness and suffering

In my mind, the greatest objection to faith in God has always been the problem of human suffering. When I say that human suffering is the great objection to Christian faith, I'm talking about great suffering. I mean it is one thing for you to break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend. There is suffering in breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. It is another thing entirely to have your 30-something husband suddenly die of a heart attack and leave behind three little kids and a wife without resources. That is something else entirely.

It is one thing to have an elderly parent die after a long and fruitful life. It is another thing to have a teenage son die by way of suicide. It is a whole different level of suffering.

A week ago I got together with a dear woman in our church, who I will call Sara, because Sara had lost a relative to suicide. When we met, I felt that I had a prophetic word for Sara. I said, "Sara, I suddenly had a picture of you in my mind's eye. You had a blanket over your head. And it was a blanket of shame that was keeping you from being able to look into the face of Jesus Christ."

Sara wrote me after we met and here is what she said:

The girl with the blanket over her head became a woman with a blanket over her head. You see, for years my sisters and I were abused. Everyday. We had to watch while it happened to the other. Our father would come in our room at night. He would start with me. When he was done he would go to my sisters. There was nothing I could do but hide. This happened everyday for almost a year. I was 10. My sisters were 9, 7 and 4. My mother would come in the room but she would leave right back out. One weekend she left. We were there alone. When she returned we were all hiding. In closets, under the bed etc. That day she called the police. They came and got him. We were not allowed to speak of it. Our relatives still have the pictures of our happy little family. They have no idea about the man in the picture.

That girl became the woman who cannot look people in the face. The woman who walks looking at the ground. The woman who will never be good enough or pretty enough or smart enough. The woman who sleeps with the blanket over her head to this day, still afraid of the dark.

Sara was Gershom, utterly and completely alone, a woman who sleeps with a blanket over her head afraid of the dark. She experienced a whole other level of suffering than most of us have experienced in our lives or in our homes growing up.

But into her life there came Eliezer. God is my helper. And through a simple prophetic word, "God wants you to pull the blanket down and look fully into his face," here is what Sara wrote:

Your words were a comfort to me. The Vineyard has been a blessing in my life. This woman can see and feel the love of Jesus Christ. This woman will walk with her head high. Looking into the face of her lord and savior. This woman believes. This woman has faith.

I read an article a few years ago in *Time Magazine* that was titled, "Why Did Jesus Die?" It came out during the enormous wave of interest that surrounded the movie "The Passion of the Christ." The writers of the article asked different people to pastors, theologians and lay people why did Jesus die. And one of the folks who answered the question was a woman named JoAnne Terrell, who is the author of the book, *Power in the Blood? The Cross and the African American Experience*.

Now, JoAnne Terrell believes that Christ died to pay for our sins; to open the door to paradise for you and me by removing the obstacle that gets in the way of our welcome and acceptance by God, namely our sin. But JoAnne Terrell believes that there is something else that we sometimes miss in the cross and it responds to the issue of horrific suffering. She said that years ago she was sitting in a grad school class and they were studying Christian doctrine. During the class, she had a flashback. She was a girl again and had just come into the apartment where her mother had been murdered by her mother's boyfriend.

And there was her mother's bloody body with blood soaking the mattress. Her mother's bloody handprint was on the wall where she tried to escape her brutal killing by her boyfriend.

JoAnne Terrell said for years that incident had just completely shut her off from God. Then she was in this grad school class and they were talking about the cross of Christ. Suddenly she had a picture in her mind's eye of Christ hanging on the cross and she realized that Christ didn't just suffer for us when he hung there on the cross, he suffered with us. Jesus was beaten to death by people who were supposed to love him.

When you confront horrific suffering like the suicide of a relative or the sudden death of a young mom or dad, or some terrorist who decides to blow up a bus full of school children; when you confront horrific suffering no amount of reasons we can offer can respond to that suffering. But God gives us not reasons, but resources to cope with pain in this fallen world. The resources God gives us is Jesus suffering with us. In this world of horrific suffering where children starve to death and fathers go down the line and rape four of their little children – in this world of horrific suffering, I could not bring myself to believe in a God who sits aloof in heaven, utterly apart from suffering.

