



# **Message Transcript**

## **Growing Spiritual Leaders**

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, thank you so much for who you are and for all you're doing. Lord, we thank you that you've given us the gift of prayer. You've given us the ability to speak directly to you and to hear directly from you. Lord, we pray this morning as you're living an active word is open, that you would have a word for us because Lord, we believe that every time your word is open, that it's studied, it's read, it's memorized, or it's faithfully and accurately proclaimed, Lord, that you have a word directly for us. So our prayer this morning is speak for we are ready to hear. And now for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the Lord, who will believe what Jesus tells you this morning and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen.

Amen. The greatest news on the planet is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son. Jesus became incarnate flesh, lived in this world, fulfilled the law, died on a cross, was buried in a grave, paid all the penalty for all the sin of the world, and rose from the dead. He's as alive today as he's ever been. And through repentance in faith, any person, anywhere, at any time can turn from his or her sins, turn to Christ and be saved to the full forever and ever. Even better. There's more. God deposits his Holy Spirit in our life and tells us that he will walk with us every single day. And what happens to us is when we are born again and we do come to faith in Christ, there's this desire to know God more intimately.

There's this desire to grow. There's this desire to let Jesus live his life through us

in a way that we lived apart from him for so many years. So if we come to Christ and we're single, we want to know what does it look like to be a Christian single? If we're married, we want to know what it looks like to be Christian in our marriage as a Christian husband or a Christian wife. If we're a child, we want to know what it looks like to be a Christian kid or to go to school and be Christian in our school. There's all these different ways. And then we start thinking about all these different areas of our life, like our finances and how we handle stress and what we do and what the Bible has to say about that. And in case the Bible, which is replete with all sorts of information about that is not good enough for you, the bookstores or Amazon are filled with books about every little detail about how you can live your life to the full as a Christian.

So there's books on marriage and there's books on parenting and there's books on how to study the scripture. And there's books on prayer and there's all these how-to books that sometimes even as someone who wants to grow in Christ, it can be overwhelming. You can read all sorts of books about parenting only to realize I'm still not great at this. Or all sorts of books on your finances and realize I'm still not so great at this or all the books upon whatever it is and realize I'm still not so great at it. Or how about one step further, the gospel's great news. How do I share it? What does it look like? Or if I do share it, then how could God actually use me to grow someone else up in the faith that's actually living out all the principles God wants them to live out.

Because when Jesus has commissioned us, what did he tell us, go into all the world and do what make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father Son and

the Holy Spirit and doing what? Teaching them to obey everything that I have told you. So one of our responsibilities is to teach people how to live everything that Jesus Christ taught. And he said, I'll be with you always till the end of the age. Doesn't that feel a little bit overwhelming? And there's leadership conferences, there's all sorts of things that we can go to and learn how to be a better leader. But I find for many Christians that genuinely love the Lord when it comes to certain aspects of their life, no matter how hard they try, they feel overwhelmed and their voice goes off in their head that says this, you'll never be any good at this Christian thing.

You'll never be a good discipler. You'll never be good at sharing the gospel. You're never going to have a great marriage. You're never going to be a great parent. Just kind of endure and get through and one day you'll be in glory. And if you've ever felt like that, I believe God has a word for you. I want you to know this morning that when God saved you, he set you apart. He filled you with his spirit because he has purpose for your life for which you can fulfill. And he actually believes that he can do a great work through you if you let him. And today we're going to talk about how you grow as a leader in Christ and how you can grow other spiritual leaders in Christ. Because something deep down in us as we begin to grow in Christ, causes us to say, well I want to see other people experience this.

I want them to grow in Christ. And if you've ever had a desire to grow in Christ or teach others how to grow, God has a word for you. Today I want you to open your Bibles up to Exodus chapter 18. We're back in the book of Exodus today. We haven't been there all year, believe it or not. And as we left off, you'll remember that what's

gone on is God appointed Moses from the time he was a young boy. Moses grew up in the household of Pharaoh, ended up murdering an Egyptian. So he fled to Midian. In Midian, he meets God at a burning bush that was being on fire, but it was not being consumed. He said, this is a curious site. He goes to the bush, God speaks to him, calls him to be the deliverer of his people, Israel from Egypt.

So Moses goes at the age of 80, he goes to deliver to the people. Moses performs 10 massive plagues. Pharaoh ultimately lets him go. When they get out into the wilderness, they're trapped. So God protects them with his pillar of fire in his cloud as he parts the Red Sea. All the Israelites cross. And when the Egyptian army goes in after them, the waters close on them. And that's the end of the leadership in Israel. Israel celebrates the leadership in Egypt, Israel celebrates. Israel's going crazy. It's a great day. They worship the Lord and that lasts for about a day or two. Because about day three they're like, we don't have any water. God provides water. We don't have any bread. God provides manna. We want meat. God provides quail. God provides everything they need. And then when battle time happens and the Amalekites show up, God has Moses stand on a heel and keep his hands up above his head.

And as long as Aaron and her hold his arms up, Joshua and all Israel is fighting. And so they've learned that even winning battles is dependent upon the Lord. And now we come here. Now we come to this section where everybody's going to begin to get reunited, and what does it look like for us to grow spiritually, and how can we grow spiritual leaders? And the first way is this. We grow spiritual leaders when we do this first and foremost, when we share and celebrate God's work with our family, when we

share and celebrate God's work with our family, listen to the text. It says "Now Jethro, the priest of Midian Moses' father-in-law heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel, his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law took Moses's wife Saphora after he had sent her away.

And her two sons of whom one was named Gershom for Moses said, I've been a sojourner and a foreign land. The other was named Eliezer for he said, the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped at the Mount of God." That's Mount Sinai. "He sent word to Moses, I your father-in-law, Jethro, I'm coming to you with your wife and her two sons. Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and he bowed down and kissed him and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent." So check out what's going on. Moses has sent his wife Saphora and his two sons back because for a period of month Moses is going to go to Egypt.

