

# Exodus Chapter 18

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      Because of God's faithfulness and because his throne is a throne of grace, we can approach him with confidence. So let's do that now in prayer. Let us all pray.

Our most glorious and wonderful Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truths of which we've been singing and reading, the truths of your faithfulness, the truths of your approachableness, the truths, O Lord, that you are gracious, that you are God and King. We thank you again, O Lord, that as we come this morning, every single one of us who knows you as our Heavenly Father, every single one of us who has known that grace poured out into our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of your Holy Spirit, every single one of us can say that what a faithful God you are. What a faithful God have I. We thank you that you are the God of us corporately, the whole of the church, every single member of the body of Christ throughout the world is yours. And yet, Lord, we thank you that we can say I have a faithful God. For you are the one who comes and works in our lives personally. You're the one who's come and spoken to us individually, called us out of darkness into light, called us from death to life. Lord, you're the one who's spoken to us when we were lost so that, Lord, you found us and brought us safely into your fold.

We thank you that you're the one who now continues to keep us, providing for us, supplying our needs, blessing us. Thank you that you will never change, though we confess this morning again that we are changeable people. We would love to be more faithful than we are, but we have to confess, Lord, that we continue to get it wrong. We continue to sin. We continue to be selfish. We continue, Lord, to be those who seek our own will rather than yours. And yet, we thank you that in your grace and because of the cross, there is full forgiveness for all and every one of our sins, if we will but bring them to you. If we will just come to that throne of grace. We know, Lord, that in heaven there is a throne yet to be established in one sense because we know that at the coming of your Son, that we will all stand before that throne of judgment. Every single person who's ever lived and died must be judged and must come to that throne, Lord, to be judged for our sins and punished and sentenced accordingly to your justice and faithfulness and fairness. But, Lord, we thank you that if we would come to your throne of grace now, then we need not fear that judgment. We need not fear that day, Lord, when we must give an account for all our behavior, our sins, our unbelief and our rebellion. Lord, if we would come to your throne of grace, then we would receive from you such unbelievable pardon and forgiveness, such delight and such deliverance from all that is, Lord, hanging over us, as it were, our own sins and shame. And, Lord, we ask that indeed each of us may come to the throne of grace, even today.

We might come with our sins. We might come heavy laden. We thank you for the wonderful, glorious invitation. Lord Jesus, come to me, all you who are heavy laden and burdened. I will give you rest.

We pray, Lord, that we might come, whether it be the burden of our sin and the burden of our health, the burden of our family, the burden, Lord, of the worries of this world, of our children, of our parents, of finance or job or future. We ask, O Lord, that we might each come to you unburdening ourself upon you, casting all our cares on you, for you care for us. And that, Lord, instead of burdens, we might receive the lightness of your yoke. We might receive the lightness of your lordship over our lives, that we might again freely and gladly acknowledge you as our king and our master, as our God, that we might, Lord, once more commit ourselves into your service to do your will, for we know that your will is best and good and only that which brings delight and joy.

[ 4 : 15 ] O Lord, be with us then. Help us then in this time. Meet with us, we pray. Do us good, for we know that is your desire. And we ask these things in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'll ask Barry to read for us now from God's Word, from Exodus and chapter 18. Exodus chapter 18. I'm going to read the whole of the chapter.

Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, I have become an alien in a foreign land.

And the other was named Eliezer, for he said, my father's God was my helper. He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the desert, where he was camped near the mountain of God.

[ 5 : 35 ] Jethro had sent word to him, I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons. So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him.

They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 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'd met along the way, and how the Lord had saved them.

Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, praise be to the Lord who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians.

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who treated Israel arrogantly. Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

The next day, Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 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?

[ 7 : 02 ] Why do you alone sit as judge while all these people stand around you from morning till evening? Moses answered him, because the people come to me to seek God's will.

Whenever they have a dispute, it's brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws. Moses' father-in-law replied, what you are doing is not good.

You and these people who come out to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me, and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you.

You must be the people's representative before God, and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live, and the duties they are to perform.

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.

[ 8 : 08 ] Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you. The simple case is they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.

If you do this, and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people go home satisfied. Moses listened to his father-in-law, and did everything he said.

He chose capable men from all Israel, and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times.

The difficult cases, they brought to Moses, but the simple ones, they decided themselves. Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

Amen. Amen. If you have a Bible to hand, and I would encourage you to put your hand on one, turn with me back to Exodus and chapter 18.

