

Moses' Father-in-Law

Exodus 18:1-27, "And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3 with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") 4 and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"); 5 and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her." 7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. 8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10 And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. 13 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. 14 So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." 17 So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. 18 Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. 19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. 20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. 21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." 24 So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 26 So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every

small case themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.”

Let's pray. Dear heavenly Father dear God, we do pray dear Lord that You would guide us this morning, that You would teach us by Your word and by Your Spirit. Be with Dan as he preaches, prepare his heart, that You would prepare the answer of his mouth, prepare our hearts and prepare the answer of our mouths during the time of additional teaching, that we would meditate on Your word, that we would consider it, that we would understand it and that we would know what Your words here are trying to teach us. That we would understand how You have ordered all things, the way You give us instruction, the way You have given us family, the way we learn from them, the way they give us counsel, the way we take things to You and the way things should be divided upon dear God. I do pray dear Lord that You help us to be wise, that we would be Your servants, and that we would go out and do Your work this day. Amen.

As you read this passage, I think that thing that jumps out the most is the amount of time father-in-law is repeated. At first I was going to do the first twelve verses and then come back and do the rest, but I think that it's important for us to think about it in terms of father-in-law, so this week I'm going to preach on how Jethro interacts with Moses as a father-in-law and then I will come back and talk next week about the specific advice that Jethro gives Moses. So I'm not going to go into detail in all twenty-seven verses, but I did think it was important to understand the totality of Moses' interaction with Jethro because it's very clear in this passage the idea that Jethro as Moses' father-in-law is a significant thing because he repeats is thirteen times. This is a different 'father-in-law'. In Hebrew there's actually two different words for father-in-law. One is the father of the groom and that is the one who took a daughter for his son so that father-in-law term is different than this one. This father-in-law term specifically means, 'the man who gave his daughter'. The root word of it is 'to give' so this is who it means. This is the relationship of the bride's father with the bride's husband is what this passage is talking about. As we consider that, there's obviously when you think about the doctrine of sufficiency of Scripture that says Scripture talks about everything, it gives us guidance for everything, every good work. So we need to ask how I, as a son-in-law, should interact with my wife's father or how do I, as a father-in-law who married off my daughter, how do I deal with my daughter's husband? If you look at Scripture and wonder which passage to go to think about that, the passage with thirteen of the twenty-eight references to that is probably the one you want to go to. So as we think of sufficiency of Scripture, it's proper to teach on this passage as, how does the father-in-law relate to his son-in-law because God could have talked about Moses and Zipporah. That's almost not talked about at all! He appears with his wife who Moses hasn't seen for months. He appears with his sons, it doesn't talk anything about his relationship with his wife and sons, what it talks about is his relationship with him and his father-in-law. When you think of the other examples of fathers-in-law, there are lots of them actually. Those other fifteen times that the word is used, they're pretty bad examples, they are the negative examples. There's the example of Lot who goes to his sons-in-law and says to flee because the destruction is going to come in this city and

destory Sodom and Gomorroah and what do they do? They laugh at him. That tells us about what a bad relationship between a father-in-law and son-in-law looks like. It's kind of the opposite of Jethro and Moses. Then there's Laban, that father-in-law of Jacob who saw the role of Jacob, not to have a house of his own, not to build up Abraham's house, but to build up Laban's house so he says the reason he is marrying Jacob into his family is so he will get rich. He's got the wrong understanding of what it means to be the father of the bride. You give your daughter as a bride to help somebody else's house be built up. Not just Jacob's house, but also the house of Abraham gets built up because he gave two of his daughters to Jacob. Then there's Samson and his father-in-law, the Philistine. He goes into his father-in-law and he's upset because of the whole riddle thing so his father-in-law gives his daughter away again, to a friend of Samson's. This obviously is a bad example of a father-in-law. Then there's the father-in-law of the concubine in Judges 19, who wants to keep the daughter there so he keeps getting the son-in-law drunk and partying until he ends up leaving late in the afternoon and has to stop along the way and it ends up in the death of his daughter. This is also a bad example of a father-in-law. Then there's Saul, the father-in-law of David. It doesn't turn out the way that Saul wants it to so Saul ends up trying to kill David. Then Solomon had Pharaoh as his father-in-law. Another example of because of who his father-in-law was, he didn't lead him to righteousness, instead he brought idolatry into Israel. Then Jehoram, king of Judah, had Ahab as a father-in-law because Jehosaphat wanted peace in the northern kingdom, he wanted his son to marry Ahab's daughter which caused Israel and the kings to follow to go astray and it ended up leaving Ahab's daughter on the throne in Judah. When you think of the other places where this term father-in-law is used, they're pretty bad examples so the example of what it should look like is here. As we consider this passage, it applies to all of us, or most of us in this room. It either applies as a father-in-law, but it also applies to sons-in-law and it applies to daughters whose fathers are in this relationship and whose husbands are in this relationship. As we think about what this looks like, we should ask ourselves if this is what our relationship looks like. As you raise up your daughters, are you raising them up with this mindset of this is the relationship I want to have with her husband when I give her away?

