

## INTRODUCTION

Whether you are being intentional or not the things you do in public may influence others. Normally, you hope to influence people in a positive way. The power of marketing is to do just that. It attracts the attention of potential customers. However, sometimes while promoting a product, there may be unexpected results. Perhaps you remember the following incidents. In 2004 Oprah Winfrey gave all the 276 audiences who attended her TV show on a certain day a brand-new car. For real! It costed the manufacturer \$ 7.7 million. Unfortunately, it did not save the car company. GM shut down the Pontiac line six years later. Also, although the car itself was free, each person had to pay \$ 6,000 or more in tax to drive it home. In 2005, the soft-drink maker Snapple created the world's largest ice popsicle in New York City. It stood 25-feet tall and weighs 17.5 tons. The problem was, the 80 F temperature quickly melted the ice-block. Fire fighters had to close off some streets to hose away the sticky mess. I am sure the company got free advertisement when every news station reported the disaster. Decided not to be outdone, KFC came up with the idea of space advertising. The company created a huge logo in Nevada that could be seen from the outer space. Perhaps even astronauts could order some food if they were hungry. The picture was produced by putting 65,000 pieces of one-foot-square tiles together. I looked up the location from the Google Earth but the logo is no longer there. Those are crazy ideas, but they influence people to a certain extent.

God also uses us to exert influence to others. In our story today, we shall see how two men influenced each other in a positive way. The two persons were Moses and Jethro. A son-in-law and his father-in-law. A leader of the Israelites and a leader of the Midianites. From their interaction we shall learn that God achieves His plans through our participation.

## EXPLANATION

### 1. Converting a Heathen 異教徒得救

First of all, we see Moses convert a heathen. A heathen is a person who worships false gods. In this case, it was Moses' own father-in-law, Jethro. He was a Midianite priest. Remember Moses was born of Jewish parents, but he was later adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Through God's Providence, Moses flee from the Egyptian palace and went to Midian. He stayed at Jethro's home, married one of his daughters and subsequently worked for him as a shepherd. Forty years later God called Moses to take the Israelites out of Egypt. Thus, Moses left his family behind in Midian and went back to Egypt alone. Now Moses was leading the Israelites into the wilderness. Jethro heard the news and so he brought Moses' wife and two sons to see Moses.

#### A. Proofs of God's Grace 恩典的明證

How did Moses convert Jethro to become a believer in God? Moses showed Jethro some proofs of God's grace. First, it was through naming Moses' two sons. We did not read verses 3 and 4 earlier. I will summarize the content for you. Moses' older son was Gershom. It means "an alien

here.” Moses had been a foreigner all his life. He was a Jew by birth, but he became a foreigner in Egypt, and subsequently a foreigner in Midian. Then Moses gave his second son the name of Eliezer, which means “my God is helper.” Moses saw the hands of God working in his life despite his identity crisis. Day after day as Jethro interacted with his two grandsons, their names spoke implicitly of God’s grace. As parents, the name we pick for our kids can be used as a means for evangelism. My next-door neighbors have two boys whose names are Noah and Caleb. When someone asks the family the background for those names, it will begin a conversation about the Christian faith. Therefore, parents, next time you give a name to your new-born, whether Chinese or English, you can inject a gospel message into it.

Besides the names of Moses’ sons there was a more direct proof of God’s grace. **Verse 1** tells us that Jethro came because he ... heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. How did Jethro know what had happened when there was no cellphone or TV? It was likely that the news was spread by travelers. A large group of slaves marching out from the strongest nation at that time was no ordinary thing. Everyone would wonder how the Israelites did it. Moses seized the opportunity to give glory to God. Let us read **verse 8**: Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel’s sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them. Moses verified what Jethro heard was true. There was no strong army to overcome the military force of Egypt. It was God who liberated His people. Moses was being honest in his testimony too. The Israelites did encounter some challenges in their journey. The pursuit of the Egyptian army, the Red Sea, the lack of food and water. But one difficulty after another, God saved the Israelites. That should be the message in our testimonies too. Life is hard but God is good. Don’t just tell others your accomplishments, tell them the bad things you encountered too. You used to be a foreigner in God’s Kingdom. You were in the bondage of sin. You faced problems in life – sickness, inter-personal conflict, financial problem, etc. But God rescued you. Share about God’s grace to your colleagues during lunch, or to your family members in your home country via Facetime. If people can connect what you experienced with what you believe, then it is an effective testimony.

## B. Proofs of Man’s Faith 信心的明證

Moses shared about God’s grace. How did Jethro react after he heard Moses’ testimony? Jethro believed in God! From Jethro’s response, we can see five proofs of his faith. First, Jethro was delighted to hear what the Lord had done for Israel (v. 9). He understood that it was Jehovah who delivered the Israelites. There could be no other explanation. Second, Jethro praised God (v. 10). He gave thanks to God for His wonderful work. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 12:2-3** that: **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. **3** Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. Just like Jethro, the people in the Corinthian church used to be idol worshippers. The point is that unless it is the work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s heart he/she will not say that God is good. Third, Jethro stated that God was above all the other gods (v. 11). Fourth, Jethro offered sacrifices to God (v. 12). It is quite unthinkable for a priest who practiced another religion to say that Jehovah was superior than the deities he served, and to present offerings to Him. It is bigger than a die-hard University of Tennessee fan who puts on a Florida, Georgia or Alabama shirt and cheer for its