[ 9 : 18 ] Exodus 18, where Barry read from just a little while ago. We've got one of the red pew Bibles, one of the church Bibles, that's page 76 or 75, around about there.

We've been journeying with God's people, as they've left Egypt, gone through the Red Sea, entered into the wilderness, the desert of sin. We've seen how God has delivered them, from the Egyptians.

We've seen how God has provided them food, provided them water on two occasions. And last week, particularly, we saw them facing their very first real test, in the sense that they had their first battle against the Amalekites, and how the Lord gave them that victory.

And that was a picture to us, an illustration to us, of how, as God's people, we are to work together, we are to serve together, we are in a battle together, spiritually, as Christians, and in the local church, how important it is, each one plays their part.

And into chapter 18, we have an interlude, in one sense, in the journey. Not much progress is made, they're stuck in one place, but there's a very, very, great deal of time, given to this interaction, this meeting of, and visiting, of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

[ 10 : 44 ] And so I want to begin by asking you, a very personal question. How do you get on with your in-laws? Perhaps you find the relationship strained, at times, between yourself, and your daughter-in-law, or your son-in-law.

It may feel that, your in-laws are interfering, judgmental. Some other ways, they make time that you spend with them, uncomfortable. And you put it off, as much as you can.

Perhaps your brother-in-law, always seems to be competing with you. But who's got the better job, or the better lifestyle, or the better income, or car?

In-laws, of course, have been the butt of many jokes. A friend of mine, whenever referring to his parents' family, always called them the outlaws. They weren't that bad. Perhaps yours are.

But for a long time, they have been the butt of jokes. And truth is, they can be one of the most difficult of the relationships we have with people within our family.

[ 11 : 50 ] They can be stressful times when they visit, or we visit them. We can find that relationships are put to the test. But perhaps that isn't the case.

That doesn't have to be the case. You may get on really well with your in-laws. You may be one of those who find that relationship with them very enriching for you, and the family. Well, such is the case, I think, with Jethro and Moses when they meet together after some time.

And that son-in-law, Moses, meets with his father-in-law. And in this event, I think we have some very helpful instruction about how we are to relate to not just our in-laws, but to all those within our family relationships, and even outside of our family, within our church relationships, especially as believers, especially as Christians.

You see, as those who have been born again of the Spirit of God, every aspect of our lives is affected by the work of God within us. Every aspect of our relationships has been changed for the better.

And in our families, and in those close relationships, that should be just as much the case as anywhere else. Whatever sort of appearance or mask we may wear to the church on a Sunday, or to the world in the workplace, or at school through the week, if we haven't a genuine transforming work of God in our lives, then the place where that will slip, the place where we will show our true colors is particularly in the family.

[ 13 : 29 ] Because it's in the family that we really are ourselves more than anywhere else. We let our guard down. And the question is, is there consistency in your life?

Consistency in the workplace, in the church, and in the family? Or is there hypocrisy? Is there something that always causes you to trip up in your relationship with others?

Or do you show that you have been truly born again of the Spirit of God? You see, there cannot be double standards. One of the things that the world loves to do is to point at Christians, or church people, or religious people, and say, ha ha, it's double standard there.

On the Sunday, you're nice and friendly, and on the Monday, you're like a hellbat. You're awful. You're terrible. This person who holds a high position, a vicar, or a minister, or an elder, whoever they may be, they're all goody two-shoes on the Sunday, but on the rest of the week, they really are something to behold.

And of course, that must include our in-laws as well. There's one overriding principle, an attitude that comes out in this chapter, which is so important, and that's the attitude of respect between Moses and his father-in-law.

[ 14 : 55 ] We see it particularly in verse 7. Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him, greeted each other and went into the tent. Now, it could have been just eastern hospitality, politeness, but it does reveal that there is real respect.

You may feel that your in-laws should bow at your feet when they come and visit you, too, but that probably isn't really very good if you ask them to. The whole story overflows with mutual respect between these two men, and we can pick up some helpful pointers in the events that take place that can practically help us in our relationships, again with our in-laws, but in all our relationships, whether it be with our parents, with our children, members of our fellowship or whatever.

How are we to grow in respect? How are we to earn respect from others? How are we to show respect? I'm going to do something which I don't usually do.

I'm going to have a seven-point sermon. Oh! Did you hear that? It was this side of the room. A seven-point sermon using the letters of the word respect to spell out just, I think, some of the insights that we have here about how we are to deal with one another.

