

June 8–9 2013
Numbers 16
“A Root of Rebellion”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

In this part of the book of Numbers it becomes apparent that the Israelites have no respect for Moses or God. In chapter eleven, they had ungratefulness about the food that God provided. In chapter twelve, they had pride prejudice about Moses and his wife. In chapters thirteen and fourteen they had unbelief and a lack of courage about taking the Promised Land. In this study, we see that the children of Israel had jealousy and envy over Moses and Aaron.

Korah, Dathan, On, and Abiram, came with 250 of the leaders of the community to oppose Moses and Aaron. The Bible tells us that they *“became insolent and rose up¹ against Moses.”²* They came to pick a fight. They were leading a revolt against Moses and Aaron. What was their problem? It’s not as if Moses had sinned or done something which was unethical. He hadn’t misused his authority. Rather, they had a problem with the fact that Moses was in charge. They simply didn’t want to submit to Moses’ authority. The rebellious group said, *“The whole community is holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord’s assembly.”³* Korah led the rebellion; a revolt against God’s selected leader.

It is important to remember that Moses did not want this job. It’s certainly not something he went looking for. In fact, he tried to get God to pick someone else. In Exodus⁴ he argued with God until it made God mad. Five times Moses questioned God’s choice when God spoke to him in the burning bush in the wilderness of Midian. God had to push Moses into the role, because he wasn’t seeking it for himself.

¹ The term “to rise up” is a military term that could be translated as “to engage in battle.”

² [Numbers 16:1–2](#)

³ [Numbers 16:3](#)

⁴ [Exodus 3–4](#)

This points to a great characteristic of leadership. The best leaders are those who are sought for the role, not those who fight for the role. When others elevate someone it brings respect, but self-promotion brings resentment. Korah and the rebellious Israelites had it wrong. Moses and Aaron did not set themselves up as leaders, God did. They were God appointed leaders. The people didn't have a single legitimate complaint against Moses and his leadership. In fact, the Bible tells us that Moses was more humble than anyone else on earth.⁵

The problem was really with Korah and his followers.⁶ Their rebellion against Moses was really a rebellion against God, who selected Moses.⁷ As a result, the Lord dealt with them. It's important to notice that God gave them a chance to repent before he judged them.⁸ God gave them the opportunity to sleep on their decision. Rather than repenting, Korah and his followers showed up with an attitude of arrogance and defiance, so God brought judgment on their rebellion. The ground under them opened up, and the men, their households, and all their possessions were taken down into the earth alive and it closed on them.

A rebellious spirit is a dangerous thing. Wherever there is authority, there is the potential to rebel against it. But, unless it is unethical, immoral, or illegal authority, we need to learn to respect the authority that God has placed us under.

In this study, Pastor Gary shares three areas where rebellion can take root: pride, discontentment, and jealousy.

The Root Of Pride

1. Pride has the attitude, "I should have authority."

The Root Of Discontentment

2. Discontentment says, "I do not like being under your authority."
3. Discontented people are unhappy with their position in life.

The Root Of Jealousy

4. Jealousy grumbles, "I want to have your authority."

⁵ [Number 12:3](#)

⁶ [Numbers 16:19](#) lists Korah as the primary leader.

⁷ [Numbers 16:11](#)

⁸ [Numbers 16:5, 11](#) - God gave them until the next morning or "tomorrow."

Sad Stories Of A Root of Rebellion

5. Satan had all three of these things going on.
 - a. He was discontented with being a guardian angel.
 - b. He was jealous of God's authority.
 - c. He was filled with pride.
6. There are other examples of a root of rebellion in scripture, including:
 - a. Absalom, the son of King David, rose up in rebellion against his father, because he was discontent with the way his father was ruling.
 - b. Saul is another example of the damage a root of rebellion can cause.
7. Rebellion is evil, satanic wickedness in the eyes of God.
8. Beware of a root of rebellion!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Numbers 16:1-40](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Discuss with your group ways they identify with the rebellious attitude of Korah.
 - a. Maybe a time in life where an individual in your group lived in rebellion.
 - b. Maybe a member of the group has had to deal with rebellion first hand (i.e. rebellious children, a situation at work, etc.).
4. Discuss with your group the long-suffering nature of God. God gave the rebellious Israelites until the following morning to sleep on their decision.
5. In what ways has God granted members of your group opportunities to repent from a rebellions attitude?
6. Discuss with your group the negative effects of a rebellious spirit.
7. Discuss some of the examples of the devastating results of a rebellions spirit in scripture (i.e. Absalom, Saul, and Korah).
8. Pastor Gary listed pride, discontentment, and jealousy, as roots of rebellions. Spend some time discussing each of these characteristics. How can we as Christians identify these things in our lives?

9. The smoldering metal censors of the rebellious Israelites were hammered flat into sheets and used to overlay the altar. This was done so the Israelites would be reminded to examine themselves as they approached God. In what ways can we examine ourselves for a root of rebellion?

10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: recognize any root of rebellion in their heart; submit to the leadership God has placed them under; and use the Bible as a mirror to examine their hearts.