There's going to be a lot going on. The Bible doesn't give us the reason as to why Moses did that. We don't know why. But one of the main responsibilities of a husband is to protect your family. Seemingly he sent his wife and sons back saying, I'm going into Egypt. I don't know how this is going to go. It's safer for you to stay with your father-in-law or your father, my father-in-law, safer for you to stay with grandpa. That's where you're going back. So now the word has spread to Jethro. Now think about this. How did word spread back then? There were no newscasts, there was no

social media. The only way that word got around was by word of mouth. So guess what? When God does great things, everybody begins to hear about it. Everybody begins to learn. So Jethro has now learned not only what God has done, but Jethro has learned that Moses is back at Mount Sinai, which is really where he is from because God promised him early on at the burning bush, you're going to deliver the people and come back and worship here.

Jethro knows he's back. So he sends notice, I'm going to bring your two sons and your wife. I'm bringing them to you. And when Moses meets his father-in-law, Jethro, what happens? There's reverence, there's bowing down, there's greeting, there's kissing head. Moses kicked his wife out and centered back to his father with his two kids. I don't know that there would've been a great celebration when they got back together. Dads are you agreeing with me? So here's what happens. They come and they come back together and what's going on now, Moses is going to spend time with the most important unit in his life, which is his family. When it comes to leadership, the most important thing you can do is share and celebrate God's work with your family. Now notice what's going to happen. They're going to go into the tent. What are they going to do when they get in the tent?

They're going to share stories, they're going to laugh together, they're going to talk together. They're going to discuss everything that's been going on in all that the Lord has done in their lives. Listen to me. When it comes to growing spiritual leaders, the number one way that you can grow spiritual leaders is to prioritize your family. I'm going to say it again because some of you didn't hear me. You're like, move on to point

number two. I thought you were going to grow me as a leader. I am. For God's kingdom agenda, I don't care what vocation you are. I don't care if you're in the business world, the sports world, the entertainment industry, wherever you are, if you want to grow with God, you prioritize the things God wants to be prioritized and God created the family. Let me define family for you because nobody in our world seems to be able to define it very clearly. A family is a husband who is a man that is married to a woman who is a woman and they're together.

And if the Lord wills you have children. That is a family biblically, okay? That's what it is. And it's the most important unit, which is why there's attack against the family. And I'm not just talking about people that speak bad about family, I'm talking about Christian men who don't prioritize their family, who don't put their wives and their family first, who don't pray for them and provide for them and protect for them. That is your number one responsibility if you want to do anything significant for the kingdom. I'm telling you oftentimes for me, when I'm hanging out with people and I'm hanging out with guys and I'm in my mind, is this a person I want to hang out with more or less I'm listening to them because I want to hear them talk about their wives and their kids and what they do to love, provide, pray and protect them.

And as that's escalating or there's a desire for that, I think I can hang out with this. When I don't hear that, I'm like, this is not the kind of person I want to spend a lot of time with because spiritually what you're going to answer for spiritually, if you want to grow muscle, it's there. It's in your family. You say, well I'm single pastor Jeff. Well you may be in a family, honor your mother and father in your family or prepare for the



family that God is going to bring you. Be the right person God wants you to be. Why? Because the family's so important to God. So Jethro brings Zipporah, brings his two sons that he has named into the tent. And notice verse eight, "Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptian for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the journey and how the Lord had delivered them."

So what are they talking about? They're talking about the good, the bad and the ugly. Sometimes when we come into church, we think that in an hour, hour and a half we can just talk about the glories of God and everything's going to be great. And if I'm a Christian, everything's supposed to be great all the time. And it's supposed to be so supernaturally exciting all the time. So our marriage is supposed to be like at a level 10 all the time. Our kids are at a level 10 all the time. Our business is at a level 10 all the time. Our marriage is at a level 10 all the time. And we come together even in groups or when we gather as a church and we think there's something wrong if something's not right. The Christian life isn't lived like that. Did God do some incredible things in Egypt through Moses?

He did incredible things and they were sharing all those things. Our god's powerful, our God delivers. Can you imagine them telling that story? I mean Moses was probably like I first got there and it wasn't going well and God told me to drop my staff. So I dropped my staff and it turned into a snake. And then after it turned into a snake, their magicians did that. They had two snakes, but my snake ate their snake. It was so bomb, it was awesome. I mean then he was telling stories about and then he told me to reach out my staff and it touched the Nile and it became blood and nobody

could drink anything, which was really hard and it stunk. And I mean he went through all the stories. There were amazing things, but there were also hard things that had befallen on them too, weren't there?

There was the Egyptian army that was chasing them and they didn't know what was going to happen. There was the Red Sea that parted and if it hadn't parted they wouldn't have lived. And then even after God destroyed Egypt, guess what happened? They were without water and they were without food. And they were without meat. And he had talked about all the complaining that the people had done and then they went to battle and they weren't battle ready and all the hard things. See, when you tell a story about your walk with Christ, you can tell your story about all the amazing things God's done and you can tell the story about all the hard times you've gone through. And then there's that middle ground too. Isn't there where we spend a lot of our time, which is just, it's not great right now. It's not bad, it's just kind of there.

And isn't that what our Christian walk is like? Our Christian life is a walk that sometimes is experiencing supernatural, miraculous moves of God. Other times incredibly hard times where we're enduring and trying to persevere. And other times where there's really nothing exciting or hard, it's just I'm living my life, I'm being obedient to the Lord right now. Moses is sharing all those things. They're talking about all those things, you know why it's so important, so their kids, his boys can hear all those things because our children in the next generation, you all need to hear these things that sometimes when you walk with God he does supernatural, miraculous

things. And sometimes when you're walking with God, you're going to have to persevere and endure really challenging things. And sometimes when you're walking with God, there's really no excitement at all. You're just going and doing the thing that's next to do because it's the right thing and it just doesn't feel all that exciting at all.

That's the Christian life. That's what it looks like to walk. And Moses is telling Jethro all these things. So notice what happens next. Jethro who's a priest of Midian started rejoicing. This is the celebration. Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. So Jethro said, notice his testimony. Blessed be the Lord. That's Yahweh who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians? Listen to his personal testimony verse 11. Now I know that the Lord, that Yahweh is greater than all the gods. Indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people. So what is Jethro doing? Jethro's realizing because of who his son-in-law is and because of what God has done through his son-in-law that even though he's a priest in Midian, I know this, your god's the God of the universe.

