



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 17, 2023

the “wannabes”

Scripture Story: Numbers 16; 17.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 35.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Korah’s rebellion against Moses, and by extension God, is very instructive for Christians today. This episode has all the elements of a good movie: A reluctant leader attempting to lead more than 2 million people through a desert to a promised land; a mixed multitude of followers experiencing major withdrawal pangs from their former life; miraculous interventions courtesy of God Himself; an undercurrent of jealousy by several civic leaders in the group, culminating in Korah’s challenge. But this was no Hollywood creation.

Ellen White notes in “The Rebellion of Korah” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 35) that Korah’s rebellion was simply the culmination of a long series of complaints leveled against God by the children of Israel. The seeds of rebellion were sown in continued discontent and faultfinding with every directive given them by God through Moses. Because the people often detested the messages that Moses and Aaron gave them from God, plans were hatched to kill the messengers who were seen as no more divinely appointed than the people.

In his desire to replace Moses, Korah infected Dathan, Abiram, and 250 leaders of the people with his unholy ambition. He promised them positions in the Temple service that were not his to give—and he did all of this firmly believing that God was with him. In what could only be described as the most stunning display of God’s power, the earth literally opened up and swallowed the rebels, their families,

and their goods. This awesome display should have been enough to convince all the people that God was with Moses and Aaron, yet the people angrily grilled them for killing God’s men.

God became so angry at this that He sent a plague that killed another 14,700 people before Aaron’s intercession stayed the hand of God. As is often the case, sin indulged by one often infects many. Our influence is a talent given by God for His glory.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God is the only being qualified to set up leaders and that we are called to respect God’s leaders and their authority. (*Know*)
- Realize the importance of seeking God’s guidance before making decisions that affect others’ salvation. (*Feel*)
- Commit to being a positive force to spiritually build up their home, church, school, and community. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17

“God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries

needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God” (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

The students were asked to rank from 1 to 10 which of the groups mentioned are those that people are most jealous of. Ask several of them to share their answers. Write the top three groups on the board; that is, the three groups that people are generally most jealous of.

Ask the students to explain why they ranked these groups so high on the jealousy scale. Then ask them whether or not this same kind of jealousy existed in Bible times, and if so, give some examples. In this activity, it may be helpful to note that jealousy played a major role in the murder of Jesus (John 11:45-48). Perhaps you can have students take turns reading this passage.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There is a story of a city that dared God to show Himself and paid a terrible price. It seems that the city of Messina, Sicily, was home to many wicked, irreligious people.

On December 25, 1908, a newspaper published in Messina printed a parody against God, daring Him to make Himself known by sending an earthquake. Three days later, on December 28, the city and its surrounding district were devastated by a terrible quake that killed 84,000 people (*Today in the Word*, October 1997, p. 25).

Once you have shared this illustration with the students, ask the following question: After all the miraculous things that God had done for Israel to deliver them from the hands of the Egyptians—the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh, food provided in the desert, protection from enemies, shoes

and clothing that never wore out—how could Korah and his followers believe that God had not given leadership of Israel to Moses and Aaron?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

At one time or another all Christians and followers of God tend to lose sight of His providential guidance, especially when He rebukes or chastises us. This was partially the problem with Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes. They were keeping a running record of all their trials and setbacks in the wilderness, and they had come to believe that theirs was a problem of faulty leadership—not disobedient followers. When God announced that only Caleb and Joshua would be entering the Promised Land because they were the only ones who trusted God to deliver the inhabitants of that land into their hands, Korah and many other Israelites then determined to oppose Moses and Aaron (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 396).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Using a white/chalkboard, make a list of the complaints that Israel made against God and Moses in the wilderness. Some answers may include:

1. “You brought us out here to kill us. It’s too hard out here.” (Numbers 11:1-3)
2. “We are tired of eating manna every day.” (verses 4-35)
3. Miriam and Aaron talk against Moses because they don’t like his wife. (Numbers 12:1-12)
4. “We are scared of those strong people in the Promised Land. We can’t beat them.” (Numbers 13:27-32)

You get the picture. Note that all these complaints were leveled against God prior to Korah’s open rebellion. There is a slippery slope here that bears revealing, one that is still claiming Christians today: (1) constant complaining blinded the Israelites to God’s blessings; (2) constant complaining infected more and more Israelites until it became an unceasing undercurrent; (3) constant complaining led to open rebellion against God and brought on His judgments.

