

MOSES

A Man of Selfless Dedication

STUDY SIXTEEN

Grumbings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

When you determine to spend time with the Lord and to walk with Him, you move into a perilous realm.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LIFE is full of risks. Every time you back your car out of the garage and drive down the street, you enter a world of peril.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines *peril* as “exposure to the risk of being injured.”¹ It refers to the *threat* of injury, not certainty. Accidents do happen, but they aren't inevitable. The answer to life's dangers isn't to stay home and never venture outside your front door. It is to accept the reality of danger and then pull into traffic anyway, knowing our lives are in God's hands.

Jesus said to His followers, “Here on earth you will have many trials,” *but He also added*, “Take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). That's reassuring. The world can't dish out any sort of trial that Jesus hasn't already handled, and, when we face problems, He is present and sufficient to see us through.

As a desert-dweller for most of his life, Moses understood the risks of traveling in the wilderness. But, perhaps to his surprise, the most threatening peril wasn't from the elements as much as from his own people.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll see Moses facing five serious problems godly leaders often face. With each problem came its own set of perils. How Moses handled his problems will help us have the courage to face the risks we encounter every day.



Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord heard David’s cry for help, and “He lifted [him] out of the pit of despair” (Psalm 40:1–2). Pray to the Lord to lift you up through your study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Israelites had pledged to “do everything the LORD has commanded” (Exodus 19:8), but their commitment was paper thin. When Moses delayed coming down the mountain with God’s law, fear tore their faith into shreds. “We don’t know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt” (32:1). They feared he was dead!

So, they demanded new gods to lead them and convinced Aaron to forge a golden calf. They made sacrifices to the calf, feasted gluttonously, and “indulged in pagan revelry” (Exodus 32:6). Descending the mountain, Moses witnessed the people breaking almost every commandment that God had just etched on stone tablets. What did he do in anger, according to [Exodus 32:15–20](#)? How were his actions symbolic of the people’s sin?

The Israelites were acting like Egyptians, so the Lord “sent a great plague upon the people” (32:35), just as He sent plagues on the Egyptians. Did the Lord’s severe discipline mend the people’s rebellious ways? For a while. Let’s see what happened when the Lord’s cloud lifted, and the Lord led the Israelites from Mount Sinai into “the wilderness of Paran” (Numbers 10:12).



Observation and Interpretation: Perils of Godly Leadership

Observation is looking at what the passage says so we can understand what it means and apply it to our lives.²

Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

In the following charts, combine observation and interpretation by, first, reading the passage under the heading and then summarizing the action in the left column. Next, in the right column, write down the meaning of the passage for godly leaders like Moses who face similar problems and perils. We've filled in the first chart as an example. Don't forget to consult your Bible-study resources like Dr. Constable's Notes, which are free at netbible.org.

The Problem of Complainers and the Perils of Discouragement and Depression <i>Numbers 11:1–17</i>	
Moses can't bear to hear any more complaining from the people. He begs the Lord to relieve him of leadership.	
Observation When the people complained , the Lord sent fire (Numbers 11:1–3). But they weren't through grumbling. A rabble incited the others to complain about the manna by reminding them of the variety of food they ate "for free" in Egypt (11:3–4). The irony is they were not free in Egypt. <i>They were slaves!</i> Hearing the families "whining," Moses couldn't take it anymore (11:10–15). He fell into a pit of discouragement and depression , and he told the Lord to "go ahead and kill me" (11:15). The Lord came to his aid by selecting other godly leaders to help carry the load.	Interpretation The words <i>complained</i> and <i>whined</i> convey ingratitude. By rejecting the Lord's provision, they rejected the Lord Himself. The "rabble" are instigators who stir up division. They are vocal, petty, resentful, and rebellious, and their attitude is contagious. When facing complainers, godly leaders are susceptible to the perils of discouragement and depression. The Lord welcomes our feelings, regardless of how depressed we may be. He tenderly cares for us and provides others to shoulder our burden and lift our spirits.

