

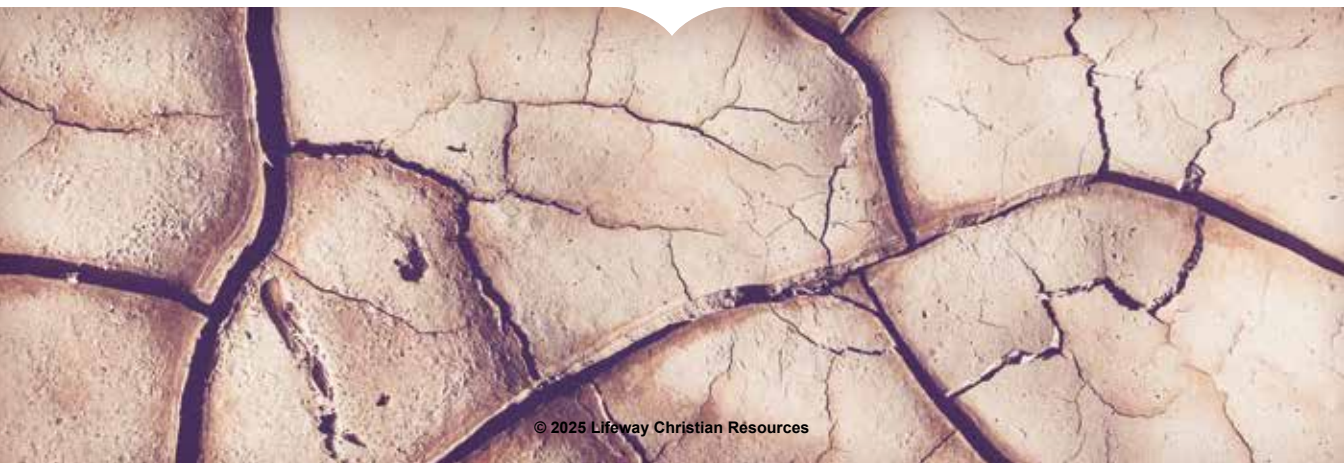


EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**®
Adults

Numbers & Deuteronomy

Daily Discipleship Guide

Fall 2025



STEP BY STEP

In poetry and music, various metaphors have been applied to life on earth. For example, one song tells us that “life is a highway,” a journey that never stops and takes us on any number of adventures if we will take the time to embrace the magic. Decades earlier, a poet suggested that life is more like a choice between “two roads” that split at the edge of the woods. We’d love to try them both, but we have a choice to make—and the road we choose makes “all the difference.”

For all the images used for our short time on this earth, roads and highways might resonate more than others. It’s the simple process of putting one foot in front of the other each day that keeps us going. No matter how hard life gets, if we can just move a little farther down the line, we’re confident that better days will shine on us.

Humans are incredibly resilient that way.

Speaking of resilient, the ancient Israelites had started a life journey on pretty solid footing. They escaped the slavery of Egypt, walked through the walls of the Red Sea, and received God’s gameplan at Mount Sinai. Before long, they were on the edge of the promised land . . . until they weren’t.

Stubborn rebellion and disobedience moved them back to “Start” in the game of life. Now, their journey entailed forty years of walking around in circles until an entire generation died out. But while putting one foot in front of the other raised new struggles, they never lost God’s presence or His promises. Even as they were marking time in the desert, He was leading them—step by step—toward a second chance at Canaan.

That’s the story of Numbers and Deuteronomy. It’s all about God leading and protecting a band of imperfect people through a wilderness as they learned to trust Him. And as they learned to trust Him, they moved closer to the promised land.

That’s not just the story of the Israelites, though. It’s our narrative, as well. Rebels against our Creator we are born into a wilderness of sin that we can’t escape on our own. But God demonstrated His love by sending His Son to die in our place, to pay the price for our sin. All we have to do is put one foot in front of the other, step toward Him, and trust Him with our lives. If you’re ready to take that step, here’s what you must do . . .

-
- ▶ **ADMIT** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
 - ▶ **BY FAITH RECEIVE** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
 - ▶ **CONFESS** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”
-

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.



SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

SEPT. 7

SEPT. 14

SEPT. 21

SEPT. 28

OCT. 5

OCT. 12

OCT. 19

OCT. 26

NOV. 2

NOV. 9

NOV. 16

NOV. 23

NOV. 30

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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Fall 2025
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- ▶ Steadfast faith. Time-tested devotion. We each desire a deep faith in God that enables us to persevere through the valleys and rejoice on the mountaintops of life. In the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, we get a front-row seat as the Israelites journeyed from Mount Sinai through the wilderness to the edge of the promised land. Like most expeditions, this journey was packed with unexpected events, a longer-than-expected timeline, and unforeseen challenges. The Israelites responded to these circumstances with grumbling, frustration, and disobedience to God's commands. Upon reaching the Plains of Moab, Moses called the Israelites to commit to wholehearted devotion—following God, His commands, and His ways.



Through the twists and turns of events, God's faithfulness to His people never faltered. He was with them. Time and again God demonstrated His loyalty to provide for and protect them as He led them to the promised land. His promise to be their God was neither forgotten nor dismissed. Despite their unfaithfulness, He remained fully faithful.

The lessons learned by the Israelites prove to be powerful truths we can cling to today. Our journeys will take unexpected turns, leaving us frustrated or unsure of what may lie ahead. Thankfully, we aren't left on our own to navigate our experiences. Like the Israelites, we can choose to follow Him each day. We serve a God who is wholly trustworthy. He is with us!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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BIBLE READING PLAN



SEPTEMBER

- ☐ 1. Numbers 1:1-54
- ☐ 2. Numbers 2:1-34
- ☐ 3. Numbers 3:1-13
- ☐ 4. Numbers 3:14-39
- ☐ 5. Numbers 3:40-51
- ☐ 6. Numbers 4:1-20
- ☐ 7. Numbers 4:21-33
- ☐ 8. Numbers 4:34-49
- ☐ 9. Numbers 5:1-31
- ☐ 10. Numbers 6:1-27
- ☐ 11. Numbers 7:1-23
- ☐ 12. Numbers 7:24-47
- ☐ 13. Numbers 7:48-71
- ☐ 14. Numbers 7:72-89
- ☐ 15. Numbers 8:1-26
- ☐ 16. Numbers 9:1-23
- ☐ 17. Numbers 10:1-36
- ☐ 18. Numbers 11:1-15
- ☐ 19. Numbers 11:16-35
- ☐ 20. Numbers 12:1-16
- ☐ 21. Numbers 13:1-33
- ☐ 22. Numbers 14:1-25
- ☐ 23. Numbers 14:26-45
- ☐ 24. Numbers 15:1-26
- ☐ 25. Numbers 15:27-41
- ☐ 26. Numbers 16:1-30
- ☐ 27. Numbers 16:31-50
- ☐ 28. Numbers 17:1-13
- ☐ 29. Numbers 18:1-32
- ☐ 30. Numbers 19:1-22

OCTOBER

- ☐ 1. Numbers 20:1-29
- ☐ 2. Numbers 21:1-35
- ☐ 3. Numbers 22:1-41
- ☐ 4. Numbers 23:1-30
- ☐ 5. Numbers 24:1-25
- ☐ 6. Numbers 25:1-18
- ☐ 7. Numbers 26:1-27
- ☐ 8. Numbers 26:28-65
- ☐ 9. Numbers 27:1-23
- ☐ 10. Numbers 28:1-31
- ☐ 11. Numbers 29:1-19
- ☐ 12. Numbers 29:20-40
- ☐ 13. Numbers 30:1-16
- ☐ 14. Numbers 31:1-30
- ☐ 15. Numbers 31:31-54
- ☐ 16. Numbers 32:1-19
- ☐ 17. Numbers 32:20-42
- ☐ 18. Numbers 33:1-56
- ☐ 19. Numbers 34:1-29
- ☐ 20. Numbers 35:1-34
- ☐ 21. Numbers 36:1-13
- ☐ 22. Deuteronomy 1:1-21
- ☐ 23. Deuteronomy 1:22-46
- ☐ 24. Deuteronomy 2:1-23
- ☐ 25. Deuteronomy 2:24-37
- ☐ 26. Deuteronomy 3:1-29
- ☐ 27. Deuteronomy 4:1-24
- ☐ 28. Deuteronomy 4:25-49
- ☐ 29. Deuteronomy 5:1-33
- ☐ 30. Deuteronomy 6:1-25
- ☐ 31. Deuteronomy 7:1-26

