

# Good & Godly Advice

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[ 0 : 00 ] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 18.

Exodus chapter 18. And we're going to look at the whole chapter, but if you read again in verse 17. Exodus chapter 18 at verse 17.

And so on.

You know, it was once said that when you hear good advice, you should always do two things with it. You should take it in and then pass it on.

When you hear good advice, you should always do two things with it. Take it in and pass it on.

Because as you know, good advice, good advice is hard to come by. Especially in a day and generation where there are so many opinions.

[ 1 : 37 ] So many opinions being given by the masses and the multitudes and even by our own media. But you know, for many of us, it's not the good advice that we receive from the masses or the multitudes that we often remember.

It's the good advice and in many cases, the good and the godly advice that we received from our parents or our grandparents. That's what we often remember.

Because we remember the good and the godly advice of those who were older. Those who were wiser. Those who had more life experience than we did.

And we remember their good and their godly advice because it was given to us. And it was given to us gently. It was given to us graciously in the hope that we would take it on board and apply it in our own lives.

And whether that good and godly advice was about loving the Lord or loving one another, it was advice that we've never forgotten. And I'm sure there's many things you were told, maybe as children, you were told and you never forgot it.

[ 2 : 43 ] Advice that you were given as a child and yet you still remember it to this day. And now you want to pass that advice on. You want to pass it on to your children or to your grandchildren or to your nieces or to your nephews.

And that's, you know, that's what we see here in Exodus 18. Moses, the man of God, he receives advice. And he's to remember the good and the godly advice of his father-in-law, Jethro.

And I just want us to consider this chapter this morning. It's helpfully broken up into two sections. So I want us to consider it under two headings. Jethro's arrival and then Jethro's advice.

So very simply, Jethro's arrival and then Jethro's advice. So first of all, Jethro's arrival. Jethro's arrival. Look at verse 5 of chapter 18.

We're told there that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife. Boys and girls, his wife was called Zipporah. He came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God.

[ 3 : 50 ] Now I've mentioned to you before that D.L. Moody once said about Moses' life. He said that Moses spent his first 40 years in his life thinking he was a somebody.

Then he spent the next 40 years of his life learning that he was a nobody. And then he spent the final 40 years of his life, because he lived till he was 120, he spent the final 40 years of his life discovering what God can do with anybody.

So the first 40 years of his life, he spent thinking he was a somebody. The next 40 years thinking he was a nobody. And the last 40 years learning what God is able to do with anybody.

And you know, we've seen that as we've considered the story of the Exodus. Because way back in Exodus chapter 2, if you can remember that far back, we learned that in the first 40 years of his life, Moses was educated.

He was educated in Pharaoh's palace in Egypt. But when Moses moved to Midian at the age of 40, it was then that he gained experience.

[ 4 : 56 ] Moses was educated in Egypt, and he thought then that he was a somebody. But when Moses gained experience in Midian, he discovered that he was a nobody.

And that's actually when Moses became a man of God. Moses became a man of God when he realized that he was a nobody. He was a nobody.

And it was as a nobody that Moses was taught. And Moses was trained to be the leader of the Lord's people. Because we've read the narrative, we looked at the narrative.

In the perfect providence of God, it was while Moses, you'll remember, was sitting at a well. He was sitting at a well in Midian. And it was then that his future wife came along.

His wife was called Zipporah. And as we read in the narrative, together, Moses and Zipporah, they had two sons. Two sons with two specific names. The first son, as we read, was called Gershom, which means sojourner.

[ 5 : 57 ] That's what the children of Israel were. They were sojourners. The second son was Eliazar, which means my God helps. That's what the Lord did. He helped the children of Israel.

And so both sons had specific names that reflected the education and the experience of their father, Moses. Because for 40 years, Moses served his father-in-law.

He served this man, Jethro, that reappears in chapter 18. He served Jethro, his father-in-law, as a shepherd by looking after Jethro's flock in the fields of Midian.

And that education, that experience that Moses had for 40 years as a nobody, that's what prepared and primed Moses to serve the Lord, to serve his heavenly Father as the shepherd of Israel.

Because it was Moses who was to look after the flock of Israel. He was to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and on towards the promised land.

[ 6 : 59 ] And you know, you look at Moses' life, 40 years thinking he was a somebody, 40 years realizing he was a nobody, and 40 years working out that God is able to do anything with anybody.

You know, it ought to be a wonderful reminder and a wonderful reassurance to us that in our lives, nothing is wasted with the Lord. In our lives, nothing is wasted with the Lord.

Not even our painful providences of sin or sickness or sorrow. None of it. None of it is wasted with the Lord.

