August 3-4 2013
Numbers 17
"Budding with Life"
Pastor Gary Hamrick

When studying Numbers 16 we learned that a group of Israelites rose up in rebellion against the leadership of Moses and his brother, Aaron. This was because God had appointed Moses to be the Prophet, and Aaron to be the High Priest. So when they people of Israel began to rebel against them, they were in effect rebelling against God, and their rebellion cost them their lives.

Apparently the rebellion in Numbers 16 is mostly aimed at Aaron. [1] So, as a way to settle this matter once for all – that Aaron is, in fact, God's choice as the High Priest – God called the leaders of the people to something of a contest. God gave an interesting, miraculous sign to all the people that distinguished Aaron from everyone else as God's chosen High Priest.

God called a leader from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to bring a staff or a rod. They were instructed to write the names of the leader of the tribe on the staff and then to give them to Moses. The tribe of Levi had Aaron's name written on it. Moses told them to lay all twelve staffs in front of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle.

On a side note, when reading the Bible, a staff was intended as a symbol of strength and authority. There are plenty of instances in life that attest to this. For example, a scepter in the hand of a king or queen is a sign of authority. In fact, former President Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy could be summed up in the phrase, "Speak softly and carry a big stick." In the Bible, shepherds would use a staff or a rod to guide and correct their sheep. [2] When God first spoke to Moses in the desert of Midian from a burning bush, Moses was tending sheep and he was holding a staff in his hand. [3] Even

[1] Number 16:11
[2] Psalm 23:4
[3] Exodus 4
[4] Genesis 2:7

during the ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt, God used the staff in the hands of Moses or Aaron as a symbol of his authority and strength.

So each of the leaders of the tribes of Israel presented his staff to Moses with his name written across it. The next day, Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and produced almonds. God performed a miracle to communicate that Aaron was distinguished from all the rest; that he was chosen by God to be the High Priest for God and no one was to question it any further.

When God was confirming his choice of Aaron as the High Priest, he communicated something important about his own character and nature. All of the staffs were common sticks of wood that at one time were part of a tree, but when they were cut off, they became detached from their life source and became dead pieces of wood. In the same way, when we are cut off from God, we essentially become dead pieces of wood.

This story in Numbers 17 illustrates some principles that shouldn't be overlooked. In this study, Pastor Gary shares two practical points concerning the character and nature of God.

God Gives Life To Dead Things

1. God is all about life. In Genesis, God placed the breath of life into man. [4]

2. God placed the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. This tree is mentioned four times in book of Revelation.

3. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life",* [5] *"I am the resurrection and the life",* [6] and *"I have come that [you] may have life and have it to the full."* [7]

4. The Bible speaks of God's book of life, in which every Believer's name is listed. [8]

5. God promises a "crown of life" to Believers who persevere under trial. [9]

6. Even today, when making a toast, Jews raise their glass and say, "*L'chaim,*" which means, "to life." God is all about life.

---

[4] Genesis 2:7
[5] John 14:6
[6] John 11:25
[7] John 10:10
[8] This book is mentioned eight times in the Bible.
[9] James 1:12

7. Sin leads to death and it's Satan who wants to kill everything about you – your life, your dreams, your marriage, your faith, and your hopes.

8. The Greek word used for life, is a nobler word that expresses the totality of life, physically, spiritually and emotionally. [10]

9. Romans 4:17 tells us that God *"[is] the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as thought they were."*

God Gives Life To Dead Things And Makes Them Fruitful

10. God took a dead piece of wood and not only brought it to life, but caused it to produce almonds. This is a picture of fruitfulness that God can bring out of a lifeless, hopeless situation.

11. When Peter denied knowing Jesus, Jesus didn't simply forgive him (although that would have been enough); God produced fruit in and through his life.

12. When Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus, he didn't just save him; he produced fruit through his life.

13. When David sinned against God, Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband, God didn't just have mercy on him and forgive him; he produced through his life.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

2. Read Numbers 17:1–13 to provide an overview for this study.

3. Discuss with your group areas where God has used extraordinary circumstances or miraculous events to help discern his will.
    a. Allow group members to share specific instances or stories.

4. Discuss with your group times when God has used his "staff" to correct, protect, or direct you life.
    a. Allow group members to share specific instances or stories.

[10] The word used is *Zoe* as opposed to *Bios*.

5. Discuss with your group areas in your individual lives that God wants to revive and make fruitful.
    a. Marriages, inter-family relationships, friendships are all places to start discussion.

6. Discuss how has God breathed new life to circumstances in your individual lives? How did were you able to produce fruit after this?
    a. Allow group members to share specific instances or stories.

7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: enter into the new life that God offers and bear fruit in their lives.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984). (JM)