Verses 1-4, ""And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3 with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land") 4 and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh")." So we come back to Jethro. We first met Jethro when he was called Ruel, which means 'the friend of God' in chapter 2. He first met Moses when he met his daughters, probably including Zipporah, who were at a well and what happened every day is that his daughters would fill up all the troughs and then the other shepherds, once the troughs were filled, they would come in and drive away these women with their flocks and then they watered their flocks and then Reul's daughters would have to refill the troughs to water their own, but Moses was there and stopped them from doing that. So the first thing he says is, 'This man protected you and you didn't invite him for dinner?' That's how we get introduced to Ruel who is also known as Jethro. Ruel is probably his title, his nickname was

'friend of God' while his given name was Jethro which means like 'excellent'. "And Jethro, the priest of Midian." He was a priest which would make him a descendent of Abraham, he was one of the children of Keturah which was Abraham's concubine. So the way that the passage reads, the way that Moses moved in with him and since Moses wanted his brother-in-law to continue with them, it seems likely to me that Jethro is a priest of the true God, he's just like Melchizedek where he comes up, you don't know his ancestry or what happens to him afterwards, he comes, he goes and it's not generational. He's the priest of Midian and "Moses' father-in-law." So this is the man who gave Zipporah to Moses. He had "heard of all that God had done for Moses." As we hear this they are by the mountain of God so they are probably close to where Moses saw the burning bush. They'd been moving there since the Red Sea, this is where Moses had told Pharaoh that they had to go to sacrifice and to worship God. So he was feeding Jethro's flocks near this point so this probably isn't very far from where Jethro lives. It's also significant that he heard, the news of what happened to Egypt was not just in Egypt, it had spread. Granted, the Sinai Peninsula is right next to Egypt, but the news of what happened had already spread out through the nations. This was not some thing that happened off in a corner, it happened in what was the most powerful nation in the world so people would obviously talk about it. If you remember from Ezekiel 20, the reason that God didn't want to kill them in Egypt was because everybody would talk about it and instead He delivered them so everybody would talk about it. So Jethro hears because everybody is talking about it. So once the Egyptian army is wiped out and they are over on the Sinai Peninsula, it's not surprising that Jethro would hear. Notice that Jethro also first makes mention of Moses, he doesn't say he heard all the God did for Israel even though it was about the delivery of Israel. He says he heard all that God had done for Moses. We don't know how much Moses had told Jethro, we do know that Moses sent Zipporah back so Jethro would have had some idea of the risk that Moses was in because I think the most obvious reason why Moses would send Zipporah and their sons back was because he thought it was dangerous for them to be in Egypt. So Jethro is thinking about it in terms of the context of his daughter and her family. He doesn't say He delivered just the Israelites, he says that He delivered Moses first "and for Israel His people." If you remember, at a point near the end of the plagues, that Moses' name was great in Egypt so we also know Moses' name was great beyond Egypt, that people were talking about what Moses did and what God had done for Israel. Jethro mentions it, but it's second after talking about Moses. God had used Moses to draw them out of Egypt to that the people would have been talking about the miraculous deliverance "that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt." So God was using their deliverance to make His name known, using their deliverance and these miraculous things so people would talk about who God was. This is a valid thing for us to do. When we see the hand of God we're supposed to speak about it because this is how people see God's hand in the world. If all we do is see it and praise God and don't speak about it to others, people forget that God is sovereign over all things in the world. This is the most basic ways, that as unbelievers in the nation around us, that we're supposed to keep the knowledge of God there by speaking about what God does. If we remain silent we shouldn't be surprised when we live in a nation that doesn't want to retain God in its knowledge. So Jethro hears Israel was brought out of Egypt and he decided it was time for Zipporah and their sons to be delivered back to Moses. "Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife." So Jethro would have known where they were, he probably thought they were in relative safety now, the Egyptian army had been defeated, the Amalekites

had been defeated, so he brought Zipporah to be reunited with her husband. Notice Jethro did this on his own. Think about what happened with Laban, Jacob takes Leah and takes Rachel and takes his sons and leaves and Laban basically says what right did he have to take his family away from him. Consider that and contrast it with Jethro who is saying this isn't his family, this was my daughter but I gave my daughter so the right thing for me to do is take her and Moses' sons and take them back to Moses. That's the proper role of a father-in-law, it's to help where appropriate, but not to direct it to build your own house, but to help so Moses' house it built. So Jethro righteously works to be a blessing to Moses and not to try to manipulate to get Moses to be a blessing to him. So he returns Zipporah "after he had sent her back" after Moses had sent Zipporah back to her father. We know Zipporah was headed to Egypt with him, she was the one who circumcised her son because God was angry with Moses and was killing Moses as they were traveling to Egypt, but we've heard nothing about her since. We don't know when she was sent back. Some commentaries say they was angry at Moses then so she left right after the circumcision. It doesn't seem likely to me, I think that's a misinterpretation when she says he's a husband of blood, meaning he is covenanted with her. It doesn't seem like that would be a time that she would abandon Moses so I think she probably continues on, but it is pretty miraculous that Pharaoh never said he was going to just kill Moses. He lifted his rod and all this destruction happens, you would think at some point Pharaoh would say he was just going to kill Moses, but it's also reasonable to think Pharaoh would be frightened of Moses so the avenue to attack Moses very well could be Zipporah and his sons so it makes sense to me that Moses thought it was too dangerous for Zipporah and Gershom and Eliezer to be there so he sends them back to a safe place, her father's house. We do know that the plagues, they haven't been separated that long, the plagues start when Moses is eighty and end when Moses is eighty. We know that from Scripture, so we know they lasted less than a year. Looking at it, what I think is likely is that they lasted five or six months so they haven't been separated that long. So Zipporah comes "with her two sons." Moses sent his whole family away to be protected. We know they are relatively small because the three of them rode on a donkey when they left Egypt and this is probably only six or seven months later. "The name of one was Gershom." We heard the name before when he was first born, the name means 'refuge'. Moses was a refuge and he calls him Gershom "for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land". When we think that his children may not have been born until significantly after Moses went to Jethro's house, because he was there for forty years and they are young children, the three of them could fit on a donkey, and that word 'I have been a stranger' means that he lived, he abided as a stranger in a foreign land. This isn't that he just passed through so for a long period of his life he lived in a strange land and then he gets a wife and has sons. So he gives his firstborn son the name that was based on Jethro allowing him to abide in a foreign land. "And the name of the other was Eliezer." The second son's name means 'God's help' "for he said, "The God of my father was my help." We have seen how much God has helped him through all the plagues and the deliverance, but the son was named before any of that. He was named God's help because God helped him when he fled from Egypt when Pharaoh was wanting to kill him. God protected him and hid him in the wilderness "and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh". Pharaoh sought his life so he had to go to a place where he was not known, he had to abide in a foreign land where Pharaoh wouldn't hear about it. Even still, even as he did these things, Moses saw God as being the One who maintained the secret, He was the One that

delivered Moses from the righteous judgement of Pharaoh after he had murdered the Egyptian, He's the One that protected him from Pharaoh's sword. Even when he declared all the Israelite sons should die, God preserved Moses' life and sent him to Pharaoh's daughter. So he names his son, 'God is my help who delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.

Verses 5-7, "And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her." So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent." Again, "Jethro, Moses' father-in-law", in case we forgot that is their relationship, he "came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness." When we think of him coming to Moses in the wilderness, that word wilderness means that there's no people around. It doesn't mean there are lions and tigers and bears, it means like a pasture land, it's unsettled land. This is where Moses would take Jethro's flocks to graze. So he comes out to meet Moses. He very well may have known where they were headed because Moses knew or he may have found out from the rumors going around where they were headed because it's kind of hard if you have a group of three million, to hide them. Everyone would know where they are going. But he comes to where Moses is, "where he was encamped at the mountain of God." If you remember the last chapter, they had a battle in Rephidim with the Amalekites and they were still headed to Mount Sinai so they continued on their path. Whether Jethro met them on the way there or if they were at the final place where Moses goes up to get the Ten Commandments, either way they are basically close to the mountain of God, to Mount Sinai. They're encamped, and we should think about this. They left Egypt as slaves and they march out as an army, but now when they are encamped they've been attacked. If you remember, the Amalekites kept attacking the stragglers, they would attack the weak, they would attack those who were on the outskirts, which meant you would set it up more like a military camp so this isn't just them out there camping in the wilderness. They probably have guards, they probably have watchmen, they probably have everything set up. So when Jethro approaches the camp, he can't just ride up and ask for Moses. Instead he calls out and we see that Moses has to go out to meet him so he is probably calling to the camp saying he wants to meet Moses. "Now he had said to Moses." So he's calling out to Moses to an armed camp who would be on high alert because it hadn't been that many days since they had a battle. "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you", which is not that Moses didn't know who Jethro was, it hadn't been that long. It's not like he aged that much in six months, it's that he is far off and is calling to the camp saying who is here and this is why I am coming to you. I am "with your wife and her two sons with her." He announced to Moses that not just he came, but he brought his wife and children back as well. Again, it's interesting as we read this, he doesn't mention the response of Moses to being reunited with his wife and children. We don't hear anything about Zipporah, anything about the sons, but I don't think we should interpret from that silence that there is a problem with their relationship. The point of this chapter is the relationship between Jethro and Moses, which is why thirteen times it says, 'father-in-law' so I don't think we should read anything into what that means about anything related to Moses and Zipporah or Moses and his sons. I think the intentional focus of what's recorded here is the father-in-law and son-in-law relationship. "So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law." Rather than waiting for his father-in-law to come to him, he goes out to meet him. Understand, Moses, we find out in a few