In each one of the instances mentioned above,

God sent a specific punishment against the complainers. Ask the students to divide into groups. Give each group the passages above and ask them to read farther in their passage to find how God dealt with the people's charges against Him. Have the groups share their answers.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Ellen White highlights the fact that Korah was a cousin of Moses (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395). Few facts in this story are more challenging than this one. Korah was a relative of Moses, albeit a somewhat distant one. On the face of it, familial ties alone should have given him pause as he plotted the overthrow of Moses and Aaron. His quest to be number one in the hierarchy of Israel made him willing to step on anyone he had to in order to have his way. For Korah, familial ties meant nothing. Perhaps Jesus captured it best when He said: "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" (Luke 12:53, NIV). The unregenerate heart recognizes no family ties.
2. "Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses.

With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council" (Numbers 16:1, 2, NIV). It is quite striking that Korah's rebellion was led by the "best and brightest" leaders Israel had to offer. While there was unrest among the common people, the folks who fomented the takeover were those most honored and admired in the society. It is always Satan's goal to lead the most gifted and talented astray. In so doing, he is able to exert his evil influence over the masses who look up to them. Ask the students to name some gifted people who are popular and admired, but who also exert an evil influence.

3. "Close to the tents of Korah and the Kohathites, on the south side of the tabernacle, was the encampment of the tribe of Reuben, the tents of Dathan and Abiram, two princes of this tribe, being near that of Korah" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395).

The lessons in this story are so many that one can scarcely get by the first page of Ellen White's chapter on Korah's rebellion. The quote above makes the point that it is dangerous to live in close proximity to those who are doing evil. Because Dathan and Abiram lived near to Korah, they often conversed with him, and he stirred their inner designs on Aaron's priesthood. God through the wise man of Proverbs counsels us: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

4. Korah was a Levite. That fact alone ought

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

*Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.*

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Picture of Influence

In many of these lessons there are numerous themes that warrant illumination. While it is impossible to discuss all of them thoroughly, or even touch on some, an activity can be introduced that will help the students at least open their minds to themes that you might not have time to cover thoroughly in discussion.

In this lesson, for instance, for the generation of teens you are teaching, you need to address the power of influence, both negative and positive.

Post pictures of influential people. Ask students to identify what they think is the secret to each person's mass appeal. Why does each of these people command attention, and why do people follow or imitate them? Finally ask: What is the secret of the Christian's influence? How should we use that influence?

RABBI 101

to give us pause. To the Levites God had entrusted the care of the sanctuary, particularly after they refused to participate in the building and worshipping of the golden calf (Exodus 32:25-29). Korah had an exalted position.

Korah was a descendant of Kohath, son of Levi. Kohathites were the descendants from whom came the priests and those who cared for the sanctuary of Israel. Aaron was from this lineage, and from his descendants came the priests. Korah was a part of the Kohathites who cared for the sanctuary.

While his position was already exalted, he craved more. He aspired to the dignity of the priesthood. He wanted Aaron's job. This was the same spirit that manifested itself in Satan as he tried to overthrow God in heaven, and it is the same spirit that makes many in

the church dissatisfied with the place God has given them (see Isaiah 14:12-14).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Invite an adult or young adult member of the church to share a brief testimony about the power of a positive influence on others. After this testimony, ask this person to pray a prayer of commitment asking God to help everyone be a force for good wherever they go and in all their activities.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Each of us is given one life to live here on earth. What we do with our lives will determine our destiny. Korah and his crew made a fateful decision, one that cost them everything. God had sent them warnings and rebukes, but none were heeded. They had already opened the door to Satan's control.

Witness these comments by God's servant: "It is by sinful indulgence that men give Satan access to their minds, and they go from one stage of wickedness to another. The rejection of light darkens the mind and hardens the heart, so that it is easier for them to take the next step in sin and to reject still clearer light, until at last their habits of wrongdoing become fixed. Sin ceases to appear sinful to them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 404).

God wants us to respect Him and those He places in authority. Leaders are not perfect; they will make mistakes. When we disagree with them, we must first take our complaints to God. We must seek His guidance as to how to address the matter. Here, Matthew 18 is very helpful. It is never wise to play God, especially when we have not consulted Him.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 35.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Numbers 16; 17.

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the “wannabes”



Photo by Juan González Nieves

flashlight

“The Israelites were continually losing sight of the fact that they were under divine guidance. They forgot that the Angel of the covenant was their invisible leader, that, veiled by the cloudy pillar, the presence of Christ went before them, and that from Him Moses received all his directions” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 395, 396).

keytext

“When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: ‘In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him.’ ”

(Numbers 16:4, 5, NIV)

what do you think?

From least (1) to greatest (10), rank which of the following people and people groups others are most jealous of.

- ___ Politicians
- ___ Preachers and Pastors
- ___ Actors
- ___ Musicians
- ___ Lawyers
- ___ Corporate CEOs
- ___ Athletes
- ___ Doctors
- ___ Teachers
- ___ Friends

did you know?

