

## #151 “Over-commitment Doesn’t Help Anybody”

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Exodus 18 provides us with a very important truth about the dangers of over-committing ourselves. On one side of the extreme, we can be prone to laziness and inactivity, and, at such times, we need some prodding to get more involved in life and in ministry. Yet there are other times when we can fall to the other extreme of constant activity and juggling too many responsibilities. This extreme is not any healthier because it leads to high stress for the over-committed individual and an inability on his or her part to be balanced and to give to others what they need. As Exodus 18 will reveal, **even though we might think we are sacrificing for the well-being of others, we can actually be doing them a disservice.** God’s desire is that we would use wisdom such that we would make the most of our time and use our lives for the best possible purposes and in the most God-honoring ways (Ephesians 5:15-16). Just how our time is spent and divided up will depend on where we are at in life, what kind of health we are in, what ministry opportunities are available to us, etc (Galatians 6:10, Philippians 4:10). Sometimes certain things will demand an unusual amount of our attention for a period of time, and there is nothing we can do about it whether we like it or not. Other times we will find ourselves with an abnormal amount of time on our hands, and we will need to search out what God would have us do. Regardless of the specific circumstances, what is certain is that neither laziness nor over-commitment is advantageous to our spiritual success.

Being over-committed is not defined simply by being energetic, purposeful, zealous, or excited about the things of God or about His graces in this life. In fact, we ought to be all of those things. **The danger comes when we do more than God has led us to do or something other than He has led us to do such that we harm ourselves and jeopardize our ability to live faithfully, in holiness, and for the long run.** Zeal must be tempered by wisdom such that it can remain fervent and not die out. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” The emphasis for us here is on the idea of “steadfastness” and “immovability” because such characteristics are required in order to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Over-committed people abound in activity but not necessarily in the work of the Lord according to how God wants them to spend their time. **There is a significant distinction between being active as compared to doing the work and will of God.** This is why it is so important to seek God’s will according to the Scriptures as we go throughout our lives.

In Exodus 18, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, paid him a visit. Jethro noticed that Moses spent from morning until evening (v. 13) judging the people of Israel. He asked Moses, “Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” (v. 14) Moses replied, “Because the people come to me 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” (v. 15-16). Moses was filling his day with good things (or so he thought) by teaching the people the commands of God. But Jethro saw a problem, and he responded, “The thing that 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 for you; you cannot do it alone*” (v. 17-18 with emphasis added). Jethro then advised Moses to divide the labor between many other faithful, trustworthy men so that he would only have to decide the most difficult of cases (v. 22). Jethro was absolutely right that Moses would never be able to keep his current schedule going because it was too much for one man to do. His over-commitment was not based in the wisdom of God.

Jethro continued in v. 23, “If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, *and all these people also will go to their place in peace*”(emphasis added). Moses agreed that Jethro’s counsel was indeed wisdom from God, and he made the proper adjustments in how he governed and spent his time. Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that God needs us or that nobody else could fill our shoes such that we choose to take on more than God has asked us to do. This is dangerous for us, and as verse 23 indicates, it harms those we are intending to serve as well. In Moses’ case, the people had to wait in line all day to get counsel. Obviously, this wasn’t good, and the wisdom of God offered a better way for all.

God’s will is that we do the tasks He has given us to do, not more and not less. Our joy will be full as we do these things, and He will supply our needs accordingly. The one who walks in wisdom will find balance leading to steadfastness and immovability, which, in turn, enables us to endure. **So, let us not be over-committed; rather, let us be fully committed to what God has asked us to do.**