

Values Matter Discovery Starters

We Are a Global Missions Movement

7. BE DECENTRALIZED

YWAM is a Christ-centered, faith-based global volunteer movement, united by shared vision, core beliefs, foundational values and relationships. We do not have a centralized structure. Every YWAM ministry has the privilege and spiritual responsibility to develop and maintain healthy relationships with appropriate authorities and circles of elders.

[Exo 18:13-26](#); [Num 1:16-19](#); [Num 11:16-17,24-30](#); [Deu 29:10-13](#);
[Jos 23:1-24:28](#); [Act 14:23](#); [Act 15:1-31](#); [1Co 3:4-11](#); [Tit 1:5-9](#); [Heb 13:7,17](#)

Value #7 – Be Decentralized: Authority Dispersed

Biblical Foundation:

The next day, Moses took his seat to hear the people's disputes against each other. They waited before him from morning till evening.

When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?"

Moses replied, "Because the people come to me to get a ruling from God. When a dispute arises, they come to me, and I am the one who settles the case between the quarreling parties. I inform the people of God's decrees and give them his instructions."

"This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing their disputes to him. Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."

Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions. He chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders over the people. He put them in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. These men were always available to solve the people's common disputes. They brought the major cases to Moses, but they took care of the smaller matters themselves (Exo 18:13-26).

Discovery Starter:

Though Moses had a heart to serve his people well, his father-in-law Jethro recognized that he had unwisely centralized decision-making around himself. This centralized leadership style was clearly “not good” and would have negative effects on both Moses and the people (vv 17-18). Jethro urged Moses to disperse authority, not concentrate it. Today’s leaders should likewise think of how to empower others, instead of amassing power unto themselves.

To this end, Jethro encourages Moses to do several things that every leader should take to heart:

- 18:19 – Continue to stand before God, interceding on behalf of the people. Prayer for those whom you are leading is a hallmark of every godly leader.
- 18:20 – Teach, teach, teach. To lead people into godly decision-making, godly leaders must take time to instruct them in the ways of wise living. When people are governed by a clear internal understanding of what is right, then the need for centralized, external government is diminished.
- 18:21 – Select and appoint other responsible leaders, delegating authority to them. These leaders must be people of competence and character. Competency has to do with their capabilities and skills. Character has to do with their integrity and trustworthiness

Psalm 119 is the only other chapter in the Bible which uses the same Hebrew words used by Jethro to describe these “honest men who fear God and hate bribes” (Exo 18:21). The Psalmist...

1. prays for the integrity/truthfulness which comes from being shaped by the Word of God, saying, “Do not snatch your word of truth from me, for your regulations are my only hope” (Psa 119:43).
2. prays that he will align himself with all those who fear God. He says, “Let me be united with all who fear you, with those who know your laws” (Psa 119:79) and “May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word” (Psa 119:74).
3. prays that the love of walking in God’s ways will keep him from the covetousness that would make him susceptible to bribery, saying, “Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money!” (Psa 119:36).

Keep Going:

A phrase the Bible regularly uses as a shorthand description of a life of integrity is “the fear of the Lord.” It is used most often in the book of Proverbs, a very practical book about how we should live. Consider the following passages: Pro 1:7,29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26,27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17. As you read through them, ask Holy Spirit how he wants to grow these character qualities in your life.

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