There is always the "rabble" who will put down the dreams God gives you. If you don't watch out, you will get discouraged. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Problem of Competition and the Perils of Jealousy and Indispensability <i>Numbers 11:25–30</i>	
God gifts two other men to prophesy. Instead of getting jealous, Moses welcomes the work of the Lord's Spirit in people's lives.	
Observation	Interpretation

There wasn't an ounce of jealousy in Moses. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

The Problem of Criticism and the Perils of Being Misunderstood and Misrepresented

Numbers 12:1–16

Miriam and Aaron criticize Moses for marrying a Cushite woman. The Lord afflicts Miriam with leprosy. Even though misunderstood, Moses prays for his sister's healing.

<i>Observation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>

You will be misrepresented, but you don't have to run your own defense. God runs the defense for you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Problem of Panic and the Perils of Being Ignored and Rejected

Numbers 13:1–3, 25–33

Fearing giants, ten spies spread panic, and the people refuse to move forward. Caleb and Joshua try to convince them to claim their land, but they are ignored and rejected.

<i>Observation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>

*When people shoot at you as a godly person, resentment and revenge can eat you alive. Leave the offenders with God. He will deal with them.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

The Problem of Hostility and the Perils of Resentment and Revenge

Numbers 14:6–12, 19–25

Caleb and Joshua proclaim that the Lord will bring them safely into Canaan, but the people try to stone them. God sends His people back into the wilderness.

Observation

Interpretation

The godly life is never easy. Rewarding, yes. Fulfilling, yes. But never easy. It is often endangered. But it is always exciting when your life counts for Christ.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Assurance for the Godly

All Christians who chart a course toward godliness encounter problems and perils along the way. Paul warned Timothy that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). What warning did Peter add in *1 Peter 5:8–9*? And what encouragement?

Certainly, the devil is a far more fearsome enemy than any giant in Canaan. But, as Caleb and Joshua boldly declared, “The LORD is with us! Don’t be afraid” (Numbers 14:9). How did John echo their confidence in *1 John 4:4*?

Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

Whether our enemies are from inside or outside our own camp, whether they are spiritual or physical, we know that the Lord is with us and hears us when we call to Him. Perhaps you're facing similar problems as Moses. Let's look at ways we can depend on Him as we apply the Scriptures.



Application: Finding Strength in the Lord

Review the list of problems that godly Moses encountered trying to lead God's people.

1. *Complainers clawed at Moses' nerves until he couldn't take it anymore.*
2. *Other men with spiritual gifts like Moses' gifts competed with him.*
3. *Moses' own family members criticized him.*
4. *Instead of inspiring the people to go forward, ten leaders stirred up fear.*
5. *His own people plotted against him: "Let's choose a new leader!" (Numbers 14:4).*

Have you encountered troubles like these? Which ones could be lines written in your story?

How did you handle the problem? If the problem is current, how are you handling it?

How does Moses' responses to the perils he faced give you hope? Guidance? In what ways?

Grumblings against a Godly Leader

Numbers 10–14

What counsel is the Lord giving you through these passages that you can put into practice today? What verse or phrase stands out as a promise you can claim?

The people aimed their accusations at Moses, but it was the Lord they rebelled against, putting themselves in jeopardy of His judgment. Seeing their action as an offense against God, not him, Moses had compassion on his enemies and interceded for them. Through his pain, Moses prayed on their behalf to the One who “is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion” (Numbers 14:18).

Close your study by praying for your enemies. Share your hurt and pain with the Lord, just as Moses did. But also, as Jesus taught us:

“Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:44)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I rest in Your security and strength. You know the perilous seas I’m sailing, and You are with me like Jesus was with the disciples in their storm. When enemies attack, I lean wholly on Your Word as my shield. Guard me from harm and lead me through rough waters. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), see “peril.”
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2024–2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1975, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

[insight.org](https://www.insight.org)

Insight for Living
Study 16 • Page 7

