

Men's Sunday Night
A Study in the Book of Exodus
Lesson 9 – Exodus 17-18
Journey to Freedom
War & Peace

As Israel followed the leading of the Lord, they experienced tests and trials which helped them understand themselves better and see more fully the power and grace of God. The congregation had thirsted before and God had met their needs, but, like people today, they forgot God's mercy. They were trying His patience by their repeated complaints.

Moses illustrates what the trusting Christian does in the hour of trial; he turned to the Lord and asked for guidance. The Lord instructed him to take his rod and to smite the rock and water would come out. The order here is wonderful: in chapter 16 we have the manna, illustrating Christ's coming to earth; in chapter 17 we see the smiting of the rock, which pictures His death on the cross. The water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who was given after Christ had been glorified (John 7:37–39).

The new Christian sometimes is amazed that the Christian life is one of battles as well as blessings. Up to this point, Israel had not had to fight; the Lord had fought for them. But now, the Lord chose to fight through them to overcome the enemy. As Christians we must always be ready for battle both "*In season and out of season.*" (2 Timothy 4:2)

Believers face open and obvious attacks of the flesh, as with Amalek (17:8–16), but also subtle ideas of the flesh, as with Jethro. Certainly, Moses could have done whatever work God called him to do, for "God's commandments are His enablements." How easy it is for us to pity ourselves, to feel that nobody else cares and that God has given us too great a burden! We see God's solution to this problem in Isaiah 40:31; "*But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*"

Read Exodus 17:1-16 and Answer the Following Questions:

1. What was the next problem the children of Israel encountered as they got to Rephidim?
2. Exodus 17:1-4 shows a total breakdown of trust between Israel and Moses, to the point that the people were ready to stone him. How did God go about restoring the nation's respect for Moses authority? (See 17:5-6) What do you think the Israelites were supposed to learn from this?
3. Who fought against Israel as they approached Sinai? How did the children of Israel do in their first battle? (See 17:8-16)
4. What does the support of Aaron and Hur for Moses, symbolize in our Christian journey?
5. How does God's command to Moses to record the victory over Amalek speak to the importance of remembering God's deliverance in our lives?

6. What does “*The Lord is my banner*” (vs. 15) personally mean to you? How does this verse challenge your understanding of God’s provision, protection and promise?

Read Exodus 18:1-27 and Answer the Following Questions:

7. Who comes to see Moses? Why does he come?

8. What was Jethro’s reaction to hearing all that the Israelites had been through? (See 18:7-12)

9. What does verse 18 reveal about Moses’ motives and leadership abilities?

10. What did Jethro realize about what Moses was doing? What advice did Jethro give to Moses? Was this good advice? (See 18:14-27)

11. What do we learn from the respectful and loving relationship between Moses and Jethro?

Jethro Preforms an Intervention

Moses was a classic case of a workaholic heading for burnout. Fortunately, he had in Jethro a clever father-in-law who could see what Moses could not. Jethro recognized that Moses failure to delegate authority would wear himself and his people out. Jethro had the courage to speak up and warn his son-in-law about the looming danger.

Such drastic action is often necessary with workaholics because they are often the last to see the damage their compulsive work habits are doing to themselves and to others around them. When things are not working out, their tendency is to work harder, making the problem even worse. This is where intervention may be a matter of life or death.

God may have you be a Jethro in someone's life by taking the person aside and explaining the damage that excessive work is causing. You might offer some strategies for change, or perhaps suggest some resources for getting help. On the other hand, perhaps you are the one that tends to work too much. We might ask the question: Is there already a Jethro in your life who is asking you to slow down? Maybe your Jethro is a spouse who you haven't spoken to at length for days or weeks. Maybe it's a son or daughter who long ago gave up expecting you to take time just to relax and play. Maybe it's a friend you have been avoiding, who always seems to nag you about working too hard. Moses responded right away to Jethro's suggestions and corrected the problem. How long will it take you?