

Moses Receipt of Jethro and Its Biblical Lessons for Christians Towards Good Manners

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Abstract

This is a discourse about the encounter between Moses and Jethro when the latter visited him at Rephidim as recorded in Exodus 18:1-12. It reveals some vital issues in relation to good manners necessary for human relationship at all levels particularly among Christians. It contains aspects of godly attitude and responsibilities of Christians to one another and unbelievers in a bid to make them understand something about the Christian life based on love, respect, acceptance, care, and good treatment as reflected in Jesus' culture. It is believed by this trend Christians will teach and encourage themselves toward good manners. Likewise, they will influence others to develop interest in Christ and embrace Christianity as Moses did with Jethro leading to his love, appreciation, faith, and worship of God. Consequently, it calls on Christians to learn from Moses who in spite of his exalted position among others, humbled himself, came out, bowed, greeted, and embraced Jethro, a foreigner in his (Moses) inherent conduct and as a model to his people in the practice of faith.

Keywords

Good manner: Manner has to do with a person's character, behaviour, attitude or conduct and generally about mode or ways of doing things. It could be channel towards doing good or evil; useful, helpful, valuable or destructive. Therefore, by good manner, it implies the process of expressing constructive, positive, and successful actions. It is the performance of a responsible, respectful, honorable and dignifying interaction ("Manner," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018).

Jesus' culture: This is the pattern of behaviour, ways of doing things as taught and exemplified by Jesus. So, it is the reflection of the lifestyle and spirituality of Jesus Christ. It earns believers the name Christians and its resultant practice as Christianity (Act. 11:19-26). Christianity was initially and commonly known or described as the Way and those who subscribed to it as the people of the Way (Act. 2:28, 9:2, 13:10, 16:17, 18:25, 19:9,23, 22:4, 24:14,22).

Pursuit of faith: It is the striving, desire, and determination to please the Lord; a mark of obedience; a conscious effort to implement God's desire, purpose, and will as it concerns self and others. It is intrinsic in the commandments expressed by Jesus as contained in Mark 12:29-31:

Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You must love your neighbour as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.' (ISV).

1. Introduction

Christianity is an attitude, a tradition, and culture based on faith in God. It has no racial, tribal or ethnic boundaries. Thus, it is universal in scope, practice, and spirituality. It is a mark of the people who have committed themselves beyond earthly affiliations to align with each other in a deep sense of oneness, relationship in brotherly love, holiness, honour, respect, and care, fellowship as well as worship of God through Jesus Christ as the centre of their union and interaction. Moreover, they look beyond this world to a continuation of their togetherness in similar conditions in heaven a home in the throne of God (Joh. 17:1-11, 14:1-3; Deut. 6:5; Mar. 12:30-31; Lev. 19:2; Rom. 3:7).

In its earthly concern, it starts with Abraham through Isaac, Jacob and his descendants and finally through Jesus Christ. Moses was one, a major instrument of God in bringing the people to a full realization of the inauguration of the godly nationhood with a projection to Christianity as it is today. This is the fulfillment of a plan with a disclosure by God from the onset, at the earliest beginning of life on earth to Adam and Eve. The process is known theologically as protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15, 12:1-3, 22:18; Exo. 5:2-3; M. M. Oboh, 2018: 101-102).

Some people do not seem to have this understanding. Their inter personal Christian relationships more or less is a projection of their own individual cultural disposition in terms of race, tribe, ethnicity or a reflection of their personality and choice to override what they were supposed to know and pursue in the universal family of

Christ. This universal Christian culture was also to serve as a source of attraction to other people in the world in coming to join the church.

Consequently, the opposing attitude repels people and set Christians more apart from one another instead of bringing people in and getting them closer to each other in Christ (Joh. 17:19-21; 1 Pet. 2:9-25). Thus, this paper is set to create, remind, and inform on the expected attitude of Christians as God's people vis-à-vis their relationship and expectations in view of the interaction between Moses and Jethro, his father-in-law as a major figure and model in Christianity (Exo. 18: 1-12). This is done with the hope that it will effect a positive change of character in this regard. To accomplish this, the paper employs a research instrument using the method of discussion based on the elements of theological, historical, sociological and ethical analyses.

Theologically, the research examines the understanding of God and how it is applied. This is based on Frank Whaling's teachings that theological approach involves the way in which God is perceived (1999:227). In the historical aspect, the research looks into things that have happened in the past and the impact they make on the present as well as how they are likely to affect situations in future (Ayantayo, 2015:196).

