

week four

NUMBERS 16

THE CURE FOR OUR REBELLION

KORAH INCITES REBELLION

¹Now Korah son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took ²two hundred fifty prominent Israelite men who were leaders of the community and representatives in the assembly, and they rebelled against Moses. ³They came together against Moses and Aaron and told them, “You have gone too far! Everyone in the entire community is holy, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?”

⁴When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. ⁵Then he said to Korah and all his followers, “Tomorrow morning the LORD will reveal who belongs to him, who is set apart, and the one he will let come near him. He will let the one he chooses come near him. ⁶Korah, you and all your followers are to do this: take firepans, and tomorrow ⁷place fire in them and put incense on them before the LORD. Then the man the LORD chooses will be the one who is set apart. It is you Levites who have gone too far!”

⁸Moses also told Korah, “Now listen, Levites! ⁹Isn’t it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the Israelite community to bring you near to himself, to perform the work at the LORD’s tabernacle, and to stand before the community to minister to them? ¹⁰He has brought you near, and all your fellow Levites who are with you, but you are pursuing the priesthood as well. ¹¹Therefore, it is you and all your followers who have conspired against the LORD! As for Aaron, who is he that you should complain about him?”

¹²Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come! ¹³Is it not enough that you brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? Do you also have to appoint yourself as ruler over us? ¹⁴Furthermore, you didn’t bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey or give us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come!”

¹⁵Then Moses became angry and said to the LORD, “Don’t respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them or mistreated a single one of them.” ¹⁶So Moses told Korah, “You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow—you, they, and

Aaron. ¹⁷Each of you is to take his firepan, place incense on it, and present his firepan before the LORD—250 firepans. You and Aaron are each to present your firepan also.”

¹⁸Each man took his firepan, placed fire in it, put incense on it, and stood at the entrance to the tent of meeting along with Moses and Aaron. ¹⁹After Korah assembled the whole community against them at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole community. ²⁰The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, ²¹“Separate yourselves from this community so I may consume them instantly.”

²²But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and said, “God, God who gives breath to all, when one man sins, will you vent your wrath on the whole community?”

²³The LORD replied to Moses, ²⁴“Tell the community: Get away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.”

²⁵Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. ²⁶He warned the community, “Get away now from the tents of these wicked men. Don’t touch anything that belongs to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins.” ²⁷So they got away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Meanwhile, Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrance of their tents with their wives, children, and infants.

²⁸Then Moses said, “This is how you will know that the LORD sent me to do all these things and that it was not of my own will: ²⁹If these men die naturally as all people would, and suffer the fate of all, then the LORD has not sent me. ³⁰But if the LORD brings about something unprecedented, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them along with all that belongs to them so that they go down alive into Sheol, then you will know that these men have despised the LORD.”

³¹Just as he finished speaking all these words, the ground beneath them split open. ³²The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, all Korah’s people, and all their possessions. ³³They went down alive into Sheol with all that belonged to them. The earth closed over them, and they vanished from the assembly. ³⁴At their cries, all the people of Israel who were around them fled because they thought, “The earth may swallow us too!” ³⁵Fire also came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were presenting the incense.

³⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses: ³⁷“Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to remove the firepans from the burning debris, because they are holy, and scatter the fire far away. ³⁸As for the firepans of those who sinned at the cost of their own lives, make them into hammered sheets as plating for the altar, for they presented them before the LORD, and the firepans are holy. They will be a sign to the Israelites.”

Life Group Discussion Guide

RHYTHM REMINDER  Repentance

LEAN IN

When you were a kid, were you more of a goody-two-shoes or more of a rebel?

LOOK DOWN

In Numbers 16:1-5 and 16:31-35, what do Korah's accusation, Moses' response, and God's judgment reveal about Moses' leadership and God's view of rebellion? _____

LOOK OUT

How can we tell the difference between healthy questioning of authority and sinful rebellion? _____

LOOK IN

What does it practically look like to trust God as our Lord even when we don't understand why things are happening the way they are? _____



CHRIST CONNECTION

By Munyoki Mulwa | Lead Pastor of Mariners Anaheim

Rebellion is often about grasping for what has not been given, especially authority and access. Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16 was about access to God's presence. On the surface, it could sound noble. But in the larger context, it was a refusal to trust God's will. Korah wanted access to God at the expense of submission to God's authority.

We know that instinct well. Our rebellion may not look like Korah's, but it often carries the same heart. We follow our own will instead of His. We try to manufacture our own blessings instead of seeking Him first. We exalt ourselves at His expense. Jude 11 warns us not to perish in the same kind of rebellion.

What Korah tried to seize through rebellion, access to God, Jesus secured through His work on the cross. Through Him, we do not force our way in. We are welcomed. As we repent, submit, and believe, we find the very thing rebellion could never achieve: nearness to God by grace.