Because like it was for Moses, the Lord always uses our education, and he uses our experiences for his glory. The Lord uses our education and our experiences for his glory.

But the thing is, as Christians, we should be wanting and willing to serve the Lord and seek his glory in our congregation and in our community.

[ 8 : 05 ] Because like Moses, we've been saved to serve. We've been saved to serve. Therefore, we should be wanting and willing to serve the Lord and seek his glory in our congregation and in our community.

But you know, what I find fascinating is that even as a servant of the Lord, Moses put his family first. Very interesting thing that happens in this chapter.

As a servant of the Lord, Moses put his family first. Because when you read the opening verses of the narrative, in order to protect and to preserve his family, to protect his wife, Zipporah, and his children, Gershom and Eliezer, in order to protect them, Moses left them behind in Midian.

He left them behind with his father-in-law, Jethro. He kept them away from all the dangers and the difficulties that were in Egypt. So when Moses went off to rescue and redeem, or help rescue and redeem the children of Israel out of Egypt, he left his family.

He put his family first. Because he knew that they were a gift from God. He put his family first. It's very interesting. And you know, reading it, it reminded me of what we were often taught as students in the Free Church College.

[ 9 : 21 ] We were taught that as a minister, you are a Christian, first and foremost. So I'm a Christian, first and foremost.

Then we were taught, if you're blessed to be married, you're a husband. If you're blessed to have children, you're a father. And then, you're a minister.

You're a Christian, a husband, a father, and then a minister. And that order, for any minister, that order is very difficult to maintain.

But what we see here in the passage, it's mandatory. The order is important. Because, as we see with Moses, faith in your family is foremost.

Faith in your family is foremost. Because on Jethro's arrival, Moses was not only reunited with his beloved wife, his wife that he'd been married to for about 40 years, and also his family, his children. [10:19] But on Jethro's arrival, the first thing we're told, is that Moses reports the redemption of the Israelites to Jethro. So the first thing Moses did when Jethro arrived, was that he takes Jethro into his tent.

And Moses speaks to Jethro privately and personally. And you know, it's important to note, because it says there in verse 8, if you read verse 7 actually, Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him.

And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them.

And you know, when you read verse 8 there, where it says, Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done. That word told, it literally means proclaimed.

Moses proclaimed, in the sense of preaching and proclaiming the good news of the gospel. So boys and girls, what did Moses do when Jethro arrived? He preached the gospel to Jethro.

[11:35] Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done. So on Jethro's arrival, Moses proclaims the gospel to his father-in-law. Moses told Jethro of all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and for the Israelites.

Moses told Jethro about all the plagues and even the Passover in Egypt. Moses told Jethro about the parting of the Red Sea and the punishment that Pharaoh received, and also the provision of the Lord in the wilderness.

Moses told Jethro everything. He told him of how the Lord had rescued and redeemed the people of Israel from Egypt. So Moses told, he preached and proclaimed to his father-in-law of all that the Lord had done for his people.

And this is important because Jethro wasn't an Israelite. Jethro, as we're told, he was a Midianite.

More than that, Jethro, in verse 1, we're told that he's a priest in Midian.

So Jethro is a religious man. But his religion is the wrong religion. His religion is all wrong. Because Jethro, as a Midianite, he worshipped images and idols.

[12:49] As a Midianite, he followed and fell down before dead gods. In other words, Jethro didn't know the Lord. He didn't know the Lord as the living and true God.

Jethro was outside the covenant of grace. He wasn't converted. He wasn't committed. You could say that Jethro, this man, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro wasn't a Christian.

He wasn't a Christian. Which is why, as soon as Jethro arrives at the Israelite camp, the first thing Moses does, and he does it eagerly and enthusiastically, he takes Jethro into his tent and he speaks to him privately, and personally, he tells him the good news of the gospel.

And it's amazing that after Moses, after all that Moses had experienced and enjoyed in the Exodus from Egypt, how Moses had seen the Lord through all these plagues, how he had seen the Lord part the Red Sea, and even provide for the people throughout the wilderness thus far, Moses had seen the salvation of the Lord, and the first thing he wants to do is share it and spread it to other people.

The first person Moses wants to share this message with and spread the good news of the gospel to is his own family. His own family.

[14:12] Moses wanted to witness to his own father-in-law. He wanted to proclaim the salvation of the Lord to his family. And clearly, there's a lesson for us here, isn't there?

Because as Christians, we've experienced, we've enjoyed the Exodus. We've enjoyed the Exodus from slavery to sin. We're free in Christ.

We've enjoyed the salvation of the Lord in the person of Jesus. Therefore, like Moses, we should want to witness to our family and to our friends.