In his discourse on sociological approach to the study of religion, Michael S. Northcott (1999:193) perceives it as an interactive relationship between society and religion. Thus, sociological approach determines the way in which things and experience are regarded and how they change or shape people's disposition. The concept of ethics involves the manner, values, reason, purpose, culture, and interest people hold and exercise in the context of religion (Ayantayo, 183).

2. Moses and Jethro' Lives and Works

Moses and Jethro shared some common ancestries. They were part of the descendants of Abraham. Moses was of the Levites lineage through Jacob and Isaac. But Jethro was of the Midianite origin following one of the sons of Abraham, Midian, the fourth by Keturah his wife or concubine after the death of Sarah (Gen. 21:3, 25:26, 29:34; Exo. 2:1, 25:1, 2, 6; "Moses," Smith, 1924, 757; "Midianites," Haskell, 1924, 727). However, their connection in this study as it is in the Bible is not based on their ancestral connectivity. The link between Moses and Jethro was a cause of divine providence. Thus, this section examines their lives in the following accounts.

2.1 Moses' Life and Works

Moses, is described by Henry H. Halley (1965, 118) as the foremost in one of the pre-Christian world who did not allow his race of slaves to dampen his destiny and the worth of his people. Irrespective of the circumstances he found himself, he used them to advance his goal, deliverance, and development of his people. With this determination, he transformed them into a great nation. Thus, by his hard work and dedication Moses changed the course of history in reference to the nationality, freedom, and religion of his people (Judaism) leading to Christianity.

Moses was born to a Levite man named Amram. His mother Jochebed was also of the same tribe with the father. He had two elder siblings, Mariam and Aaron (Exo. 6:20, 15:20, 4). His mother and sister played significant roles in his rescue as a baby when every male child born to the Jews in Egypt was to be killed according to the order of the Pharaoh who reigned at that time. He got the idea from a revelation made known to him by the Egyptian magicians and from his father in a dream (Smith, 757). But his mother wrapped and put him in a basket sealed with tar and put him somewhere in the River Nile where the queen, Pharaoh's daughter usually come to bath. Mariam stood by and was on the watch over him. At a moment of time, the queen, Hatshepsut (Halley, 119) came with her maids to the river and found baby Moses crying. She requested for him to be fetched for her. While she was pitying and wondering how to take care of him, his sister appeared and volunteered to call a woman from among the Hebrew women who could help to nurse him. The queen obliged her to seek for such on her behalf. She went and called their mother and the queen sought for her services with payment to nurse him for her. So Moses was taken by his own mother to care for him. When he was grown enough to live with the queen, she took him to her. He became her son. His queen mother named him Moses meaning that she drew him from the water (Exo. 2:1-10).

His original Hebrew name was Joachim (Smith, 757). His mother did not take chances in caring adequately for him. She also groomed him in the best of the Jewish traditions. With this, he was strengthened against the allurements of the Egyptians palace. He was so dedicated to the Jewish cultural and religious training that nothing was able to eradicate the early impressions they made on him. Moreover, in Egypt, he was again given the finest education. Yet, "it did not turn his head, nor cause him to lose his simple childhood faith" (Halley, 119).

Moses spent his first forty years in Pharaoh's palace as the son of the queen. He was being considered as the heir to the throne which if he had renounced what the mother had imparted on him, he would have been one of the kings in Egypt. By his privileged position, he served as a government official in Egypt. He was also in command of an army stationed in the South. He had a high level of power and reputation (Halley, 119-120). Moreover, he was well taught in the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22; Kitchen, 1996; 784).

Moses escaped from Egypt due to the threat on his life by Pharaoh as a result of his intervention to protect his people, Israelites against the Egyptian oppressions. In a severe situation bordering on a torture that was being suffered by a Jew, Moses secretly intervened and killed the Egyptian that was involved in it in order to rescue the Jew. In a separate incident involving two Jewish men who were having a quarrel, He came in to reconcile them. Unfortunately, one of the men resented his action with an accusation that, he was going to kill him for his opponent the way he did to the Egyptian. Thus, Moses became aware that the matter was no more a secret. Indeed, Pharaoh heard and wanted to kill him. So Moses escaped to the wilderness of Midian (Exo. 2:11-12).

His presence in the wilderness was God's providential arrangement for his training in preparation for the deliverance of his people in Egypt. Thus, in addition to the earliest training with his mother and the cozy life and skills he acquired in Egypt, God brought him into the forest. It was meant to cause him to experience its loneliness and roughness that would provide him with sturdy qualities that were rear in the soft and cool life enjoyed in the palace. It also gave him a firsthand knowledge of the area in which he was to lead the Israelites for the next forty years of his life (Halley, 120).