rivalries. Moses, Aaron and the Israelite elders did not stop Jethro by saying: “Hey pal, I don’t think our God will appreciate your offering.” Instead, those Israelite leaders ate with Jethro (v. 12). Brother Ron told us last week that sharing a meal indicates friendship. Therefore, the Israelite leaders welcomed Jethro into their faith community. We can use those five points as a checklist to examine our faith in God. Are we excited to hear what God has done in other people’s lives? Do we attribute the results to God alone, or do we simply comment: “He had good luck.”? Do we admit that our God is the one true God and He is bigger than the other so-called “gods?” Do we offer our money and service to God from a willing and grateful heart? Lastly, do we cherish a time of fellowship with other believers? Your answers to those five questions reflect your faith in God.

## 2. Convincing a Head 說服帶領者

God used Moses’ testimony to convert a heathen. Jethro returned the favor to Moses by solving a headache situation. He convinced this head of the Israelites to adopt a new proposal.

### A. Discern the Problem 察覺問題

First, Jethro discerned the problem. Look at **verse 14**: When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?” Jethro’s remarks come down to a simple question: “How come you don’t have any helper?” Jethro noticed Moses could not do anything else but sat there all day and listened to people’s grievances. Jethro did the right thing by first clarifying what he discerned. He did not say to Moses: “I think you should adopt the management plan I use in Midian.” or “I have been a consultant to many Fortune-500 companies. Let me tell you what to do.” Jethro was not an Israelite. It was none of his business. But he cared about the well-being of his son-in-law. Guys: I know sometimes your in-laws may be hard to please. But more than likely they want you to stay healthy and happy. After all, if you are doing well, you will treat their daughter nicely too. If our conclusion is correct that Jethro had become a God-follower then he was no longer an outsider. After Jethro understood what was going on, he made his comments in **verses 17-18**: 17 Moses’ father-in-law replied, “What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.” Jethro discerned the problem from a practical standpoint. Moses could burn out. It is like for the Attorney General of Tennessee to serve as the only judge in the whole state. One person cannot take all the court cases. People would not be happy to see a long line either. Don’t think that you are the only impatient customer waiting at the doctor’s office or the DMV. With the time it took to finally see Moses people might as well settle their conflicts among themselves.

### B. Discuss a Solution 提供解決

After Jethro discerned the problem he then discussed a solution with Moses. Listen to Jethro’s proposal in **verses 21-22**: 21 “But select capable men from all the people-men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain-and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will

make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.” Moses being the head judge had to find people who were able to share his workload. In Jethro’s opinion, a hierarchy of court system should be set up. Moses would oversee some leaders, who in turn would supervise judges at the next level. The “lower courts” could handle trivial cases. For example, some kids bullying other kids or people mixing up their flocks with their neighbors’. Pay attention to the criteria for electing judges. They had to be men who honored God, had good reputation among the people and refused to take a bribe. In the New Testament, the early church used similar standards to look for coworkers. **Acts 6:3** reads: “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.” Does anyone remember what kind of church ministry it was about? It was the distribution of food to widows. The church set high requirements for coworkers who took care of even a simple matter. They had to be spiritually mature, because they were considered leaders. How do we choose our coworkers in the church? Do we pick people who have higher education degrees because we think they must be smarter? Or do we look for people who are managers at work because they should be more talented? Our church is in the process of electing new coworkers. Recent I suggested to the Council a set of guidelines for qualified people. There are eight criteria from A to H. For the sake of time I just go through the list quickly. I would love to share the document with you. Please let me know. The list includes meeting attendance, Bible knowledge and wisdom, cash (how to handle money), devotion life, evangelism, family, spiritual gifts and talents and humility. Those qualities are related to personal relationship with God, how people see themselves and how others see them. My intention is not to put people down. We should not discourage people to serve in the church. No one can be perfect. Fortunately, I have not received any resignation yet. However, ministry is not just completing a long list of responsibilities. It is a privilege to serve God. Those who serve in the Council, direct fellowship groups, teach Sunday school and even stand on the Sunday podium are all leaders. God sets a high standard for all the leaders and so should we.

## CONCLUSION

God achieves His plans through our participation. God used Moses to convert Jethro. God also used this new Gentile believer to bless the Israelites. Moses saw the eternal need of his father-in-law. Moses shared about what God had done to Jethro and he believed. Jethro saw that Moses needed helpers to shoulder his burden. A system of judges was implemented. Even today, God is using you and I to achieve His plans in this world. All it takes is for us to pay attention to the people around us and to take actions. From daily needs to the need for salvation, we can be a tool for God to achieve His plans. It does not even need to be something big. Let me encourage you with a recent new song by Christian artist Josh Wilson titled “Dream Small.” Part of the lyrics go like this: “Dream small. Don’t bother like you’ve gotta do it all. Just let Jesus use you where you are one day at a time. It’s visiting the widow down the street, or dancing on a Friday with your friend with special needs. These simple moments change the world. Of course, there’s nothing wrong with bigger dreams. Just don’t miss the minutes on your way, your bigger things, no! ’Cause these simple moments change the world.”