Now, it can be very difficult to respect one another. It can be hard, particularly if the people that we are related to or in relationship with are unconverted or unpleasant or difficult or ungodly, but the Bible teaches us, 1 Peter chapter 2, 17, that we are to show proper respect to everyone.

[ 16 : 40 ] So it's not one person that we are not to respect and show respect and show respect to whoever they are, whatever we think of them, whatever they've done to us. And for that reason, we're going to take these letters of the word respect and bring out, hopefully, without straining the text, but actually showing from the text that we can grow in respect for one another and we can earn respect from one another by the way that we live in such a way as to bless our relationships, to strengthen our relationships.

Sometimes we can write them off and we can say, well, there's just no way we can ever come back from this situation, this hurt, these words, these actions, but rather, I trust that with God's help we can.

The very first letter, then, of respect is R, and so I'm going to point out and pick up the fact that respect begins with rejoicing together. Rejoicing together, it's there in verse 9, Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians.

Now we know that Jethro had heard earlier on at the very beginning in verse 1 of everything that God had done for Moses and his people which prompted him to come and make this visit as he does, but we hear that he's delighted, he's delighted in what happened to them, and he praises God, doesn't he, as well, for what happened to them.

Now it had no effect upon him, really, he was out of it, he was in the desert of Midian where he was a shepherd owning great flocks and where, of course, we know Moses had been his employee for 40 years before going back to Egypt.

[ 18 : 25 ] the Lord saving his people, Israel, had no effect upon him materially, he wasn't going to get richer by it, he wasn't going to be more prospered by it in any way, yet he's the one who rejoices, he's delighted.

Romans chapter 2, verse 15, tells us that as Christians we are to rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. The trouble is, of course, that we are selfish beings and we are given to jealousy.

And so when somebody else is particularly blessed, when somebody else does particularly well, when somebody else receives something that we don't have, there grows within us that jealousy, doesn't there?

Oh, why have they got it? Why didn't I get that blessing? Why haven't I enjoyed that windfall, as it were, from the tax man or whatever it may be?

Remembering that the final commandment in the Ten Commandments is do not covet. The reason that God puts those commandments in there, of course, is because each one of them is a problem to us.

[ 19 : 29 ] We do covet. We covet one another's blessings. We see others happy, others prospering, others healthy, and we envy them for those things, particularly if they're absent from ourselves.

But, dear friends, isn't it much better to rejoice with them? It's much better for us and it's much better for them. It's much healthier for our relationship to rejoice, to delight. I've got to confess to you and I'll hold my hand up high.

There are times when I hear of God blessing a particular church or churches, seeing people converted and growth, and I'm envious. Why, O Lord, doesn't that happen to us or me?

But there's a problem there, isn't there? A problem that is revealed by the fact that we feel that way. It's a sinful problem and let us look to the Lord then to help us to rejoice.

Rejoice when somebody is recovering from an illness. Rejoice when things are going well for them. Certainly would make our lives even better as well as helpfully encouraging our relationships with others.

[ 20 : 41 ] Second point then is this. Our respect is to rejoice. He is inquiring. Inquiring after the welfare of others.

Back in verse 14 when Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing, he said, what is this you're doing for the people? Why do you sit as judge while all these people stand around you from morning to evening?

He's clearly got a concern and interest in Moses' affairs, in Moses' life, in his duties. We see that in verse 13. He spent the whole day following Moses, listening to what Moses was doing, the burdens and the job that Moses was undertaking and he comes to him with concern.

What's happening? What's going on? He inquires. He is concerned. about the welfare of his son-in-law.

Now of course that could be easily misconstrued as interfering, couldn't it? Sticking in the nose, the mother-in-law acting as a busybody. What are you doing that for? Why are you doing this?

[ 21 : 45 ] What's going on? Perhaps you might feel that way when people ask us or question us or concern for us. We may take it wrongly. Again, it shows there's a problem in us, isn't it?

What do they want to know for? Why are they interested? Is it real interest? And let's be honest, let's search our own hearts when we do ask after the daughter-in-law. Is there a real sense of interest and concern for her?

Or is it just that we're nosy or looking for an opportunity to be critical? Perhaps we don't ask about family and friends because we're afraid. Well, we don't want to be burned with their worries.

We've got enough worries of our own. We don't want to have to take on their trials. They've probably brought it upon themselves anyway. See how the word of God illuminates our hearts, doesn't it?

And it shows there's some very nasty, dark places. Clearly only in mine, but I'm sure in yours too. Paul tells us in Galatians 6.2 that we're to carry each other's burdens.