NOVEMBER

- ☐ 1. Deuteronomy 8:1-20
- ☐ 2. Deuteronomy 9:1-29
- ☐ 3. Deuteronomy 10:1-22
- ☐ 4. Deuteronomy 11:1-32
- ☐ 5. Deuteronomy 12:1-32
- ☐ 6. Deuteronomy 13:1-18
- ☐ 7. Deuteronomy 14:1-29
- ☐ 8. Deuteronomy 15:1-23
- ☐ 9. Deuteronomy 16:1-22
- ☐ 10. Deuteronomy 17:1-20
- ☐ 11. Deuteronomy 18:1-22
- ☐ 12. Deuteronomy 19:1-21
- ☐ 13. Deuteronomy 20:1-20
- ☐ 14. Deuteronomy 21:1-23
- ☐ 15. Deuteronomy 22:1-30
- ☐ 16. Deuteronomy 23:1-25
- ☐ 17. Deuteronomy 24:1-22
- ☐ 18. Deuteronomy 25:1-19
- ☐ 19. Deuteronomy 26:1-19
- ☐ 20. Deuteronomy 27:1-26
- ☐ 21. Deuteronomy 28:1-26
- ☐ 22. Deuteronomy 28:27-44
- ☐ 23. Deuteronomy 28:45-68
- ☐ 24. Deuteronomy 29:1-29
- ☐ 25. Deuteronomy 30:1-20
- ☐ 26. Deuteronomy 31:1-30
- ☐ 27. Deuteronomy 32:1-27
- ☐ 28. Deuteronomy 32:28-52
- ☐ 29. Deuteronomy 33:1-29
- ☐ 30. Deuteronomy 34:1-12

MEMORY VERSES



SESSION 1:

They camped at the LORD's command, and they set out at the LORD's command. They carried out the LORD's requirement according to his command through Moses. - Numbers 9:23

SESSION 2:

The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm weak? Now you will see whether or not what I have promised will happen to you." - Numbers 11:23

SESSION 3:

Then Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said, "Let's go up now and take possession of the land because we can certainly conquer it!" - Numbers 13:30

SESSION 4:

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, forgiving iniquity and rebellion. - Numbers 14:18a

SESSION 5:

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me to demonstrate my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land I have given them." - Numbers 20:12

SESSION 6:

Balaam said to him, "Look, I have come to you, but can I say anything I want? I must speak only the message God puts in my mouth." - Numbers 22:38

SESSION 7:

You are to take possession of the land and settle in it because I have given you the land to possess. - Numbers 33:53

SESSION 8:

"Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren." - Deuteronomy 4:9

SESSION 9:

"Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." - Deuteronomy 6:4-5

SESSION 10:

When you cross the Jordan and live in the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and he gives you rest from all the enemies around you and you live in security, then the LORD your God will choose the place to have his name dwell. - Deuteronomy 12:10-11a

SESSION 11:

The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he swore to you, if you obey the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. - Deuteronomy 28:9

SESSION 12:

For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. - Deuteronomy 30:16

SESSION 13:

How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread on their backs. - Deuteronomy 33:29



Writer

Moses is credited with writing the first five books of the Bible (Deut. 31:9; Josh. 1:7-8; Mark 12:26; John 5:46; 2 Cor. 3:15). These five books are known collectively as the Pentateuch, a word derived from the Greek terms *penta*, meaning “five,” and *teuchos*, meaning “container.” Less formally, many people refer to the five as “the books of Moses” or the Torah, a Hebrew word meaning “law” or “teachings.”

Setting and Dating

The books of Numbers and Deuteronomy were written after the Israelites left Egypt but before they entered Canaan. Numbers focuses on events that occurred before God’s people left Mount Sinai, as they traveled between Sinai and Canaan and while they were on the Plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan River and ancient Jericho. Thus, the events in Numbers began about a year after the Jews had left Egypt and continued for the next thirty-nine years (1445–1407 BC). All events in the book of Deuteronomy occurred while the Hebrews were on the Plains of Moab, prior to their entering Canaan. This would have been in 1406 BC.

Themes

The book of Numbers is about organizing and preparing God’s people to enter the promised land. It records Moses conducting two censuses of the Israelites, one when they were at Sinai and the second thirty-nine years later, while the people were on the Plains of Moab waiting to enter Canaan. It also records Moses organizing the levitical priesthood, the tribal units for travel, and the process for worshiping and offering sacrifices to God in worship.