THE CURE FOR OUR REBELLION

By Alexandra Lindenberg

Three years ago, I had no interest in knowing Jesus.

Every Sunday, people danced, sang, and cried out Jesus' name in adoration as if they knew Him. But for me? Jesus felt so far away—like a distant relative I was supposed to know, yet had never met.

I could never understand the people who sang from the top of their lungs, hands held high in the air as they surrendered everything to this man. I could not fathom their tears, their joy, and their utter love for God. What were these people feeling? Why had I never felt the same way?

People always said God was love, but it's hard to understand its unconditional form when it's a foreign thing—when it's something I'd spent most of my childhood chasing. And, perhaps, it was this disconnection and isolation that led to bitterness toward a loving God. Bitterness to then a self-sabotaging heart made of stone walls.

Three years ago, I had no interest in knowing Jesus because I thought I did not need Him. If I had survived my entire life without Him, why did I need Him now?

In an act to prove this, I began living my life beating a war drum of rebellion against God and Christianity. Every Sunday, when my mama took my sister and me to church, I opened a book and read during the service, hoping to tune out the Word. During worship, I refused to sing and even laughed at others pouring out their hearts to Jesus the loudest. Whenever I got the chance, I tutted my finger in arrogance at anyone who claimed to be a follower of Christ. And I promised to never, ever, read the Bible.



Aaron's Plea

Original Artwork by Cedric Dennis

But, when no one was watching me crusade, I remember being constantly consumed by crippling anxiety for my future, for my identity, and for my self-worth. On the altar of my life, I sacrificed myself to my people-pleasing tendencies and my overthinking nature to ensure that, at least, people liked me. And when it was time to start fresh and move away to college? These things followed me and viciously morphed into something cruel, taking root in my heart and mind.

During the summer of my second year at college, my uncle tragically passed away, leaving my family and me to pick up the pieces and attempt to understand what had gone wrong. His passing was a blow to my life, and there I was at my uncle's funeral, standing next to



The Tabernacle.

▼
Moses: Faithful Despite the Rebellion
Original Artwork by Ruben James

his casket, feeling the weight of his loss, the weight of this life, and the weight of being the eldest daughter. It nearly brought me to my knees, but I was still stubborn, and as my second year of college began, the self-talk that convinced me I was invincible—that I knew everything—started again.

But God had different plans for me.

One day, after coming home from class, I remember sitting down at my desk and pulling out my homework. As I was in the midst of setting up, I felt a deep tugging sensation in my heart and mind. It filled me with the strangest desire—to read the Bible. I shrugged the thought off, confused and a little repulsed.

The next day, I came home from class again and sat down at my desk. The tug gently came again, distracting me completely. I suddenly knew who was trying to get my attention, and I felt Jesus speak in my heart:

Read the Bible. Draw near to me. Know me.

I ignored Him, uninterested and, quite frankly, frustrated He'd come back a second day. But He did not leave me. For the next few weeks—months—I would go home and feel this abnormal desire to open a Bible and read the Word. It chipped away at the walls in my heart, but I remained stubborn.

Finally, one evening, I pulled a Bible off the bookshelf, the words Holy Bible shining beneath my desk lamp's light. I'd been given this Bible as a child after being dedicated in the church, but it had sat patiently on my shelf for nineteen years. Now, I was finally opening it, curious to know if this strange desire would leave me if I indulged it just a little.

How wrong I was.

God had pursued me even in the darkest moments of my rebellion. God had loved me and yearned for a relationship with me even when I'd turned my back on Him

completely. And all those moments I'd convinced myself I'd never know Jesus? He had proved me wrong time and time again.

I burst into tears, weeping over a Bible—over a God—that had been there my entire life waiting for me. Like some kind of salve, the words on the page brought warmth and comfort to my heart as nothing else had before. My rebellion had caused me so much pain and suffering, yet on the other side of it all, God waited with an abundance of love and mercy that the world would never be able to show me. And for the first time, I knelt on my knees and surrendered everything to Jesus.

In the book of Numbers, Korah led a rebellion against Moses, Aaron, and God. He accused Moses and Aaron of misleading them, unable to understand that it was the Israelites' own failure to obey that had caused them to delay their arrival in the Promised Land. In one part of the book of Numbers, Aaron and Moses cry out: "...!O God,' they pleaded, 'you are the God who gives breath to all creatures. Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?'" (Numbers 16:22, NLT). In an attempt to save Korah and the Israelites from perishing, Moses and Aaron pleaded with God for mercy.

Like many Old Testament books, the book of Numbers and the rebellion point towards the birth and death of Jesus Christ. They remind me that Jesus died, paid for my rebellion and sin, so that I may have a relationship with the Father today. It reminds me that, even in the darkest and most rebellious moments with God, Jesus endured every minute of the punishment my rebellion deserved so that I could stand here today and proclaim being made new in God.