His sojourn in the wilderness brought him in contact with Zipporah (Exo. 2:21), a lady who was leading her father's flock, the priest of Midian. Moses was relaxing at a point not far from a well where the shepherd were coming to provide water for their animals. He observed that the males did not allow seven sisters, among which was Zipporah to water their flocks though, they got to the well before them. In sympathy, following his usual character, he served and aided them to provide water for their animals. With this done, they returned quickly to their father, Reuel who was amazed with the ease with which they came back home unlike the past. He sought to know from them the reason of their early return. They narrated their favorable experience with Moses (Exo. 2:15-16).

Reuel, the priest of Median was pleased with Moses' action that he asked his daughters to call him to the house. Moses came and lived with them. In the course of time, he gave his daughter, Zipporah as wife to him. She had two sons for Moses Gershom (Exo 2:22) and Eliezer (Exo. 18:3-4). Meanwhile, the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt was not reduced. Rather, it was escalated on them by the king and his people. They cried and lamented for help. God was touched by their weeping and agony for deliverance (Exo. 2:17-25).

At the age of eighty years, Moses had a clearer and direct call from God to deliver Israel. He had this experience while he was thinking about the suffering of his people in the burning bush experience (Exo. 3:1-10). However, Moses was no longer self-confident as he was in his younger years. As a result of this, he was reluctant and made some excuses. Being assured by God of His divine assistance to him added to the power He gave to him to perform miracles, he accepted and went (Exo. 3:11-4:1ff, Halley, 120).

2.2 Jethro' Life and Works

Jethro was described as a prince or priest of Median. It appears he occupied both offices. It was with him that Moses spent the second forty years of his life in exile. Moses married his daughter Zipporah (Exo. 3:1; 4:18). The year of this event is put at 1250 B.C. He advised Moses to appoint deputies that would help him serve as judges and thus, share the burden of leading the people with him (Exo. 18, "Jethro," 1924:582).

He was also called Raguel ("Jethro"). In Exodus 3:1, 4:18, he was referred to as Jethro. He brought Moses' wife, Zipporah, his daughter and her two sons, Goshem and Eliezer to meet with Moses their father at Mt. Horeb. He rejoiced with Moses and the Israelites for their deliverance in Egypt. On account of this, he made a sacrifice of thanksgiving on their behalf to God. He supported Moses' request for his son Hobab to accompany them in their journey to the promise land because of his knowledge of the wilderness acquired as a shepherd within the territory (Num. 10:29; Lilley, 1996: 583-584).

3. Plagues on Pharaoh and his People

At his return to Egypt, Moses began the process of the liberation of the Israelites. He sought a release of them from Pharaoh. He was adamant and insolent against them. Moreover, he increased their burden, labour, and suffering. After a test of power between Moses and the Egyptian magicians, Moses prevailed against them but Pharaoh did not grant the request for them to leave. Then God ordered Moses to inflict Pharaoh and the Egyptians with plagues (Exo. 7).

The test of power was intended as a proof the authenticity of Moses' mission as coming from the Lord. It involves the display of some signs. Thus, he was asked by God to request Aaron his brother to command his shepherd staff to become a snake in Pharaoh's presence. He did but Pharaoh was not convinced. It was on this note, he called his wise men, sorcerers, and magicians to imitate him and they did. Nevertheless, theirs were consumed by Aaron's staff. But Pharaoh remained recalcitrant. This was the cause of the plagues (Exo. 7:8-13).

The plagues were the turning of the River, streams, and ponds as well as all sources of water into blood with the death of every living creature in them; the attack of frogs, lice, the gnats, infliction of disease on cattle, boils on Egyptians and their animals, hail and fire, locusts, darkness as well as the death of every firstborn both of man and animals (Exo. 7:14-24, 25- 8:15, 16-19, 20-32, 9:1-7, 8-12, 13-35, 10:1-20, 21-29, 11:1-12:36).

4. Israelites Departure from Egypt and Jethro' Visit to Moses – Exo. 12:29ff, 18:1-6

The death of the first born was the last struck that forced Pharaoh to temporarily allow the Israelites to depart. There is historical evidence to this event. Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh involved in the battle for the release of the Israelites. But he was succeeded by Thothmes IV who was neither his first born nor his heir apparent. This is a confirmation of the Biblical incidents as recorded in Exodus 4:23, 11:5, 12:29 (Halley, 123).

