

Discussion Guide

Date: 11/1/2026
Sermon Title: How do others shape who I am?
Scripture: Exodus 18:13-24

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

SERIES INTRODUCTION:
We often picture a leader as someone confident, polished, and ready to stand out front. Yet Scripture tells a different story: God often calls the overlooked, the unlikely, and the underprepared and shapes them through the people around them.

On this All Saints Sunday, we remember those who have died in the past year and give thanks for the lives they lived, the faith they shared, and the ways they shaped us. Their witness reminds us that we do not walk the journey of faith alone. We learn from those who have gone before us, just as we continue to shape the faith and lives of those who come after us.

In Exodus 18, Moses learns from his father-in-law, Jethro, that even faithful leaders need the wisdom of others. Today, we consider how God uses relationships, the witness of the saints, and the wisdom of those who have walked faithfully before us to shape who we are becoming.

CENTRAL QUESTION: How do others shape who I am, and how might God use my life to shape others?

OPENING PRAYER:
Gracious God, thank you for the gift of community and for the saints who have shaped our lives and faith. On this day of remembrance, comfort those who grieve, strengthen those who carry the memories of loved ones, and help us give thanks for the legacy of faith that surrounds us. Open our hearts to the wisdom of Scripture and to the lessons we can learn from one another. Shape us into people who follow Jesus faithfully and leave a legacy of love for those who come after us. Amen.

GETTING STARTED: Remembering those who shaped us (5 minutes):
All Saints Sunday invites us to remember that our faith is shaped not only by what we believe, but also by the people who have lived that faith before us.

1. Who is someone, living or deceased, whose faith or example has helped shape the person you are today?
2. What is one lesson, value, or expression of faith you carry because of that person?
3. When you think about the saints who have gone before us, what does it mean to “run the race” faithfully?

Transition: Today, we remember those who have shaped our faith while also looking at Moses, who discovered that even a great leader needs to learn from others.

DIGGING INTO SCRIPTURE:

Read the passage Exodus 18:13–24 together · 10–15 minutes

Helpful background

Moses is leading the Israelites after their escape from Egypt. He spends the day hearing disputes and making decisions for the people, carrying an enormous responsibility largely by himself. His father-in-law, Jethro, observes this and recognizes that the arrangement is neither healthy nor sustainable. Jethro offers Moses honest counsel: share the responsibility with capable, trustworthy people. Moses listens and changes his approach.

This passage reminds us that even people called by God need the wisdom, experience, and perspective of others. Faithful leadership does not mean doing everything ourselves. It means being willing to learn, grow, and make room for others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In verses 13–18, what does Jethro notice about Moses' leadership that Moses may not have recognized himself? Why can it be difficult to see our own limitations?
2. In verses 19–23, Jethro offers Moses a different way forward. What was Jethro's advice? Who has helped you see a situation differently or offered wisdom that changed your approach to life or faith?
3. Verse 24 tells us that Moses listened to Jethro and followed his advice. What does this teach us about humility and the importance of remaining teachable, regardless of our age or experience? What is hard about listening to others for you?
4. On All Saints Sunday, we remember people who have finished their earthly journey. What can we learn from the faith, character, and witness of those who have gone before us?
5. Looking ahead: Just as we have been shaped by others, how might our own choices, faith, and relationships shape the people who come after us?

Connecting Scripture, faith, and All Saints Sunday

The Christian faith is passed from one generation to another through Scripture, worship, relationships, and the witness of people who live out their faith. You may choose to look at one or two of these additional passages:

- Hebrews 12:1–2 — We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and encouraged to run with perseverance the race set before us.
- Romans 12:4–8 — We are members of one body, each with gifts to share.
- 2 Timothy 1:5 — Paul remembers the sincere faith that lived first in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

These passages remind us that we inherit a faith shaped by others, and we have a responsibility to nurture that faith in those who follow us.

A WESLEYAN CONNECTION:

John Wesley emphasized that Christian growth happens in community. Through small groups, prayer, accountability, and encouragement, early Methodists helped one another grow in holiness and love.
This connects with both Exodus 18 and All Saints Sunday. We need others to help us recognize our gifts, correct our course, and persevere in faith. The saints who have gone before us leave more than memories; their witness can continue to encourage and challenge us as we follow Christ.

1. Who has helped you keep going in your faith when the journey was difficult? What part of their witness do you want to carry forward?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Clayton with a quote from Frederick Buechner who describes saints as 'pocket handkerchiefs' that God drops into our lives to make us feel more alive. Who are the people in your life who have functioned this way, and what specific qualities made their presence life-giving to you?
2. Jethro is not a widely celebrated biblical figure, yet he played a pivotal role in Moses' ministry by offering practical wisdom at a critical moment -- what does his example teach us about the kinds of people we should be open to receiving guidance from?
3. The sermon identifies three gifts that saints offer: being heard, being seen, and being guided -- which of these three gifts has been most transformative in your own life, and why do you think that particular gift had such a deep impact?
4. Pastor Clayton says of his mentor Don Benton, 'He believed in me before I believed in myself' -- can you recall a person who believed in your potential before you recognized it yourself, and how did their belief shape the direction of your life?
5. The sermon connects the Lord's Supper to the communion of the saints, suggesting that gathering at the table is a moment where the living and the departed are mysteriously united. How does this understanding of communion change or deepen the way you approach the Lord's table?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

1. Remember: What is one thing you are thankful to have learned from someone who has gone before you?
2. Receive: What might God still be teaching you through the people in your life today?
3. Pass on: What do you hope others will learn about faith, love, or following Jesus by watching the way you live?
4. What is one part of the faith or legacy you have received that you want to carry forward into the lives of others?

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of all generations, we thank you for the saints who have gone before us and for all those whose lives have shaped our faith. We remember with love those who have died in this past year, and we ask you to comfort all who grieve. Thank you for the lessons they taught, the love they shared, and the ways their faith continues to inspire us. Like Moses, help us remain humble enough to listen and wise enough to learn. Give us courage to follow Christ faithfully and to share the gifts you have entrusted to us. Fill us with your grace and strengthen us to run our race of faith with perseverance, keeping our eyes on you Jesus. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Identify one person in your life who needs to be heard. Set aside time with no agenda other than to listen to them fully and without judgment.
2. Think of a saint in your life, living or deceased, who shaped who you are. Write them a letter of thanks. If they are still living, consider sending it or reading it to them. If they have passed, this can still be a meaningful act of remembrance and healing.
3. Consider whether there is someone in your life, perhaps a younger colleague, a neighbor, a student, or someone newer in faith, who could benefit from your guidance. Pray about how God might be calling you to step into that role.

4. Moses was wearing himself out by trying to do everything alone. Jethro helped him see that. Honestly assess whether you are doing the same. Are there responsibilities you are carrying alone that could and should be shared?
5. During a quiet moment this week, perhaps during prayer or at your own table, intentionally remember those who have gone before you. Give thanks for them by name and ask God to help you carry forward the gifts they gave you.