Deuteronomy contains primarily three long speeches or messages Moses delivered to God’s people. Moses called the people to live obediently to God’s instruction and warned of what would happen when the people erred. Deuteronomy contains some history; the focus, though, is on living as God’s people in the land of Canaan. This is reflected in a phrase that Deuteronomy uses regularly: “the LORD your God.” This appears 400 times in Scripture; 392 are in the Old Testament. Of those 392, 240 are in the book of Deuteronomy. In the book, God declared many times that no other so-called god was like Him. None were worthy of worship. He, Yahweh, deserved to be their God exclusively. God was remaining true to His covenant with His people; He wanted and expected the same from them.



Numbers

- I. First Census and Consecration of Israel at Sinai** (Num. 1:1-6:27)
- II. Preparation for Departure to the Promised Land** (Num. 7:1-10:36)
- III. From Mount Sinai to Kadesh** (Num. 11:1-15:41)
- IV. Rebellion Against Aaron's Priesthood** (Num. 16:1-19:22)
- V. From Kadesh to the Plains of Moab** (Num. 20:1-25:18)
- VI. Second Census and Preparation of the New Generation** (Num. 26:1-30:16)
- VII. Preparation for Entering the Promised Land** (Num. 31:1-36:13)

Deuteronomy

- I. First Address of Moses** (Deut. 1:1-4:49)
- II. Second Address of Moses** (Deut. 5:1-26:19)
- II. Third Address of Moses** (Deut. 27:1-30:20)
- III. Final Days of Moses** (Deut. 31:1-34:12)



USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and move us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.



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Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focuses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
 - In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.
-

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

SESSION 1

The Journey

NUMBERS 9:15-23

GOD GIVES DAILY GUIDANCE TO HIS PEOPLE.



Many of us rely on GPS navigation when going someplace new. Not only will it tell us to turn left in 1.2 miles, but it will also tell us what time we can expect to arrive. GPS systems weren't as reliable when they first came out. They were programmed at the factory and didn't automatically update with the most up-to-date information. They didn't know about new roads or routes. Thus, sometimes they gave wrong information, and people got lost.

*THINK OF A TIME WHEN BAD DIRECTIONS LED YOU SOMEWHERE UNEXPECTED.
HOW CAN GETTING JUST ONE DETAIL WRONG DISRUPT OUR TRAVELS?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The book of Exodus divides into three parts, which are separated geographically. The first (chaps. 1-12) records events in Egypt. The second (chaps. 13-18) describes Israel's trek from Egypt to Sinai. The third part (chaps. 19-40) details events at Sinai. Similarly, the book of Numbers presents three primary scenes, and geographic locations identify each. The first part (chaps. 1-10) occurred while the Israelites were still at Mount Sinai. The second describes their journey from Sinai toward Canaan (chaps. 11-25). The final section (chaps. 26-36) describes God's people on the Plains of Moab—across the Jordan River from Jericho. This week's study occurred while they were camped at Mount Sinai.

We often associate Mount Sinai with Moses receiving the Ten Commandments and the Israelites worshiping the golden calf. Another dramatic event, though, occurred there earlier. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush at Sinai (Ex. 3:1-5). The text refers to Sinai by another name, Horeb (3:1), which means "Desolation." Certainly, it was (and is) desolate. As the book

of Numbers opens, the Israelites had been gone from Egypt for a little over a year and had been in this desolate place for just over a month (40:2; Num. 1:1).

One major theme in the opening chapters of Numbers involves being "consecrated." It means to be set aside as holy or sacred, emphasizing keeping something pure. The recurring emphasis on being consecrated underscores God's setting aside His people to be unlike all others. He wanted them to be holy unto Him and devoted wholly unto Him. They were to serve, honor, and obey Him alone. The question of Numbers is how they would do in fulfilling that intent. In the opening chapters, they did well.



15 On the day the **tabernacle** **A** was **set up**, **B** the **cloud** **C** covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and it appeared like **fire** **D** above the tabernacle from evening until morning.

