

church online

Alvin Tatum-Virginia Peninsula Crime Stoppers 2020 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Q— *what are some things that as a kid you thought would be a big deal later in life... that turned out to be an afterthought as an adult?*

One for sure answer: Quicksand

Psalm 46:1-7 (NIV) - READ

We see talk of *the earth giving way*. We see talk of *the earth melting*.

It sounds like the authors shared the same fear of the earth opening and swallowing them as I did

They go down in Bible history as the “**Sons of Korah**”

They’re noted for writing 11 Psalms. Psalm 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87, and 88.

The question you might ask... *so who’s Korah and why is his name significant?*

But first – to understand why Korah casts such a long shadow through the rest of the Bible – let’s consider the very first pages of Genesis.

Adam and Eve manage to fail to obey God’s singular command, and sin and death enter the equation. In **Genesis 3** we see God speak on this curse of sin over mankind.

Romans 5:12 – *“When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.”*

- Sin’s curse took root with Adam and bears fruit in every generation since.
- It’s the original generational curse.

And it’s just a couple books later in the Old Testament where we read **Numbers 14:18** – *The Lord is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. He lays the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.*

If we take what we’ve just talked considered in Genesis 3 and read in Numbers 14 and run with it – we can drift into a mythology based on screwy theology – called “*generational curses*.”

Maybe you’ve experienced it...

You struggle with lust like your father did? That’s because you have a generational curse.

You struggle with alcohol just like your parents did? You have a generational curse.

You struggle with an eating disorder like your mom and sisters did? Generational curse.

If there’s a sin present in your family that’s in your life... it’s not just a script or pattern to be broken — no it’s a generational curse.

Maybe you haven't experienced this first hand...

How big of a deal can this be?

How is this remotely relevant?

As important as our current movement recognizing the racism that's been in place for centuries, It is equally important to recognize that the Church helped place it there.

How?

With this very teaching.

Generational curses.

The Curse of Ham was preached and taught from pulpits to not just to justify and *normalize* slavery ...but to *spiritualize* it.

Ham was the name of one of Noah's sons. After the flood Noah planted a vineyard and he ended up getting drunk off his own wine... and he fell over uncovered and naked. His son Ham saw him and rather than covering his nakedness... ran and told his brothers.

It says: *When Noah woke... he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done.*

Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

*"May Canaan be cursed! **May he be the lowest of servants** to his relatives."*

How on earth did this seemingly obscure passage become relevant?

Ham was the ancestor of much of Africa, and because his descendant was cursed to slavery because of his sin, leaders in the European and American church concluded that enslaved Africans were prophetically destined to be slaves. It was their divinely ordained place in life.

It served to anesthetize the conscience of people who called themselves Christians but also subjected human beings to slavery.

It also served to tell slaves that to resist slavery was to resist the will of God and face eternal punishment.

Never mind the fact that Noah only cursed *one* of Ham's *four* sons. He had three others- whose descendants would become Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya- two of which were founders of great civilizations.

And never mind the Bible doesn't support the idea of generational curses to begin with.

But why do I share all of this?

Because while this example is cultural, the enemy also loves to weaponize this kind of flawed theology to wreak havoc in individuals.

He can use this half truth in similar ways in *our* lives to keep us from living free.

To keep us enslaved to strongholds.

To keep us from finding hope in Jesus.

To keep us in bondage to patterns present before us.

To keep us repeating scripts, chained to habits.

With the table set, and with the issue set before us,
let's turn to our appetizer that sets the stage for Korah's Kids tonight - **Numbers 16.**

The heading for **Numbers 16 – Korah's Rebellion.**
Numbers 16:26-33 reads...

What sparked this dramatic, stern judgment? What was Korah's rebellion all about?

It was a power grab by Korah and others that served in the Temple.

They teach us another lesson for another sermon another time:

If you're too big to submit, you're too small to lead.

If serving is beneath you, leadership will always be above you.

Korah and those standing with him wanted position and power.