4.1 Israelites Departure from Egypt (Exo. 12:29ff)

The departure from Egypt was covered in the Passover event in which God instructed the Israelites to use the Lamb's blood on their doorpost. This symbolizes the death "of the first born, deliverance out of a hostile country, and the continuance of this feast throughout Israel's history" (Halley, 123). God's purpose of this in the entire Jewish history is a pointer to Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb for our deliverance out of a hostile world by His blood. So it happened that at last, the Israelites prepared and left Egypt following the death of the first born of the Egyptians (Exo. 12). After they had left Egypt, Pharaoh and his army pursued after them but they escaped by the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea in modern Suez. When they crossed, Pharaoh and his men went in pursuit of them but before the Egyptian could cross along with them, the sea covered up killing Pharaoh and his entire force. With other series of events in the wilderness, they came to a place where Jethro visited Moses bringing along with him Moses' wife and their two sons (Exo. 14:15-17; Halley, 124-127).

4.2 Jethro' Visit to Moses (Exo. 18:1-6)

The good news of God's deliverance of the Israelites from the persecution and sufferings in the hands of Pharaoh, and his Egyptian people with the numerous events and miracles that trailed the course were not such that could be hidden and not spread like a wild fire. So, Moses' father in-law and family got the world's most breaking news of that time. They were a proof of the supremacy of God; the great defeat of the then world power and ruler; the shameful reduction to nothing of the numerous gods and goddesses, priest, and magicians as well as their sources of powers, the principalities and agents, spiritual forces of the living and the dead, and so on that were embodied in the Egyptians religion and practices. All of these were in no doubt cheering to those who believe in justice, fairness, righteousness, and godliness. So Jethro received the news with joy and celebration in his family particularly for his daughter Zipporah and her two sons. They also prepared to visit Moses where the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai. At a distance not too far in his approach to the camp, he sent to alert him of his surprised visit in company of his (Moses) wife and children with the euphoria of the victory, "I your father in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons" (Exo. 18:6 CSB; 1-6).

However, there are divergent views as to how the news got to Jethro and why his daughter and her two sons with him in Midian were not with their father. Though, these are no problem in themselves, it is interesting to note how some people feel about them. According to John MacArthur (2005:110), people of the ancient time had an intelligent system of gathering information that is not to be underrated. As a result, it was fast for news and important happenstances to be carried from one community to the other. Some were through traders, representatives of communities in other places, and other official agencies. Nevertheless, MacArthur is of the opinion that Zipporah took the news to her father because Moses had sent them ahead (Exo. 18:1-6).

It is true that Moses sometimes sent his wife and their children to his father in-law somewhere along the line as the Scripture states (Exo 18:2). This claim cannot be relied on as a basis through which Jethro got the news because Moses could not have sent his wife with two children needing care on a distance simply to share information that others such as young men and some adults could carry faster and for security purposes will do well on. Another point is that the scriptures did not give specific time and purpose for that action. Nevertheless, it can be deduced from other more probable factors surrounding the event on the basis of a mere critically deductive analysis.

Warren W. Wiersbe (2007: 117) raises two questions in this context, "(1) How did Jethro hear about the wonderful works of God in Egypt? And (2) When did Moses' wife and two sons return home?" Thus, he asserts the possibility of Moses sending his wife and children to his father in-law at Midian before the war was declared on Egypt by God. Moreover, it was after the departure from Egypt that he sent a messenger to them. But he was quick to follow it up with the idea that some scholars do not accept that presupposition on the ground that Moses would definitely be interested in his wife and children having a personal knowledge of God's judgement on the Egyptian and the liberation of the Jews.

He also added a question being asked by those who refused the idea that he might have sent his family back to his in-law before the crisis saying, what kind of a leader would that be who will prefer the comfort of his family while his own people were in anguish in Egypt? Consequently, he opines that if Moses' family was with him in Egypt, therefore, it means it was after the Exodus, he sent them to deliver the information to her father. So since his wife and two sons could travel faster than the whole of Israelite nation, they got to Midian before the Jewish assembly arrived at Sinai (Wiersbe, 117).

The previous assumption is not in the opinion of this paper. The proponents of it do not consider the fact

that Moses could have had a better reason other than his family comfort as a basis for sending them to his wife's father. One of such was the need for him to have ample opportunity to concentrate on the battle. Moses was a well trained soldier, who had been a commandant in Egypt. No soldier ever goes to war with his wife or family. Thus, it was socially, politically, and strategically necessary for him to have taken that action. He knew the seriousness of that moment, he transverse between the palace and his people, going to God for consultation, holding meetings with his own people and elders, planning, and leading in the execution both day and night. How could he have combined family responsibility with the demand of war? That is not to say he did not love his family or that he loved them more than his people. Keeping them with him would have created so much distraction on his part. Besides, it would not have been for their safety.

