



May 25-26 2013

Numbers 12

"Pride and Prejudice"

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Complaining was one of the favorite past-times of the Israelites. In Pastor Gary's message last week we learned about their complaints regarding their living conditions and the food God provided. In Numbers 12 complaints are voiced about Moses' wife, and the complainers are Moses' own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam!

The two things we'll learn about in this study are pride and prejudice. We'll see how Miriam and Aaron's pride against Moses and their prejudice against his wife, made God angry, and how we can

Pride

1. **Numbers 12:2** - "*'Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?' they asked. 'Hasn't he also spoken through us?' And the Lord heard this.*"
2. It's as though they're saying, "Who does Moses think he is?"
 - a. Miriam - "I'm a prophetess."
 - b. Aaron - "I'm the high priest."
 - c. They were both older than Moses.
3. **Proverbs 8:13b** - "*I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.*"
4. Pride was the first sin, because pride was the root of Satan's rebellion against God.
 - a. **Ezekiel 28:15-17** - "*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you... So I drove you in disgrace*"

from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth."

5. We are most like Satan when we allow pride to take over; and we are most like Jesus when we are humble.
 - a. **Matthew 11:29** - *"Take my yoke upon your and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*
 - b. **Proverbs 16:18** - *"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."*
 - i. Nebuchadnezzar was an example of this biblical truth.
 1. As the king of Babylon, he was the most powerful king on earth in the 6th Century B.C.
 2. In **Daniel 4:28-37**, we read that pride filled his heart and he lost his mind, a condition in which he remained until he acknowledged that God was sovereign, at which time God restored him to his right mind, a changed man.
 3. **Daniel 5:20-21** - *"But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign..."*
6. The quickest route to destruction is pride!
 - a. **1 Peter 5:5b-6** - *"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."*
7. God afflicted Miriam with leprosy as the reward for her pride!
 - a. **Numbers 12:9-10a** - *"The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he left them. When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam - leprous, like snow."*
 - b. The reason Aaron was stricken with leprosy is because Miriam's name is listed first, which implies that, as the older sister, she was the instigator and that she most likely did the talking for the two of them.
 - c. Aaron begged Moses for mercy, and Moses prayed and asked God to heal her, so God told Moses to quarantine her outside the camp for seven days, at which time she would be healed so she could return to the camp.

- i. [Numbers 12:15](#) - “So Miriam was confined the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back.”

Prejudice

8. Zipporah was Moses’ first wife, with whom he had two sons.
 - a. Zipporah is not mentioned after [Exodus 18](#), and it’s believed that she was no longer living.
 - b. There are some who believe she was the Cushite wife mentioned in [Numbers 12:1](#), but the Bible, in [Exodus 18:1](#), tells us that Zipporah was from Midian, not Cush.
 - c. Midian was located in what is Saudi Arabia today (Moses spent 40 years there).
 - d. This wife is from Cush, which is the ancient name for Ethiopia.
 - e. It’s possible Moses’ met his Cushite wife as part of the rabble who joined with the Israelites when they made the exodus from Egypt.
9. It’s possible Miriam and Aaron’s prejudice concerned her nationality.
 - a. It may have been the case that they simply didn’t like anyone from Cush, which, unfortunately, is the way some people react to someone who come from Mexico, France, Russia, etc.
10. It’s possible Miriam and Aaron’s prejudice concerned her race.
 - a. A woman from Ethiopia would have been black, so they may have had a problem with her skin color.
 - i. That would have been something, considering the fact that people from the Middle East generally have olive complexion, dark eyes and dark features.
 - ii. Their prejudice is appalling, especially since Miriam was a prophetess and Aaron was the high priest.
 - iii. These prominent spiritual leaders acted in a very ungodly way!
 - iv. No matter what the reason or reasons for their prejudice, the fact is that their prejudice made God mad.
11. There is nothing in Scripture that prohibits different nationalities or different races from marrying.
12. The only intermarrying that God had a problem with was when the Israelites intermarried with idolatrous people.
 - a. God did not tolerate the comingling of the godly with the ungodly, or the “saved with the unsaved,” if you will.

- b. This is not just an Old Testament concept.
 - i. [Second Corinthians 6:14-15](#) - *“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”*
 - 1. Paul did not write this to indicate Christians can’t befriend unbelievers, because that’s what being a witness for the Lord is all about.
 - ii. It is the yoking that God condemns: the harnessing together of two people in a relationship or a common bond who are not spiritually aligned.
13. The apostle Peter also had a problem with prejudice.
- a. Even though he knew that Jesus died for all, because he loved all, Peter still had to rid himself of what had undoubtedly been engrained in him as part of his Jewish upbringing, namely that Gentiles are unclean, ungodly, second-class people.
 - b. God called Peter to go to the home of a Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius, with a message about Jesus.
 - c. [Acts 10:13-15](#) - *“Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’ The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ ”*
 - d. [Acts 10:34-35](#) - *“Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’ ”*
 - e. Peter still struggled with prejudice five to six years later.
 - i. [Galatians 2:11-13](#) - *“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”*
14. Everyone can appreciate and understand the cultural differences between races or nationalities, which is one thing, but to hold feelings of resentment or hostility or superiority or bitterness towards a person because of their race or nationality, that’s prejudice, and God hates it!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Numbers 12:1-16](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss [Proverbs 8:13](#) and [Proverbs 16:18](#).
4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences regarding their childhood and the way they were brought up.
5. Have you had bad experiences in which you were treated badly because of someone else's prejudice toward your skin color, your nationality, or your station in life?
6. How have pride and/or prejudice held you back in life?
7. Read [Daniel 4:38-37](#) and discuss the biblical account of King Nebuchadnezzar.
8. How have you dealt with pride and/or prejudice so that you could deal with these sins and move on?
9. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: recognize pride and prejudice as sin; ask the Lord's forgiveness when they allow pride and/or prejudice to become part of their thinking, actions, or attitude towards others; give them the spirit of humility, so they would be more Christ-like; prayerfully consider and choose to do things God's way when life decisions come up that may put them in a position of being yoked to an unbeliever or unbelievers.

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