And we see *they were swallowed by the ways of the world*

long before *they were swallowed by the Earth itself.*

Their death gives us a vivid picture of what had already happened in their heart.

So they rebelled... they stood their ground... and ultimately the ground swallowed them.

And it sounds like their families died with them.

To a quick reader, you wouldn't expect to see anyone affiliated with Korah's lineage mentioned for the rest of scripture.

But a careful reading of Numbers we see God's grace shine through.

Numbers 26:11 - *this served as a warning to the entire nation of Israel.*

However the sons of Korah did not die that day.

Just a handful of generations later they were authoring eleven Psalms, prayers and writings that became part of God's Word and were attributed to "The Sons of Korah."

All the talk in the Psalm we read about the earth melting and giving way makes more sense now

I want to look at three lessons for us in what they wrote in Psalms

The first lesson: **Mistaking CONSEQUENCES for a CURSE (PSALM 88)**

Generations later in Psalm 88:4 the Sons of Korah wrote: *"I am counted with those who go down into the pit."* – we see the Sons of Korah were still viewed in light of Korah's legacy.

And you know - one of the biggest lies that sin tells us is that **it only effects me.**

All sins come with the same lie: it's just effecting me.

But sin derails marriages. It can derail families.

Sin carries consequences. And they're often communal.

It can *affect* families for generations just like Numbers 14 says.

And for the men known as the Sons of Korah, the name Korah came with a legacy of rebellion.

In Numbers 16 God tells Moses and Aaron that Korah's demise was to "serve as a warning" and in Numbers 26:11 we see it did just that.

Not only do they say they are counted with those who go down into the pit... they also write:

"You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths."

And ***"I have been afflicted and ready to die since my youth"***

This affliction shows that the sins of a father or mother can affect and afflict the next generation.

There's an ancient, oft repeated ancient proverb about the consequences of a parent's sin:

"The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

Meaning sometimes children suffer for their parents actions instead of the parents themselves.

God directly addresses this proverb through the prophet Ezekiel when he says:

The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.

While initially this may seem to contradict Numbers 14:18, Numbers 14:18 only speaks to the consequence of the sin in the third and fourth generation, but not some cause for further sin.

The sons of Korah show us that while we can be *affected* generationally, we aren't *bound* generationally by the sin of our parents.

Korah's descendants were still affected as they wrote Psalms generations later. But they weren't walking in the same sin.

And instead of being swallowed by the Earth, their legacy was one of helping people contemplate Heaven.

Mistaken Control and Taking Credit – PSALM 84:10

Generational Curses is just one side of the coin with this churchy mythology that we have to give the boot. A bigger Issue – **Generational Control**

This takes root in proverbs that we quote today, and it's not some random ancient proverb quoted by ancient prophets -- it's a proverb from the book of Proverbs right in our Bibles.

Proverbs 22:6 - *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

Proverbs 22:6? **It's a Proverb, not a Promise.**

Promises are checks we can take to the bank.

Proverbs are observations about life.

A memorable definition I once heard is that they are *short sentences drawn from long experience*

In light of this Proverbs 22:6 is a general principle. Not a guarantee in parenting.
But **we desire control**, so we take this verse as a promised cause & effect
– *a godly home will guarantee good, godly kids*

Somewhere along the way many have confused “**Will not turn**” with “**Will return**”
And Proverbs 22:6 became a promise that if our kid goes off the path, they will return.

Many parents are banking on a check that God didn’t write-
that children raised in a godly atmosphere will have to come home like the prodigal.
So they wash their hands and sat back and waited.

We’d do well to consider **farming and gardening** as an analogy for parenting, leading, ministry,
and any of the sowing we do in other people’s lives.

Because for all the work the farmer puts in, the annual harvest may have more to do with **weather**
than the skills or godliness of the farmer, and in a similar way the outcome and of the next
generation is often reflective of far more than just parenting.
But the Enemy loves to sell us on the façade of control so he can sow his own seeds into our
lives...

First ... Sometimes we take more **CREDIT** than we should for the fruit in our children’s lives.
Rejoice over your kids that walk in the LORD. Praise God. But don’t let it feed foolish pride.