We should want to be like Moses to share it and spread the good news of the gospel to those whom we know and love. But as you know, my friend, that's easier said than done.

Because our family and our friends, they are often the hardest people to witness to. And I'll tell you something. I've never told my father that I'm a Christian.

[15:17] I'm sure he's guessed by now. But I've never actually said to my dad, Dad, I'm a Christian. Because, you know, family and friends, they are often the hardest people to witness to.

And yet the example of Moses challenges me, confronts me with the fact that we need to be constantly and continually praying for opportunities. We need to be constantly and continually praying for opportunities.

Opportunities to speak to our spouse, as hard as that may be. Opportunities to converse with our kids, as hard as that is. Opportunities to share with our siblings who probably don't want to hear it. Opportunities to spread the good news to our neighbors that know all about it. Opportunities to follow up with our friends that, well, that's just what they do. Or opportunities even to witness in the workplace.

Sometimes the hardest place to be a witness. And you know, my friend, instead of focusing on the many obstacles, and there are so many obstacles that we can put up or we can think that are there, instead we should be praying for opportunities.

[16:29] Opportunities to tell people about the salvation of the Lord. And what I often find in my own experience is if I'm praying for an opportunity, an opportunity will arise. But will I take the opportunity?

That's what it comes back to, what it always comes back to. And yet when the Lord is at work in someone's life, when we speak to them, we see that the response to the message of salvation brings rejoicing.

That's what we see with Jethro. Jethro heard the gospel. We see in verse 9, Jethro, we're told, rejoiced. He rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

And Jethro said, blessed be the Lord. He had never said that before. He said, blessed be the Lord, the covenant God, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

[17:38] That's Jethro's confession. That through the faithful witness of his son-in-law, Moses, Jethro rejoiced. He heard the message.

He believed in his heart. He confesses with his mouth. He says, Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

And that's our longing for our unconverted friends and family. Our longing is that they will believe in their heart and confess with their mouth and say with Jethro, Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

And you know, for you, my unconverted friend, who maybe is the unconverted person in your family, the only one, you know, I want this to be your confession.

I want you to be able to say with Jethro by coming to the Lord and committing your life to him, Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

[18:46] That's the confession of the Christian. The Lord is greater than all gods. And so we see Jethro's arrival. But then secondly, Jethro's advice.

Jethro's advice. Now look at verse 19. Where Jethro says in verse 19, Now obey my voice. I will give you advice and God be with you.

You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God. Now it's not every day that you receive advice from your father-in-law.

Because as we said, good and godly advice, it usually comes from our parents or our grandparents. But you know, there is one, that one particular time in a young man's life when he will receive some sound and probably strong advice from his father-in-law.

And that's usually the day he asks permission to marry his daughter. I remember the night I asked my father-in-law if I could marry Alison. It was in Inverness.

[19:48] I was 22. I was sweating and shaking and not sure what I was going to say. And yet, thankfully, Kenny made it very easy for me. And I'm sure Moses had a similar experience with Jethro when he was asking for Zipporah's hand in marriage.

But you know, the good and godly advice that Moses was going to receive from his newly converted father-in-law, it was going to be good and godly advice that would strengthen and support Moses for the next 40 years of service to the Lord.

This good and godly advice was going to help Moses as the anybody. The anybody who can serve the Lord. He thought he was a somebody.

He realized he was a nobody. But now he's realizing what the Lord is able to do with anybody. Because we're told in verse 13, the next day Moses sat to judge the people.

And the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. Now when it says Moses sat to judge the people, it's not that Moses was making a judgment on the people, it's that Moses himself was giving advice to the people.

[ 21 : 02 ] Moses was meeting with all the people of Israel, they were coming to him, and he was hearing all their cares and all their concerns and even all their complaints. I suppose you could say it was like an MP's surgery where you can go to your local MP or your local MSP and you can discuss or debate some of the cares and the concerns or the complaints that you might have.

But the thing about Moses was that he wasn't an MP over a small constituency. Moses was the leader now of a small country. Moses was the leader over nearly three million people, which is half the population of Scotland.

Moses was the leader over a small nation. And as a nation, they would come to Moses with all their cares, all their concerns, and even all their complaints. And they would bring it all to Moses. But the problem was when they would come to Moses, the people would be waiting around from morning till evening.

They'd be waiting around to speak to Moses, but he couldn't. They couldn't speak to him because there were so many people there. And needless to say, being the leader of a country or even a congregation, it isn't an easy task.

But because Moses was the only one dealing with the people and making decisions for the people, the process was painfully slow. The procedure for Moses was exhausting and the patience of the people was wearing thin.

