

Avoiding Burnout. Lessons from Moses and Jethro

Scripture and Notes

Pastor John E. Dubler

Question: Is it possible for a person to work too much?

This is not a criticism of people who work too much.

It is recognition that help is needed.

It is recognition that God has answers.

God is not interested in you becoming a “crispy critter.”

Read: Ex 4: 18-20

Moses had worked for Jethro for 40 years.

No doubt Jethro knew his weaknesses—and strengths.

Read: Ex 18: 5-27

Jethro honored Moses and the Lord

He noticed what Moses was doing—namely lack of delegation of work load.

He spoke honestly with him—v. 17: “The thing you are doing is not good.”

He predicted the outcome—v.18:

“You will surely wear out”

“Both yourself and these people.” (Note our profound impact on others.)

“The task is too heavy”

“You cannot do it alone.”

V. 19 “Now listen to me” Moses was meek, not weak. A humble man listens.

V. 19 f Jethro’s counsel:

You be the representative to God. (He is urging intercession)

You bring disputes to God. (Recommends prayer and intercession)

V. 20 “Then teach them.” (Investing time in others to relieve work load)

V. 21 Select judges. A plan of delegation

Find good men

Put them over the work

But Jethro’s plan was unwieldy and apparently never implemented.

What was wrong with Jethro’s unwieldy plan?

1. It called for leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.
2. The staggering number of judges required for a nation of 650,000 men over 20 years of age (as reported in Bible census figures of the time):
 - a. Leaders of Thousands: 650
 - b. Leaders of hundreds: 6,500
 - c. Leaders of Fifties: 13,000
 - d. Leaders of tens: 65,000
 - e. Total number of judges required: 85,170
3. This confirms that it’s easier to spot the problem than to propose the solution.
4. Perhaps Jethro should have said:

- a. “The thing you are doing is not good . . .”
 - b. “You will surely wear out . . .” You and those with you
 - c. “The task is too heavy”
 - d. “You cannot do it alone.”
 - e. **So consult with God!**
5. God’s plan was to bring help—70 men.
- a. God waited until Moses realized his need and cried out to God:
 - i. **Numbers 11: 10-15** This Burnout.
 - ii. God gives Moses help (v.16-17)

Miscellaneous notes on Moses and the problem of burnout:

1. What to do when you are working too much
 - a. Receive counsel from those closest to you. Especially those who know you best. Do not forget to ask your wife or husband.
 - b. Go to God with what they say.
 - c. Do whatever God says to do.
 - d. “The sons of God are lead by the Spirit of God” Romans 8
2. Delegate authority for helping.
 - a. This will involve teaching.
 - b. It will involve finding qualified people.
 - c. This is work. More work at the very time you need less!
 - d. But in the end it may save your skin.
3. How to delegate:
 - a. In every responsibility there are two factors:
 - i. Essential (do not delegate)
 - ii. Additional workload—Look for what is additional and delegate.
 1. Desiring to do more we add to our load
 2. Until it comes to a breaking point
 - b. Some believe that because they have not yet broken they never will
 - c. There is a time to delegate even though
 - i. We could do it faster
 - ii. We could do it better
 - iii. Even if those to whom we have delegated fumble the ball.
 - d. As the workload increases—the wise leader trains the help
4. What will happen if we do not address the problem
 - a. Easy: It gets worse.
 - b. NOTE: Men of God are not exempt from the penalties of breaking natural laws. Just because you may be involved in “God’s Work,” do not think that you are exempt from burnout.
 - c. The human machine has a limit—Confront your limit.
5. There is nothing spiritual about an early grave.
6. Unstringing the Bow
 - a. Take the Sabbath day away from your work
 - b. Every now and then—unstring the Bow.