- **Korah means “baldness.”** Whether or not this “wannabe” had much on top of his head, he doesn’t seem to have had very much inside of it. Today the name is synonymous with being swallowed up and buried alive.
- **Incense.** A mixture of fragrant substances, such as gum resins and spices, used in connection with religious worship. The incense prescribed for use in the tabernacle was made with a special recipe. It was forbidden to use a mixture made according to this recipe for other purposes (Exodus 30:34–38). The incense was burned morning and evening upon a special altar that stood in the holy place of the sanctuary in front of the curtain that separated it from the Most Holy Place.
- **Censer.** A vessel for the burning of incense. Censers having the form of a hollow hand have been excavated. The censers used in the tabernacle were of bronze, but the ones used later in the temple were of gold.

INTO THE STORY

“Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?’

“When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: ‘In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to

come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!’

“Moses also said to Korah, ‘Now listen, you Levites! Isn’t it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD’s tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too. It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?’

“Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, ‘We will not come!’ ”

“Moses said to Korah, ‘You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow—you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it . . . and present it before the LORD.’ . . . So each of them took his censer, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting. When Korah had gathered all his followers . . . , the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly.”

(Numbers 16:1-12, 16-19, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever heard this story before?

What part of it was most startling?

Underline all the key parts of this week's story.

Highlight two emotional speeches given by characters in the story. (*Circle* them.)

After reading this story, what would you say is the main point?

What did you learn about God from this story?

What lesson will you apply to your life this week?

For the rest of the story read Numbers 16:23–35.

punch lines

“All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. . . . You said in your heart, . . . ‘I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit” (**Isaiah 14:11, 13–15, NIV**).

“To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice” (**Proverbs 21:3, NIV**).

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble” (**1 Peter 3:8, NIV**).

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’ ” (**Matthew 18:1–4, NIV**).

“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it’ ” (**Isaiah 30:15, NIV**).

further insight

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to*

Christ, p. 23.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 3:8.

How did you rank the items on the jealousy scale in the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson? Jealousy has a tendency to make people do weird things. Which group would you say people are most jealous of? List three ways that people express their jealousy of others.

Sunday

Read Proverbs 21:3.

Read the *Into the Story* section. Few stories in the Bible offer us a glimpse at an all-out rebellion. This one does. When Korah and the 250 princes confronted Moses, what did they say about Moses? How did Moses react? Why was Moses so distraught at their charge?

Have you ever been falsely accused for doing what God asked of you? (Write your answer below.)

Monday

Read Numbers 16:4, 5.

It is clear from this week's *Key Text* that a really big showdown is about to happen. Korah and his followers have been "called out" by Moses. Read the *Key Text* again to see if you notice anything strange. Did you see it?

Who did Moses say would settle this dispute? Moses had the authority to raise an army and destroy Korah and his followers. Why do you think he didn't do this? How are Moses' actions similar to the grace God gave Lucifer when he led a rebellion in heaven?

Tuesday

Read Numbers 14:20–25.

In this week's *Flashlight* quote, Ellen White lights up a major problem faced by Israel and by many of us today. Israel forgot who was leading them. It wasn't Moses; it was God. But there was another reason that many of the Israelites tried to overthrow Moses.

As you can tell, God is quite upset at the fact that the Israelites did not believe that He could help them defeat the strong nations that inhabited Canaan, the land He had promised to them. After all of God's miracles on their behalf, this is how the Israelites had repaid God—they refused to believe in Him. Ellen White notes that it was this rejection of them by God that led them to level their anger at Moses (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 397, 398). Do you ever find fault with people who deliver difficult messages from God, messages you don't like?

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 30:15, Numbers 16:23–35.

This week's *Punch Lines* have rich food for thought. In your own words, explain what Isaiah 30:15 means to you.

Repentance means much more than just feeling sorry for what you've done. It also means being willing to turn away from what you've done to hurt God. God even promises to give us power to make the change stick. What frightening scene took place the day after Korah confronted Moses?

Thursday

Read Numbers 16:41, 43–48.

Sadly, the story of Korah's rebellion did not end with his death and the deaths of Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes. How did the people react to what happened the day before? How did God respond to them (verses 43–45)? What did Moses tell Aaron to do (verses 46–48)? How many people were killed

by the plague God sent on the Israelites?

What does this lesson teach you about the effect that one person's actions might have on other people? Korah's influence led to the death of close to 15,000 people.

Friday

Read Matthew 18:1–4.

One of the truly startling parts of this story is contributed by Ellen White in the last part of chapter 35 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Read the whole chapter.

"God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. . . .

"God works by the manifestation of His Spirit to reprove and convict the sinner; and if the Spirit's work is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul. . . . The transgressor has cut himself off from God. . . . There is no reserved power by which God can work to convict and convert the sinner" (pp. 404, 405).

May God bless you as you seek to serve Him. Have a terrific Sabbath!

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 35.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.