

Lessons for Leaders

Numbers 20:1-13

The Leader Sins

1 *In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.*

2 *Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron.* 3 *They quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! 4 Why did you bring the LORD's community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? 5 Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"*

6 *Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them.* 7 *The LORD said to Moses, 8 "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."*

9 *So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him.* 10 *He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.*

12 *But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."*

13 *These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD and where he showed himself holy among them.*

QUESTIONS:

The Israelites had faced the lack of water earlier in their journeys and God had provided (see Exodus 17:1-3). In Num 20:3-5 the people insulted God by saying it would have been better to remain slaves in Egypt. Why do people turn against the LORD so quickly?

How did Moses and Aaron immediately respond to their complaints (see vs 6)? What does falling "facedown" signify? Why is it good to seek the LORD first before responding to people's complaints or criticisms?

What did God tell Moses and Aaron to do and why (see vs 8)?

What did Moses do instead and what was the result (see vs 10-11)?

What did Moses call the people and who did he say had to bring water to them?

Why did God allow the water to gush forth even though Moses did not obey Him completely?

What was Moses' sin(s) according to the LORD in vs 12 and what does He mean? See also Psalm 106:32-33.

How can we be guilty of sinning in the same manner as Moses?

What was the punishment that God handed out to Moses and Aaron?

How did the LORD "show Himself holy" in this situation?

Moses' sister, Miriam, died just before the people started complaining about their lack of water. The Bible is not clear on whether Moses allowed his grief to influence his poor decision. Regardless, God does not excuse Moses' actions in any way. Many people today make excuses for their disobedience. What are some of those excuses and would God call them legitimate?

*****Interesting note:** Apparently Moses, Aaron, and the priests and Levites were not included in the punishment of

Numbers 14:20-35 that called for the death of an entire generation before the people could enter the Promised Land. Moses and Aaron had planned on leading the new generation into Canaan until this incident. The women may have also been excluded from the earlier punishment. God specifically says in 14:22 "all the men" who had seen His wonders but were unwilling to listen to His voice would not go into the land. It seems to be a punishment directed at the "fighting men" or army who were afraid to go take the land when God commanded it.

Numbers 20:14-21

No Passing through Edom

14 *Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying:*

"This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come upon us. 15 Our forefathers went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our fathers, 16 but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt.

"Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. 17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

18 *But Edom answered:*

"You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword."

19 *The Israelites replied:*

"We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot--nothing else."

20 *Again they answered:*

"You may not pass through."

Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. 21 Since Edom

refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.

QUESTIONS:

The people of Edom were relatives of the Israelites because they were descended from Jacob's brother, Esau. Moses used diplomacy to seek passage through their region, even offering to pay for anything they used. The Edomites refused and even brought their army forward to threaten them. Israel turned away and went a longer route rather than fighting a nation they had no quarrel with.

The Israelites had a large enough army to force their way through Edom, so why didn't they?

Why is it better many times to seek a peaceful solution rather than starting a fight even when you know you can win? (see Matthew 5:9-12; 43-48)

In the first part of the chapter, Moses' temper got him in trouble with God. In this passage, he controls his temper in what could have been a volatile situation. When do you have trouble controlling your temper? How are you allowing God to control the situation?

Numbers 20:22-29

Passing On the Priestly Garments

22 *The whole Israelite community set out from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor.*

23 *At Mount Hor, near the border of Edom, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 24 "Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I give the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah.*

25 *Get Aaron and his son Eleazar and take them up Mount Hor. 26 Remove Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar, for Aaron will be gathered to his people; he will die there."*

27 Moses did as the LORD commanded: They went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community. 28 Moses removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar. And Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, 29 and when the whole community learned that Aaron had died, the entire house of Israel mourned for him thirty days.

QUESTIONS:

In vs 24 what does God say was the reason that Aaron would not enter the land?

"Rebellion" is a root cause of sin. What are some commands of the LORD that you sometimes rebel against and what is the danger in that sin?