16 It remained that way continuously: the cloud would cover it, appearing like fire at night. **17** Whenever the cloud was **lifted up** **E** above the tent, the Israelites would set out; at the place where the cloud stopped, there the Israelites camped. **18** At the **LORD's command** **F** the Israelites set out, and at the LORD's command they camped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they camped. **19** Even when the cloud stayed over the tabernacle **many days**, **G** the Israelites carried out the LORD's requirement and did not set out. **20** Sometimes the cloud remained over the tabernacle for only a few days. They would **camp** **H** at the LORD's command and set out at the LORD's command. **21** Sometimes the cloud remained only from evening until morning; when the cloud lifted in the morning, they set out. Or if it remained a day and a night, they moved out when the cloud lifted. **22** Whether it was two days, a month, or longer, the Israelites camped and did not set out as long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle. But when it was lifted, they set out. **23** They camped at the LORD's command, and they set out **at the LORD's command**. **I** They carried out the LORD's requirement according to his command through Moses.

A. Israel's portable worship structure. It was built at the command of God "that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8).

B. The tabernacle was set up in the middle of Israel's camp, symbolizing God's dwelling place among His people.

C. Before the tabernacle was built, the Lord appeared to Moses in a cloud outside the camp (Ex. 33:7-10). After the tabernacle was completed, the cloud covered the tabernacle (Lev. 16:2,12-13).

D. The fire of God's presence first appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:2). It led the Israelites out of Egypt (13:21-22), rested on Mount Sinai (19:18), and settled on the tabernacle (40:38).

E. The movement of the cloud/fire was God's signal that it was time to depart or make camp.

F. This was not a verbal command, but a visual one.

G. Sometimes, the cloud stayed for several days, as when Israel camped at Sinai. Other times, it would remain only a few days (v. 20) or even just one day (v. 21).

H. When and where they would camp was determined entirely by God.

I. Having learned important lessons regarding disobedience at Sinai, the people were willing to trust God's directions.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God's Presence

(Num. 9:15-16)

Believers can be assured that God is with them and can provide trustworthy guidance.

- **God made His presence with His people visible. How do you think the visible evidence of His presence made the Israelites feel?**
- **How can you be assured of God's presence in your life?**
- **What are some ways you can benefit from His presence?**

2. Faithful Direction

(Num. 9:17-21)

Following God's guidance will require believers to act on His instruction.

- **Have there been times when God made you wait for an answer or solution from Him? How did that experience affect your faith?**

3. Active Obedience

(Num. 9:22-23)

Following God in faith means that we act on His timeframe and not our own.

- **Why does it matter that we follow the Lord's lead?**
- **Why do we sometimes delay doing what He wants us to do?**

Apply the Text

- **How might the Lord be leading your Bible study group or church into a new ministry?**
- **What can the group or church do to follow His lead?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

To God we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. (See Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 John 5:3.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a biblical concept.

Numbers 9:15-23 describes how God led His people through the wilderness. Read the article "Pillar of Fire and Cloud" in a Bible dictionary and record any new insights. Reflect on these questions: How does God primarily guide His people today? What is the relationship between Bible reading and prayer and God's guidance? How can you be sure you are following God's will for your life?



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.



TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 9:23. Tell about a time you got lost or struggled to complete a task because you didn't follow directions.

Verse 23 emphasizes how the Israelites followed the Lord's leading. When He said stay, they stayed. When God said move, they moved. Notice that three times this verse mentions the Lord's command. The Israelites knew they needed to follow God's leading as they traveled toward the promised land. After all, He knew the way better than they did. He knew the dangers they would face along the way, the needs they would experience, the enemies they would encounter, and the other challenges they would meet. The Lord knew what was coming—they did not.

How does God guide us today?

Most of the time, God does not reveal His entire plan at once. If He did, we'd be overwhelmed. Instead, He graciously reveals His agenda and purposes on a "need to know" basis. This allows us to trust Him and obey one step at a time.

Where are you struggling in your Christian journey? Pray for one another as you seek to follow the Lord's guidance in your life.

Write Numbers 9:23 on a card or put it on your phone. Review it each morning before you go to work this week as a reminder to follow the Lord's lead.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 9:15-16

Underscore the words “cloud” and “fire.”