When we take credit for the path our kids have taken, we often begin to look down on parents of
those whose kids who didn’t do the same. We can become dismissive. How could they not do
what I did, follow the same blueprint for parenting that clearly bears fruit...

*There are also good parents that blame themselves for the rebellion of their children,
carrying a weight through life that God never wanted them to carry.*

The other side of the coin... when we assume we control... we can take far too much **BLAME**

A wayward child isn’t irrefutable proof that you failed as a parent.

Korah’s kids remind us of something powerful – everyone has free will. Even our children.

And remember, as we opened with Genesis - Adam and Eve, from the first pages of scripture,
show us that even the perfect setting in the very presence of GOD doesn’t guarantee perfect
behavior.

Does this mean we punt parenting and the work of preparing our children for the right path?
Of course not.

Just because so much of farming is out of a farmers hands doesn’t mean the farmer doesn’t plant
seeds! It’s much the same with our parenting.

But we should walk in these simultaneous truths:

***While we are accountable for how we parent our children.
We aren't accountable for how they turn out.***

I share this so some of us can lay down the burden of guilt or shame that we've carried to long.

But I *certainly* don't share this so anyone gives up hope.

My parents never gave up hoping for me... I was 21 when I finally laid down a life of foolishness and personally pursued Christ.

And at 26 I was ordained as a pastor, to serve His Church.

The Sons of Korah also served, and they write in **Psalm 84:10**

“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

We sing this and quote it figuratively. But for the sons of Korah this wasn't figurative.

The sons of Korah served as gatekeeper for the Sanctuary.

They labored and worked in the House of God.

They certainly didn't get this adoration and love for the temple from their forefather, who scorned his as he looked to supplant Moses' leadership.

Again – Korah may have passed on consequences.

But clearly no curse or control.

And he most certainly could take no credit for this passion present in his descendants.

But God is at work doing the work of redeeming and saving, even when we fall short.

A SAVING FAITH IS A PERSONAL FAITH // PSALM 45:17

For some of us, if we stood before God on judgment day to be judged based on the faith of our parents, we'd be in world of trouble. For others, if we stood before God on judgment day to be judged based on the faith of our parents, we'd be in a great place.

But in either case – *it doesn't matter.*

Because we won't be judged by the faith of our parents. A saving faith is a personal faith.

Again it says in Ezekiel: ***Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.***

And yes ...as we looked at earlier Paul wrote Romans 5:12 and talked about the curse of sin that entered creation through Adam, but he doesn't stop there... he goes on to say: *just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man – Jesus - the many will be made righteous.*

And because of this, Paul can say in **Romans 6:16&18** - *Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living... Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.*

Two very important words used multiple times in this passage: **“YOU CHOOSE.”**

The enemy loves to feed us half truths to keep us bound in chains, living in fear that we can't step out of the traps sin laid for us.

But no matter what habit in life you haven't been able to shake.
No matter what script you keep walking in.
We need that reminder that Jesus died to free us and make us righteous,
and as Paul says in Romans 6 – “YOU CHOOSE.”

God's grace, and the good news of the Gospel means that if you don't like the past fruit of your family tree, you get to plant a new one.

And it's not just family names...

*If you don't like the fruit on the tree of YOUR OWN LIFE so far?
You get to plant a new one.*

But what is at the root of the new creation?
Jesus Christ and our identity in him.

How did Korah's kids change the fruit of their family tree,
This fruit of *“being counted among those who go down into the pit?”*

The mission statement of the Sons of Korah?
Psalm 45:17 – “I will make YOUR NAME to be remembered.”

Korah's kids?
Ultimately they found their identity in being **God's kids.**
The root of their identity was no longer in their name. It was in God.

And that changes everything.

We were once children of the pit. We'd all sinned and fallen short.
But now we're children of God.

And so the question becomes:
Ultimately people may forget my name. In history I may end up all but anonymous. But even if people forget my name, will they remember how I pointed to Jesus, the name above all names?

Galatians 3:13 – *Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us.*