The resource we Christians have is a God who gets down with us, a God who gets down with us, a God who suffers, a God who is beaten to death, a God who has experienced violence – political violence, religious violence, rejection, and injustice. I can trust that kind of God. I can trust in a God who walks alongside of me, who becomes for me Eliezer, my helper. A God who completely understands whatever suffering I am experiencing because he's been there first.

Let me put it slightly differently. If you are going through a major trial in your life – let's say you have cancer; it is one thing for a friend to come up and offer to pray for you. I'm sure you really appreciate that. But there is a whole other depth of understanding when a cancer survivor comes up to you – maybe someone who is in the midst of treatment. They've lost their hair. They've been through radical chemo. It is a whole other level of understanding when you meet someone who has been exactly where you find yourself now.

If you've lost a child, it is one thing to be supported by good friends. That's a great blessing. It is another thing entirely to meet someone who lost a child at nearly the same age, in similar circumstances.

One of the things the cross communicates to us is you are not alone in your suffering. God says, "I understand. I've been there." He doesn't give reasons for horrific suffering, but we have resources in Christ. Indeed, when we look at the cross and really understand it, one of the things we discover is that no one has ever been more alone than the Son of God was on the cross. It doesn't matter what kind of abuse we've suffered, or how terrible the isolation was. No one has ever been more alone than



Jesus. Because on the cross the lights of the universe turned off for Christ. We read in scripture that when he died the sun was blotted out. It was night.

For Jesus there was no comfort from God. There was no sense of God's presence or warmth. There was no feeling of, "Son, don't worry; I'm with you." On the cross Jesus experienced the wrath of God for our sins. The one who had been eternally united with his Father suddenly found himself completely separated, utterly without hope, utterly in despair, nothing good, nothing kind. When he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" we can see in that phrase that Jesus died utterly alone so that you and I would never have to be utterly alone. That you and I could always have God with us. That we would never be separated from the love of God the way Jesus was.

We don't have reasons for suffering, but we have resources – God with us. We know that Jesus didn't stay dead. Instead, he rose from the dead. And in this, we always have hope that God will transform whatever we've experienced in this life maybe, but certainly in eternity.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead means, as I said last week, all the things you've ever longed for – maybe as a child that you dreamed about and said, "Oh, one day I would love to have this," all of your deepest dreams will one day come true in the resurrection of the dead. You will one day have the body you've always dreamed of. You will have the love and acceptance you've always dreamed of. You will have the security and protection of God your father that you've always dreamed of. You will have significance; you will have meaningful work; you will have recognition; you won't be afraid. You will have the family you always wanted and never had.

Eliezer – God is my help – even when I'm alone; even when I'm suffering horrifically. God can give resource so that I can cope with my suffering.

We are not alone in weakness and suffering. And

We are not alone in worship

### **Exodus 18:5-12**

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. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons." 7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 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.” 12 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law in the presence of God.

Moses bore witness to his father-in-law, Jethro, in the same way that we who claim to be followers of Jesus need to bear witness to our families and friends. Verse 8:

**Exodus 18:8**

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.

As followers of Jesus we are called to bear witness to Jesus in all of our personal relationships. Not just that they know I’m a Christian; they know I go to church. Bearing witness is more than that. In verse 8 we find the perfect summary of what bearing witness is all about. It is not arguing a person into faith. We can’t do that. I’ve tried. It doesn’t work. So you’re trying to argue your spouse, or your teenager, or your boyfriend in believing. As Dr. Phil would say, “How’s that working for you?”

There is a personal testimony about what you have seen God do in your life and in the lives of people around you and how God saved you and how God saved people around you. Being a witness for Christ is nothing more than telling someone else the story of what God has done for you in your life and what you’ve seen God do for other people.

Now, there is a narrowness, there is an exclusivity of Biblical faith. Verses 9-11:

**Exodus 18:9-11**

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.”

This raises the other great contemporary objection to Christian faith. We talked about horrific suffering, but a second great objection to Christianity is this idea that there could be just one true faith. Jethro’s statement:

**Exodus 18:11**

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly.”

The problem of exclusivity and the problem of saying that faith in Christ is somehow superior than faith in other gods. Lots of people in Columbus that I meet say that all religions basically teach the same thing. For you to assert that faith in your God is

somehow better than faith in another god is the height of arrogance. But is there anyone really who doesn't believe that some ideas are worse than other ideas; or even that some religions are worse than other religions? Is there anyone who really believes that all religions are equally valid? I mean, would anyone say that a religion in which people offer their children in sacrifice to the gods is just as good as a religion in which people are taught to love, to protect, and to cherish their children? Does anyone really believe that Nazism that teaches that one race is superior and other races are sub-human is just as valid of a religion or philosophy that teaches that we are all equal in the sight of God?

