

Delegation - A Biblical Perspective!

By Gerry Hickman



Many time management problems are a result of not delegating enough or delegating ineffectively. When we don't delegate properly, we and others may suffer.

What is Delegating?

"To delegate" means "to entrust to another; to appoint as one's representative; to assign responsibility or authority." (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*) So delegating requires entrusting others to complete tasks and logically leads to them sharing responsibility and being given authority for the tasks. Delegation also involves partnering with others to complete objectives and saves time and energy if done successfully. We can accomplish much more when we are able to partner with others. (*Ecc. 4:9*).

Some Reasons Why We don't Delegate

- Belief we can complete the tasks faster or better
- Afraid to give up authority or responsibility
- Mistrust (Unsatisfactory results from others in the past)
- Perfectionism (Too focused on the details)
- Money Restrictions (Can't afford to pay for help)
- Resource Restrictions (No one is available to help)

Biblical Examples of Successful Delegation

The Creator God was the first to delegate. He could have created everything by Himself, but decided to let His Son (Jesus Christ) share in His creative and redemption work. (*John 1:1-3, John 3:16, Mark 8:31, John 10:11*) While on earth, Jesus Christ imitated his Father in delegating responsibility. He steadily trained his 12 disciples and later 72 other disciples to manage the preaching work. (*Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-7*) Before leaving the earth, Jesus delegated greater responsibilities, including the global preaching work, to his trained disciples.—(*Matt. 24:45-47*). He gave them power and authority to continue this great work (*Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:16-20*) and after leaving earth, sent His Spirit to live inside of them (*Acts 2:1-4*). Because of the effort of the disciples and the early church, we are able to experience the blessings of Jesus Christ today.

In Genesis 41:55 we find that at the height of the famine in Egypt, Pharaoh had assigned absolute authority over all of the storehouses in Egypt to Joseph the son of Jacob. When the people cried to Pharaoh for bread, he sent them all to Joseph to decide exactly how to allocate the portions. Joseph was not simply Pharaoh's "distributor" of the provisions in the storehouse that had been accumulated under his direction over the seven *years* of plenty, but it is also clear that Pharaoh did not want to assume the responsibility of feeding the people. He entrusted and empowered Joseph to handle everything and Egypt prospered tremendously under the direction of Joseph. (See *Gen. 41 Entire Chapter*)

Biblical Example of a Delegation Problem/Solution:

The bible also points to examples of delegation problems (*Acts 6:1-7*). One set of scriptures is found in Exodus 18:1-23. In Exodus 18, Moses is leading the Hebrews through the desert when his father-in-law (Jethro), a priest of Midian (*Exodus 18:1*), shows up.



Jethro observes Moses as he tries to handle every civil disagreement among the Hebrew people. Jethro advises Moses to delegate some of his work and not try to handle everything on his own. When Moses begins to share some of his responsibilities, he has fewer disputes to resolve and more time to do his higher priority tasks of seeking God for direction, teaching and leading his people.

Delegation - A Biblical Perspective! *(cont'd)*

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Effective Delegation Tips

We can learn so much about delegating from this biblical example. Consider the following tips:



Delegate, don't dump. It is important for a leader to become skillful at delegating and not pass off unwanted chores, busy work or tasks they can complete themselves. Every task should be weighed and distributed to the qualified (experienced, mature, committed) person to carry out the assignment. *Remember you can delegate upward (to your boss) as well as downward if necessary or possible.*

Delegate the challenging and rewarding tasks. Assign tasks that encourage growth in others. Remember no one is perfect and training is necessary for growth. It is easy to give directions, but harder to keep from interfering after a task is delegated. Sometimes another may have a better way of approaching the tasks.

The key to delegation is TRUST. Always give others sufficient training, time and authority to make necessary decisions and choices. Never delegate with strings attached (*Genesis 29:15-28*) or if you know the person is not able to do the task.

Don't give to others unwanted tasks or assignments you can do yourself

Every task should be prioritized, weighed and given to the qualified person to carry it out

Let others have time to train, for it is a necessary for growth.

Experience, Maturity and Commitment are key when deciding who should be assigned a task

Give direction when necessary but resist interfering after handing off the task

Authority and Trust are necessary for others to have the autonomy to complete tasks

Take time to listen to others; they may see what you can't. (*Remember Jethro*)

Enjoy the time to focus on high priority tasks as you learn to delegate effectively.

Personal Experience: It is very rewarding when delegation and partnering (teamwork) works successfully. In my past experiences, I worked as a leader who delegated and one who was delegated to.

In one assignment, I worked on a team of two people. My partner and I met and planned our approach to tackling the assignment by first discussing each other's strengths and then assigning tasks based upon these strength areas. We both received training and were committed to completing the assignment and working together. As a leader, my focus was on planning, marketing and managing the overall project. My partner was responsible for the daily activities and handling customer requests and details. We met frequently to discuss progress, opportunities and problems.

The partnership was very successful, for I encouraged and empowered her to make daily decisions without meddling and trusted her to complete the tasks her way. She also trusted me to do my part and respected my decisions. We were able, as a team, to complete our assignment with extreme success and even received awards for our efforts.