verses, from morning to night is meeting with people, he had a long line of people asking him what the right thing to do here or here, what's just. Moses interrupts that to go meet his father-in-law so Moses starts by showing honor to his father-in-law. He doesn't just say to bring him into the camp and I will see him when he gets here, instead he goes out to meet him. He has a duty to show respect and honor to the man who he received his wife from. Then he "bowed down". Even though he's a leader of millions of people who look to him for the answer to every question, he still shows great respect for his father-in-law and acts to him like he would act if he went in to see Pharaoh. He makes obeisance, he shows him respect and honor "and kissed him." So he doesn't just show him a civil respect that's based on culture, but he also shows great affection for his father-in-law. Again, part of this could be because of what Jethro did for him, but the emphasis in this passage seems to be that you have a duty to have affection for your father-in-law, to remember what he did for you, he gave you his daughter and because of that you should have affection for your father-in-law. "And they asked each other about their well-being." Again, they have mutual concern, they have mutual interest, they had this connection that gave them a relationship. "And they went into the tent." So Moses shows hospitality to Jethro and brings him into his tent.

Verses 8-12, "And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." So Moses gives the details of what the Lord had done. We all know how stories spread. The things that Jethro would have heard may have had general truths to them, but they would have been twisted, they would have had other information with it that would have some level of truth, but may not have been the whole truth and it would certainly be lacking in details. So Moses takes the time to relay the details, the truth of what God did, this is how God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, this is the mercy that He showed Israel. Notice when Jethro talks to Moses, he talks first about the great deliverance God did for you. When Moses talks to Jethro he says the great deliverance that God did to Israel. "And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake." I'm sure he gave all the details of the plague and destruction and how God used it to separate the Egyptians from the Israelites, all that God had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt so that God would fulfill His promise to Abraham. He also described "all the hardship that had come upon them on the way." He didn't just talk about the plagues and the Red Sea and how God delivered them from the oppression of their slavery, He also talked about the difficulties that were on the way. He would have filled Jethro in on the running out of food, running out of water, how the Amalekites were picking off the weak and how they had to go to battle against them, "and how the Lord had delivered them." He related how God had delivered them out of it all. Notice when the Israelites were talking

about it, they assigned everything to Moses. They said Moses did this, Moses led us here where we are going to die because we don't have water. Moses led us here where we are going to be killed by the Amalekites, Moses led us to this place where there is no food, and they kept blaming Moses, but Moses goes this is how God delivered us. He saw the hardships as something to talk about that caused God to be glorified. You read a lot of books about missionaries and a lot of books about the founding of this country and now when people talk about things, they don't talk about this is what judgement came upon them, this is how they failed but God showed mercy to them. This isn't how we write books now, this isn't how we describe it because we want this simple God. That's not how Moses described it, he described it as God took them to a place without food and God provided food. Let's make sure when we talk about what God did that we don't put rose colored glasses on so we forget part of the story. The first part of the story is that God took them where there is no food, God took them into where there was no water. God took them so their enemies were attacking them so He could deliver them. We need to make sure that when we tell the stories of what God has done, we don't make it half the story because God put them in that situation to show He could show His deliverance just like He did with Joseph. He caused him to go and be over by Pharaoh. He directed all these things so He could deliver them. Moses talked about the hardships and how God had delivered them. "Then Jethro rejoiced." When the Israelites were delivered from those hardships, we don't hear about them rejoicing, but when Jethro hears how they were delivered, he does. When they don't have food and they get food, they wonder if they can keep it overnight, an extra day. That's what we hear about the Israelites, they're not rejoicing and saying God will provide for tomorrow, they're saying God probably won't provide so we better save some for tomorrow. Their response is very different than what Jethro's response is, Jethro's response is to hear how God delivered them from hardship and to rejoice. It's the difference between someone who trusts God and someone who doesn't, someone who doesn't trust God can even see what God did and then go, 'Yeah, He brought Lazarus from the dead, but I'm sure Lazarus is going to die again.' He gave us food, but I'm sure tomorrow what makes us think that we will get food again tomorrow? Jethro doesn't say you deserve food tomorrow, instead he says God delivered you and gave you these things you didn't deserve. Let's make sure when we see God's hand around us that we're not like the Israelites, that our response is more like Jethro's. His response was to rejoice when he saw God's hand, rejoice "for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel." Here's someone who is not directly involved, but he rejoices more in the mercy they received from God than the Israelites did. Let's make sure that we think about that and make sure we're not like that, where other people see the mercy of God in our lives but we don't see it because we're wondering what will happen next week or the week after that. It's really easy to do that, it's really easy to not walk by faith and not be able to look backwards with eyes of faith and say God delivered me before. We should be like David, God let me have victory over a bear and a lion, why wouldn't I have victory over Goliath? If we look back and ask how we will get food tomorrow, then we're not going to have that attitude. Instead we need to have the attitude of look what God did, I'm sure He will do the right thing the next time. The Israelites just saw the negative, why would God let these things happen to us? Why would He put Moses in charge of us just to kill us? But Jethro saw the positive, look at the lovingkindness that God had shown the Israelites. Let's make sure we're like Jethro and not like the Israelites. "Whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians." They were under Egypt's complete control and God delivered

