

EXODUS

v o l u m e 2

The Dangers of Going It Alone (Exodus 18:13-27)

Bottom Line: Neglecting the help of others is dangerous for you as well as those around you.

Can you describe the hardest thing you've ever had to do by yourself? How would it have been different if you had some help?

We don't want to admit it, but we all need help. Failure to recognize that will only result in problems for ourselves and for others. When we close ourselves off from receiving help and advice from others and we try and go it alone, we're missing out on a very special grace that God has given us.

Read Exodus 18:13-27

Jethro comes on the scene and quickly realizes that Moses has a big problem on his hands. Of course, Moses' problem was not that he was doing something *bad*; helping the people of Israel to settle their disputes was a *good* thing. Moses' problem was that he was trying to do a good thing in a bad way. In this case, Moses was taking too much of the responsibility upon himself and not allowing others to help him.

In this case, Moses should have been proactive about asking for other people's help. Why are we afraid of asking for help? How does pride affect our ability to work together with others? What about trust?

What are some common areas of our lives that we think "I have to do this myself" and we shut ourselves off from being open to advice or help from others? (Could be areas like parenting, finances, dating/relationships, etc.) Why do we feel this way?

Read verses 17-18 again. What is the personal danger of taking too much responsibility upon ourselves? How does our desire to go it alone hurt others? How does our sharing the load with others actually end up helping others and benefitting *them*?

As is clear from Moses' example, our attempts at "lone ranger" Christianity end up hurting not only ourselves, but others as well. There is no way that we can be faithful to take care of ourselves as well as everyone else. Like the crowd of people waiting to get their turn to speak to Moses, some people in our lives are going to be overlooked and possibly forgotten. The weights and responsibilities of this life are far too numerous for any one person to navigate on their own. We will collapse under all the pressure, and others will end up experiencing the collateral damage. **One of the dangers of going it alone is the inevitable burn-out and exhaustion that will come not only to you, but to others as well.** Like Moses, there are gifted people in our lives that are capable of shouldering some of the workload, but if we never give them a chance to help, then they never get to use their gifts, and they are missing out on opportunities to grow in their faith. But that's not the only danger of going it alone.

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Verses 13 and 14 tell us that Moses' workload kept him busy from "morning till evening"—his entire day was devoted to just this one thing. As the leader of Israel, Moses had much more responsibility than just settling disputes, he was also responsible for hearing from God and relaying God's messages to the people. In fact, in verses 19 and 20, it is this responsibility of representing the people to God and God to the people that Jethro reinforced to Moses was his main duty. Somewhere along the way, Moses got sidetracked. **Another danger of going it alone is that we can easily go astray without anybody to help hold us accountable.**

What are the spiritual responsibilities that we have as Christians? What excuses do we often try to make about why we don't pray more? Why we skip out on church? Why we don't share the gospel? Why we don't study the Bible? How does being in community with other believer hold us accountable to these things?

We have to fight against the increasing temptation to try and live the Christian life in solitude. If we work hard to build strong communities that spend time with one another, care for one another, and encourage one another, we will find it far easier to "stay on track" in our walks with the Lord. This kind of guidance and protection is something that we miss out on if we try and go it alone.

Who was the "help" that the Lord provided for Moses? What communities of help and support do you have? What ways are you open to allowing the church, your small group, or your family to help you?

How has the Gospel reconciled us not only to God, but to others as well? (see Ephesians 2:14-19) How does this reality affect the way that we think about giving and receiving help from others?

At the end of the day, a sobering question to ask yourself is: can you fulfill God's purpose for you on your own?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

What is your initial reaction when you think about having to ask someone for help? Do you feel weak for having to do so? Do you feel inadequate? Or do you feel like you don't have to, that you have everything under control? If Christ's righteousness has been credited to your account, then why do you not feel free to admit that you may not have everything together? Is it a lack of trust in the Gospel? Are you trying to maintain a certain level of performance in order to please God? Is it a lack of deep, trustworthy relationships? How can you increase your confidence in the Gospel? What steps can you take to open up to somebody about the help that you need?

Are you approaching burn-out? Are you trying to do too much on your own? If you don't share the weight of what you're trying to do with others, who could potentially be hurt if

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you fail? Are there any spiritual disciplines that you are neglecting because you are too busy? (Prayer, studying the bible, attending church, etc.)

Are you truly open to allowing this small group to help you and keep you accountable? Do you come to group expecting to be helped or to help someone else? Or are you merely trying to maintain a certain image or reputation?