***It is interesting to note that in vs 10 Moses called the people of Israel "rebels," but in vs vs 24 God said that Moses and Aaron had rebelled against His commands.

Why did God tell them to transfer Aaron's garments to Eleazar? What significance would it have?

Leaders are responsible to continue their work until God provides new leaders. Which do you find more difficult: continuing to do what God has called you to do, or turning over the leadership to others when God raises them up to help?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

The Discipleship process involves helping the next generation of believers to become leaders. How did Paul tell Timothy to accomplish this?

Where are you in this process?

If you are a mature believer and are qualified to teach others, who are you teaching right now?

If you don't feel qualified to teach others, what are you doing to become "reliable" and "qualified to teach others?"

If you are a young believer, who is discipling or mentoring you right now? Do you desire to grow strong enough to help disciple others?

APPLICATION

Moses' life was characterized by his obedience to the LORD and his willingness to stick to the task God had assigned. But Moses chose on this occasion to disobey not in a gross sin, but just changing the manner in which God told him to bring forth water. Note that God punished him because Moses insulted God's holiness and rebelled against His desires. Examine your life to see if there is any sin for which you need to repent. Remembering that Moses' sin was more about "how" he did what he did, is there anything in your life that you are doing because you know it is right, but you are not doing it in a way that pleases God? Ask God to change your heart to both obey Him and seek to honor Him in all you say and do (see Colossians 3:17).

Thinking about Aaron and Eleazar and the transfer of leadership, would you consider yourself ready to be a leader?

As you examined the Discipleship process, where did you place yourself? How can you move to the next level of learning or leadership?

***DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITY:

Our discipleship team is trying to put together young believers with mature believers to help them grow up in the LORD. If you would be willing to serve as a mentor or you would like someone to help mentor you, contact the church office at (972)736-3733 or talk to Jack Hill or Danny Derden.

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FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

February 21, 2010

Lessons for Leaders

Focal Passage: Numbers 20

Cross References: Psalm 106:32-33;
Matthew 5:9-12; 43-48; 2 Timothy 2:1-2;
Colossians 3:17

Central Idea: Moses allowed his anger to control his response to the people and sinned against God as a result. He and Aaron lost the opportunity to enter the Promised Land, but still led the people and prepared others for leadership responsibilities.

Lesson Idea: Leaders need to control their emotions and be fully obedient to the LORD as they guide God's people and prepare future leaders.

Historical Context: The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, because they refused to trust the LORD and take the land. Numbers 20 takes place toward the end of that time of punishment. A whole generation has passed away, and Moses is preparing the new generation to conquer the land. But when the new generation begins to complain just like their fathers before them did, Moses loses his cool and disobeys the LORD by lashing out at the people and not doing things the way God instructed. Moses and Aaron both lost their opportunity to accompany the people into the Promised Land, but they continued to lead the people until God called out new leaders.

Bible in a Year Daily Readings

February 14-21, 2009

Feb 14 Numbers 16 - 18
Feb 15 Numbers 19 - 21
Feb 16 Numbers 22 - 24
Feb 17 Numbers 25 - 26
Feb 18 Numbers 27 - 29
Feb 19 Numbers 30 - 32
Feb 20 Numbers 33 - 36
Feb 21 Deuteronomy 1 - 2

Read the Bible Through Highlights of the Week:

February 7-14, 2010

Num 16: Korah's Rebellion
Num 17: Aaron's rod buds
Num 19: The Red Heifer
Num 20: Death of Miriam, Water of Meribah, and Death of Aaron
Num 21: The Bronze Serpent
Num 22: The Talking Donkey!
Num 23-24: Prophecies of Balaam
Num 25: The Sin of Peor
Num 26: Census of the new generation
Num 27: Joshua: the next leader
Num 31: Victory over Midian
Num 33: Wilderness Travelogue
Num 35: Cities of Refuge
Deut 1-2: Moses' Farewell Speech