

A photograph of a church building with palm trees in the foreground. The text "Starlight Adult SS Lesson" is overlaid in large, bold, white letters with a red outline. Below it, "Exodus 17-18" is written in a smaller, white font.

Starlight Adult SS Lesson

Exodus 17-18

17:1-2 Quarreling—The Israelis move to Rephidim (r'fee-DEEM), & there is no water. After the ten plagues that got Israel out of Egypt, after the parting of the Red Sea, after the bitter waters turned sweet, after the miraculous meal of quails, after the manna appearing every single morning, you'd think that the Israelites would have come to the place of saying, "Hey, let's wait & see how God's going to come through this time!" But instead they quarreled with Moses. Quarreling is an accurate "flesh indicator." The more quarrelsome a person is, the more he/she is walking in the flesh rather than the Spirit. Our flesh is the source of quarrels & conflicts.

1Cor 1:10-11; 3:3 Pro 20:3

17:3-6 Moses Cries Out To The Lord—Moses cries out to the Lord. Too often when we encounter a difficulty, we immediately set out to make our plans. "Let's see, how can I make this work out?" But Moses knew the futility of the problem. Where are you going to get water for 2 or 3 million people? What else could he do but cry out to the Lord?

God doesn't tell Moses to take his staff & go strike the people. The people are fleshly, but they're thirsty, & God will provide.

Water From The Rock—So instead of telling him to beat the people, the Lord tells him to take some of the elders of Israel, strike the rock at Horeb, & water will come out of it. We read in 1Cor. 10:4 that the rock that poured out water was actually Christ!

In John 7:37-39 & John 4:13-14, Jesus tells people that He will give them living water. The living water of life springs forth from Jesus to satisfy our thirst for God & rescue us from death in the wilderness of sin. But what had to happen for that water to be released? The rock had to be smitten. Christ had to be smitten, crucified, killed, that the water of life could flow forth to all of us.

Again, just like Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, just like the Passover, just like so many typological pictures of Jesus in the Old Testament, God has orchestrated each & every detail to be a perfect picture of Jesus Christ. By being obedient to maintain the picture of Christ in striking the rock, Moses is having victory.

17:7 Massah & Meribah—Massah means test or trial. Meribah means place of strife. It was called Massah & Meribah because they tested the Lord & quarreled with Moses.

17:8 Amalek At Rephidim—The name Rephidim means "resting place." Rephidim was supposed to be a rest stop, a place to find water & peace. But unlike its name, the Israelites found no water or rest, & were attacked by the Amalekites.

The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek. Amalek was one of Esau's grandsons. In Deut 25:17-18, Moses will remind the Israelites before they enter the promised land of their first encounter with the Amalekites. So the Amalekites' first strategy was to attack the stragglers at the rear, picking off the ones who didn't walk with the rest of the children of God.

That is the easiest place for you to be attacked as well. When you're out of fellowship with the rest of God's people, having a Lone Ranger kind of attitude: "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian. I can worship God up on this mountain while I'm hunting." Guess what - something is hunting you. The further you are from the rest of the flock, the easier prey you are for the wolves.

17:9-13 Joshua—This is the first we hear of Joshua. Moses put him in command of the battle, & God will eventually use him to lead the people into the promised land. Moses tells him to choose men for an army, & lead the fight against the Amalekites.

Holding Up Moses' Arms—Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, & Hur go up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held the rod up over his head, the battle was victorious for the Israelites. But when Moses' arms grew tired & he dropped them, the Amalekites would prevail. Aaron & Hur supported Moses. They gave him a stone to sit on, & lifted up his hands. Thus, God's people were victorious.

This picture here will become clearer in chapter 18. Moses was the servant that God chose to lead His people through the wilderness. But Moses wasn't able to do it alone. There were too many people, too much work to do on his own. He needed other leaders to support him in what he had been called to do.

A pastor is in much the same boat. Pastors have been called as servants to lead a number of God's people through the wilderness of this life, but the job is too big to handle alone. If our church is to be victorious, we need other leaders who will support our pastor & lift his arms when they grow weary. That is why the biblical church has been established with elders (overseers) & deacons (trustees). The pastor can't do it all alone, any more than Moses could. The elders are called to support the pastor's spiritual arm - counseling, praying, encouraging, & teaching. The trustees are called to support the pastor's physical arm - cleaning, helping, moving, serving.

With Aaron & Hur's support, Moses was able to do his part to insure that the Israelites were victorious against their enemy.