[ 22 : 46 ] How can we carry each other's burdens if we don't know what burdens the other person? He says, carry each other's burdens and in this way fulfill the law of Christ. Jesus' commandment which we talk to the children about, love one another as I've loved you.

How can we do that unless we know? Are we really interested? Are we concerned? Are we making inquiries about the troubles that people are going through with our in-laws?

We may be quick to jump to a judgment about them when they do something which we think isn't right, but have we actually understood their circumstances and their situation? Do we know what's behind the decision they've made?

We can't just say, well, they should have told us. Well, perhaps we didn't ask. Rejoice, inquire. Thirdly, share.

Share with them. Notice there in verse 12. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God.

[ 23 : 50 ] He came with things. He came with provisions, if we can put it that way. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

Jethro didn't withhold from giving generously, ultimately, to Moses and yes, to the Lord. Now, we know he was a relatively wealthy man. Back in chapter 3, we found out he had great herds of sheep, which again, Moses looked after.

He had an important position within the tribe. He was the priest of the Lord within the tribe. What did he do with the good things he had?

What did he do with the way that God had prospered and blessed him materially? Well, he shared it with his son-in-law. Now, practical support of family isn't always possible.

It's not always that we're in a position where we can give to our in-laws in one way or another. We may feel that it can be a problem.

[ 24 : 52 ] A son-in-law can feel a little intimidated, can't he? When he can feel he's a poor provider when his father-in-law is always bailing him out or helping or offering finance. We've got to have much wisdom in the way that we do this.

And so, the previous point, of course, of inquiring and understanding the strains and pressures that our in-laws are under is so important. We need to know, are they struggling?

Is it difficult? They may be withholding it from us because they think that we're going to feel that they are inadequate in the way they've provided. Of course, saying all of that, we've got to be very careful.

You see, the Bible is very, very strong on the fact that we must look after our families. In fact, Peter, sorry, Paul writing to Timothy, giving him instruction about the church makes this comment, which is quite cutting.

He says in 1 Timothy 5, verse 8, anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially for their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[ 26 : 06 ] That's harsh, isn't it? There's a duty upon us as those who are members of a family to care for, to provide for whenever we can and wherever possible, the needs of our family.

That's not always possible, of course not, but where it is, are we like that? Do we share? Do we give? Surely that's going to build respect. It's going to build a good relationship between one another when there is that sense of sharing and giving and supporting.

Jethro did that. Fourthly then, we have as well P, rejoice, inquire, share, be patient.

Be patient. Verse 17, Moses' father-in-law replied, what you are doing is not good. Moses must have had to exercise a certain amount of patience and I think really Jethro did the same because he spent the day with Moses on verse 13, saw all that he was doing.

He didn't say anything at the start or midday or even that evening. He waited till later on to speak patience. Now we know, of course, that Moses, we're told, is the humblest man who ever lived so that probably helped in him being patient with his father-in-law.

[ 27 : 27 ] But no doubt, as Jethro begins to criticise the way that he's been behaving and the things he's been doing, it must have been very hard for him not to immediately fly off the handle and say, who do you think you are?

He could have said to Jethro in return, look, you know, you don't know who I am. I'm Moses. I'm God's appointed leader of this people. You don't go around telling me what to do. Didn't you hear about the miracles that God did through me in Egypt?

Didn't you hear about how the Red Sea was parted because I held my hand over and the water came to the rock when I struck it? He could have jumped to all those things, couldn't he? He didn't. Whether he did inwardly, we don't know, but he certainly did outwardly.

The problem, of course, is that we all have egos. We are proud people and we can be impatient with the weaknesses or seeming weaknesses of others, particularly when they are in our family.

We can be critical, not patient, not understanding, not knowing. And, of course, we can, on the adverse side, be angry when our in-laws tell us what to do or are unforgiving towards us or say things.

[ 28 : 44 ] We can be angry with them, not patient. Patience is, as we know, a fruit of the Spirit. It's one of those ones that we really need to exercise and ask the Lord to help for with one another.

Particularly, of course, when we see that the fifth point, E, is excusing one another's faults. excusing one another's faults. You and these people who come to you, verse 18, will only wear yourselves out.

The work is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. Moses had got it wrong. He wasn't handling his time, his energies.

Well, Jethro noticed that. It was a failing, it was a fault in his son-in-law. But he is forgiving. Each one of us muck up.

Each one of us make a mess of things from time to time. Each one of us get it wrong. We say things. We do things. We make mistakes. We need to be excusing of one another's faults.