[ 22 : 31 ] So on the whole, what Moses was doing, it wasn't beneficial. It wasn't a blessing to anyone, especially to Moses, because it was in fact sucking the life out of Moses to the point that Moses was becoming exhausted.

He was running out of energy. And you know, even if we were to consider the previous chapter, chapter 17, we saw there in chapter 17 that Moses was at breaking point.

He was at breaking point because the Israelites were constantly complaining. They were grumbling and groaning against God. They were muttering and moaning against Moses. And Moses was at breaking point.

In chapter 17, the Israelites were asking, they were saying, Moses was saying to the Israelites, why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord? And so in chapter 17, Moses is at breaking point.

You come to chapter 18, Moses is on the brink of burnout. He's on the brink of burnout. So Moses, he's not only at breaking point, he's now also on the brink of burnout.

[ 23 : 35 ] And you look at Moses and you're reminded, I was reminded, a man who's who's on the brink of burnout, just as my good friend J.C. Ryle would say, even the best of men are only men at best.

Even the best of men are only men at best. And the one who could see it, the one who could see it best was Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

And he comes to his son-in-law and he could see that his son-in-law, Moses, was at breaking point. He could see that his son-in-law was on the brink of burnout.

He could see that there was something wrong. Moses was at breaking point and on the brink of burnout. You know, there's a book that came out recently or a number of years ago.

It was written by an English pastor and preacher called Christopher Ash. And the book is called Zeal Without Burnout. Zeal Without Burnout. It's a very personal and practical book about the perils and the pitfalls of reaching breaking point and also burnout in the ministry.

[ 24 : 47 ] And you know, I'd encourage everyone to read it. It's not just for ministers. It's for everyone to be reminded whether you're a minister or not, it's a book that reminds us to watch what we're doing when we're serving the Lord in ministry.

It's called Zeal Without Burnout. And just to give you a flavor of the book, the blurb at the back of the book, it says, it says, thousands, thousands of people leave Christian ministry every month. They've not lost their love for Christ or their desire to serve Him. But for one reason or another, they are exhausted and simply cannot carry on.

And that applies not only to ministers but Sunday school teachers, youth fellowship leaders, all these different ministries that go on. And you know, this advice, this good and godly advice of Jethro, it's important for Christian ministry because we read there in verse 17, we read, Moses' father-in-law said to Moses, what you are doing is not good.

You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out for the thing is too heavy for you. You're not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice, I will give you advice and God be with you.

[ 26 : 07 ] You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy, and hate a bribe and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens and let them judge the people at all times.

Every great matter they shall bring to you but every small matter they shall decide themselves so it will be easier for you and they will bear the burden with you.

And you know, it's interesting, isn't it? Moses was at breaking point. He was on the brink of burnout and he was doing it while trying to give good and godly advice and yet he himself now has to take advice which for a leader is never easy but it's necessary.

Jethro's good and godly advice was very simple. Moses spread the load of serving the Lord. Moses share and spread the load of serving the Lord.

And Moses, he had shared and spread the gospel with his father-in-law Jethro but now Jethro's good and godly advice was very simple. Share and spread the load of serving the Lord.

[ 27 : 34 ] Moses, you need to delegate. Moses, you need to designate people for a purpose. You need to assign and allocate roles and responsibilities within the congregation because you cannot, as he says there, you cannot bear the burden alone.

You cannot bear the burden alone. And as you know, we have all these sayings, don't we? We have all these sayings that emphasize the importance of working together and serving together. The saying, no man is an island. Or the saying, there's no I in team. Because team stands for together everyone achieves more.

We're all familiar with the saying, many hands make light work. Even Bob the Builder, boys and girls, I'm sure you remember Bob the Builder. He said that we all need to be working together to get the job done.

We all need to be working together to get the job done. And that's not only applicable to the congregation in Israel. It's also applicable to us as a congregation in Barvis. Because the good and godly advice of God's word this morning is simply share and spread the load of serving the Lord.

[ 28 : 49 ] Share and spread the load of serving the Lord. Especially if you've been assigned and allocated a role and responsibility as an elder or as a deacon.

You're to bear the burden. That's what the passage is teaching us. Bear the burden. The burden of all the cares. The burden of concerns. The burden sometimes of complaints. Bear the burden of the congregation.

Bear the burden by providing pastoral visitation to houses, hospital, care homes within and of those connected to our community.

And you know even as a congregation of nearly 70 members you know this passage it's reminding me and it should remind you that we are saved to serve.

We are saved to serve. Therefore we should be willing and we should be wanting to work. We should have the mentality of Isaiah here am I send me Lord what do you want me to do?