all of them. He didn't just deliver them, He delivered their cattle, and not just their cattle, He delivered all their gold and silver and all they said was, You just delivered us to come out and die? What Jethro says is, can you believe this deliverance? Can you believe how God rebuked the oppressor? Because that's what this is a picture of. Pharaoh was an oppressor of Israel and God left him with nothing, not even his life. Let's make sure when we see God rebuke the oppressor that we don't say, well He could have done this or He could have done that. Let's make sure that we see with eyes of faith what God is actually doing and the way that God is actually delivering because his response was to worship and that's what our response should be. If we're blind to what God does, we will worship as we ought to worship. "And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord." That word translated 'blessed' literally means 'to kneel', but it's more humbling yourself before God and humble adoration. It's kind of like what Jacob did when He comes and sees Joseph and his two sons and he leans in the doorposts and bows his head and worships God. This is kind of what he does here, he can't believe how great and merciful God has been. It's not being prostrate before God, which is usually a picture of fear. This is just like having your head bowed and just thinking this is how great God is. That's that attitude that Jethro has towards God. Blessed be the Lord "who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh." Again, he doesn't start with Israel, he starts with Moses. He's also going to say who delivered the people, but he starts and says God is great because He delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh. When Moses returned, the last time he had been there he was wanted as a murderer, but he returns and God delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians and now out of Pharaoh. Every time he went to see Pharaoh it would not seem a strange response at all if Pharaoh had said to kill Moses, but yet every single time God delivered Moses out of Pharaoh's hand. Every time he went into him, Pharaoh didn't strike Moses because God protected him and that's what Jethro sees. He sees God protecting Moses. He goes back to deliver the Israelites, but God had to protect Moses and deliver Moses out of Pharaoh's hand or how could Moses ever deliver the Israelites? So Jethro's first thought is not about all these people, but his first thought is about Moses, that Moses trusted God and he put himself in the hand of Pharaoh and God had delivered him from that hand. "And who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians." He does bless the name of God for delivering the Israelites, but he starts with blessing Him for delivering Moses. Then he says, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods." I don't think that the right interpretation here is that Jethro didn't know who God was and now he understands. I think it's more that now he sees it again and has new evidence of it. He's seen fresh evidence of what he knew before and it was reinforced and proved again, that the Lord is greater than all gods. When we think of that word 'God', which is 'Elohim', it's more than just idols and demons, it's also the powers and principalities of this earth, it comes from the word 'strength'. It's the strong men of the world whether that's demons or idols or Pharaoh. God proved that He was above all of them. Obviously when it goes on to say, "for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." The one who behaved most proud was Pharaoh. He said there was no way the Lord could make him release these people and that's how God showed that He was greater and the very thing in which they behaved most proudly, the very way they tried to prove to be stronger than God by making them make bricks without straw, God ends up impoverishing them and destroying their nation. Every time that Pharaoh hardened his heart, every time that he insisted that he would not let the Israelites go even

