

A TEMPTING OFFER

Numbers 14:1-23

Modern society admires aggressive, dynamic leadership--the no-nonsense, aggressive, competitive visionary leader--one who knows where he's headed and wants to take others along.

People love to follow a great leader!

How about Moses? Would you have put *HIM* forward as your candidate to lead God's people?

Occasionally someone sends me a list of **Bible-prospects for leadership**. It goes through most biblical famous people seeking a leader. One by one it presents reasons each should not be called to lead God's people. Except for one who presents all the right qualities for a leader: *Judas!*

Would you have wanted to call Moses as your leader?

Israel makes clear they would not!

After a few days following him across the desert, watching God provide food and water supernaturally, they decide they'd rather go back to Egypt, or even die in the desert, than follow Moses across the desert.

They'd had enough.

After listening to them grumble and complain--*again!*--God says *He's had enough!* He's ready to destroy them and start over with Moses.

Suppose for a moment that you were there, and God made that offer to you!

How would YOU respond? Would we go for it?

Most of us--especially after weeks of complaining and personal attacks would probably have been ready! "*Zap 'em, Lord!*"

This is our great opportunity to get ahead! God is going to build a kingdom around *ME!* Wouldn't that be great?!!

How does Moses respond to such a wonderful opportunity?

Deut. 1 tells us it takes 11 days to get from Sinai to the promised land.

Because of unbelief and disobedience it took 40 years in the desert.

When we come to Numbers 14 they've just been on the road a few days.

They've seen God work in their midst.

He delivered them from Egypt.

He provided food and water.

But, when they see the land God wants to give them, they can't believe He can actually deliver it to them.

They send 12 spies ahead to find out what it's like.

The spies bring back a good-but scary-report.

It's a good report: The land is a great place! Look at it's fruit.

It's a scary report:

We aren't strong enough to take it!

When the spies tell them what they've seen, the people demonstrate their lack of faith and rebel against God. 13:26-14:4

They were predisposed to accept the pessimistic opinion of the 10.

ISRAEL CRIED ALL NIGHT BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE GOD COULD DELIVER THEM. 1-4

"All the people cried aloud all night long. ²All the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or even in this desert! ³Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us die in battle? Our wives and children will be taken away as slaves! We'd be better off to go back to Egypt!" ⁴And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Fulfillment of God's promise and their dreams was right ahead of them. They couldn't believe God would give them what He had promised.

They began to cry and grumble.

They should've stayed in Egypt and died there peacefully.

As they grumbled, they wished they could die in the wilderness.

Although they were complaining against Moses and Aaron, *their real problem was with God.*

It was *His* cloud that led them there.

So they ask why *HE* led them there to die.

MOSES APPEALED TO THEM TO TRUST GOD AND OBEY HIM. 5-10

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces 5 *Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there.*

Joshua & Caleb tore their clothes 6

Only four people believe God.

Desperately plead for them to trust God when challenge is too big

Have you ever faced a challenge like that?

A challenge so big that only GOD could pull it off?!!

Keener: "I'm glad we can't pull this off! If we could pull it off ourselves, we wouldn't need God."

All 4 appealed to the people 7-9

We have His promise--*Let's trust Him and move ahead!*

The land is a great place! 6-7

Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good."

If God is pleased with us, He will give it to us! 8

"If the LORD is pleased with us, He will lead us into that rich land, flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.

Don't rebel!

Don't be afraid of them! 9

But don't rebel against the LORD. And don't be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. They have no protection; but the LORD is with us. Don't be afraid of them."

"They will be our food
--we'll devour them!"

Their protection has been taken away.

THE LORD IS WITH US!

The people turn on them and decide to stone them. 10a

But the whole community began to talk about stoning them.

When godly leaders appeal to God's people to trust Him and move ahead, God's people decide to stone the leaders!

The glory of the Lord appeared at the Meeting Place 10b

Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites from the Tent of Meeting.

In that moment, God intervened

--He got their attention!

GOD DECIDED TO CUT THEM OFF AND START OVER with Moses 11-12

They refuse to trust God, in spite of the evidence 11

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people reject me? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed in their midst?"

God promises to make Moses into a nation greater than they are 12

I will strike them with a plague and destroy them. Then I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they."

God would destroy them and start over with a new people

2nd time God made this offer to Moses--previously when they made golden calf

(Exod. 32:7-14)--twice Moses gives same answer!

MOSES INTERCEDES ON THEIR BEHALF 13-19

Moses is concerned about God's glory before the pagans 13-16

They know that you are in the midst of this people 13-14

But Moses said to the LORD, "What will the Egyptians think when they hear about it? By Your power You brought these people out from among them. ¹⁴They're telling the local residents about it. They've already heard that You, O LORD, are with these people and that You, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that Your cloud hovers over them, and that You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

All the nations had heard Yahweh was with them.

They'll think you killed them because you couldn't deliver 15-16

If You slaughter all these people, the nations who have heard about You will say, ¹⁶'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land He promised to them, so He slaughtered them in the desert.'

"He did it because He couldn't deliver land He promised them"

Moses is concerned that God forgive His people 17-19

It would be better to show them His mercy and forgiveness

Moses appeals on the basis of God's mercy 17-18a

"Now may your strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ¹⁸The LORD is slow to anger, rich in unfailing love and forgiving sin and rebellion.

Moses appeals for God to forgive His people 18b-19

Yet he doesn't leave sin unpunished... ¹⁹Forgive the sin of your people, In accordance with your great, unfailing love, as you have continually forgiven them ever since they left Egypt."
--one more time, as He had many times before.

He was more interested in preserving God's people and in God's testimony before the pagan nations around them.

Moses cared more about God's people and God's glory than he cared about personal greatness.

IN RESPONSE TO MOSES' PLEA, GOD FORGIVES HIS PEOPLE 20-23

God forgives His people 20

The LORD replied, "I forgive them, just as you asked."

God partially accepts Moses' request.

He forgives them--*again!*--He'd already forgiven them 10 times.

They have to learn you can't play games with God and walk away unharmed!

God's glory will be revealed through them 21-22a

Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²²not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—

God's people who saw God's glory but would not listen to His voice

will not see God's land 22b-23 *not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.*

He forgives them; they continue as God's people, but that unbelieving rebellious generation is excluded from the land.

They pass next 40 years wandering around in the wilderness.

They'll die in the desert, as they said.

MOSES IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT GOD'S GLORY **AND GOD'S PEOPLE**

THAN ABOUT HIS OWN GREATNESS!

God is delighted to use those who are more concerned
about His glory
than their own greatness!

Moses' interest in God's glory and God's people are evident in his intercession on their behalf, even when it was against his own best interests.

How would WE have responded?

How might WE show concern for the welfare of God's people around us?