The tabernacle was a visual reminder of God’s presence with His people. In giving Moses instructions about the tabernacle’s design and furnishings, God said, “They [the Israelites] are to make a sanctuary for me so that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8). The “tent of the testimony” points specifically to the small, enclosed structure that housed the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments. Exodus refers to these as “the two tablets of the testimony” (31:18; see 25:21-22). The “tablets of the testimony” likely led to the tabernacle being called the tent of the testimony.

The “cloud” by day and the “fire” by night covered the Holy Area and the Most Holy Area. The Hebrew verb tense for “covered” indicates a single act. In other words, the tabernacle was covered and remained covered. The adverb “continuously” in verse 16 means without interruption. The fire and cloud remained in place and never stopped being there. This fire and cloud had guided God’s people as they approached the Red Sea. At the sea, it stood between them and the Egyptian army (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-20). There, it guarded them from danger. Here, the fire and cloud represented God’s presence with His people. The fire and cloud would serve again as a guide as God’s people began their journey toward Canaan.

When have you been acutely aware of God’s presence in your life? How did you benefit from His presence?



Day 2: Numbers 9:17

Underscore the words “set out” and “camped.”

The book of Exodus records God’s instituting Passover, delivering the Israelites from Egypt, and leading them to a new land. Numbers 9 somewhat echoes those events. First, the Israelites initially celebrated Passover at God’s directive while they were still in the house of Pharaoh. When they celebrated it a second time, they again did it at the Lord’s directive (Num. 9:1-5). Second, He made provisions for those who would have been deemed unacceptable. In Egypt, He had the non-Israelite men circumcised before they could receive Passover. In chapter 9, God made provision for some men who had handled a corpse and were thus unclean (vv. 6-12). Afterward, they could receive Passover. Third, both stories tell of God’s guiding and guarding His people with the cloud and fire.

The passage does not describe how “the cloud was lifted up above the tent,” how long it took for the cloud to reposition itself, or how far it hovered above the tent. The dual focus was on God’s leading and His people’s following.

Beginning in verse 17 and continuing through the end of the chapter, the text has a poetic and rhythmic quality. Some scholars believe verses 17-23 may have been a song the Israelites sang as they journeyed. If so, that explains the repetitive nature of this “Song of the Journey.”

Which best describes your Christian journey right now: moving or camping? Why?



Day 3: Numbers 9:18

Highlight the words “at the LORD’s command.”

Two verbs in verse 18 describe what the Israelites did: they “set out” and they “camped.” We sometimes forget that hundreds of thousands of people were involved in the exodus. Over six hundred thousand men left Egypt; the number of people swells exponentially when we add women and children (Ex. 12:37; Num. 1:45-46).

Earlier, the Lord laid out an arrangement for the tribal clans and their position around the tabernacle (Num. 2:1-33). Had He not, confusion and disorder would have ruled the day. Whether the people were camping or setting out for the next leg of the journey, they would have otherwise resembled a disorganized mob.

The first to set out were the Levites. They camped closest to the tabernacle and were responsible for its set-up and transport. Concerning the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant was always out front as the people relocated. Next was the tabernacle structure itself—with its curtains, posts, tent pegs, and ropes. Last in the procession of the Levites were the furnishings for the tabernacle. This included the utensils they used for presenting the incense, grain, and animal sacrifices.

Where do you see God leading you? How is He leading you?



Day 4: Numbers 9:19-21

Circle “many days” and “few days.”

The final chapter of Exodus describes the setting up of the tabernacle for the first time. The structure itself would have been impressive. Nothing, though, could compare to what brought its ultimate glory. “The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34). The cloud was the visible manifestation of God’s presence with His people.

At times, the cloud stayed in place for “many days.” Other times, the wait lasted “only a few days.” These verses are a reminder that the Lord sometimes compels us to wait. He may call us to sit still—which can be difficult to do. Many times we wait without knowing why. Verse 21 provides a contrast to verses 19-20. Rather than the tabernacle remaining in place for multiple days, at times the sacred space was to be in place only overnight. When the cloud lifted the next morning, the people resumed their journey.

This description raises the question of how quickly the tabernacle could be set up. Exodus 40 provides the answer: “You are to set up the tabernacle . . . on the first day of the first month” (Ex. 40:2). We get an echo of this detail in Numbers 9:15, “On the day the tabernacle was set up. . . .” This was possible because of the number of people involved. Over 8,500 Levites were responsible for the tabernacle, and each had a task for which he was responsible (Num. 4:46-49). This reminds us that God is a God of order, not chaos and confusion.