though God had promised that they be released, God had promised that the Israelites would go into the Promised Land, every time that Pharaoh hardened his heart, it was behaving proudly. It was because of his pride saying God can't really be more powerful than I am, even when he saw with clear testimony that God was more powerful than he was, Pharaoh's response was that God couldn't be more powerful than he was, every time he behaved proudly and every time God brought him low again. How God treated Pharaoh is the epitome of how God pities the proud and gives grace to the humble. Moses was the humblest man on earth and Pharaoh was the most proud and we see what happens between the two of them. Understand, if you behave proudly you should expect, if God is merciful, you should expect in this life to be humbled. He even humbled Pharaoh. He showed He was above all of them, that no one has any right to any pride before God. There's nothing they could do to resist His will, they couldn't constrain their pride because God hardened his heart. That's how weak Pharaoh was, he couldn't control himself, he had no power over himself even, and God showed He was greater in the very thing that Pharaoh in Egypt behaved himself most proudly. He was above them. "Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering." Jethro responded by making offerings to God. The first offering he makes is a burnt offering and that's a picture of substitutionary atonement, this picture gets burned in the picture of hell so you don't. That's what a burnt offering so Jethro starts with that. There's other people that had done burnt offerings before this, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Moses said they needed to do burnt offerings when they went into the wilderness, but the first person we know of that did a burnt offering wasn't the Israelites, it was Jethro. After they leave Egypt it was Jethro who did a burnt offering. "And other sacrifices to offer to God." He made other offerings as well and I would assume Jethro knew what was going on and brought some of his herd with him because I doubt He is borrowing from the Israelites to do the offering. Instead he brings his own animals to sacrifice. Then after making the sacrifices, "Aaron came with all the elders of Israel." After Moses filled Jethro in and Jethro responded, Moses also had a gathering. Again, this is about showing honor to his father-in-law, he didn't have to do this, but he introduces Jethro to the powerful people in Israel, to the elders, to the leaders starting with his brother, but also the rest of the elders. He has fellowship with them. Again, it's about showing honor, he showed honor to Jethro. It was all done before God.

Then in the rest of the chapter, I want to just touch on a few things that we see about Jethro and his relationship with Moses. Like in verse 14, "when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people", his father-in-law saw that he had a right to speak to his son-in-law. He had a real relationship that's established when you give your daughter away. It doesn't mean you get to control their household, but it means you have a real interest in their household and you are able to speak. We're going to talk next week about the value of his advice. We should just remember that it wasn't wrong for Jethro to look and watch Moses and say this is what he suggested. We need to be willing to take advice from our fathers-in-law and fathers we need to be willing to look and give advice. It doesn't mean we have a right to demand what people are supposed to do because they have their own authority, but it does mean you have a position where you have the right to speak. Even to rebuke him in 17, "So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good." Think about this, look at all that God did with Moses. He clearly showed that His hand was upon him as He delivers him from Pharaoh and caused

him to lead all the Israelites out, but yet Jethro still said he had the right to say that what you did is not good, what you're doing is not wise, you're destroying yourself and you will destroy these people. Then as we got down to verse 24, Moses is also willing to listen. "So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said." When a man gives his daughter, he has real vested interest in that new family so it doesn't mean that you obey like if you're told what to do that there's an authority there, there's not an authority there, but there should be respect there. There should be real consideration when you're asked to do something. You should give them the respect of saying they raised this woman that I married so they must do something right so I should at least consider their advice. In this case it was good advice, we hear about it again in Deuteronomy and it really helped the nation. Jethro gave good advice so Moses judged it and he heeded it. It was advice that he received, it wasn't a commandment. A father-in-law doesn't have the right to command his son-in-law, but he does have a right to give advice and the advice should be taken seriously. Moses, even though he is leading millions of people, he's not too proud to hear. He is willing to say there is a third party that walked in that has my interest at heart, which is what a father-in-law should be, someone who's not necessarily directly involved in someone else's house being built up, but he has real vested interest in that house. We should be willing to listen to advice, we should be willing to listen to counsel and who would be a better counselor than someone who's not involved with the situation directly, but you know has your best interest at heart? That's what the relationship should be between a son-in-law and a father-in-law, where the son-in-law can trust that the father-in-law desires what is best for his daughter and grandchildren so that he listens to him. Now, if you have a father-in-law that's like Laban that's just trying to steal stuff from you, of course you should be slow to listen to him. There are fathers-in-law like that, but instead what we should ask ourselves is, is that what our father-in-law is like or do we just say we don't want his advice because I'm too proud to receive it? Moses is the leader of millions and he's not too proud to receive it. Moses understood that Jethro desired blessing on his family so he heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he said. Then if you go down to the last time father-in-law is mentioned to verse 27, "Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land." That 'let depart' means that he got permission to leave. If you remember when Moses left Midian to return to Egypt, he was living in his father-in-law's house and he had to ask permission to leave, he couldn't just head out. So what we see here is that authority wasn't because Jethro was his father-in-law, it was because Moses was living in his house and now Jethro had joined Moses' household of these millions of people so Jethro has to ask for permission to leave and Moses gives him permission to leave. It's an armed camp, he gives him permission to leave the camp. So you see here that Jethro has some authority over Moses and can tell him what to do. It's a lot different between a father and son. Even when he is married, there is a big difference between a father and a son than a father-in-law and a son. There is no authority between a father-in-law and a son-in-law. So Moses grants him permission, just like he had granted Moses. Not trying to get something out of him, but by being a blessing to him. Moses wasn't trying to get anything out of Jethro and Jethro wasn't trying to get anything out of Moses, they were just showing natural affection for one another and care for one another. Jethro doesn't try to take over Moses' life or take over his role, instead he goes back to his own life because he has his own household to build.

