



Feb. 19th - Feb. 25th

WEEK 8 | IN THE WILDERNESS | NUMBERS 1 - 36

We've completed our reading of the Old Testament book of Numbers, so we'll reflect on God's patience and generous blessing in spite of the Israelites repeated disobedience and rebellion.

The Israelites have just spent a year's time at Mt. Sinai in God's presence receiving the Law and learning how to be His chosen people. The first 10 chapters of Numbers open with Moses taking a census of the population prior to their departure for the Promised Land. Once they leave Mt. Sinai, the book essentially becomes a travelogue of their journey through the wilderness. As Israel sets out on their trek a distinct pattern quickly emerges. The people grumble and complain to Moses about many things - the voyage is too hard, they are hungry, thirsty, tired, and Canaan will be impossible to conquer. Several times they even wish they were back in Egypt! God hears their grumbling and is exceedingly patient, but not at the expense of justice. He eventually allows them to go their own way and experience the full consequences of their disobedience. In the end, He declares that because of their continued desire to forsake the Promised Land and return to Egypt, anyone over the age of 20 among them would not be allowed to enter in. Instead, He has them wander through the wilderness between Mt. Sinai and the Promised Land for forty-years until the entire generation has passed away. Despite their almost constant rebellion God remains faithful to Israel, even blessing them in the midst of their grumbling by providing manna, quail and water throughout the journey. The story culminates with Balaam, a pagan sorcerer/prophet sent by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse Israel. Four times Balaam wants to curse them and Four times God allows his mouth to speak only blessing. In this way, He confirms His intention to carry out His unconditional promise to Abraham independent of the people's faithfulness to Him. Throughout Numbers God is faithful, long-suffering and full of steadfast love for His people despite their disobedience.

Group Resources

Read: Genesis 12:1-3; Numbers 1:44-46, 5:1-10:10, 9:1-14, 20:2-13, 21:4-9, 23:7-10, 23:18-24, 24:3-9; 24:9b, 24:15-19; Numbers 31:16; Joshua 5:10-12; John 3:14-15, Revelation 2:14

Video: [Numbers](#)

Sermon: [When the Saved Need to Get Saved | The Backstory of the Bible's Most Famous Words](#)

Proposed Group Agenda (2 hrs)

Fellowship/Connection Time (30 min.)

Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Warm Up (10 min.)

Video (15 min.)

Dig In (45 min.)

Grow (10 min.)

Closing Prayer (5 min.)



* The individual reading plan for this week covers Numbers 31 - Deuteronomy 12 and Psalms 50-56.



Warm Up

Discussion Value - Blessing

This week our value is blessing...

“Blessing is the projection of good into the life of another. It isn’t just words. It’s the actual putting forth of your will for the good of another person. It always involves God, because when you will the good of another person, you realize only God is capable of bringing it.”

-Dallas Willard-

Opening Question (choose one or more)

In what way have you experienced blessing this week?

What’s one thing from your reading of Numbers that really stood out to you? How did God speak to you through it?

Have you ever gotten off track on a journey (e.g. a road trip, hike, vacation etc.) and as a result it took much longer than it should have? If so, how did you respond? If not, how do you suppose you would respond if something like that happened to you?

Dig In

Q. Look again at the promises God makes to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. What elements of this promise do you see in the book of Numbers?

1

The overarching theme of Numbers is the gradual fulfillment of the promises to Abraham that his descendants would be the people of God and would occupy the land of Canaan - the Promised Land.

Genesis 12:1-3

Four elements in God's promise to Abraham can be found in the book of Numbers.



1

LAND

Numbers describes Israel's preparation and journey towards the Promised Land.

2

DESCENDANTS

Jacob's family numbered 70 when they entered Egypt. The first census reveals the number of Israel's fighting men to be 603,550. That didn't include women and children.

Genesis 46:27 | Numbers 1:1-46

3

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The Lord's presence with Israel is constantly highlighted throughout the book of Numbers.

4

BLESSING TO THE NATIONS

Nations who bless Israel generously will themselves be blessed.

Numbers 24:9b

Q. Mount Sinai, with its constant reminder of God's presence, was never intended to be the final destination of God's people. There comes a time to break camp, head out into the world, claim God's promises, and fulfill His calling. How'd they do? Compare and contrast your spiritual walk with the nation of Israel.

2

Numbers has a clear geographical and chronological arrangement that highlights three main movements in the overall story of God's people.



MOVEMENT 1

The preparation and instructions, under God's direction, for breaking camp and moving through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

MOVEMENT 2

Highlights the rebelliousness of the people and their refusal to enter the Promised Land against God's faithfulness and patience.

MOVEMENT 3

The second preparation to enter Canaan because the first didn't work.

Q. The first movement is about preparing to break camp and set out, but it also reveals Israel's part in maintaining the awesome presence of God among them on the journey. What, if anything, did you find intriguing about the required rituals? Did one or two stand out above the rest? Why? How can these rituals inform our walk with God in the present?

3

The reality of God's presence.

Numbers 5:1 - 10:10

The people were to maintain clean and holy lives because of God's pure and holy presence in their midst.

The process of turning out of camp those who defiled it.

Numbers 5

Confession and restitution.

Numbers 5:5-10

The Nazarite Vow.

Numbers 6:1-21

The Aaronic Blessing and offerings to the tabernacle.

Numbers 6:22 - 7:88

Obedience to the cloud of Yahweh's presence.

Numbers 9:15-23

Blowing of the silver trumpets.

Numbers 10:1-10

A contrast in the blessings of the holy with the curses of the profane:

HOLY	PROFANE
- The Presence of God	- The Wrath of God
- The blessing of numbers	- Plagues of judgment
- The laws of cleanliness	- The loss of inheritance by a dying people
- The service of the Levites	- Pollution of the land
- The atonement of Aaron	
- The inheritance of the land	

Q. Numbers chapter 9 is the literary climax of the first movement. It occurs just before the nation of Israel breaks camp. What does God command the Israelites to do? Why is it so important?

4

Remembering and celebrating the mighty acts of God in the past is a prelude for expecting His guidance and protection in the future.

Numbers 9:1-14

A

CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER

In the first half of chapter 9 God commands the Israelites to celebrate the Passover before their departure from Sinai.

Numbers 9:1-14

B

CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER

They celebrate it again before the battle of Jericho and the conquest of the Promised Land. The next day they ate of the produce of the land.

Joshua 5:10-12



Q. The second movement highlights the failure of the people to trust and obey God while they wandered in the wilderness. There's something ironic about the Israelite's complaints over their wilderness diet and longing for the food in Egypt. Did they forget they were enslaved there? Is it really possible they didn't remember God had rescued them from their suffering? How could they rebuff his leadership?

Q. The complaints became far more serious than merely whining about food. Their rebellion ultimately cost them the land God had promised. Compare the mercy and patience of God with His justice.

5

The struggles with obedience and the consequences of disobedience.

Numbers 11-16

NUMBERS 11

The people complain about the misfortunes of the trip.

Numbers 11:1

The Lord consumes the outlying parts of the camp.

Numbers 11:1

The supply of quail runs out and the people grow weary of manna.

Numbers 11:4-6

The Lord sends a plague on the people as they eat.

Numbers 11:33

NUMBERS 12 - 14

Aaron and Miriam oppose the leadership of Moses and therefore God.

Numbers 12:1-3

The Lord strikes Miriam with Leprosy.

Numbers 12:10

Israel refuses to take possession of the land and threatens to go back to Egypt.

Numbers 13:25 - 14:4

The Lord refuses to let them possess the land. Everyone 20+ will die in the wilderness.

Numbers 14:28-30

NUMBERS 14 - 16

The people try to reverse God's judgment and enter the land.

Numbers 14:39-40

The Lord is not with them and the Amalekites and Canaanites defeat them.

Numbers 14:42-45

Korah leads a group of rebels against Moses and Aaron.

Numbers 16:12-14

The Lord sends an earthquake and fire consumes their followers.

Numbers 16:31-43

Q. Moses' sin at Kadesh is a reminder that no human leader, not even Moses, is exempt from the consequences of unbelief. This indicates that the promises of God will be fulfilled in spite of the failure of human leadership. What does this say about the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises? What does it mean to you personally?

6

The Old Testament knows no distinction between faith and obedience. Faith is the correct response to God's word of promise or command.

Numbers 20:2-13

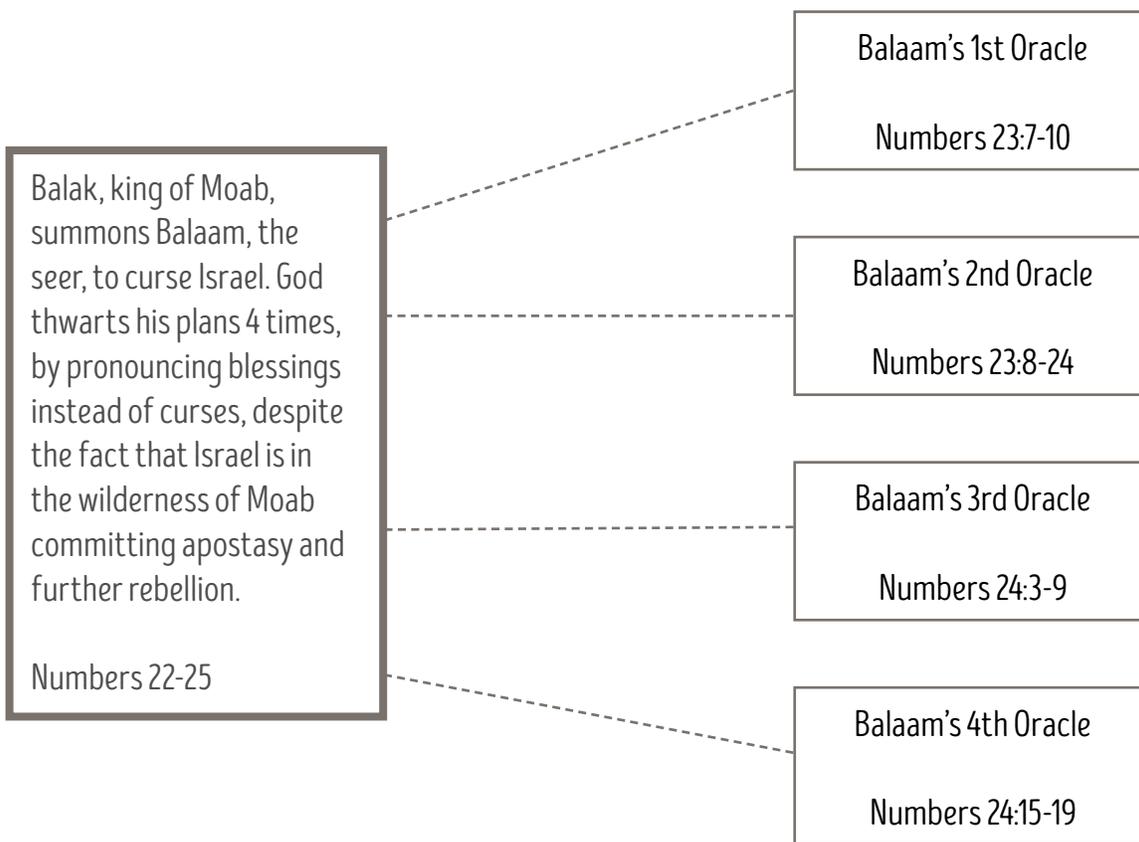


Q. The third and final movement begins with a humorous but gravely serious story and continues on with the habitual rebellion and unfaithfulness on the part of God's covenant people. In spite of their nearly constant failure, God continues to bless them. What aspects of God's character does this reveal? How has He shown some of those same attributes in your life?

7

While Israel's sin and religious apostasy seems to imperil the covenant promise to Abraham, God patiently and lovingly continues to reveal that they will enter the land.

Numbers 22-24



Under Balaam's influence, the Israelites were quick to intermarry with the women of Moab and to worship their gods. But as in other passages where sin and punishment threaten to bring God's people to an end, the next unit presents legal material for worship in the Promised Land and instruction for life in the new setting of Canaan.

Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14



Where's Jesus?

Q. Numbers 21:4-9 relates an episode where the new generation of Israelites begins to grumble against the amount of food and water God has provided. The LORD sends “fiery” (poisonous) serpents in response to their rebellion. When the people repent of their sin, God instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. Whenever one of the serpents would bite an Israelite, the dying person was instructed to “look at the serpent of bronze and live.” How does this episode relate to our salvation in Christ?

A. This event prefigures the simplicity and availability of salvation for us.

Just as the Israelites were saved by lifting their eyes to look at the bronze serpent, so may we be saved by looking in faith to Christ lifted up on the cross.

John 3:14-15

Works Cited:

Theme 1 | Home | ESV Study Bible | Crossway -

<http://www.esvstudybible.org/sb/objects/introduction-to-numbers/> (excerpted)

Theme 2 | Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan Beyer. Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey. Grand

Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1999. Pages 128 - 130 (excerpted).

Theme 3 | Ibid, 130 - 131 (excerpted).

Theme 4 | Ibid, 129 - 130 (excerpted).

Theme 5 | Ibid, 131 - 135 (excerpted).

Theme 6 | Ibid, 134 - 135 (excerpted).

Theme 7 | Ibid, 135 - 137 (excerpted).

Where's Jesus? | Ibid, 135 (excerpted).

Other Study Materials, Questions & Information | Generated from materials provided by Reality Church SF - Year of Biblical Literacy and The Bible Project. Used by permission.



Grow

This exercise is designed to help you look at yourself, be aware and honest about who you are in light of your interaction with Scripture, and consider any appropriate actions.

In Numbers 6:22-26 we see God instructing Moses how to bless others. Notice he doesn't actually bless the people. He is merely the instrument, or transmitter, of the Lord's blessing.

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, "This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

"The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you; the LORD
turn his face toward you and
give you peace."

Practice the value of blessing with your group using the instructions below. During the week, bless at least one or two others God has placed in your sphere of influence in the same way.

Group Exercise:

1.) Break into pairs.

2.) Take turns speaking the blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 over one another. If you are the giver of the blessing speak slowly while trying your best to maintain eye contact. If you are the receiver do your best to give the speaker your full attention.

3.) As you speak, try to posture your heart towards the person you are blessing. Remember they are created in the image of God and He wants nothing but good things and fullness of life for them. If you are receiving the blessing ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart so you can fully receive it as a gift from God.

4.) When you and your partner are ready, speak the following over one another:

The Lord bless you and keep you; (pause)
The Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you; (pause)
The Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace. (pause)