

Overcoming Through Community

August 29, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Exodus 18:1, 10-18 *Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.*

¹⁰ Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. ¹¹ Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them." ¹² And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and 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. ¹³ The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. ¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?" ¹⁵ Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. ¹⁶ When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

This Week: The Book of Exodus, Exodus 18.

The Book of Exodus, the second of the Old Testament, is the story of God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Ex 1-15), Israel's travels in

the wilderness (Ex 16-18) and God's making and restoring a covenant relationship with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai as they begin their journey toward the promise land (Exodus 19 -40).

Exodus 15 brings to a climax the story of God's miraculous deliverance of his people from cruel Egyptian bondage. The ensuing victory celebration is encapsulated in a brief poem commonly called "The song of Miriam." After this moment of celebration, the children of Israel soon experience adversity. The first adversity concerns a water shortage, and the next crisis is one of leadership.

The problem is that Moses is overworked. The text begins abruptly: "Moses sat as judge." The text affirms and assumes that the practice of justice in the community is a primary concern for his leadership and for Israel from day one. It is worth noting, by contrast, that the matter of justice nowhere comes up as an Egyptian concern.

Jethro sees immediately that Moses is committed to an unworkable practice. Moses cannot handle the heavy docket. We do not know whether Moses is so concerned with control that he wants to handle all the cases himself or if he is unreflective and has never thought about a more workable practical system. Moses seems not to have much common sense about administrative matters. But then, such dominating figures often do not. Jethro fears for Moses that he will "burn out"; Jethro's solution is that Moses must learn to delegate and team up with others.

A team approach to life system will help Moses overcome isolation and burnout and will allow others to grow, develop and exercise their gifts. Moreover, it will let the entire community go home in harmony and wholeness, free of conflict, enjoying a stable, shared welfare (v. 23).

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol 1, pp. 827-828

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. How did Moses get into such an unsustainable life-load? Have you ever been there?
2. What did Jethro see that an overwhelmed Moses could not? Have you ever had a 'Jethro' speak into your life? Have you ever been a 'Jethro' for someone else? What was the result?
3. How are you at teaming up with others to share the load? What might happen if a person does not team up with others in some way?

4. How might 'growing your team' impact your life and fruitfulness? How might it impact the lives of your 'team'?
5. Who are you going to team up with this week?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Take time each day to journal in the "Morning by Morning" gratitude resource.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week (Exodus 18:17):
Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.