Thank you, Jesus.

THE FRAGRANCE OF OBEDIENCE

By Jenn McBride

Faithful forever, God of generations,
steadfast King above every nation.

Unwavering pillar of cloud and fire,
guide us through dross and mire.

Order our steps, Jesus; Go ahead.
When darkness bears down, whom shall we dread?

Only our petulant defiance,
the crooked path of self-reliance.

Let us lean not on what we understand.
We fail to seek You, yet Your blessing we demand.

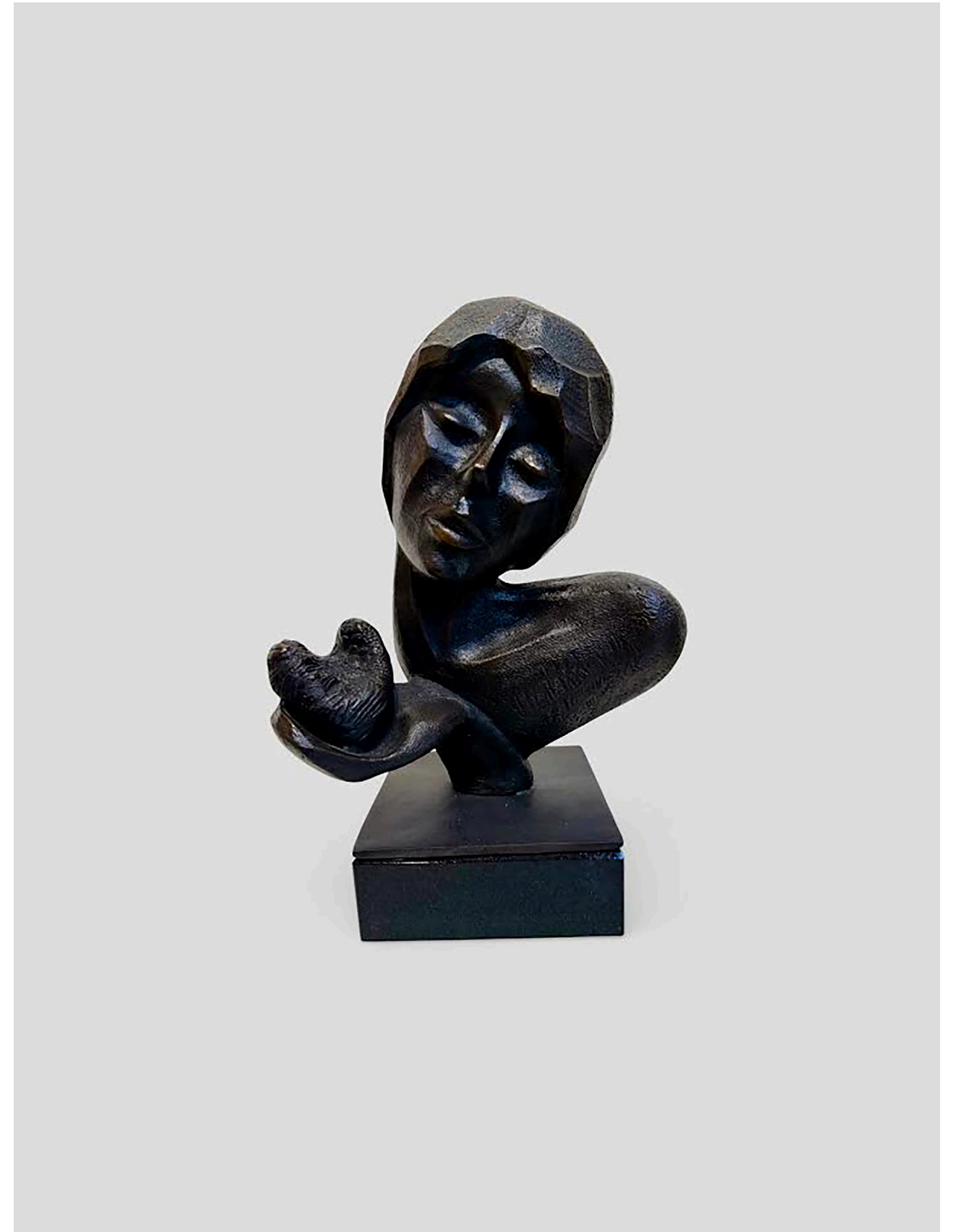
We succumb to empty replacements.
Hearts crying out to You, once again anxious.

Oh, how our stubborn rebellion rages.
Yet merciful You are through the ages.

Only You save, comfort, and satisfy.
Without You, though we might live, we will surely die.

Cement our souls in the grip of Your mighty hand.
Do not let us fall away as sifted sand.

Unshackle us from bondage that breaks at Your name alone,
so the incense of our worship would arise again unto Your throne.



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The Arrogance of Korah
Original Artwork by Andrea Holte

