

7. Delegation – a Biblical principle

**AIM: To demonstrate clearly that the Bible has an ideal for leadership – we do it together!
Delegation is a vital part of working together.**

Note – the group leader should make sure to ‘delegate’ much of this meeting for other people to lead!

Introduction – Burnout

**Write the word ‘Burnout’ on a FC or OHP and invite those present to give their thoughts, experiences and understanding of it? What is it?
Why not write up other words associated with Burnout ... tired, wrecked, wiped, exhausted, mentally and physically worn out etc.**

When we think about Moses “burnout” is not a word that automatically springs to mind. Instead, if we think of him at all, we think of a man who had the courage to stand up to Pharaoh, or of a great deliverer who led his people out of slavery in Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land, or of a man who went to the mountaintop and returned with the Ten Commandments.

But the truth is that Moses at one point *did* suffer from burnout. There was a stage in his life when he had taken on so much that he was facing utter exhaustion, the workload was killing him.

One or more members read **Exodus 18: 13 – 27.**

In groups discuss the following questions:

- 1. What was it that Moses was doing?

.....

- 2. Why was he doing it?

.....

- 3. Did it make sense to do it alone?

.....

- 4. Have you ever been in a similar situation that you could share?

.....

COMMENT

(Have a number of people read aloud the following 2 paragraphs.)

1. Clearly Moses’ father-in-law was deeply concerned, and rightly so. He was a good father-in-law, a compassionate man, Moses had experienced that when he first met him. Jethro now saw what was happening to Moses so he took his courage in his hands (for Moses though younger was the boss) and faced up to Moses. No doubt he wanted Moses to be around to care for his daughter but Jethro also had a genuine concern for Moses himself.

2. Basically his message to Moses was: keep going this way and you will kill yourself. You've taken on too much. You don't have to do all this, judging every minor case or dispute that comes along. There is a better way. Share out the responsibility, engage in delegation.

Too Busy to Think

The idea of sharing the load may never have crossed Moses' mind. He was so busy carrying out his responsibilities that he didn't have time to think it could be done some other way. That's often how it is for us. We take up a task, the task grows ("role creep" someone has called it), and the next thing we know we are over committed and have no time to think about how else we could manage the task. We are so busy doing it.

The Church rightly has a concern for good effective leadership. We need leaders who are prepared to lead. But that doesn't have to mean leaders who do it all themselves. *When it comes to local church leadership the call more often than not is for team players rather than solo agents! Jesus chose a team of disciples to engage in mission!*

False Objections to Delegation

(Here one person could read the objections and different group members read the responses)

Also you could ask members of the group for ideas before reading the objections and responses given here.

Sometimes its not that we are like Moses, so busy that we haven't the time to pause and think that there may be another way, instead we have more dubious reasons for not delegating. We think:

"No one else has the skills!" Occasionally that may be true. We may have an outstanding gift, we may have had particular training for the task, we may have lots of experience in doing what needs to be done. Usually, however, it simply isn't true that no one else has the skills. It is important for us to be reminded that other people are capable, and often will grow into a task if given the opportunity.

"But I've always done it!" That too may be true but it's a poor reason for continuing to do it alone!

"No one else can be trusted to get the job done!" That may well be arrogance on our part. Besides we won't know if it is true until we are prepared to trust someone else.

"I like it done my way, and the only way I can be sure that will happen is to do it myself!" That also may be true, but who is to say that "my way" is the best way for all concerned? Often a small group working together will come up with new and creative ways of doing things. Also, who am I to think that if I don't do it, it won't be done right!

"Let her do it and I'll never be asked again!" In other words we recognize the skills someone else has, but, because we think this task gives us status we want to hang on to it. We fear that sharing it out might mean losing it. So we seek to exclude the other from taking on the task.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

More often than not these attitudes say more about us, and our insecurities, than they do about the reality on the ground. But we need to face up to ourselves, to examine our motives, to ask ourselves why we so often resist delegation.

We need to realize that YHWH does not = MY Way!

It may not be easy to be completely honest with someone else about these inner thoughts, these blocks to delegation. But let's give it a go.

Think of yourself in your everyday context ... home, work, church. Might you be stifling other people's creativity by stopping them from work, or by not encouraging them? How does delegation fit into everyday life?

Choose one of the above statements, preferably the one that comes closest to how you feel about the "risk" of delegation. Then find a partner with whom you can share your feelings about it (and they with you on the statement they chose).

DISCUSSION STARTER

Moses listened, Moses changed

See how the following words fit into discussion of the passage: selection, training, equipping, authority, accountability.

Jethro gave good advice that day, and Moses we are told in verse 24 "listened to his father-in-law". First, Jethro urged Moses to select capable people – that meant Moses' acknowledging that there were others who were capable!

Second, he suggested that Moses train them and equip them for the role. That required Moses to be willing to share some of his expertise.

Third, he suggested to Moses that he hand over some of his authority. This was to vary in degree depending on the ability and responsibility entrusted to the other person. To his credit Moses did that, the great leader relinquished some of his power.

Fourth, he suggested that Moses encourage some reporting back. Moses was still to carry ultimate responsibility for the big decisions, he was not to abdicate that responsibility.

Questions – in groups

1. If Jethro examined how we exercise our various leadership roles in our local church what might he say?
2. In the roles we carry out in church, are there tasks we could/should delegate? Name some.....
3. How could we go about delegation in a way that will be both positive for the life of the church and sensitive to those already carrying out tasks? What would be the benefits?

FINALLY

Our Lord himself modeled delegation for us. Jesus was not a one man band. He deliberately chose disciples and he gave them tasks. His role was to lead the leaders, to be a model of the "good news" for them, to equip them, and to send them out into the world.

He was able to do that with great effect (though not complete success, Judas betrayed him) because the disciples knew that Jesus loved them.

If the leaders in the local church are to be effective as leaders who delegate, who share power, and who equip people, then a key to the success of that will be found in our "love for the people whom God has called us to work with."

- Delegation – takes us beyond burnout.
- Delegation – values the role others can play.
- Delegation – shares power.
- Delegation – increases effectiveness.
- Delegation – benefits the body of Christ.

Moses and his people benefited by it.
Our Lord practiced it.
The disciples participated in it.
Let's make it a mark of our leadership!

You may like to use the following prayer to end the session.....

Lord, we thank you for the great privilege and responsibility of being leaders here at,

Forgive us: if we have exercised our leadership in selfish ways
If we have seen leadership as an opportunity to get our own way,
Or to have control over others,
Or to draw attention to ourselves,
Or to seek the praise of others,

Help us: to be responsible leaders
To recognize and encourage the gifts of others,
To be willing to work closely with others,
And above all to model our leadership on that of our Lord, who did not seek to minister alone
But with his disciples,

This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen