

Was Moses Wrong?

Ethical Dimensions in Leadership

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Numbers 12 demonstrates the account of Moses' brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam's disapproval of Moses' wife, believed to be a Midianite. Secondly, Zimri's rebellion against Moses' direction, although appearing similar to the choice of Moses, cost Zimri and his wife their lives. While it appears that Moses clearly defied God's direction in his choice of a Midianite wife, he is not brought to task. However, those who rise up against Moses' choice and seek to emulate it face swift consequences. This paper explores the issue of grace as it pertains to Christian leadership. Further, this paper provides suggestions for Christian leaders in the area of ethics in personal decision making as it pertains to personal perceptions of divine empowerment.

Introduction

Numbers 12 demonstrates the account of Moses' brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam's disapproval of Moses' wife, believed to be a Midianite. "Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite" (Numbers 12:1, KJV). "And the LORD heard it." (v.2b). Secondly, Zimri's rebellion against Moses' direction, which was believed to have come from God and, although appearing similar to the choice of Moses, cost Zimri and his wife their lives.

And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel (Numbers 25:6-8).

While it appears that Moses clearly defied God's direction in his choice of a Midianite wife, he is not brought to task. However, those who rise up against Moses' choice and seek to emulate it face the swift consequences of alienation, sickness and death. Is it possible that leaders, whom are chosen by God are given an extra measure of grace when it comes to personal sins and weaknesses? If so, perhaps, the exception to this lies in the affects a chosen leader's choices of behaviors have upon those God entrusts to the leader. Moses rebellion against God in which Moses misrepresented God to the people proved to be a fatal decision for both him and his first assistant. "And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numbers 20:12).

Terry Price (2004) writes that organizational leaders operate as though rules do not apply to them and continues that followers perpetuate leader behavior by excusing acts of irresponsibility. Leaders, according to Price (2004) regularly give themselves permission to ignore codes of conduct and behavioral expectations as though their position somehow provides exemptions of the same.

How can Christian leaders reconcile God's directive to Moses' choice, which seemingly went unchecked? Does Moses' choice to marry among the Midianites really provide a backdrop for a different set of rules for leaders, or for extra grace, when it comes to personal life choices despite what appear to be God's explicit directives?

This paper endeavors to explore the issue of grace as it pertains to Christian leadership and examine the ramifications of personal choices that appear to oppose God's direction. Further, this paper provides suggestions for Christian leaders in the area of ethics in personal decision making, as it pertains to personal perceptions of divine empowerment.