He was holistically convinced about what God was doing. So he ensured he planned and work not to fail. It speaks of his level of dedication and commitment. It does not mean that soldiers and military personnel who leave their families to go to war do not love their people. Moreover, do they have take their spouses and children with them to see what is happening at the battlefield as eye witnesses before they will understand the intensity of what goes on there? It is absolutely not. Therefore, it was not different with the circumstances of Moses in sending his wife and children home. With the wisdom of his father in-law who would have assessed the situation, he might have requested Moses to send them to him. He would definitely have been following the events as they unfold in Egypt. From the spiritual perspective, Moses could also not have taken chances by not observing sexual abstinence as a reason to have sent the wife home for a time.

John D. Hannah's (1987:136) view supports the idea that Jethro was evidently monitoring the affairs of his son-in-law, Moses in Egypt with keen interest. He submits that this was a reason why at the point they were in Rephidim, near Sinai (Exo. 10:5, 3:1; 4:27) he decided to visit him with his family in order to rejoice with him and the Israelites for their victory. Consequently, this paper believes that the news of the victory could have reached Jethro not through his daughter who was already with him. But by any of the channels of information dissemination earlier presented above. However, more specifically Jethro because of his interest in the matter and love for his son in-law whose wife and children were with him and was intelligently following the situation could have sent to know from Moses of every step and result he was taking. Moses on his part could not have been unmindful not to send to inform him of the Lord's victory for them due to his respect for him and his love for his family that were with him.

5. Moses' Receipt of Jethro and its Lessons of Good Manners for Christians – Exo. 18:7-23

So much of interest and learning transpired in the manner in which Moses and Jethro conducted their meeting. The process began from the time he got information about his arrival and throughout his stay with him at Rephidim near Mount Sinai in the wilderness. Initially, as Jethro and his company of Moses' wife and two children were approaching, he sent to inform him of their close arrival (Exo. 18:6).

5.1 Moses' Receipt of Jethro (Exo. 18:7)

Moses did not waste time on receiving the message of the arrival of his and father in-law. He did not remain within the camp or inside his tent for them to come in to him. Rather, he went out to welcome and receive them while they were still at a distance from the camp. On getting to him, he bowed down to his father in-law. They embraced each other. Taking interest in one another's affairs, they began to seek to know how they and everything with them had been. While in this mood, exchanging ideas, and information, they went into the tent (Exo. 18:7).

In the tent, Moses began to narrate to Jethro everything that the Lord had done for them in Egypt: the battle to be freed, the miracles, and the plagues, the imitation of the magicians, the defeat of the gods and goddesses, and the hypocritical release of the Israelites by Pharaoh as well as God's final conquest of him and the entire Egyptians. The narrative must have also included the plundering of the Egyptian gold and silver, the division of the Red Sea, provision of water from the rock, victory over the Amalikites, and manna for food among others. Jethro was overjoyed with the news of God's mercy and kindness to the Israelites in their deliverance from Pharaoh (Exo. 18:14-18:9).

In terms of human and Christian relationships as well as our duties and responsibilities to God, there are issues in the narrative that require some attentions. Thus, Wiersbe observes that,

After reading about the trials, complaints, and battles of Israelites, it's a relief to move into a chapter that describes the camp of Israel as a quiet place of family fellowship and daily business. Life isn't always hunger and thirst and warfare, although those are often the things we usually remember (176).

Consequently, the welcoming encounter between Moses and Jethro provides us with some lessons for good manners, particularly in our Christian relationships.

5.2 *Lessons of Good Manners for Christians (Exo 18:7-8)*

The church and Christian community is being polarized on the basis of individualism. Some communities have become strongly affected that hardly does anyone cares about the interest or problem of his or her neighbour. Some would rather walk away than seek to assist even when it is within their reach to do so. Greeting is resented by some. They see it as intrusion or interference with their comfort or privacy. When some manage to express salutation within their acceptable class, it is usually not expressed with the supposed honour, respect, love, and acceptance that it deserves. Thus, some younger ones would manage to greet the elders with the nodding of head, a wave of the hand, saying of hello or hi. Instead, the Bible instructs Christians, believers in Christ to render due honour to those deserving of it which is your neighbour (Exo. 20:12; Lev. 19:32; Matt. 19:19; Rom. 13:7; Eph. 6:1-2; Phi. 2:29; 1 Pet. 2:17). Consider the content of the following scriptures in this regard:

Honour your father and your mother... (Exo. 20:12 ISV) you are to rise in the presence of the elderly and honour the old. Fear your God: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:32 CSB); Honour everyone. Keep on loving the community of believers, fearing God and honoring the King (1 Pet. 2:17 ISV).