All religions aren't equal. And all ideas aren't equal. I would argue that no one really thinks they are even when we're arguing with each other.

And, indeed, all religions don't teach the same thing. I was a comparative religion major and there are ideas in the world's great faiths that utterly contradict ideas in other of the world's great faiths. For example, Buddhism does not teach faith in a personal God at all. Judaism, Christianity and Islam teach that God is personal. Hinduism teaches that in the end all of your individuality will be obliterated. Your individuality will disappear like a drop of water in the ocean. The goal is release from the cycle of reincarnation. The goal of Christianity is not release, but resurrection. Jesus taught that your individuality will not be obliterated. Your individuality will be celebrated by God, who made you. You will come fully into your own on the day of resurrection.

There is a narrowness and exclusivity in biblical religion. Jesus said in John 14:6:

**John 14:6**

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

But we are not alone in our worship of Jesus. In the Bible there are these odd people who come along outside of the covenant community, outside of Israel, who were also worshippers of the true God – people like Jethro and Naaman in 2 Kings 5; the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. It is interesting that all of these Gentiles outside of the covenant community say the same thing:

**Exodus 18:11**

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly."

**1 Kings 17:24**

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

**2 Kings 5:15**

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

The way to God is narrow. It is only through faith in Jesus. But the people who follow Jesus are not as few as many Christians believe. Because there are many folks who have put their faith in Jesus who do not look like the church-going sort of folks we're used to. There are many Jethro's, Naaman's, and Widows of Zarephath all over the world who are true followers of Jesus, but they may not fit within the confines of churchianity.

Let me tell you a story about one man who is a hero of mine. His name is Daniel Zion. He was the chief rabbi of Bulgaria during the Holocaust. I've met many Jewish people who have said to me, “The only Jews who ever believe in Jesus are Jews who really don't understand their own religion.” Jews who have studied Judaism, religious Jews, and Jews who know the Talmud – they would never put their faith in Jesus.

But then there are people like Rabbi Daniel Zion. Rabbi Zion saved hundreds of Jewish lives during the Holocaust. His name is unfamiliar to most Jewish people. The reason is because Rabbi Zion, the chief rabbi of Bulgaria was a fervent believer in Jesus.

He was so highly respected to orthodox leaders in Israel that after WWII when he immigrated to Israel, he was invited by the chief rabbi of Jerusalem's rabbinic court to serve on the court. The only obstacle was Rabbi Zion's faith in Jesus. The chief rabbi said, “That's not a problem so long as you keep your faith to yourself. If you don't talk about Jesus, you can serve on this rabbinic court.” Rabbi Zion couldn't agree to this. In fact, he presented evidence for his case before a meeting of all the chief rabbis and he concluded with these words:

I will give up all my earthly honor for the sake of Messiah Jesus, my friend.

The rabbinic court stripped him of the title “rabbi.” But he was still looked to as the rabbi for Bulgarian Jews who resettled in Israel. And every Sabbath afternoon, after he held synagogue services, he would have a Bible study in his home where he taught about Jesus from the New Testament. He died at the age of 96 in 1979 affirming his faith in Jesus to the end. But he never called himself a Christian. He didn't look like a Christian. He didn't wear a cross around his neck. He lived a traditional Jewish life until the day of his death, and then he was received by Jesus into heaven.

Brothers and sisters, I think all over the world there are true followers of Jesus Christ, who don't look the way we think they should look. They believe in Jesus as the only way to God and they believe in his death on the cross as the only payment for our sins. There are Rabbi Zion's and Jethro's and Naaman's. I've been told that there are a million culturally Hindu people in Calcutta, who are devoted followers of Jesus Christ. They no longer subscribe to many tenets in Hinduism. They love Jesus, but they look and have cultural traditions that are very different than American Christians. I have a

friend who is a missionary in the Middle East. He says he knows hundreds and hundreds of culturally Muslim people, who no longer subscribe to many of the tenets of their religion, who are culturally Muslim, but are devoted followers of Jesus.