Applications:

1. The first is that the family you receive a bride from makes a difference. This doesn't mean that no young man should ever marry a woman that's from an unbelieving or pagan home, I'm not saying that, Christ took His bride from the family of Satan so that would be a wrong interpretation. But what a right interpretation is, look at how much it matters. It sure mattered for Jacob, it mattered for Moses, it matters what family your wife comes from. Considering that, there could be fathers-in-law that do great damage, but there can also be fathers-in-law that are great blessings so we should understand that the authority doesn't cut across, it's not like a son-in-law's father-in-law has some authority over him, that's not how it works, but it can still be in blessing and care and advice. It's really helpful to have somebody who's older and wiser than you are that gives advice on your behalf whose interest is really on your side and doesn't have some other skin in the game, some other objective, some other motive there. That's what a father-in-law should be like. The family that you receive your bride from can have a big difference in going forward.
2. People were watching what God was doing. The Israelites got used to what God was doing, causing the manna to come down day by day, every morning, causing the water to come out of the rock day after day, but they would quickly forget how miraculous the kindness was from God, but Jethro sees it and his response is that this is amazing. We should work to make sure that we see that it's amazing what God does, it's amazing the mercy He shows, it's amazing the deliverance He does. We can become really callous to it, where it's still there but it just becomes our expectations. We should remember that it can be helpful when a third party comes in and says, 'Wow, this is amazing!' It can be helpful to have the conversation to say what happened, these are the things that happened because it reminds us of how thankful we should be for the deliverance. Think about Moses, who from morning till evening, day by day is listening to people's problems and the people are saying, 'What do we do about this? What does God say about this? What should we do in this situation?' It can be very easy for Moses to also forget that God gave them manna this morning and God sent a third party to come and say it was amazing that God gave you manna and that He delivered you from this hardship. Let's take those opportunities to look at our situation through other people's eyes when God gives us a situation. Remember to rejoice in what God did and don't just become complacent and say that's just what God does. Instead, when we describe it we see it is pretty amazing and we should rejoice. God is kind that He gives us people to tell things to, things that God has done and to be reminded that we should rejoice and be thankful. As we come to the end of the year, something that I say pretty much every year, is that God gives us times and seasons so that we can reflect and we can think back on what God has done and the mercy that He has shown. This is one of the ways that Moses reflected back. He described the things that happened, described all the hardships they were delivered from, described how they were delivered from Egypt, and we should remember to do that. We should remember to take account of our days and to remember what He did and also to look forward and say what we should do. The end of the year, your birthday, these times that God has given as markers in our lives, that's

what we should use them for, to say what God has done, how we have seen the hand of God in this past year. As we gather on New Year's Eve, this is what we want people to do, this is why we gather, so that we each think about what God has done and then we talk about it with one another so we can just go, isn't God great? Look at the great mercy He has shown. It's very easy in a year where everyone around us saying what a horrible year, 2020, we just can't wait for the year to be over, we should be the people that say what a glorious year because every year is glorious because it's perfect in God's sight. It perfectly accomplishes His will and we should be able to look and see His will in it.

