Jethro's Wisdom God's Community Gift Today

Exodus 17:8–18:2

Have you ever been in a situation where you observe someone struggling while trying to resolve something, thinking there must be a simpler approach?

You offered assistance. No, I am fine. An hour later, they remain there; they are not fine at all, and you have gained nothing.

When Jethro comes to Moses, he finds him sitting in judgment over civic issues from morning till evening, without pause. One man. Everybody's problems.

Jethro is watching Moses work and later he asks what no one else has asked. But before we get to that packed day, Moses has asked for help and received it.

1. Sometimes you need support

The Amalekites attack Israel, and Joshua takes the men into battle while Moses goes up the hill with Aaron and Hur, holding God's rod—the same rod that parted the sea and brought water from the rock. While Moses holds up his hands, Israel has the advantage, and when he lowers them, the battle turns against them. He holds his hands up continually in prayer. Israel needs the Lord. Joshua fights, but his sword alone is not sufficient for victory.

Then Moses gets tired. Of course he does! You don't need to be a genius to know you can't hold up your hands indefinitely. Try holding your arms up while someone makes tea. You'll be glad when the kettle boils. This continues right on until sunset.

Aaron and Hur do notice. They find a stone for Moses to sit on and then stand on either side to support his hands.

What a nice, sensible thing to do. They don't question his devotion or tell him to go deeper. They give him a seat and support.

Someone listening today might require that sort of support. You may be caring for another person and carrying a burden home that weighs on you continually, keeping you awake at night without respite. You do not need guidance; you need someone ready to remain with you.

Someone could ease the strain this week. Be precise:

"I can take you there on Thursday."

"I'll bring a meal."

"I'll pray with you."

"Let me watch the children for an hour."

"I'll come sit with you at the hospital."

Those modest offers are valuable.

Before the week ends, ask God to reveal one person you might assist—then select one action you will take. It need not be grand. Pause now to consider it and form a plan. If each of us applies this, picture the comfort and relief we could provide to those nearby.

Ultimately, Moses raises an altar and names it ‘The Lord is my banner’. The Lord secured the victory. Aaron and Hur supported him in reaching it

2. Make room for an honest conversation

Jethro arrives with Moses’ wife Zipporah and their sons, and Moses steps forward to meet him. After exchanging greetings, they enter the tent.

They can pause briefly from the tasks ahead. Moses recounts what the Lord has done, and verse 8 adds a notable point: he speaks of the hardships.

He does not tidy the story.

Rescue from Egypt brought fear, thirst, conflict, and a demanding journey.

Our most meaningful discussions about faith begin when we cease pretending everything is fine.

"This has been a difficult month."

“I’ve found prayer hard.”

"Someone helped me, and I am grateful."

Such honesty invites another person to speak openly.

Jethro listens, feels deep satisfaction, and praises the Lord; Aaron and the elders join him for a meal in the Lord's presence.

I enjoy the unhurried quality of that scene: bread on the table, a story waiting to be shared, goodness to acknowledge.

We require moments like these—times without organising or rushing, moments to learn what lies behind a routine "Very well, thank you."

Sometimes this demands intention: invite someone for coffee, walk together, or join a small group where dialogue moves beyond the surface. Set aside an evening to talk without an agenda. Small steps like these open space for honesty. I had a pleasant fifteen minutes like this on Friday morning, speaking with someone worried about their health.

3. Listen when someone tells you it's too much

The following morning, Jethro watches Moses at work. Moses explains why everyone comes to him. They want God's will and settled disputes and God's clear instructions.

Those are good reasons. But Jethro says, "That's not good what you're doing. That must have been uncomfortable.

Then he explains: "You and these people will wear yourselves out." He sees both the exhausted leader and the exhausted people waiting to be heard.

You can care deeply and still need to change. Maybe you've said, "It's quicker if I do it myself." This is one of my biggest weaknesses. I first wrote 'this is probably one of biggeste weaknesses' but then I crossed out 'probably' because it is.

It probably is quicker—today-for most of us. But if you always do it yourself, no one else learns, and everything ends up waiting for you.

Jethro suggests a different arrangement. Moses should continue to be the one to represent the people before God, to teach them and to deal with the hard cases. Others should deal with the rest.

They should be competent, devout, honest and reluctant to profit through dishonest means. People's concerns merit this standard of care.

Jethro offers his counsel to God: “If you do this and God commands it…”

Moses listens, though he might have defended himself; instead, he alters the narrative, which requires humility. Allowing another person to work in a different way demands the same quality.

Whether at home, at work, or in the chapel, we must grant one another room to serve.

4. The burden only Jesus can carr

Moses required assistance. Every pastor needs it, as does every carer and each of us. Yet the reality is clear: no one can carry another person’s burden—their sin and their need to be reconciled with God.

Jesus gave himself for us. He rose again and lives forever, interceding for us as we are told in the NT book -(Hebrews 7:25).

You can rely on him, and you can stop expecting yourself or anyone else to do what only Jesus can do. Only he can forgive sins, grant new life, and bring us into right relationship with God.

What does relying on Christ daily look like?

It might mean pausing in stressful situations to pray and ask for his strength, rather than trying to resolve everything alone. It could involve admitting to God that you feel overwhelmed and trusting him with what follows. Saying, “Lord, I can’t do this without you. Please help me today,” is an act of dependence.

Before you leave, consider two questions: who needs you beside them, and who needs you to say, “Truth be told, I could do with some help”?

Asking for help is not weakness; it is an act of faith that strengthens community. It requires courage and trust to be open and honest about what you need, letting others love and support you. Sharing that burden moves toward grace rather than failure.

A brief conversation may be all that is required. Have it.

Moses had a stone to sit on, two companions, and an in-law ready to speak plainly. He had the ssurance that God was with Him, helping, leading, guiding.

Perhaps God has placed someone close to you, and you only need to notice. Let them carry part of the load.

Amen.