[ 29 : 53 ] Forgiving one another. Now, of course, we know that Moses' intentions were good. He wanted to do God's will. He wanted to help the people to do what God wanted.

There was nothing wrong with his intentions, but it was a fault. He got it wrong. Jethro could see that ultimately, verse 18, ultimately, this was going to create a real problem, going to cause a disaster.

If things weren't changed, if things weren't dealt with, then there could end up being a real breakdown in the whole situation of Moses' leadership of God's people. Dear friends, if we've been failed by our in-laws, if we've lost respect for them because the way they've treated us in the past, or because the mistakes that they've made, or because they don't do things the way that we think they should do those things, have we excused them?

Have we forgiven them? Do we actually make a point of bringing them up? Do we make a point of using them against them?

And you might respond to me, but Peter, you don't know what they did. You don't know what they said to me, how hurtful their words were, how unpleasant they were, how they were so unsupportive when I was in real need.

[ 31 : 28 ] You don't know how they let me down and they've done it more than once. No, I don't know your situation. But I know the command of our Lord Jesus Christ is that we forgive from the heart.

I know the command of God's word in Ephesians 4.32 is that we should forgive each other just as in Christ God forgave us. And you know it too.

Yes, we know our own sins, our own weaknesses, our own failings. If we've badly treated our family and friends, then it's no surprise that they may have done that to us too.

Excusing one another, forgiving one another is imperative to a good, healthy relationship. Point six, which really sums up what we've already been saying but comes again together.

Communication is key. Communication. Look at verse six. Verse six tells us that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had sent word to him.

[ 32 : 34 ] I am your father-in-law and I am coming to you with your wife and two sons. Now there are some people I know who are really quite happy when people just drop in on them uninvited, unexpected.

They don't mind that at all. They take everything in their stride but there's a lot of people who don't like that at all. They like some notice in advance if people are going to pop round so they can bake a cake. Think about it.

Never mind. We all like a bit of notice. We all like to be prepared. Jethro didn't have to communicate to Moses. He didn't have to say to him and send him a message.

Look, I'm coming on my way. I'm on the way, I'm coming. He didn't have a mobile phone. He couldn't text. He didn't, he didn't even send a letter. He obviously had to send a servant ahead of him. It took some preparation.

Now the good, the key to all good relationships we know, whether it be with in-laws, whether it be between a husband and wife or parents and children, the key is always communication. More often than not, the reason that things do break down, the reason that relationships are strained, that we do end up saying things we don't, shouldn't say or acting in ways we shouldn't act is because we haven't communicated.

[ 33 : 48 ] We haven't spoken. We haven't got our message across. We haven't, we haven't inquired. We haven't really made a good connection. Now for men particularly, that's a problem.

We are not good communicators, men. Our wives are all nodding. We just aren't. You know, women are good communicators. They practice all the time.

But we aren't. That's better. Regular communication builds respect. It builds relationship. And especially, of course, if they're people, if they're in-laws who are like another part of the country, another part of the world, we don't see them very often and we see them infrequently, it's so important that we do communicate with one another, keep in touch, email.

It's easier than ever before. That's how we get to know one another. That's how we break down barriers that are naturally there. These people, particularly our in-laws, are people we know nothing about. Yes, we married their daughter, but we've married into the family.

We need to communicate. And we see, of course, good communication on Moses' behalf as well in verse 8. He takes Jethro into the tent and he tells him everything the Lord has done. With Pharaoh and the Egyptian, tells him all about the Red Sea, all about the plagues, all about the Exodus, all about the Passover, all about the bread, the manna, the water from the rock and so on.

[ 35 : 12 ] He tells him the lot. He shares with him. He shares with him something of his testimony. And for some of us here, we will have, if not all of us, we will have relations who are not Christians.

When was the last time I shared with them my testimony? When was the last time I spoke to my in-laws about Christ? Who are not believers?

When was the last time that I really told them why it is I'm a Christian? Why it is I go to church? Why it is that I want to follow him and put his standards in my life in all that I do?

Now, there can be resentment, can't there, on behalf of in-laws who are not believers to those who are believers because they don't really understand what's going on. They don't understand why you've suddenly become religious or why you are religious.

They can't understand what it's all about. There can be resentment. Why won't you go and watch the football match or take part in it on the Sunday? Why won't you do these things?

