

# Making Space for God

## Exodus 18

### OPENING PRAYER

Try me, O God, and search the ground of my heart, prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any wickedness in me, any root of bitterness yet undiscovered; and lead me in the way everlasting. Show me the true state of my soul, bring me out of every false refuge, strip off every deceitful covering that is not of thy Spirit. Forbid,

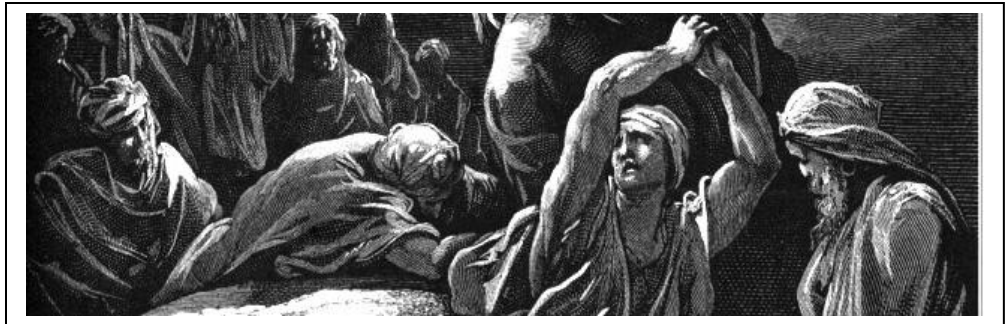
that the anchor of my hope should be cast, or the house of my dependence built on any but Christ, the rock of ages; forbid that I should rest short of that repentance which is thy gift, and is connected with life eternal; and forbid, O forbid, that I should sit down without aspiring to that conformity unto thee in righteousness and true holiness; abstracted from which, repentance is false and faith is dead.

*Augustus Toplady England/ 1740-1778*

### Looking Back

Take some time to settle yourself. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you quiet your mind. Review your calendar and journal for the past two months.

- List the people, projects, and events that have occupied your time.
- What emotions colored your experiences?
- When did you sense that Jesus was present to you?
- When did he seem distant or you seem distant from him?
- Note any life lessons or themes that have surfaced for you in this time. Offer that up to Jesus.
- What do you want or expect from Jesus during this retreat. Tell Him



*Engraving by Gustave Dore` 1832-1883*

**Scripture Reading-** Read Exodus 18 three times. In this passage, Jethro gives us a wonderful picture of what it means to me a compassionate father-in-law and skilled mentor. As you read it put yourself first in the shoes of Moses and then of Jethro. Ask the Lord to give you eyes to see the truth he has for you.

### Reading for Reflection

One of the main compulsions of our society is addiction to urgency. This addiction dominates the day with a string of urgent matters...It is common in a society whose main criterion for its own health is economic success, and which encourages people to focus their identities through their jobs.

*David Ford in the Shape of Living*

It is probable that in practice the religion of many in our society could be described as a form of polytheism: there are many shifting objects of esteem and desire, many beliefs, many “gods” demanding “worship” in explicit or implicit forms, and time and energy are divided among these “cults”...Even a claim to impartiality, neutrality or flexibility in the face of religious options is itself a definite and controversial option. The great questions about life-shaping truth, beauty and practice do not allow for neutral treatments. Everybody stands somewhere!

*David Ford in the Shape of Living*

The Christian process looks like this: you center yourself on the concept of a loving, creative God, and if you're centered correctly this alignment somehow produces visible beneficial results—it enables you to turn outwards to help other people while at the same time it balances you inwardly so that you can fulfill your human potential. It's a very healing process, particularly for those who are not well integrated.

*Susan Howatch in The High Flyer page 335*

And even if the case had ended well, I could have claimed no credit because I myself wouldn't have healed him. The healing would have come from Christ the Healer, working either through me or in spite of me. Christian healers have to remember that, because pride is an occupational hazard and one needs to fight against it day in and day out...

*Susan Howatch in The High Flyer page 460*

"The first thing to realize," said Lewis firmly, "is that God never wills suffering but tries to redeem it. Suffering's the dark side of the creative process, as I said earlier, but the true artist can never stand it and can't rest until the mess is fixed. Sometimes suffering is brought on us by our wrong actions—as I pointed out when I mentioned the people who dabble with Ouija boards—but even then suffering can be quite disproportionate to the sin, so priests should always think hard before the surge into the pulpit and thunder out: "We reap what we sow!" Indeed suffering is often random and not the result of any wrong action at all."

*Susan Howatch in The High Flyer page 461*

In his brief ministry Jesus did his best to give short term help in healings and feedings. But the thrust of his teaching was to get at the roots of evil and suffering, and his message of the Kingdom of God was about a healing which involved love, trust, compassion, forgiveness, and radically inclusive hospitality. He faced the fact that that sort of healing can only be offered by those who embody it, whatever the cost.

*David Ford in the Shape of Living*

He's got to find out who he is and accept himself, warts and all, or how is he going to be of use to those who come to him for pastoral care? A healer must achieve a high degree of integration and self knowledge before trying to work among divided, damaged souls; if he doesn't, he'll unwittingly project all the unassimilated aspects of his personality onto those vulnerable people with disastrous results.

*From the Wonder Worker by Susan Howatch page 125*

"A cure is the disabled person who gets up from his bed and walks. A healing is that same disabled person coming to terms with his lack of mobility, transcending his anger and grief and becoming an inspiration to all those who visit him."

*From The Wonder Worker by Susan Howatch, page 20*

The gifts of God seldom come packaged with user friendly instructions and he'll almost certainly be calling other people to guide you.

*From The Wonder Worker by Susan Howatch, page 198*

Try to keep in mind the fact that fear is one of the strongest forces which cuts us off from God—you must fight the temptation to build a wall around yourself and hide behind it.

*From The Wonder Worker by Susan Howatch, page 328*

## **Benediction**

*Take Lord and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. All is yours. Dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me only your love and grace. That is enough for me.*

*Ignatius of Loyola*

## Reflective Questions for Exodus 18

**Background:** Israel had been set free from their slavery to Egypt and in chapter 18 they are in the process of wandering in the desert learning the ways of the Lord and becoming the people he calls them to be. In chapter 17 the Amalekites attack. Moses appointed Joshua to lead some of the men to fight against the aggressors. Meanwhile Moses, Aaron, and Hur watched and prayed from the hill top. The Lord gave them victory.

1. Who is Jethro? What were his demeanor, status, and religion?
2. Why might Moses have sent his wife Zipporah and sons away? What cultural forces might have shaped their relationship with one another and with the broader Jewish community? What do the names of the sons reveal about what might have been happening internally for Moses?
3. Moses was cut off from his own father at birth and raised in the house of Pharaoh by women. Jethro plays a unique role in his life. Describe it. Who play similar roles for you?
4. Verse 11 may represent a conversion experience for Jethro. How does he respond?
5. As an outsider and priest with a caring heart, Jethro has a unique insight into the justice system that had developed. What factors contributed to the creation of the system and why might Moses have been unable to see or change the system?
6. What were Jethro's concerns for Moses and the people? What steps does he take to usher in change? What does the change mean for Moses? For other leaders? For the people?
7. "The load is too heavy for you... if you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain and all these people will go home satisfied." As a campus staff member, how does your load feel? When do you most feel the weight of your responsibilities? Is the Lord inviting you to make changes and if so what do you fear? What steps might you need to take?