



Lesson 51

Jethro's Wise Counsel

Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text: Exodus 18:1-27• Setting: circa 1445 B.C. near Mt. Sinai• Characters: God, Moses, and Jethro• Plot: Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes for a visit and gives Moses wise counsel. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key word(s) " _____ the people" (vv 13, 22, 26)• Climax: <i>Exodus 18:18</i> <i>Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.</i> |
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Reuniting the Family

1. (vv 1-6) As the nation of Israel came to Mt. Sinai, Jethro came to visit his son-in-law, Moses.
 - a. Jethro had heard all that the LORD had done for Moses. We see how not only had God made his glory known to Hebrews (Exo. 10:2), and to the Egyptians (Exo. 14:4), but the word of God's mighty power had spread even to _____.
 - b. Jethro also came for the purpose of reuniting Moses with his wife Zipporah and his two sons Gershom and Eliezer.
 - i. Previously, Moses took his family to Egypt with him, but when Moses failed to circumcise his son, the LORD "sought to _____ him" (Exo. 4:24).
 - ii. Zipporah performed the rite on her son, saving Moses' life. We suppose then, for reasons not mentioned, she went back to Midian with her sons. Moses travelled on to Egypt and was escorted by his brother _____ (Exo. 4:27).

Rejoicing in the LORD

2. (vv 7-10) Moses received his father-in-law with reverential affection (going out to meet him, bowing, and kissing.)
 - a. As they visited together in the tent, Moses relayed all that Israel had suffered and how God had delivered his people.
 - b. Jethro " _____ for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel."

APPLICATION → Matthew Henry notes, "Though he [Jethro], as a Midianite, was not to share with them in the promised land, yet he shared with them in the joy of their deliverance. We may thus make the comforts of others our own, by taking pleasure, as God does, in the _____ of the righteous."¹

APPLICATION → Jethro's rejoicing, juxtaposed to Israel's doubting in previous chapters, is a poignant example of how Gentile faith was showcased even in the Old Testament. "While the Israelites were themselves murmuring, notwithstanding all God's goodness to them, here was a Midianite _____. This was not the only time that the faith of the Gentiles shamed the unbelief of the Jews; see Mt. 8:10."²

- c. (vv 10-11) Jethro, who was a priest of Midian, testified, "Now I know that the LORD is greater _____"

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 120.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

than all gods.” This does not necessarily mean that Jethro was an undecided polytheist, but that his faith in God was confirmed and _____.

3. (v 12) To celebrate the wonderful works of God, Jethro offered sacrifices unto God, and Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel joined with him and ate bread “before _____.”

Recommending a Better Way

4. (vv 13-23) The following day, Moses resumed his leadership responsibilities. After watching his son-in-law spend the entire day judging in every matter of civil law – small and great - Jethro warned Moses that his incredible administrative workload would “_____ away, both thou, and this people.” Jethro gave Moses wise counsel:
- Moses should continue to be the great _____ of Israel, sharing with them God’s truth, and interceding for them before God.
 - In matters of civil judgment, qualified men should be chosen to decide most cases, while Moses would act as the “supreme judge” for difficult cases. These men would need to be:
 - “_____ men”
 - “such as _____ God”
 - “men of _____”
 - “hating _____”

APPLICATION → Can you think of an example in the New Testament, where new leadership became overwhelmed with mundane decision-making and needed to delegate to tasks to good men? _____

5. (vv 25-27) Moses followed Jethro’s advice, and the two bid each other farewell.

APPLICATION → Moses was humble enough to take advice (and follow it too). How foolish it is to think because of our position, or because of great victories won, or wonderful blessings enjoyed, that we are above the need for wisdom from others.

Proverbs 1:5 *A wise man will hear, and will increase _____; And a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*

Notes: _____

Answer Key: Key word(s): “judge” • 1. a. Midian; b. 1. kill; ii. Aaron • 2. b. rejoiced; → prosperity; → rejoicing; c. strengthened • 3. God • 4. wear; a. teacher; b.i. able; ii. fear; iii. truth; iv. covetousness; → Acts 6:1-7 • Pro. 1:5, learning

How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study: (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. (Note: some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.