17:14 -16 Amalek Will Be Blotted Out—The Lord promises that each generation would have war against the Amalekites until they were utterly wiped out. In Samuel 15, this was the time that God ordained to utterly blot out the Amalekites. But Saul had his own interpretation of victory, that didn't include complete obedience to God. The Lord told Samuel that He regretted having made Saul king, because he would not out God's commands.

Saul tried to make excuses in 1Sam. 15:20-22. But Samuel tells Saul that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, & stubbornness is as iniquity & idolatry. Because Saul had rejected the word of the LORD, Saul was also rejected from being king. 1 Sam 15:23

Partial obedience is disobedience. When we don't obey the Lord completely, His perfect plans for our victory can get really messed up. Had Saul obeyed, the Amalekites would never have troubled Israel again. But by sparing just one man, Agag, it almost meant the complete destruction of Israel.

In the book of Esther, a man named Haman was nearly successful in having all the Israelites destroyed. Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of the sole survivor of the Amalekites.

That certainly has application in our own lives. When God calls us to deny our flesh completely, to obey entirely, to pluck out a root of bitterness in its entirety; if we only obey partially, these things will come back in spades & possibly destroy us.

At the end of 1Chron 4, we read that the remnant of the Amalekites are finally destroyed. Today, all the world knows of the Israelites, but Amalekites are nowhere to be found.

18:1-7 Jethro Shows Up—Jethro (or Reuel), brings back Moses' wife (his daughter), Zipporah. We really don't know when, but at some point, after Exo 4, Moses had sent her away. Now, Jethro brings Moses' wife & their two sons.

18:8-12 Jethro Believes—Remember that Moses had spent forty years tending Jethro's sheep. They knew each other well, & Moses had probably often spoken both of the Lord & his own desire to free God's people from the bondage of their slavery in Egypt. After meeting God at the burning bush, Moses packed up & said, "I'm going to deliver God's people." You can imagine what Jethro might have thought about all this "craziness."

In Acts 8, Philip was in Samaria, proclaiming Christ, & massive multitudes of people were getting saved. He was casting out unclean spirits, & healing many who were paralyzed & lame. People were being baptized, signs & miracles, people receiving the Holy Spirit. The town was rocking with revival. Then in Acts 2:8, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip & sent him to a desert place.

The most impressive thing about Philip is not that he was being used mightily in this revival, but that he didn't say, "Wait a minute, Lord! We've got radical revival happening here, & you want me to leave & go to the middle of nowhere? What's up with that?" No, he just up & went. That's faith & obedience.

Moses had done the same thing, leaving security to go off & do something "nutty" for God. But now Moses relates the incredible story of God's deliverance & miraculous provision. Jethro is floored. Basically, he says, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods, Moses. If he can do what He's done with you, He can do anything!"

18:13-27 Jethro's Advice—With over two million people to lead, there was often conflicts that needed resolving. "She took my bucket & didn't return it!" "Those neighbor's kids stole my tent pegs!" "That guy broke my rake!"

Moses was dealing with these problems all day long. Jethro saw that this was an impossibility, both for Moses, who would wear himself out, & for the people, who deserved more expedient justice. He tells Moses that he should focus on two responsibilities: 1) Represent the people to God, & 2) Teach the people what God says. As for the matters of resolving disputes, he was to select men with three qualifications: 1) Men who fear God, 2) Men of truth, & 3) Men who hate dishonest gain. They were to be placed over the people as leaders of various-sized groups. Moses would handle the major disputes, but these guys would be a support to Moses' ministry, bearing the burden with him.

This plurality of leadership validated in Exodus is carried on into the church. In Acts 6:1-4, the apostles came to the same conclusion that Moses did. "We should only have two responsibilities, the same two that Moses had. Prayer & the Word."

Just as Moses was to represent the people to God in prayer, & minister the word by teaching the people God's statutes, laws, & the way they should walk. Just as Moses needed his arms held up. Just as he needed assistance from godly men who could help lead the people, so every pastor needs elders & deacons to share the weight of ministry.

If God Commands You—Too often, we give our advice like it is gospel truth. Too often, we think, "I've got the solution, listen to me." But Jethro had some wise advice. He says tells Moses his idea. But then he tells Moses to only implement it if God commands & confirms it. When we give advice, we should always make sure to say the same thing: "Hey, this is just my idea, but pray about it & see if the Lord would confirm it."