Have there been times when God made you wait for an answer or solution from Him? How did that experience affect your faith?



Day 5: Numbers 9:22-23

Note the repetition of “the LORD’s command” in verse 23.

The phrase “when it was lifted, they set out” conveys two ideas—first, the people followed the Lord’s directive promptly. Second, the phrase emphasizes that God’s people followed His lead decisively and consistently. Because of the way the Lord led, they knew each day where they were supposed to be.

Verse 23 uses repetition to strengthen the impact of the message. Three times this verse speaks about “the LORD’s command.” This makes a total of seven times God’s command is mentioned in this “Song of the Journey” (see also vv. 18,20). For a second time, the phrase “the LORD’s requirement” appears—making yet another reference to God’s command (also v. 19). Thus, the emphasis of this verse is on the Lord’s directive. The question is how the people responded. Two verbs describe their response: they either “camped” or “set out.” The dual emphasis of verse 23 is on the Lord’s directive and the people’s obedience. The message is clear. When He led, they obeyed.

Finally, verse 23 echoes two statements that had been said of Moses earlier. Exodus 33:11 says, “The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend.” Numbers 1:54 says, “The Israelites did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.” In this verse, the people carried out God’s directive that He had given “through Moses.”

Why does it matter that you follow the Lord’s lead?

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your own life. How are you doing at following the Lord’s lead? How can you become more attentive to His guidance?

JOURNAL



SESSION 2

Provision

NUMBERS 11:4-17

GOD HEARS HIS LEADERS AND SUSTAINS THEM FOR HIS PURPOSES.



Many of us know what it's like to have a job and find out we don't have the tools we need. We start to wash clothes and discover the washing machine isn't working. Maybe we are supposed to drive for the carpool, and the car won't start. We need to turn in an assignment in the morning and realize at midnight that the printer is out of ink. We discover that the bolt we're trying to remove requires a metric socket wrench that we don't have.

*WHEN HAS SOME DIFFICULTY KEPT YOU FROM DOING WHAT YOU NEEDED TO DO?
HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN SOMEONE CAME THROUGH WITH A SOLUTION?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Israelites had been camped at the base of Mount Sinai for ten months and nineteen days (Num. 10:11-13). This was not a time of idle inactivity. Moses received the Ten Commandments and the law, built and consecrated the tabernacle, established the priestly orders, organized the Israelites by tribes for travel and conquest, conducted a military census, and celebrated Passover for the second time. The Israelites remained at Mount Sinai for about a month after celebrating the Passover.

The first ten chapters of Numbers have been free of complaints and conflicts. That was about to change. Chapter 11 begins a cycle of rebellions. The first complaint or rebellion was due to the general hardship of the travel (11:1-3).

This first rebellion established a pattern. The cycle of behavior had four stages. First, the people rebelled or sinned against God. Second, God punished His people. Third, the people cried out to God. Fourth, God forgave and restored His people. We see

this progression of behavior not only in the book of Numbers but also in the Israelites' ongoing relationship with God.

Before reaching Sinai, the Israelites complained because they needed food and water (Ex. 16; 17:1-7). God responded by providing what the people needed. The complaint in Numbers 11 is a lack of food. The Israelites would later rebel because they needed water (Num. 20:2-13). In both instances, God responded with judgment.

Why did God bring judgment rather than simply supply the need? Mount Sinai had changed everything. There, God had revealed Himself and His power to the Israelites. He had established a covenantal relationship with them. He wanted them to trust Him. God's people had some lessons to learn. In today's story, class was about to begin.



4 The **riffraff**^A among them had a strong craving for other food. The Israelites wept again and said, “Who will feed us meat? **5** We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, along with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. **6** But now **our appetite is gone**; ^B there’s nothing to look at but this manna!” **7** The manna resembled coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of **bdellium**. ^C **8** The people walked around and gathered it. They ground it on a pair of grinding stones or crushed it in a mortar, then boiled it in a cooking pot and shaped it into cakes. It tasted like a pastry cooked with the finest oil. **9** When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it. **10** Moses heard the people, family after family, **weeping** ^D at the entrance of their tents. The LORD was **very angry**; ^E Moses was also provoked. **11** So Moses asked the LORD, “Why have you brought such trouble on your servant? Why are you angry with me, and why do you burden me with all these people? **12** Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth so you should tell me, ‘Carry them at your breast, as a nursing mother carries a baby,’ to the land that you swore to give their ancestors? **13** Where can I get meat to give all these people? For they are weeping to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ **14** I can’t carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me. **15** If you are going to treat me like this, **please kill me right now** ^F if I have found favor with you, and don’t let me see my misery anymore.” **16** The LORD answered Moses, “Bring me seventy men from Israel known to you as **elders and officers** ^G of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. **17** Then I will come down and speak with you there. I will take some of **the Spirit** ^H who is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you bear the burden of the people, so that you do not have to bear it by yourself.