3. Remember God resists the proud. It's easy to forget Pharaoh's pride, it's easy to forget why he kept saying he wouldn't let the people go, it was purely his pride and look at the destruction that came upon him. Compare that to Moses listening to Jethro. Let's not forget the big picture from the plagues. Proverbs 16:18, "ADD pride goes before" Make sure you remember that, God resists the proud. Pride comes before destruction. The picture of Egypt being destroyed, that is the picture of what pride does because as Jethro said, the very things that they were proud of, that's what He judged them for. God is good that He does that.
4. When we see the glory of God, our response should be to make offerings. I don't mean that we go out and kill animals because in the new covenant those aren't the offerings that we're supposed to give, not the sacrifice of animals, but the sacrifice of our lips; praise and thanksgiving. We see Jethro do that too even as he sacrifices animals, and the one has been completed in Christ and the other has not. We need to be a people that praise God for what He did. We need to be a people whose response when we see what God did is to make offerings, not just by speaking words either, but by being a living sacrifice. That's what we're supposed to do, when we see the movement of God, when we see the mercy of God, our response is supposed to be to serve Him more faithfully.
5. It's probably significant that Moses named the sons. If you look at who named Laban's grandsons? Their mothers all did, or the slaves, which are kind of his grandsons. It's Leah that names them, it's Rachel that names them, except for one which is Benjamin who gets named after Rachel dies. Here what you find out very clearly is that it's the father that names the sons. This is a picture of the order being mixed up. I'm not saying that a father shouldn't take his wife's advice about the child's name, I'm not saying that, but what I am saying is that if you look in Scripture there are plenty of people named by their mother, like Ishmael, not a very good sign. It's really not a good sign and we should remember that. Here it's Moses that named the sons, it's a sign of things being in order, it's a sign that Moses was the head of the household and it's a sign that the children were considered not part of Jethro's heritage, not part of Jethro's legacy, but part of Moses' legacy. The wife becomes part of her husband's household and not the other way around and the naming of the sons really reflects that.
6. This is a picture of the relationship that you should have with your father-in-law or your son-in-law. If you don't have this relationship that God has given us a picture of, you should ask yourself if there is something you can do to foster this kind of relationship.

God gives us all kinds of relationships in our lives and the purpose of all those is to further the kingdom of God and all of them require balancing; should I submit to the government or should I rightly rebuke the oppressor? Those are two sides that you have to balance and that you have to figure out what is just and what is right. In this case the father-in-law gave his daughter and he has a vested interest in you and your family, but if he's using his daughter to add to his family by manipulating like Laban did, then you shouldn't listen to him. On the other hand, he is a valuable resource that has a vested interest in you. Even when Laban is talking to Jacob when he finally confronts him, he's saying of course they are his children, this is my family, why wouldn't you let me say goodbye to them? Now, he's deceitful and manipulative, but he does have a vested interest in the children as well so we should make sure we are balancing those properly. In this case, the father-in-law gave his daughter and he had a vested interest in the family. Your father-in-law gave you his daughter so he has a vested interest in your family so he should be a source of advice. You should look and make sure that he doesn't have ulterior motives because I gave a list of examples that did, but at the same time you should expect that he does want what's best for his grandchildren. So what did the relationship look like between Jethro and Moses? You see mutual respect, mutual affections, you see understanding the jurisdictions, you see Jethro intentionally trying to be a blessing to Moses' ministry and not trying to make it part of his ministry, you see rejoicing with those who rejoice, you see what it should look like for a father-in-law and son-in-law. For those of you who are too young to have a father-in-law, recognize this is what you should be looking for and this is what you should be trying to develop when you get married because it will really be a blessing to your family if you have something like the relationship between Jethro and Moses.

7. It's important for a son-in-law to show honor to his father-in-law because he did raise his wife and he gave a valuable gift. Remember the root word for this word 'father-in-law' is 'he gave' and that's the basis for the obligation is that he gave you his daughter. It's easy for us to do what the Israelites did when there are problems, they immediately forget everything God has done for them. It's easy to forget that with your family relationships, it's easy to forget everything that man did for you, it's easy for you to forget that you father-in-law raised your wife so you have a real obligation to him because he did a real blessing to you, even a wicked man did a real blessing to you by raising your wife so you should show honor to him.
8. It's useful to get advice, especially if you can find someone who is in the position of Jethro, where first of all he is going to give righteous advice and secondly, he truly cares. It's very clear that he cares about Moses, he cares about his daughter's family. It's really useful to get advice from the third party that's not really involved at all. He's not an Israelite, he's not part of Moses, he's an interested disinterested party. He's not actively a party, but he has vested interest. We should seek these things, we should seek it from our father-in-law, but we should also seek it from other people who we know care, we know have affection for us but aren't involved in the situation because that one level removed can really help because the Israelites said they needed Moses' advice, he has to be here and Moses is saying, 'What else can I do?' and a third party comes in and

says he's killing himself and he needs to do something different and gives a suggestion. We need to recognize how often we fall into the same situation and it's useful to find advice from somebody who cares, but isn't an involved party.

With that, let me close us in prayer. Oh Lord God, we do thank You for this passage. We pray that You guide us to the things that we should learn from it. Lord, You made it very clear in this passage where it repeats father-in-law over and over again that we are supposed to consider that. Lord let us rightly consider it and how to rightly apply it in our lives. Lord, we thank You for instructing us in all different aspects of our lives, even as we think of these great pictures of the gospel, the picture of manna and the water coming from the rock, the picture of destroying the Amalekites and then all of a sudden You throw in this story of Moses and his father-in-law. Lord, we thank You that You instruct us in all these elements of how we are to live our lives. Let us be a people that desire to live for You. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.