But this is not how the church is today generally. Therefore, Moses presents us with this model in his relationship with Jethro.

5.2.1 *Moses Went Out to Meet Jethro (v. 7a)*

Moses did not hesitate to go out and welcome his family especially his father-in-law. As a mark of honour, he left whatever he was doing at that moment to receive them when they were still some distance away. It reflects the value or importance Moses had for him and his family. For this reason, the respect, receipt, and accommodation we accord people is a sign of the importance we attach to them and how compliant we are to God. This is not to be done to our family members alone. The Scriptures did not ask that we should be selective about it but to all (1 Pet. 2:17). Wiersbe corroborates the view of Moses' gesture of going out to meet them as a sign of respect from him to his father-in-law (177).

5.2.2 *Moses Bowed to Greet Jethro (v. 7b)*

After Moses had gone out to meet Jethro, he greeted him. He did not do this with a mere expression of a nod, hello, hi or a wave of the hand. He bowed down to him. It was not a sign of worship, but an expression of reverence, honour to a befitting personality. Similar to the posture of bowing is to rise depending on one's position when the occasion arises. This is what Leviticus 19:32 expresses: "you are to rise in the presence of the elder and honour the old." The two can be combined to rise and bow that is to flex in honour. Thus, Moses exemplified what he taught (Exo. 18:7).

James A. Borland (1982:151) and Hannah (136) both describe Moses' action as respectful. Matthew Henry (1960:91) expands the notion and asserts that, "Those that stand high in the favour of God are not thereby discharged from the duty they owe to men. Moses went out to meet Jethro, did homage to him, and blessed him. Religion does not destroy good manners." Therefore, there is no exemption of persons in the Christian practice of respect and the approach to it.

Furthermore, Moses' attitude was not based on a particular culture, tribe or race. It is pure Christianity in action. Consequently, the argument in some quarters seeing it as a reflection of Semitic practices being the main purpose behind what he did is not correct. Otherwise, the culture in reference does not prohibit an elder or a man in the position of Moses not to send someone on an errand which he did not do to help receive his wife, children and in-law. Most of the people would have been too pleased to jump at the opportunity. Rather, he condescended and went himself. Thus, there is much to it. It captures his great sense of humility and modesty as well as of his "great deal of honour" to Jethro as John Gill describes (1980:333). This indeed is Christianity in practice. Therefore, we should imbibe it.

5.2.3 *Moses Embraced Jethro (v. 7c)*

The third action of Moses was to kiss his father-in-law. Every step taken by him has something to tell about his character, faithfulness, and dedication to godliness. Moses was very humble. The Scriptures describe him as a man whose humility has not been equated by anyone on earth (Num. 12:3). He did not allow his position, power, and fame to becloud his value and respect for others. This was also a display of his sense of appreciation to his father-in-law in helping him with the care of his family, giving him enough time to concentrate on the struggle with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He teaches and reminds us of our duty to one another in the context of a practical demonstration of love and service to God (v.7). In response to this, James K. Hoffmeier (1989:52) opines that, "The meeting between Moses and Jethro displays the typical honour paid to a respected person." This is the way the Lord instructs and desires for us to relate with one another.

5.2.4 *Moses and Jethro Exchanged Pleasantries (v.7d)*

In the same way of showing respect and acceptance to each other, Moses and Jethro did not hide their feelings. So they were opened and took interest in each other's concerns. They were truthful and honest in doing this. Christians should see their fellow brothers as one, love, and draw them closer. They should not hate and avoid them as if they are not humans. We should look beyond skin colour social, cultural background, race, and tribe.

Beyond our natural quality as mankind, we have been bought or redeemed with the same sacrifice, called to the same faith, and blend with the same spirit and the same baptism. We also together look forward to the same home in heaven and owned by the same God (Joh. 3:26; 14:1-3; Acts 10:28. 34:44-48).

If God shows no partiality (Act 10:34) then we are not called to discriminate against one another. Therefore, let us do away with sentiment, hatred, and resentment. According to Gill (333) the exchange of pleasantries is a show of concern in each other's welfare or peace. In it, they desire prosperity along with happiness for themselves. It includes their feelings for each other spiritually, temporarily, inwardly, and outwardly. Their personal health and of their families were also involved.