What I know is that your God's more powerful. Here's how I know because I've seen your God at work. In other words, Moses, you took a step of faith. You believed what God was going to do and as he worked through you, I saw God do it. When you take a step of faith and when you begin to walk with God, it's not just for you to grow your faith in God, it's for others to see as you grow your faith in God that the God that you say you believe in is actually the living God. That's why don't be afraid to take a

step of faith. God wants you to grow and then notice what they do next. They have a meal together, they're going to offer sacrifices to God says verse 12, "Then Jethro, Moses's father-in-law took a burnt offering. That's an offering for sin and sacrifices for God.

And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses's father-in-law before God." That's a fellowship offering, right? They ate a meal together, they're cooking out, they're having a barbecue, right? They're going to celebrate all that the Lord has done. They're going to offer him praise, they're going to offer him sacrifice, they're going to eat together. And guess who's going to be there for all of this Moses's wife and two boys. And they're going to get to see their dad worship the living God. They're going to get to see their dad talk about all the good that God did. They're going to get to hear their dad talk about all the difficult times they've been through and they're going to get to hear their dad talking about all the mundane. But in it all, what they're going to see is that God is worthy of being praised.

God is worthy of being glorified and he's the only God in the universe. And let's celebrate him together. That's what's going on here? If you want to grow spiritually, if you want to have kingdom impact for the long term, prioritize your family. Prioritize your family. Single guys, listen to me. If you're called to be single or you're called to be celibate, fine. I've met two in my life that have been called to be celibate, that I really believe are called to be celibate. Most guys aren't. If not, get right with the Lord and go pick a wife and get married and start a family. You need to prioritize your family. Family's what's important, family's what God blesses. That's what God wants. He

blesses the family. We're called to focus on the family. You can't do this without your family. You say, well, how do I include my family?

What does that look like? I'm glad you ask. And I'm sharing this with you, not because I do this perfectly, but I do this increasingly during the season of prayer and fasting. Here's what I encourage you to do, pray with your spouse, pray with your spouse. What that means is that you get together and you pray out loud together as a couple. I know many Christian couples that love the Lord that have a really hard time praying together. And ladies, let me just explain something to you. Sometimes this is understandable because sometimes you ladies are a little more skilled in prayer and you have more flowery language and you do all this stuff and you pray this incredible prayer and then your husband's sitting there and he is like, Lord, help. And I don't know what to say. I mean I agree. I echo that prayer, right?

Here's what I encourage you to do. Husbands tell your wives, I want to pray with you, I'm just not good at it yet. Why don't you tell me what I can pray for and I'll pray for you and husbands, why not put your hand on your wife's shoulder on her head and say, if this is what you're doing today, I'm going to ask God to bless those three things. And wives, pray for your husbands. There's something special that goes on when you start praying with somebody. There's a knitting that takes place. There's a cementing that takes place. There's a growing that takes place when you do that, when you know each other's heart and you're praying for them with each other. And you can follow up at the end of the day and do that. Now, if you've never prayed together with your spouse, it may feel a little awkward at first.

I get that. But don't let that stop you from doing that. And if you do pray with your spouse, pray more increasingly in it and be more attentive to how you need to pray and what you can be praying for you'll see God show up in special ways. Pray with your spouse. How about this? Pray with your kids. Pray with your kids. Pray over your kids. Know what's going on in their heart. Be praying for the specific things that they're telling you that they need and then the things that you see that they need. And asking God to do something. Because when we pray, here's what we're saying, I can't do this without you. I need your help in this area. I'm demonstrating my dependence upon the Lord. That's what it looks like. Pray with your spouse, pray with your kids. If you're single, you're like, whoa.

Who would I pray with? Grab somebody else and pray with them and just say, Lord, I want to become this. This is some of my desires. This is my heart. This is where I want to go. Get with somebody that you trust and pray with one another and pray for one another. And then as you do that, you can celebrate what God's doing in your family, celebrate. When I say celebrate, here's what I mean. You can talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly about what's going on in your life. Let your kids see it. Let your spouse see it. You don't need to protect everybody from everything. Share with them. This is going really, really well. Share with them. This is extremely difficult. Share with them. I'm kind of in that dry space. Let them know that it's okay, right? Parents, it's okay for your kids to have questions.

It's okay for your kids not to be where you are spiritually. Remember where you

were when you were their age? Before I became a pastor, I had the privilege of traveling around doing evangelism. And so I spoke at lots of different churches, met lots of different pastors, and met lots of different pastor's kids. And one of the things my wife and I would talk about are, aren't we glad that we're not pastors so we don't have to have pastor's kids? Because some of the times pastor's kids feel like they got to measure up to everybody in the church. And so when I told Kim, God's calling me to be a pastor, that was one of the things that went off in her heart, I don't want that pressure for my kids. And we've tried our best not to have that. So it's okay for my kids to have doubts.

It's okay for my kids not to believe everything that I believe. It's okay for them to explore and press back and question things, right? That's okay. It's okay for your kids too. That's how we learn. That's how we learn. Here's the problem. One of the problems we have when we talk about family is we have this false idea of what family is if you're a Christian. Somebody's painted some picture in our mind of some false family that's perfect all the time where the husband and the wife live perfectly happily ever after and all the kids are perfect and everybody's perfect and they come to church and they sit together and they're perfect. And we wonder, why is my life not like that? Well, because their life's not like that. And sometimes when people post on Instagram, not always, but sometimes when they're posting their great pictures on Instagram and oh our beautiful family this and oh that, they're not telling you what's really going on and they're posting because of their own insecurities that they don't want you to see. Everybody's family's a little bit messed up.