[ 36 : 19 ] Why do you not get drunk when there's a family due? It can be a resentment, a lack of understanding and because we don't communicate. Is it simply that we take a moral high ground and we say, well, you know, they should know I'm a Christian therefore I don't do that.

No, why should they know that? Why should anybody know that? Communication is important and necessary. One final thing.

See, those six points went quick, didn't they? Seventh point as we close. Finally, we see, of course, there must be trust.

There must be trust. Moses had already displayed great trust in his father-in-law Jethro when he sent his wife Zipporah and their two sons to him before he undertook that dangerous task of returning to Egypt to face Pharaoh.

Verse 2, after Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her and her two sons. He'd entrusted his family into the hands of his father-in-law.

- [ 37 : 29 ] Now, he probably had a very strong relationship with his father-in-law having known him 40 years, worked with him and for him over that time as well. But showing someone that you trust them is a sure way to gain their respect and to show that you respect them.
- Just as not trusting someone can seriously harm a relationship and show a lack of respect. Every relationship exists only on the basis of trust.
- Whether it be a professional relationship with a doctor and a patient, whether it be the trust relationship between a husband and wife, children and parents. But it has to be more words, more than words.
- You can't just show trust by saying I trust you. It has to be much more than feeling as well. We've got to show it. It's got to be visible. It's got to be seen. When was the last time you let your son-in-law borrow your car?
- Woo-hoo-hoo! That's my precious joy. That's, I polish it and clean it. Let him touch it. He's a maniac. I'm just exaggerating and imagining what you think.
- [ 38 : 41 ] When was the last time you let your in-laws look after your children? Yes, but they feed them up with sugary sweets and drinks and they come back hypo. Hyper, not hypo, no, they're not diabetic, hypo.
- Now Moses trusted his in-laws, his father-in-law and he had to put, and he reveals a great deal of trust, doesn't he, an increasing trust in him when he receives the advice that Jethro gives him and acts upon it.
- Look at verse 24. Sorry, not verse 24, yeah, verse 24. Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. Moses advised him how he can distribute his time, how he can delegate, how he can be freed up from the weight of responsibility for better, much better for his family, much better for his health.
- And as we've seen already, Moses doesn't respond by the, who do you think you are telling me what to do, but he listens and he acts upon it. When did we last do that with our in-laws?
- Whether it be our parents-in-law or our sons and daughters-in-law, when did we last listen when they gave us some advice? When did we last seek their advice?
- [ 40 : 00 ] When did we last ask them to pray for us because of a difficult situation? When did we last entrust them with very personal and difficult things which we are going through?
- It's part of respect, isn't it? Trusting one another. It's got to be what the relationship in the local church is built on, isn't it? Well, trusting one another. Trusting that we won't gossip about one another.
- Trusting that we won't be judgmental about one another. Trusting that we will seek to encourage one another. Trusting that we will want the best for one another. You see, as I said right at the very start, dear friends, we are, as Christians, those who are changed.
- Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has gone. Everything has become new. Not just inwardly, but externally.
- That's the wonder, that's the blessing, that's the joy, that's the marvel of being a Christian. The old way of looking at things, of distrusting people, of being judgmental and critical, of finding fault in others, is gone.
- [ 41 : 17 ] The new way of living, of loving one another as Christ loved us, of trusting, of forgiving, of forbearing, of being patient, of rejoicing, of looking for the best, that's the new.
- That's why I really don't understand why people aren't breaking down the doors of the church wanting to get in. Because to be a Christian is the most wonderful, glorious thing that can ever happen.

It makes everything better, including our relationships with our in-laws. Let's pray together. O Lord our God, we thank you for bringing us into that relationship with yourself once we were far from you, cut off, alienated, enemies because of our sinful way of life and behavior and attitudes.

Yet, Lord, in love you came to us where we were and where we are in our sin and you rescued us and you lifted us up and you made us new. We thank you that you made us new not only that our relationship with you might be restored but our relationships with others may be healthier, stronger, better.

And Lord, we have to confess that so often our relationships with members of our family, particularly perhaps in-laws but others as well, have not been good. We've not looked for the best.

[ 42 : 46 ] We've not spoken well of them privately or even publicly. Oh Lord, forgive us. We pray that you would work in our hearts and lives as we believe you worked in Jethro and Moses to be mutually a benefit and to show the reality and the power of your grace and gospel in our lives.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us in this and that you give us that great desire, Lord, we pray, that in those relationships which we particularly find strained and difficult, that we would work with your help to restore and improve them.

Help us to learn from what we've heard this morning, to put it into action and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Amen.