5.2.5 *Moses Received Jethro in his Tent (v.7e)*

The chronological order of the unfolding events between Moses and his visiting father-in-law is quite interesting as it is instructive. At this juncture, Moses returned with them and ushered his in-law into his tent. Giving the spiritual aura of the time, place, and of the journey, Moses did not abhor or resent his in-law as a non Jew and so not qualified to come into his tent which then was his home. This was before he had time to explain to him the experiences so far and to know of his would-be responses. So, Moses did not make any separation between himself, his family, people, and anyone else. Moreover, several non Jews accompanied them from Egypt. They were allowed and absorbed (Exo. 19, 48, 47; 2-2:21; 23:7). He had a very big picture of what Christianity entails and he did exactly that. If we separate people from us or ourselves from them how can we reach them for Christ? We hardly can evangelize them. And if we fail to embrace our fellow Christians on the ground of the colour of the skin or whatever we might think about them, we cannot be loyal to God. Christianity is not about selective obedience. It is absolute.

5.2.6 *Moses Narrates God's Favour and Israelites' Liberation Experience to Jethro (v.8)*

At the point they had been fully brought in and settled, Jethro was "refreshed with food and drink" (Gill, 333). Moses began to testify in detail of the Lord's goodness to the Jews in their struggle, persecution, and suffering in the oppressive regime of Pharaoh to him. He made him become aware of the several exciting occurrences since he came back to Egypt. The main trust of the account was to share with him of the great deed for God for them (Hannah, 136). Matthew Henry (350) notes that the conversation was a profitable one, it was such that is edifying and to minister God's grace (Eph. 4:29). However, Moses did not hold back their hardship on the way and how God also overcame for them ("Exodus," Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary, 96). By implications, Christians should spend time to share God's grace and deeds with one another and to those with whom they come in contact as much as the occasion permits. This is one of the ways we can profit of our time with others.

As a result of the warm welcome accorded him by Moses, Jethro was extremely excited. In his elated mood, he expressed praises to God and made a confession of faith in Him (vv.10, 11). He also worshiped and celebrated with the Jews (v.12). On the other hand, his visit was a source of joyful reunion for Moses and his family. Moreover, the occasion afforded the Israelites the opportunity to commemorate their breakthrough and deliverance from the Egyptians.

6. Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that Jethro's visit to Moses provides several lessons for good manners. Added to this is the moral, ethical, and social implication it has for the church. Thus, good manners should not be seen as mere cultural issues. They are inherent in Scriptures, exhibited by Moses and practiced by other heroes of faith and the saints. They are also explicit in the character of God. By good manners, Christians reveal the genuineness of their inward belief in Christ. Thus, they are the emblem of the presence and submission to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23, 24-25, 26; Eph. 1:13; 3:5; 4:3).

In the same vein, by the instrumentality of good manners, Christians encourage one another. They enable us to please God and to cause others to be happy and to move along with us. With good manners, we teach the world the contents of Christianity. They are not meant to be hidden. As beauty is showcased, so are good manners. The expected peace at home and cordial relationship with those with whom we fellowship in the church as well as those we meet from place to place and time to time are enhanced by good manners.

Thus, good manners bind and bless marriage, as well as foster family unity. In spite of his exalted position, Moses did not give chances on good manners. Consequently, he encouraged Jethro and won him to God. Likewise, with good manners, Moses strengthens his own relationship with the elders of Israel and the people. This is the nature and essence of a good manner that issues from the heart and goes down to the mind. It is not love or hospitality at the surface which is hypocritical, pretentious, defensive, and deceptive display by some individuals to lure or get someone off.

Rather, good manners are values in Christianity. Christians are taught and encouraged to love and pursue them as symbols of their faith. Consequently, the Bible has instructions and lessons on good manners to every category of persons (*knowing Jesus*, "13 Bible verses about Manners"; 17 Best Bible Verses about Respect-Encouraging Scripture - Bible Study Tools."). Thus, the young are urged to give due reverence to the old. Adults are to treat themselves in the same way and superiors or those in authority to have similar mindset towards others

and to treat their colleagues equally with good manners as well. To handle people with courtesy is a demonstration of the fear and obedience of God. It also amounts to the value or importance reposed on other people. (Job. 29:18; Lev.19:3). Parents are also enjoined to treat their children with good manners (Gen. 31:35).

In the same vein, strangers are to be accorded with respect irrespective of who they are. It was in such situation that Abraham received angels unknown with greetings and bowing. Moreover, having received them with honour, he took care of them by giving them water to wash. He also gave them food to eat prepared by his wife based on the request he gave to her and she did. They were both committed to good manners (Gen. 18:1-5). This attitude was also a part of Lot's household. He treated the angels in the same way when they visited him after their departure from Abraham. The development shows a particular character of a people with the same background. This is the way it should be with Christians irrespective of places, time and age because of their common faith and teachings (Gen. 19:1-3).

