



No Growth - Provoke

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

Numbers 14:11

Problem - Job 14:1

Rumors - Exodus 23:2

Observe - Isaiah 42:20

Voices - 1 Corinthians 14:10

Outspoken - Proverbs 16:28

Keep track - Job 7:12

Eyes/Ears - Proverbs 20:12

Provoke is first mentioned in Exodus twenty-three, verse twenty-one. "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in Him." God warns the people by His servants not to provoke the Angel, as in verse twenty. "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." Therefore, not to provoke, which is by unbelief, by murmurings and complaints, by unbecoming words and actions, by transgressing His commands, and acting contrary to His will: The only one that could forgive sins is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Only He can cleanse, deliver, heal, and save by His precious blood shed on the cross for those who have accepted Him and are serving Him.

Despite all the Lord has done for His creation, there are still rebellious people in society who refuse to abide in peace for all the wrong reasons. God spoke to His servant, Moses, in Numbers fourteen, verse eleven, "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere (before the time) they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?"

Why do certain people provoke others?

There could be many reasons. However, the popular ones would be envy and jealousy. Envy is the person themselves and the qualities they have within, their abilities, or capabilities. On the other hand, jealousy pertains more to what they have on the outside, their possessions, things that are visible to the public.

Provokers begin by creating a problem or problems. Why would a person go through all that trouble to get at someone? For the believer, a life "full of trouble" may be the result of injustice, persecution, or Satan's opposition to the fight of faith. However, whether the situation is from us undeliberately or not, believers should seek His guidance on how to handle these matters because some come from the evil one. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The Lord asks Moses, "How long will this people provoke me?" There are two different ways that provokers behave to make others angry: one way is direct, and the other is indirect. The direct method is face-to-face. The provoker comes with their misbehavior only with the intention of ruining the day of the person they are after. On the other hand, indirect is another way to complain to the person associated with the individual they are against, or cause an interruption that would affect their daily routine.

At the heart of Israelites that came out of Egypt was rebellion, which was caused by their unbelief, which grew out of their failure to remember God's past faithfulness, to trust Him as their Lord, and believe Him according to His Word. The people provoked God by not doing so. They retaliated with an ungrateful heart by crying throughout the night. They murmured against God's servants and saying things contrary to being delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians. They expressed that they would rather stay there in Egypt and remain there instead of being delivered, as in Numbers fourteen, verses one through three.

Provoke can be generated by gossip. Provokers love to advertise false reports about the ones they are after to ruin. Why? To satisfy their heart from what is bothering them about the person that they may have envy or jealousy over. However, is it really worth it?

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, as in Exodus sixteen, verse two. They expressed their feelings in verse three, "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." They were creating a rumor. This was already the third time the people of God were complaining, and the Lord still stretched out His merciful hand to heal them.

Instead of spreading accusations to God about neglect and unfaithfulness, believers should commit their way to Him and humbly ask for help from Him trusting He will work on their behalf.

Provokers love to observe. Observers mean to see, but also a way to notice. Three days into the journey, as in Numbers ten, verse thirty-three, the

people complain that the circumstances were not perfect. How quickly they forgot their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. There was a mixed multitude as in Exodus twelve, verse thirty-eight, that influenced Israel to rebel against God and desire the presumed pleasures of Egypt. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick," as in Numbers eleven, verse five. They carefully observed how the food supply was in Egypt, and now out in the wilderness, there was nothing like the food the people of God remembered. Provoke can be generated by a volume of voices. The congregation of the children of Israel, after their journeys, needed water to drink in Exodus seventeen, verse two, "Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?" Chide means to criticize or lecture. In the following verse, "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" Imagine so many people complaining at you, at the same time, how do you respond to that? The servant of God who led the people out of Egypt had to experience this with his response in verse four. "And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me." Moses dealt with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and all the adventures with the people of God. However, this was different.

The many voices of the people he journeyed with are now turning on him due to the lack of water. The reaction from the people of God caused Moses to feel threatened by his own people. They even

went further to comment at the end of verse seven to Moses about God, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" After all the hardship in Egypt, the many years of bondage, the demonstration of God's mighty power against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, led them out freely from that ungodly experience, this is what they think of God now? See how many voices simultaneously can provoke someone to anger.

Provokers can be so outspoken. Numbers fourteen, verses one through four, gives the demonstration or example of how ungrateful a group of people can become, who are supposed to be thankful. "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

It is sad how someone can speak their mind with the truth far from it.

Provokers love to monitor. To take note of certain things from the person they are watching. The fine details to get "under their skin" to satisfy whatever their intentions are for one they are focusing on. Job seven, verse twelve, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" The provoker behaves as if the person is to be carefully patrolled to the degree that they are confined and restrained, allowed no liberty to enjoy what they want to do without being monitored. The people of God, who were delivered out of Egypt, were monitoring the conditions surrounding them. They were looking for another leader among them to

rise and lead them back to Egypt, back to bondage. Joshua and Caleb, two of the twelve spies, gave a good report of the land, while the other spies did not. They were there with the rest of Israelites as deliverance from Egypt came from God. However, when they spoke to the congregation, the response was negative. "But all the congregation bade stone them with stones," as in the first part of Numbers fourteen, verse ten. God then questioned Moses concerning the people because He planned to discipline them, as in verse twelve, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." The Lord was provoked to the point that He was ready to punish the people because of their ways. All that was done for them in that were saved from Egypt, and now they want to stone Joshua and Caleb?

Provokers always have their eyes and ears open to whomever they are provoking, while keeping a tab on the person they have in their thoughts. Those who provoke will tend to copy or mock the individual based on what they hear or see from them. All our powers and faculties are from God and are to be employed for Him. However, those who are not serving the Lord will be working for the evil one, the devil, who will use those ungodly people to provoke the saints of God. Similar to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Satan will have his eyes and ears open to plan as we live for God in our community.

During the complaint of Israel in Numbers eleven, Mariam and Aaron brought their own criticism in verse two of Numbers twelve. "And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it."

This line of questioning provoked God to anger that when He called Moses and

these two complainers and later departed, Mariam was leprous, as in verse ten.

Aaron admit to Moses that they sinned and done foolishly in verse twelve.

"For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses." Only a small number did not follow the provoking crowd. According to this, it would be a question, and would mean, "But who were they who when they had heard did provoke? Were they not all indeed who came out of Egypt under Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?"

In society, there will be rebellious people who will refuse to abide by doing right. On the other hand, there will always be provokers who will be under the influence of Satan to be a menace to believers.