Our faith is narrow and exclusive. It focuses a laser on the person of Jesus. But there are many people who love and believe in Jesus who do not look the way we think they should. It is not as narrow as we believe. We are not alone in the worship of Jesus.

And finally, we are not alone in work and ministry.

We are not alone in work and ministry

### **Exodus 18:13-23**

The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 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. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. 21 But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 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."

I read a story once about a denominational official who visited a church. It was early Monday morning. He saw a man there polishing the pews. He thought the man was the custodian, but he turned out to be the pastor. The pastor said, "Do you mind if we talk while I clean up?" He then began to polish the floors and he polished all the brass in the church until it was absolutely gleaming.

The denominational official said, "The brass door handles just shown as if they were brand new." The pastor was asked if the church was struggling financially. He said, "No, it's not. It is just that I can't get anyone to clean up as well as I do it." He discovered the pastor also printed off the bulletins, did all of the visitation, taught the only adult class in the church.

We see this problem of control and non-delegation everywhere you go in the corporate world, particularly with entrepreneurs who have started their own companies. Even when the company grows and they have employees, the entrepreneurial founder of the company has their hands in everything.

I read an article in *Inc. Magazine* in which the VP of the company, who happened to be the company president's wife, said he's doing sales, he's managing people, he's opening the mail, he's taking out the garbage. "We get a new chair in the office and he is assembling it." The founder said, "Well, I guess I do have a certain style. Maybe I have an issue."

Yeah, maybe. What's the issue in non-delegation? Many leaders suffer from a condition that psychologists call psychological inflation. That's a euphemism for being an ego-maniac. You believe that because you can perform a particular task better than someone else, you can perform all tasks better than other people. Because you are a whiz at designing software, you are also a whiz at selling your product, or hiring people. Or because the pastor is a great preacher, he or she is also a great counselor, or a great fund-raiser, or a great missionary.

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 Exodus 18:18:

**Exodus 18:18**

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.

We wear ourselves out and people aren't satisfied. We don't do the job that everyone wants us to do.

Let me bring this down. If you are a person who says, "I am just absolutely overwhelmed. I am exhausted all of the time. I run from my job to clean up my house; cooking meals to doing ministry – I am just absolutely worn out." One of the questions presented by this text is are you really alone in your work and ministry? In other words, are your circumstances such that you just simply are carrying a load that no one else can share; or instead, are there personal issues inside of you that need to be addressed? It is not your circumstances that are wearing you down, rather, it is the unaddressed burden of your personal issues that is exhausting you.

And it is here that the gospel has resource which addresses the personal issues in your life so that you don't wear yourself out. For example, if you say, "Well, no one else can clean up the house as well as I can, therefore, I don't have anyone else to wash the floor or do the laundry or make the beds." The question might be asked, "What is really the driver for your perfect housekeeping? Is it that if your house is a little messy you don't feel acceptable?" If your husband or wife or kids or a cleaning service did it, would that take something away from you?

The gospel needs to be applied to every area of life including our overwork. If we are unable to delegate because we think that we are the only ones who can do things well, then the cross deflates our feelings of superiority as we kneel before Jesus and see ourselves as broken and fallen. And if we can't delegate because having everything perfect is a way we gain stature and acceptance, the gospel addresses that – our feelings of inadequacy and how we gain acceptance. When you kneel before the cross and embrace what Christ has done for you and for your sins, God declares you perfectly accepted in his sight. He gives you adequacy that you could never have by your frenzied working. He conveys on you a status that a clean house or a great job or a big ministry can never give you. At the cross, God, whose opinion ultimately and eternally will matter. God says, "I accept you as you are." God says, "I give you stature and status." God says, "You can get off the treadmill and release control of activity to others and you don't have to be afraid of how it is going to reflect on you or worry about what others think about you."

The gospel gives us resources to enable us to delegate. We are not alone. Leaders are never alone. Let's pray.

## Leadership Can't Be Done Alone

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The Making of a Leader: Lessons Learned from the Life of Moses

Exodus 18

1. I am alone (Exodus 18:1-4; 1 Kings 19:10, 14)
  - A. Alone in church
  - B. Alone in the universe
2. We are not alone in weakness and suffering
3. We are not alone in worship (Exodus 18:5-12)
  - A. Our faith is exclusive
  - B. Our faith includes more people than we think
4. We are not alone in work and ministry (Exodus 18:13-23)