As a practice of good manners, Sarah stood before her visitors while they ate (Gen. 18:8). This is not an instruction for us to do just like that when hosting guests. But when the occasion calls for it, we should not hesitate to do the needful. It is like when having guests at home, church or in some places of meeting, juniors, peers or subordinate can stand for others as a mark of honour for them to be seated instead of the hosts while the visitors are standing. It is for the same purpose that some people would stand if they were seated for elders or some other persons like those with difficulties or otherwise in a bus or public places to take their position. Such actions should be encouraged, commended and improved upon. Humility makes it possible to practice good manners. So, it has a great role to play in the pursuit of good manners (1 Pet. 3:8).

Moreover, good manners make good citizenship. When Christians extend the spirit of good manners toward one another and to others in the society, it would help to foster love, acceptability, good relationship, peace and docility. In the same vein, they will be able to make some positive impacts on those who do not subscribe to the Christian faith. Living as a Christian with good manners attests to a person's portrayal of the gospel and commitment to the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Phi. 1:27).

It depicts a gainful and wise use of time to practice good manners. It is a way to avail oneself of the privilege in Christ. Consequently, it acts as a proof for Christians against those who think and act with suspicious toward them. Thus, good manner vindicates Christians against those who doubt their authenticity. In the process, it causes other people to honour God and make them to be more disposed to Christianity (Col. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:12).

Good manners are attitude of holiness for a Christian. Holiness cannot be practiced in the absence of good manners. A life that is devoid of them is not true to the faith it confesses in Christ. Thus, leaders are to be imitators of Christ as the followers are to be with those who lead them. Good manners should constitute a lifestyle and legacies by which Christians should be known and remembered. They are landmarks as well as positive impacts to the upcoming generations (1 Pet. 1:15; Heb. 13:7). Therefore, immoral conduct, misbehavior, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild partying and things like that..." (Gal. 5:19-21) are inimical to the practice of good manner. They are hindrances to a fruitful growth, holiness, and a qualitative Christian life. They impede on the blessings of heaven.

In contrast, good manners constitute actions of productivity in "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness... and self-control" (Ga. 5:22-23). By the conduct of good manners, Christians are able to guide themselves. A person controlled by good manners will not provoke nor envy his or her neighbor (Ga. 5:25-26).

Indeed, good manners have contributing impact in the amicable, lovely, peaceful, and mutual relationship among couples and their family. It enhances a sense of submission and provides incentives for the unbelieving spouse to come to the knowledge and inspiration to believe in Christ (1 Pet. 3:1).

To treat others with respect is a way of showing them how much one loves and also deserves to be treated. The Bible teaches it and the prophets instructed and lived by it. In addition, by good manners, we can practice proper care and respect to one another. It is an injunction for Christians to regard others more highly than themselves. This is possible only through good manners or respect. With it, Christians are able to maintain integrity and seriousness of faith (Mat. 7:12; Rm. 12:10; Phi. 2:3; Tit. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:17).

Besides, by exhibiting good manners, we make it known that we are not selfish but seeking the good of all. Good manners enhance cordial relationship between workers and those who have authority over them. Thus, it enables them to show respect, obedience, and compliance to constituted authorities whether of government, institutions, traditional or family (1 Cor. 10:33, Rom. 13:1-5, 1 Ths. 5:12-13; Heb. 12:7-8).

By the practice of good manners Christians are charge to pay dues and taxes as applicable to them. At the same time, it beholds us in the pursuit of good manners not to owe and refuse to pay. It is an act of good manners for children to obey their parents and elders (Rom. 13:6-7; Eph. 6:1-3).

Jesus' life was characterized by good manners. The principles, moral obligations, and loyalty embodied in the practice of discipleship and subscription to Christianity demands that we should reflect His behaviour (Ph. 2:5). Consequently, good manners are not contestable as attitude of life and Christian dispositions. They are important in the family, church, and society. It is not the practice of good manners for someone to lie, cheat, defraud and do whatever wrong to his or her neighbour. Good manner teaches a sense of love, best treatment,

safety, and security towards self, others, a system, and the state. It is not immunity against sin. However, it trains towards doing good, equips, and prevents from wrong. This is what Moses teaches as a part of his experience with Jethro.

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Biography

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Thereafter, having received the call into the Gospel Ministry, he was admitted into the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria in 1992 and graduated with a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree in affiliation to the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria) in 1996, and B.Th (Bachelor of Theology in affiliation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA) in 1996; M.Th (Master of Theology with Islamic Studies as major and minor in Systematic Theology also in affiliation to Southern, USA) in 2000; PhD in Theology and Christian Ethics as minor, NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008 and PhD in World Religions from the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria with affiliation to NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008.

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