Everybody's family has hardship. Family's going through it at different times. My family does and so does yours. So it's not, how do you have the perfect family? How do you prioritize Christ in your family as you're continuing to grow? Amen. And we can do that. We can do that. Wives, you don't have to elbow your husbands. They heard me. They're going to pray with you, okay? But it's okay to talk about your doubts and it's okay to talk about your fears. It's okay to talk about your anxieties. But if you're going to grow as a leader, if you're going to multiply leaders, you're going to do things, share and celebrate God's work with your family. Amen. Number two is this, when it comes to growing spiritual leaders, we grow spiritual leaders when we stay humble and we welcome wisdom, when we stay humble and welcome wisdom.

So notice this. Jethro's brought Zipporah, Moses's wife back. His two grandsons, Moses' sons brought them together. They've all been celebrating, they've all been rejoicing in what the Lord's done. Jethro has said, your God is God. I've heard all about it. Now notice verse 13, it came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. Now, when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, what is this thing you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening? And Moses said to his father-in-law, because the people come to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and his laws.

So the next day, his father-in-law's watching what he does, he's like, hey, come



to work with me. And Moses stands all day. And guess what? The people in his generation are the same as the people in our generation. People have problems. The congregation had problems with one another. And so all day long for morning until night, they would come to Moses. They would present their problem. They would present the problem in their family or with their neighbor or how they should handle this. And because Moses was spending time with the Lord and in new God's statutes, he would tell them, well, here's what you need to do and you're going to do this and you're going to do this and you're going to do this. And Jethro watching he's like, why are you the only one doing this? And why do you think this is a good thing?

And Moses's like, because people have problems and God's called me. I'm the appointed servant of God to do the work, simply put. Now notice what Jethro says next. He's questioned his son-in-law. I mean he's just really become a Christian and yet he's talking to God's anointed saying, why are you doing this thing for the people, and why do you alone sit there? So in verse 17, he says, Moses father-in-law is Jethro, says to him, "The thing you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out both yourself and these people who are with you for the task is too heavy and you cannot do it alone." Now you think about your family, you think about all the people in your family. You think about what you're called to do in the workplace. Now kind of invite a distant relative, a father-in-law, a mother-in-law, a cousin to come watch what you do.

And as they watch what you do, they start saying, why do you do that? And you tell them why you do that. And then they say, what you're doing is not good. Well who are you to tell me what I'm doing? God called me. I know exactly what I'm supposed to

be doing. What are you doing? You just came to know the Lord. What do you know about Moses? What are you going to see in the text? Moses is totally humble. It doesn't matter who's saying it. He's going to weigh what is being said. If you're humble, you can receive wisdom from about anybody. Even when you don't want to, you can receive it. Sometimes I don't think that my kids are listening to my sermons or that they're sleeping until we're driving down the road and I'm saying something or I'm frustrated and then they quote back my sermon to me as if dad, didn't you say that?

And I will say, well, that's not important right now. But can you welcome wisdom wherever it comes, God will be willing to use anything. I mean, even in the Old Testament, God used a donkey to speak wisdom if we're willing to listen. But sometimes we think that there's only certain people we can hear. And so we're always clamoring to get around the big leaders. If you have a question on how to do something and you're seeking the face of the Lord, God will bring you the answer first and foremost. He's always going to bring it through his word, always. But sometimes he'll choose to use people and sometimes they're unexpected people. Sometimes it's just somebody that you meet at an airport or sometimes it's somebody that's a friend of your child or sometimes it's just in a conversation around the table where two other people are talking and you're thinking, that was for me.

I mean humility is this, it's posturing yourself before the Lord in such a way that allows you to hear from others. You can usually tell who's a strong prayer because they're able to listen to other people and not just defend themselves. If you find

yourself in a defensive posture like I got this figure, I don't need you, I don't need you, I don't need, I just need that them. There's probably something that's going on in your heart that's not spending enough time with the Lord. Because when you throw all your anxieties upon him and you know God, you have this and I don't know this, this, I don't know who you're going to bring or what you're going to show me in your word, but I'm going to trust that you can do this. God can speak through anyone if you're listening. It reminds me a lot of the story that I find in Second Kings chapter five.

You remember there was Naaman who was a captain of the army of Aram and he had leprosy. He was a good guy. God actually blessed him because he was a good guy. But he had leprosy and he had heard that there was a prophet in Israel that could heal leprosy. The prophet's name was Elisha. So he sent a letter to the king of Israel saying, hey I've heard that leprosy gets cured in your land. Help me out. And king's like I can't do anything. Elisha overheard the king talking about this letter and said, well, I can do it. So he invites Naaman to come. So Naaman comes with all of his horses and chariots and all of his men. And he stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. He's like, good, I'm going to get healed today. But in two Kings, chapter five, verse 10, here's what happens.

It says, "Elisha sent a messenger to him saying, go wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean." Now think about this. What does Naaman want? Naaman wants to be cleansed of his leprosy. Leprosy was a skin disease that was flaky, super painful, super hard. He just wanted to be cleansed of that. He comes to the one who can cleanse him, but that one doesn't meet

him. Elisha sends a messenger, a servant says, go tell him to wash seven times in the Jordan, he'll be healed. Servant comes out, says Naaman, Elisha said, go wash yourself seven times in Jordan. You'll be healed. Now if you had leprosy and it was extremely painful and awful and ugly to look at and flaky and all these things and you had the cure, would you do it?

See, Naaman was too prideful to do it. In verse 11, Naaman was furious and he went away and said, "Behold, I thought he will surely come out to meet me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper." What was Naaman saying, I know how I want to be healed. I'm Naaman, I deserve a little more than that. I don't deserve a servant coming and tell me to bathe in the Jordan. I want him to come out and have all sorts of fanfare and I want God to do it this way. Then that's how I want to be healed. And notice what happens next. He begins to complain about the Jordan. He talks about two of the rivers in Damascus that are better than all the waters in Israel goes, could I not wash in them and be clean?

So he turned and went away and rage. So he's going to go back home with leprosy. He's ticked. But then one of his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more than when he says to you, wash and be clean." If he would've asked you to do something awesome, you have done that. I mean, all he's asking you to do is go down and wash seven times in the Jordan. If that works, why wouldn't you do it? So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God in his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he

was clean. Do you know God sometimes brings answers through unexpected people, I know he has in my life.

I wonder how many times I've missed it because of my own pride. I wonder how many times God's tried, tried to show me something I couldn't see it because I wasn't looking for the answer. I was looking for the way I wanted God to do something and that God's trying to bring things and do things and orchestrate things, but I've got to design for what I want God to do. We know all know Moses was humble, in numbers chapter 12 and verse three talking about Moses. I mean I don't know if anybody's ever written this about you or will write it for you when you die, but it's pretty cool to have this written about you. But this is not just written about Moses. This is the Holy Spirit inspired scripture, which is completely authentic and true. Says this in numbers 12 three. "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth."

How about that? That's what the Holy Spirit said of Moses. So can Moses handle his father-in-law telling him what you're doing is not good? Yeah, he can because it doesn't matter. He doesn't have any pride of ownership. He's not trying to figure out, I got to be the man of God. I got to do this stuff. I just want to do it the right way. And so when his father-in-law talks to him, he's willing to listen. We're going to grow as spiritual leaders when we can share and celebrate what God's works in our family. We're also going to grow when we can stay humble and welcome godly wisdom. There are people around us all the time that are further along in different areas than we are. Do we have the humility to listen to them? Do we have the humility to let them

point things out in our life?

I realize that we need to have a couple good friends around us and people that we can really share the whole enchilada with and that we shouldn't go air in our dirty laundry with everybody. And there's importance to that and you need to invite that into your life. But what about the other times? Are you humble enough that if God brought somebody that you didn't even know or wasn't even quote as spiritually mature as you or didn't seem to have it all together, like quote you do and they shared something that was true and of the Lord that you could receive it? See, when we posture ourselves before the Lord saying, Lord, you do it. You use any means necessary, I'm willing and I'm open, God has a way of orchestrating things differently than what we saw. If you want to be a leader that has impact, you want to grow as a leader and you want to pour into other people that are going to become leaders, remain humble, remain humble.

Don't worry about what your status is before people. Always be a learner, always be growing, always be able to see things in your life that may need to change. And then third is this, this is I think we'll really get to the meat of the passage where we get to the meat of the passage and it's this, it's we start to study God's ways for multiplication, study God's ways for multiplication. Jethro gotten done saying the thing you're doing is not good. You're going to wear out yourself. It's too heavy of a load. You cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. He says in verse 19, "I will give you counsel and God will be with you." I mean, think about this. I mean Moses unlike us, I mean we

hear God through his living inactive word. We can hear God as it's preach.

I mean Moses, God spoke to him face-to-face like a man. Did he need his father-in-law telling him? I mean I can go to God and God will talk to me face to face. But he's so humble, he's listening to his father-in-law. His father-in-law says, listen to me. I'll give you counsel and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God and you bring the disputes to God, then teach the statutes and the laws and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, number three, "You shall select out of all the people able, men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain. And you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times and let it be carried.

Let it be that every major dispute they bring to you, but every minor dispute, they themselves judge. So it'll be easier for you and they will bear the burden with you." Now notice what he says in verse 23. "If you do this thing and God so commands you," in other words, take what I'm saying, you bring it before God. You see if this is of the Lord or of man, you go check this out for yourself, then you'll be able to endure and all the people will go to their place in peace. So here's what he's saying. If you do what I'm telling you, you're going to be able to endure and you're going to have peace of all the people in your land. Isn't that what you want? So what's he tell them to do? Here's what he tells them to do. He tells them to do three things and he tells them to do these three things in order.

And the first thing he tells them to do is pray. Pray. If you want to be a spiritual

leader and want to see kingdom growth, pray. Pray for everybody in your sphere of influence. Husbands, your number one responsibility for your family is to be a prayer. Wives, your number one responsibility as a mom is to pray. That's your number one responsibility. If you're a school teacher, you know what your number one responsibility is. It's to pray and seek the face of God. If you're a business owner, do you know what your number one responsibility is as a Christian business owner? It is to pray. No matter what you do, you are called first and foremost to pray. Why? Because you are hearing the voice of God. You are presenting requests to God. You are leading the people for God. You need to let God step in. And we talk about prayer, we're talking about the priestly duty. Notice what he says. He says, you be the people's representative before God and bring the disputes to God. It's a priestly duty.

When you pray you are standing before God on behalf of men. That's what you're doing. I'm standing before God on behalf of people. So what would a pastor's number one job be as a pastor? Some of you are getting this, okay, it's prayer. It's his number one job. If he fails there, he's failing in his number one responsibility. There's one mediator between God and man. It's the man Jesus Christ. The most important thing a pastor can do is pray. What he should be consumed with is prayer. Praying for what? Praying for God to move. Praying for the congregation, praying for needs that he sees, praying for God to change his own heart. Prayer, prayer, prayer, prayer, prayer. Prayer is first and foremost. When you meet somebody that you think is a spiritual leader, listen to them talk about how important prayer is to them. If it's important to them, it will come out in conversation. You can ask them questions about



how they pray. They'll be able to tell you because prayer will consume them. It won't be a one time thing, it'll be a life thing.

It'll be as simple as breathing because they'll realize that they're wholly dependent upon the Lord to do what the Lord has called them to do. And this is not just true vocationally in ministry. It's true of anybody. It's true in family. It's true as a business owner, it's true as a coach, true as a teacher. If you're a Christian and you're leading people, which if you're a Christian, you are leading people because you're an influencer. Whatever you're doing, your first and foremost responsibility is to pray, pray. You're standing before God as a representative for all the people. So what's Moses doing instead of standing there and dealing with everybody? What's he doing? Lord, I'm going to bring these before you. I'm offering this before you. I'm going to name these people, I'm going to pray for them. I'm going to pray for our congregation. I'm going to do all that.