[ 29 : 59 ] You know we should be willing and wanting to work. That's what Jesus said. Jesus said in John chapter 9 we must work the works of him while it is day. Why?

Because the night is coming when no one will work. We must work the works of him while it is day. My friend we're saved to serve therefore we should be willing and wanting to work.

So we're not to be lazy or lackadaisical or lethargic or lukewarm in our love for our congregation. We're to be eager. We're to be excited.

We're to be enthusiastic. You know the word enthusiastic means in God. That's how the word means. We're to do everything to the glory of God and the furtherance of his kingdom.

And as we were saying to the children the boys and girls will remind us of this. We were saying about the spoons and singing Psalm 100 we're all to serve the Lord with mirth.

[ 30 : 57 ] Him serve with mirth. We're to serve the Lord with joy because of what Jesus has done for us. We're to serve the Lord with joy because of what Jesus has done for us.

You know this evening we're going to continue our study called Love Your Church and I'd love to see you all here this evening. Get into the habit of coming in the evening.

It's always a good habit to have. But this evening we're continuing our study Love Your Church and with this I'll conclude. Our study is as many of you know it's based upon the helpful and yet hard-hitting book by Tony Merida Love Your Church where we're exhorted and encouraged to love your church because Jesus loves your church.

We're to love your church like Jesus loves your church. And providentially this evening we're considering the theme of serving. Love your church by serving.

And this is what Tony Merida says about serving. He says followers of Christ are not spectators in the church but servants in the church.

[ 32 : 07 ] As a Christian you shouldn't think of your church as the place where I listen to sermons but the place where I serve. To be sure listening to sermons is important he says but church members are contributors to the ministry of the church rather than consumers of that ministry and contributing involves your time.

your talent and your treasure for the health and growth of your church. It's a challenging comment but you know it's emphasizing and it's explaining to us the good and godly advice that Moses received that would help him as a nobody serve the Lord for the next 40 years of his life.

And you know that's what we are. We're all nobodies but we're being reminded this morning through Exodus 18 of what the Lord is able to do with anybody for his glory and the furtherance of his kingdom.

And verse 23 that's the key verse in this passage. If you do this God will direct you you will be able to endure and all this people also will go to their place in peace.

If you do this God will direct you. My friend we're saved to serve so let us serve the Lord with mirth with joy because of what Jesus has done.

[ 33 : 39 ] Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for thy word thy word that even within the pages of the Old Testament and through the experience of Moses that we can learn and be reminded that we are those who have been saved to serve we are those who have been called not only from darkness and to thine own marvelous light but also called to put our hand to the plough and not to turn back.

Help us we pray to be faithful give us the grace to serve the Lord with mirth to do it joyfully seeking the furtherance of his kingdom and the glory of his name.

O Lord help us we pray to do everything to do everything with joy realizing as thy word says that it was for the joy that was set before Jesus that he endured the cross despising its shame and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hear us then we pray go before us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen. Well we're going to bring our service to our conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 90 Psalm 90 again in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 90 it's on page 350 before we sing the Psalm I'll ask the questions so if you get these right there's chocolate at the door if you get them wrong no chocolate okay question one what was the name of Moses' wife Zipporah oh quick answers today desperate for the chocolate okay what did Moses do when Jethro arrived he preached the gospel yeah well done what advice did Jethro give to Moses share and spread the load of serving the Lord share and spread the load of serving the Lord that's the advice that Jethro gave and that's what we're to do we're to share and spread the load of serving the Lord so whether you're a big spoon or a little spoon whether you're eighty or eight we're all called to serve the Lord so we're going to conclude by singing Psalm 90 Psalm 90 at verse 14 and the amazing thing about Psalm 90 is that Moses wrote Psalm 90 this psalm is the oldest psalm in the Bible it's three and a half thousand years old and yet what Moses concludes Psalm 90 with is this prayer to to serve the Lord that he would have a servant like heart in his service to the Lord he says in verse 16 oh let thy work and power appear thy servants face before and show unto thy children dear thy glory evermore and let the beauty of the Lord our God be us upon our handiworks establish thou establish them each one so we're singing

[ 37 : 01 ] Psalm 90 from verse 14 down to the end of the psalm and we'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise O with thy tender mercy Lord us early satisfied so we rejoice shall all our days and still be God in thee according us the days have been when we grieve have had seen

O do thou make us glad O let thy work and power appear thy servants miss before and show unto their children near thy glory evermore and let let the beauty of the Lord our glory as upon our hand he works he shall establish love establish them each one the grace of the Lord  
Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen