

SERMONS

Wait Training: Three Reasons Why You Can't Do It Alone

Exodus 18:17-23

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Rachel White

Anyone else tried to do a *little* too much in this COVID season? I tell you when I realized it...

It had been a super stressful morning already trying to do everything by myself. I stepped outside for a break and noticed a chirping noise coming from my hanging basket. This is what I found: **(photo of eggs)**

Beautiful, right? A sign that life goes on in the midst of a pandemic, a serene moment in the middle of the craziness, a simple thing to cheer up my day...

But then... then I did something really stupid... I decided to cut off the dead parts of the plant, which would have been fine, if I hadn't also decided to hang up the basket again "to keep the nest safe" ... So there I am, reaching up to the basket with the clippers, not getting a ladder, not asking for help, trying to do it all myself. No prizes for guessing what happened next.

(Video clip)

Yep, that's my daughter, crying "Mommy killed the birdies", and my husband Ellis, taking a video instead of responding to my cries for help! What you *don't* see is me ripping the phone out of Ellis' hands and yelling at him.



This was the moment I realized I was trying to do a little too much, all by myself. This was when I realized I had been trying to do it all alone, and we are just not meant to do it alone!

I wonder if you, too, have tried to do it all alone at any point in the last six months?

Today I'm going to talk about three reasons why you can't do it alone. We're going to draw those lessons from the life of Moses. Moses was called to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt over 3000 years ago. As we'll see, Moses, too, was trying to do it all by himself. He was working from dawn until dusk, doing way too much, and trying to do it all alone.

Our passage today comes from Exodus 18. Moses' father in law Jethro has come to visit. They've had a great catch up and Moses has shared the whole story of how God rescued them from Egypt, and Jethro praises God and offers a bunch of sacrifices. The next day, Jethro observes Moses on the job.

We pick up the text in Exodus 18:13-14

"The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. 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, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?"

So we see Moses doing his job. He is the "judge", which means he judges who is right and wrong in a dispute, he speaks on God's behalf to the people, and he teaches them God's way of living.



He does this all day long, from morning till evening. There are people crowded around him always asking him what they should do. It sounds exhausting!

Jethro watches all this and asks Moses a very direct question. “Why?” “Why are you trying to do it all alone?”

You see, Jethro could see that Moses was trying to do it all alone. And it’s not just Moses that does this. I believe we so often try to do it all alone too. Today we are going to look at three reasons why you can’t do it alone: it’s unhealthy, it’s ineffective, and it’s inconsiderate.

Reason One: It’s Unhealthy!

Jethro tells it to Moses straight. In verse 17-18 he says “what you are doing is not good. You and the people will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you.” **(Exodus 17-18)** It’s not good for you, it’s unhealthy!

Have you ever felt like the burden is too much for you to carry?

When our first child was almost a year old, I hit a breaking point. As I look back, I had definitely been trying to do it all alone. I was a new mom, doing it all without family nearby and trying to support Ellis as he made steps towards ordination. Add to that the pressure of taking care of a home, and various visa challenges that year and you had a recipe for disaster. I found myself regularly curled up in a ball, crying and feeling like there was no hope. I just couldn’t see how things could get better. The burden was too heavy for me.

Ellis encouraged me to reach out to an older, wiser woman and ask her to mentor me. I didn’t know her, and I don’t like to ask for help, but I was desperate. I reached out to her and we began to meet weekly. What started out as a mentoring relationship I can



truly say is now a mutual friendship that has continued over the last 6 years. She has been a huge support to me, a champion, a great listener, and someone who knows me well enough to ask that hard “why” question when I need it. She has been my Jethro, and I am so much healthier for it.

In our story, Jethro realizes its unhealthy for Moses to do it alone, so he advises Moses to find people who will bear the burden with him. He says if you do this, “it will be easier for you”. We all need a Jethro because Jethro helps us to be healthy.

So, reason one why you can’t do it all alone is because it is unhealthy. Reason two is it’s ineffective.

Reason Two: It’s Ineffective

Jethro says to Moses in verse 18 “You are not *able* to do this alone”. Moses was not very good at his job when he tried to do it all alone!

Jethro shows Moses another way. He tells Moses to raise up leaders to share the work. Look at verses 21-22:

“Look for able men... men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chief of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves.”

Jethro tells Moses that he wasn’t effectively judging the people. In fact, you could say, he was even failing. But... if Moses were to entrust some of that judging responsibility to others.... He would succeed in his goal of judging all the people’s issues. Jethro knew that doing it all yourself is ineffective. We are much more effective when we raise up others.



I want you to meet someone who is really good at this. Rich Jasper is a coach in the marketplace and a LifeGroup leader who has raised up multiple leaders and started several LifeGroups.

(Video interview with Rich Jasper)

When you raise up leaders, you are more effective at what you are trying to achieve. Jethro says to Moses in verse 23, "If you do this, God will direct you, and you will be *able* to endure". If you do this, you will be effective.

So, two reasons so far why you can't do it alone: It's unhealthy and it's ineffective. Thirdly, it's inconsiderate.

Reason 3: It's Inconsiderate

Moses' leadership style was inconsiderate. He was standing in the way of other's success, because the way he was going about his leadership made it all about him. We can see this in the text in two places - the picture of Moses the great leader, surrounded by adoring fans, I mean people. Secondly, we see it when Jethro asks Moses that "why" question. Listen to the language Moses uses in response; he says, "Because the people come to *me*...when they have a dispute, they come to *me*..., *I* decide between one person and another...and *I* make them know God's laws". It's very focused on everything *he* is going to achieve with God. It's actually very self-focused.

Jethro directs him to be more considerate, more aware of how he can empower others. He says "You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God...*moreover*... you should look for others do the task with you. He specifically tells Moses to actively "look" for those men, and to "place those men" and to "let

them judge". See the difference? Moses' leadership looked like Me + God. Jethro says it needs to be You + God + Others. Jethro could see that Moses' leadership was all about him. It was inconsiderate of others that God might want to use. Great leaders don't do it all alone; they include others. Not just because it helps them be healthier, or because it helps them achieve a task, but because it helps those others flourish too.

Have you ever had a boss who lived life like it was all about them? Perhaps they were controlling, or proud, or just spent a lot of time talking why they are so great and everyone should notice!

I wonder in contrast if you've ever had a boss who shared the glory, worked collaboratively, regularly asked for feedback and genuinely celebrated and rooted for their employees' success?

Big difference, right!

By doing it all alone, not only is that first boss missing out on the benefits to them and their mission, they are standing in the way of the progress and flourishing of others. By contrast, the second boss not only allows, but enables and empowers those who work for them to grow in their giftings, confidence and opportunities for success.

When Moses was doing it all alone, not only was he hurting himself and his mission, he was hurting others. By holding onto control, by saying it was only about him and God, he was literally preventing others from growing. He was saying, by his actions, "I'm the guy, it's all about me. And it can't be about you because it's all about me." In contrast, if he followed Jethro's advice about leaning into others, he could give those people an opportunity to step into their gifting. He could use his power and influence for their benefit.

In verse 18 Jethro tells Moses that going it alone is not good for him *or* the people. He says "you *and* the people will certainly wear themselves out." In contrast, sharing



opportunities for leadership is better for everyone. As we see in verse 23, if Moses becomes more considerate of how he can empower others into leadership, *all* the people will go to their place in peace. It's better for everyone.

Doing it all alone is unhealthy – it's not good for you. It's ineffective – it's not good for the mission. And it's inconsiderate – it's not good for others.

This is our problem too...

We get this wrong so often. We continue to try to do it all alone. And I don't think it's by accident that when Jethro says to Moses "what you are doing is not good" we are reminded of the words of Genesis. **(Genesis 2:18)** You see we were never meant to do it alone. We were designed to do life with God and with others. And humans have been making this same mistake since the beginning – we keep try to do it all alone.

But we were not made for a life disconnected from God and we were not made for a life disconnected from each other. And when we continue to live independent of God and of others, we end up unhealthy, ineffective and inconsiderate people.

Solution: Community

So, what's the solution? The solution is community, with God and with others. We need to stop doing it all alone! You can't do it all alone, so don't!

So, first – community with God.

God's solution to our inclination to do it all alone, was to send a person, to send Jesus. Jesus stands on your behalf, in your place, and restores you to relationship with your heavenly Father. He restores you to community with God.



In this story, Moses is an imperfect picture of this mediator role with God, but Jesus, well he is so healthy he can bear your burdens for you, he is so effective he is all you need to be saved, he is so considerate the Bible talks about him as love itself.

I want to tell you about a time when I was trying to do it all alone without God, and how Jesus restored me to community with God.

When I was in my early teenage years my family was in a really rough spot. My school life was also hard and I felt very alone. I was invited to youth group by a friend and decided to attend the youth camp that Fall. One night the speaker gave a really cheesy illustration about letting God be in the driver's seat of your life. He got some kids to get up on the stage and act out letting God take over the steering wheel of a car. As cheesy as it was, I realized in that moment that I had been trying to be in control of my own life. I had grown up in church, I knew a lot of Bible stories, but my faith wasn't making any difference because Jesus wasn't my Lord - he wasn't in the driving seat. And the way that was playing out wasn't working for me. I was isolated, I was trying to fit in but it wasn't working, I was unkind to the people I wanted to be close to and I didn't like the person I was becoming. Truly I was unhealthy, ineffective and inconsiderate! I was trying to do life all by myself.

That night I admitted to God that I was failing, I admitted to God that I needed him, and that I wanted things to change. I admitted I didn't even know how to start, that I didn't even think I *could* change on my own, but that I wanted him to be in the driver's seat of my life. I told him I didn't want to do it alone anymore, I wanted Jesus. And he, the same Jesus who had been drawing me to himself my whole life, was faithful again that day. He came close, he drew me to himself, and filled me with his Spirit to transform me.

Jethro tells Moses that if he will stop doing it all alone, God will be with him, God will direct him and help him to endure. This was exactly my experience too.



Have you been trying to do it all alone without God? You need Jesus. In a moment we will take some time to pray, and if you realize you've been doing it all alone without God and you'd like that to change, I'd love for you to pray with me.

The second thing we need is community with others.

Jesus not only restores you to relationship with God, he restores you to relationship with others. He fills you with his Holy Spirit, who unites you with Him, and unites you to other believers so you can experience the unique beauty and depth of Christian community. We were never meant to do it alone. We were meant to do it with others.

I want to tell you story about someone whose life was changed when he found community with others in a LifeGroup at Chapel Hill.

This guy is a friend in his 30s who was going it alone until he had a radical transformation in community. He had a lot of questions about faith and the negative experiences he'd had of Christians, and described himself as "guarded" in friendships with other people.

That is, until he said yes to an invitation to explore his questions at Alpha. There he found a safe place with people who didn't judge him and where he didn't feel alone in those questions. Someone at his Alpha table invited him into their LifeGroup, where he found a group of guys who he could learn from, be truly himself around, and began to realize the ways God could use his unique life experiences to help others.

This friend was going it alone and had a radical transformation in community. He told me that through being in community he has become "much more open and trusting", is "growing in confidence", and finds that his LifeGroup is "always uplifting and



energizing". He told me how he is so grateful to have a community of guys who are there for him. This friend went from doing it all alone, to growing in community.

If you are like me, and you admit that you go through life far too independent, you realize you can't do it alone, because you see that you it makes you unhealthy, ineffective or inconsiderate, I have good news for you. Jesus loves broken people. He loves to save broken people, connect them to his body of other followers, and empower them to live differently by the power of his Spirit. I'm praying for you that he would give you the desire and the courage to take a step forward today. A step away from doing it alone, and a step into community.

Here's how you find community at Chapel Hill:

If you are not yet in a LifeGroup, I want you to sign up for one today.

chapelhillpc.groupvitals.com/groupfinder

If you are worshipping online, you'll see a link in the description to join a LifeGroup. If you are here in person, scan the QR code in the foyer to find the link, or let me know using the weekly check in form. I would love to help you find a group that works for you. We have over 100 groups, meeting online and in person, at all different times in the week. Those groups can't wait to welcome you into community!

If you are already in a LifeGroup, I want you to commit to having a conversation as a group about what your group can do to help other people get connected into community.

Talk with Your LifeGroup



Maybe it's inviting some new people to join you this Fall, maybe it's raising up a leader, maybe it's launching a second group. I would love to support you in having that conversation. Let me know if you'd like me to join you for it.

We can't do any of this in our own strength, and we were never supposed to do it alone! So, let's ask God to help us.

Pray

- Help us to do community with you
- Help us to do community with others