Number one is prayer. Two is this. It's teach. You're a teacher. If you're a Christian, you're a teacher. Teaching means you're going to take what God has revealed to you, you're going to study his word, you're going to teach it or herald it in such a way that you're building up people. If prayer is a priestly duty of standing before God on behalf of men, then the prophetic duty is standing before men on behalf of God. It's once you've spent time in the presence of the Lord and once you've studied his word and once you know it, then you teach people according to what that looks like. In the home it would look like this, in the home it would look like praying for your family in such a way that you know the truths of God's word and what God expects

and then you teach it.

And by teaching in the home, I mean you don't pull up a pulpit in your family room and say, kids sit down. Dad has a word. It means it's ongoing instruction that you're going to begin showing them how you're practicing this and how you're living this and where you failed at this and where you need to get better at this. But what God requires and what he expects, that's number two, super important. It's as important as number one but it follows number one. Now if you wonder why the church in the west is generally very anemic and the spirit of God is not moving, it's because in many churches these first two things aren't happening very much. I've been in ministry for 30 plus years, I've had a chance to interview many friends of mine who are pastors and talk to them.

And I can tell you there's very, very few percentage-wise where prayer consumes them. And there's very few percentage-wise that when God shows them something would have the courage to stand up and teach it the way God's taught them. Both of those things are primary, especially as a pastor. If you ever get chaffed with brave church like I'm not going there anymore, fine, that's great. God can move you on. But make sure when you pick a church, pick a church where the pastor is a man of prayer and pick a church where he is not afraid to teach you the whole council of God. One and two. Amen.

And then third, because notice this. He says, "Teach them the statutes and the laws make known to them the ways in which they're to walk and the work they are to

do." Tell them what God requires of them. Here's what God is saying to you. Here's how you're supposed to walk. Here's the work you got to do, here's what it looks like. And then third, if you're a prayer and you're a teacher, then number three is you're a delegator. You delegate, means you empower, means you build others and empower others to do the work of ministry. It's Ephesians four 11 and twelves. It's equipping God's saints for the work of ministry. It means you don't do all the work, people don't come to watch you do the work. You're teaching people how to do the work and then they're doing the work. Because notice what he says, "After you teach them the statutes furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, and those who hate dishonest gain. And you shall place them over them as leaders of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens."

He says this, "Once you've prayed and once you've sought the Lord and once you've studied the word and once you've taught the word, then what do you go looking for? Go looking for men. Go looking for men who can actually do the work." I'm going to pause here. Let me just be really ultra clear on this because our culture doesn't seem to be clear on this and I'm going to be crystal clear on this. When it comes to the church, church is not a place for ladies to come and drag the men behind them. Church is a place where men are leading their families, their girlfriends, so that they can hear the word of God because they're living it all week long. Church is a place where God goes looking for men to lead. If you hear about needs in the church, it's because men have not stepped up and led. If you hear that there's a need in the church and you wonder when are the women going to do something, you don't understand what God's

calling you to do.

There should never be needs in the church because there's always able men that are able to step up every single time and fill every single one of those needs. And now back to the message. So we're looking for people that pray. We're looking for people that study and know God's word and teach it. And then you're looking for able men to go do it right? You want to have a church that flourishes, look for a place where people are praying. Look for a place where people are studying the word and teaching it. And look for a place where you're empowering other people to do it. It works in your family, parents. I mean your job as a parent is to pray your socks off for your kids. Your job as a parent is to model the word and teach the word and then your job as a parent, you got to turn your kids loose. And guess what? They're not going to get it right the first time or the second time or the third time.

The reason that you know that is because you still don't get it right either, but empower them and let them go. And it's okay for your kid to fail. It's okay for them to need to get picked up sometimes, it's okay for them to... That's how they're going to learn. If their faith is only your faith, it's never going to be their faith. Let them go empower them, right? Because sometimes the reason we don't empower people is because we think of ourselves too highly. Well yeah, but if I'm not doing this and who's going to do it? I don't know if they're as good as me. Let them go. I mean, there's a lot of people a hundred years ago that are a lot better at ministry than we are and they ain't here. This is what God has. He's got us. And when you're gone, you're not going to be here.

We need to empower the next generation to go reach the nations. If you want to know the secret formula, so to speak, for how to grow a ministry, you want to know a secret formula for how to grow your business, you want to know secret formula for how to see your family flourish, and when I say secret formula, I'm saying God's design for how these things work As a Christian, it's these three. Become a prayer, become a teacher, and you can't teach it if you don't live it, and then delegate it to other people. Dio Moody once said it is better to set a hundred men to work than do the work of a hundred men. Don't you love that. Now for some of you, you're listening to this, you're like, oh, that's good, that's Old Testament, I don't know if that applies to me as a New Testament believer.

So let's flip our Bibles to Acts chapter six. So I can show you that this has always been God's principle. This is what God wants to do. And let me show you why this is so important for you to understand this. In Acts chapter six, the church is growing and blowing up like crazy. Thousands upon thousands of people are coming to know the Lord. I mean you would think at this time, man, nothing could go wrong in the church. Unfortunately the church then in the church now is still made up of sinners and there's going to be problems in every single church. So it says in Acts chapter six, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing a number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews who are the Greek Jews against the native Hebrews because their widows, the Greek widows, were being overlooked in the daily serving of food."

You see the problem, Greek widows aren't getting enough food. The Hebrew widows are eating it all. We got a problem in the church. What are they doing coming

to the pastor, you guys got to fix it. They're coming to the apostles, you better fix this problem. So how are they going to do this? Well, here's what they do. So the 12 summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, it's not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. What does it mean? That's an important work. It's a really good work. But that's kind of below our pay grade. We got to keep praying and seeking the face of God and teaching the word. It's important that this gets taken care of and we're going to see that it gets taken care of. But for us, we're not going to stop praying and we're not going to stop teaching the word of God.

Because if we stop praying and we stop teaching the work of God, then guess what? The spirit of God is not going to be able to come through and do what he needs to do. So we see the needs. It's critical, it's important. So here's what they say to do. "Therefore, brethren select from among you seven men. There's that word, men again, of good reputation, full of the spirit and of wisdom who we may put in charge of this task." What's he say? Where are the men who can do this? There's got to be some men somewhere that can take care of this. Pick seven men, new congregation, know who they are. Pick seven. So they find seven men filled with the spirit. That means they have godly character, they're walking in the ways of God, they're doing the things of God. And that's what's going on.

So they pick these seven men to do that. Now notice what they say in verse four. In Acts six, four it says, "But we must devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." What are they saying? Our number one responsibilities are first, prayer and

second teaching, teaching the word. Third, we'll delegate people to get the tasks done, but that's not nearly as important as praying and teaching the word. It's true of all people. If you're leading a small group, the most important thing you can do is be praying and seeking the face of God and praying for the people in your group. Second most important thing you can do, live out the statutes of God and teach people how to do that, because guess what? There's always going to be problems that distract us from doing those first two things. And there are some churches in our country and all around the world that spend their time taking care of problems all the time.

And they don't pray and they don't live the word and they don't teach the word and the church is dead while they're doing all sorts of great activity. Not here, not in my lifetime. We're going to pray and seek the face of God. We are going to not only pray and seek the face of God, we're going to live out the word and we're going to teach the word, and then we're going to delegate men to take care of these things. But even the men that they're delegating to, what are those men doing? They're praying and seeking the face of God and they're teaching the word. That's why you find spirit-filled leaders, not just quote gifted people. So verse five says, "The statement was good. So they picked seven men full of faith," verse six, "And they brought before the apostles, they brought them before the apostles and after praying they laid hands on them."

And notice what happened in verse seven. Because they did this, because they followed the same pattern, we're devoting ourselves to prayer number one, the ministry of the word number two, and delegating men number three, notice what happens. The word of God kept on spreading and the number of disciples continued to

increase greatly in Jerusalem. And even a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. What was happening Revivals going on. Why? Because they had a great program. Because they did all this cool stuff. No, because they spent their time focused on prayer. They focused on living and teaching the word of God. And guess what they did? Third, they empowered men to go do this. Now ladies, if you're sitting there saying, well I'm gifted and I'm good, of course you are. My God made you and you're fearfully and wonderfully made.

But here's what we found. When men lead the way God wants them to lead, it opens up the doors for everybody to do everything that God's ever called you to do. There's no limit on what you can do. So that's what this is all about. So then how do we do it? We pray. The reason first Tuesday is the most important meeting of the month at our church and we'll continue to be and the reason we're going to grow that and continue to grow prayer is because I believe if we can get more people to seek the face of God and more people to hear God and more people to live out what God requires, we get the chance to see God do more work. So it's an honor as your pastor this past Tuesday to know on two campuses, not even including all those together online, had nearly 1500 people show up for our prayer meeting. Are you kidding me? It was awesome.

God's doing something special in our church because there's more people seeking him in prayer. That's why we're dedicating the beginning of this year to prayer and fasting and seeking his face to grow in intimacy with him, to hear what he might want to share with us. And if you study the life of Jesus, do you see any of these



things in his ministry? I mean, because if Jesus did do any of these things, then we can say, well this is just your idea Pastor Jeff. Did Jesus pray? I mean all you have to do is take a cursory read through the New Testament to know his whole life was consumed with prayer from the time he was 12 when his parents found him back in Jerusalem. He's like, did you not know I had to be at my father's house? Before he performed miracles? After he performed miracles very early in the morning while it was still dark, he went up and went to solitary places where there he prayed.

When he is in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that Judas is scarier has already turned him over, he's praying when he's on the cross, he's praying his whole life is so consumed with prayer. The only thing the disciples have recorded in scripture wanting to know how to be taught is Lord teach us to pray. Jesus pray, first and foremost, his life is about prayer. The one time we see Jesus ticked off in a way that we would say, it doesn't seem like the Jesus I know in the Bible where he got a chord of three strands and was whipping them around and driving people out of the temple. Why? Because my father's house was to be called a house of prayer. You've turned it into a marketplace for yourselves. I want to see everybody everywhere calling the name of my dad. So he's consumed with prayer.

Did he teach? Did he do any teaching during his ministry? Greatest teacher of all time. Matthew Chapter five, six and seven, the Sermon of the Mount. "Greatest sermon in teaching that we have recorded ever taught." I could never be what Jesus is. Nobody could be what Jesus is, greatest teacher of all time knew when to ask questions and when to make statements and always taught the word. He said he

embodied the word. He lived the word. He taught the word. Did he delegate? Did he just ascend to heaven and say, hey, come to my service on Sunday? No. He commissioned disciples to go into all the world he made. Is this not his model too. Study the life of the apostle Paul. You'll see him pray. You'll see him live and teach the word, you'll see him empower others. I mean it's so clear in scripture. It's a principle that God wants.

If you want to have significant spiritual kingdom impact, become a prayer, live out the gospel and teach it and then empower others to do the same. You won't be able to hold back the work of God. It'll be all over. And that's how we study God's ways for multiplication. God makes it clear, this is how I work and there's so many churches that are asking the wrong questions. How do we get more people to come, and what do we need to do to our worship? And how do we do this? And there may be some answers to all those questions. And I've been in the church for 30 plus years. I can answer a lot of those questions. But the big thing, the foundational pieces, the big rocks are start praying. Start living and teaching the word and start delegating others to pray and live the gospel and teach the word and just start multiplying that. If you just start, that as a baseline, you'll see God do some amazing things.

And I'm here to tell you too, if you're in business world, I mean study some of the Christian business leaders that are doing this, study their business and see how they're doing. Check out Hobby Lobby sometime. Some of you may have heard of that store. I know my wife has. I know they're a praying group. I know they live the word. I know

they teach the word. I know that David Green walks through a store on a Saturday every single weekend that he has built in Oklahoma to see what God is saying to him about where to put everything on the shelf. And sometimes I think he's hearing Kim's going to like it right over there and so he puts it right there. This works in every single aspect of your life, but you got to do number four as well. And that's the final one. And if you're going to grow spiritual leaders, you have to step with faith in God's direction. You actually have to do it.

I pray before every sermon and I say those who are willing to take the next step of faith, those who be willing to put it into practice, say amen. Will you do something with what God showed you today? Because those what happens? So Moses listened. That means he didn't just hear them, he heard it at his heart to his father-in-law and he did all that he said. He didn't just hear it, he did it. Moses chose able men, there's that word, men again out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties of tens. They judged the people at all times. The difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. Then Moses bait his father-in-law, farewell. And he went on his way into his own land. What happened? Well what happened was this. He said, hey, I'll take the biggies, the ones you can't get. I'll take those, but I'm going to be praying for you. I'm going to be teaching you what to do.

You can handle 90% of this on your own. You go for it and you'll learn as you go. So go do this. Go make it possible. What happens in the church sometimes that we have what we call clergy, which would be people like me. And then we have laity,

which would be people like you. I don't find it anywhere. I find the priesthood of all believers that we're all called by God and that we're all called on a mission. It's the reason in your heart there's something going off today when you hear it that I want to be part of this, I want to do something. I'm here to tell you can do it. I know you can do it because I know my God and I know how much he loves you and I know how he created you. I know how he empowered you.

You can do everything that God's showing you in your heart you can do. You just have to take the next step of faith. Can you just be a little one? I remember when I went to seminary, and you got to realize when I went to seminary, my theological background was the University of Illinois, which was not a theological stalwart of an education. So when I got to Dallas Seminary and had all these homeschoolers in Moody Bible Institute, people coming in and who knew all about the Bible, I didn't know anything. I felt like a novice like treading water. What am I even doing here? And they keep talking about this nation Israel and I didn't know anything, right? And I would be in classes with certain teachers I knew they were super gifted and super smart and I always felt small like I'm never going to learn this.

These guys are way beyond me. They know the language is better than I'm learning them. I'm not that good of a Bible scholar. What am I doing here? I felt that sometimes, but other people encouraged me. But there was one professor in particular, and I've mentioned him before, his name was Howard Hendricks. He's now gone on to glory. He's disciplined many people that you would know. And I remember sitting in his class the first week I was in school and there were about 125 of us and he

had the ability to engage every single person in the class. Even if there's one person talking, he could get them to stop. I mean it was just incredible. And I remember I would leave his class every single time I would leave his class and I would think in my heart, I can do this. I'm pretty good at this.

And then I remember as time went on, I got to meet him. I got to be in a small group with him. And the first time I met him in his office, here's what he said to me. He's like, "Jeff, has anybody ever told you're incredibly gifted for this kind of work?" Now I don't know if he said that to everybody because he probably did. But at the time, I mean I wrote that down in my journal and I drank it in and I'm like, I can do this. I can do this. We need more people telling us that we can do it. I'm here to tell you, as your pastor you can do this. You can totally do this.

And what I mean by that is if you're starting this prayer and fasting and you've never really prayed a lot before, don't start off tomorrow saying 6:00 AM I'm going to get up and get up an hour to the Lord. You won't be able to do it. Start really small. I'm going to read one verse. I'm going to pray over that verse and ask God to bless my day. I'm going to spend one or two minutes. Now for those of you who said that doesn't sound like anything, ask yourself, did you spend two minutes today before you came to church? And what happens is if you don't stop worrying about time and you start worrying about the person of the Lord and you want to start spending time with them, that'll grow over time. Start really small. It's cool to start small. It's where I started. Start small, read the Bible.

Read one verse, read two verses. Read a chapter. Just keep growing in little by little. Get around other people that are a little further along that can encourage you in that. And as you continue to grow, bring other people around, you can say, hey, here's what I learned and here's what I heard. And here's what God was teaching. I remember when I taught Howard Hendricks small group, I taught on the great commission. And I remember he pulled out a yellow tablet the day I was teaching like he always did and he was taking feverish notes on what I was teaching. And I remember thinking, he studied this passage from 50 something... I'm not telling him anything he doesn't know. And he's trying to learn everything he can because he was what? He was humble. When God starts doing things in your heart, share it with other people.

Share here's what God's teaching me. And it may seem insignificant to you, but every time God's growing you, he's doing something special. Doesn't matter where you start, it's where he's taking you. And I would encourage you to, in his 21 days of prayer and fasting, just start really small. Just start really small, but start seeking the Lord more intensely. Start studying his word a little more intensely. Start looking for who can I get around and start telling about what God's doing in my prayer life and who can I get around and start telling him about what he's teaching me in his word and how I'm living different. You can start with something that you know can start with some that you don't know. You can say, I don't even know if I'm getting this thing right, but I'm going to trust the Lord in it.

And as you do that, guess what God's going to do? He's going to grow your

heart and he's going to grow the heart of all those around you. I mean, God makes it really clear. Prioritize your family. Celebrate the work with them. Stay humble, welcome, godly wisdom and then as you're studying God's ways, no, it's these three ways. It's prayer, it's living and teaching and it's delegating. And then finally it's taken that step to believe. Proverbs three, five and six says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and to lean not on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge him, he'll make your path straight." Here's what he's saying, I got your whole future. I got it all figured out. All I'm asking you to do is with what I've showed you today, would you be willing to take a step of faith?

Would you be willing just to take that one more step? Would you be willing to grow just a little more as a prayer? Would you be willing to grow a little more in your obedience and then teaching other people how you've been that way? Would you grow just a little bit more and being able to help other people to do the same and delegate it out? And as you do, little by little, step by step, God will increase that benefit for you to be able to do all that God wants you to do. I'm telling you on the authority God's word, you can do this. He didn't leave you here inept. He gave you his Holy Spirit to walk with you every single place you go. And he's got a future and he's got a hope for you. Amen. He is the waymaker. He is the miracle worker.

He is the promise keeper. He's the light and the darkness. He's the one that can do all those different things. So let's stand today as we close and we worship His great name. Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. Lord as we sing

and celebrate to you as we commit a fresh to you in this year, Lord, do amazing things in our heart, Lord, even as our pastors and elders come forward today that are here to pray with those Lord, move on our hearts as we celebrate and worship you, the king of kings and the Lord of Lord's. In Jesus name, amen and amen and amen. Can we give God praise?