A. A “collection” or “rabble,” likely the “mixed multitude” mentioned in Exodus 12:38. These likely were not native Israelites.

B. A skewed view of life in Egypt had led the people to ignore what God was currently doing and providing in their midst.

C. “Resin” (NIV). The meaning is uncertain. A similar term in other ancient languages describes it as a gum-resin from plants used in medicines and perfumes, such as myrrh.

D. The attitude of the disgruntled rabble spread, so the entire community wept over and complained about what they did not have.

E. “Kindled greatly” (KJV); “blazed hotly” (ESV). The Hebrew wording suggests a burning anger.

F. At his wits’ end, Moses desired death rather than life. Later, Elijah had a similar experience and request of God (1 Kings 19:1-5).

G. Israel was somewhat organized with respected community leaders. “Elder” refers more to leadership capacity than age.

H. God’s Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, empowered Moses to lead Israel. Moses would not lose his empowerment, but God would empower others with the same Spirit.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Dissatisfied Followers

(Num. 11:4-9)

Believers should be careful not to take God's provision for granted.

- **What does God's providing manna to His people reveal about Him?**
- **What blessings from God might we tend to overlook?**

2. Frustrated Leader

(Num. 11:10-15)

We can always take our concerns to God, telling Him what we need.

- **Why do you think God was angry at His people?**
- **We often applaud Moses for his great faith and obedience. What does verse 15 say about Moses?**
- **How do you handle frustrations? What can you change based on these verses?**

3. Gracious Provision

(Num. 11:16-17)

We can trust God to provide what we need to carry out the tasks He gives us.

- **What did God reveal about His character by supplying Moses's specific and stated needs?**

Apply the Text

- **What actions can your Bible study group take to help each other feel free to share their burdens and concerns openly—with God and with one another? What can you do to help foster honest dialogue?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. (See Genesis 1:3; Exodus 31:2-3.)

BIBLE SKILL: Look for the prayer prompts in a passage of Scripture.

Numbers 11 describes how God sustained Moses by bringing alongside him seventy of Israel's elders (vv. 16-30). He also provided quail for the people (vv. 31-34). What does this reveal about God? How does it prompt you to pray? Give thanks for the ways God has provided for you in the past. Express your willingness to allow God to meet your needs in the way He chooses, rather than merely asking Him to work in the ways you desire.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 11:23. Talk about a time when you became discouraged because you took on more than you could handle.

As the Israelites journeyed toward the promised land, they complained to Moses about food. They had grown discontented. Instead of the manna God was providing each morning, they wanted meat, fish, and vegetables. They even convinced themselves that their lives had been better as slaves in Egypt. Moses felt overwhelmed and frustrated. He questioned why he had been burdened with these people, and where he could get meat for them.

What is God asking you to do that requires you to trust Him?

God never asks us to do more than He enables us to do. He was still in control of the situation, and He did two things to prove it. First, He brought alongside Moses seventy of Israel's elders to help bear the burden of leading the people (vv. 16-17). Second, God promised to provide quail for the people (vv. 18-20). Moses questioned how God could possibly provide meat for so many people (vv. 21-22). He needed to learn how to trust God.

Talk about ways you can help bear one another's burdens. Commit to pray for each other's faith to be strong.

Agree to text “Is the LORD’s arm weak?”
to each other this week as a reminder that
we can trust Him.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 11:4-6

Pay attention to why the people were complaining. Note the word “again.”

Seldom does such a colorful word appear only once in Scripture. Some translations render the noun as “rabble,” others as “mixed multitude,” and still, others as “riffraff.” These were non-Jews who had left Egypt with Moses and the Israelites (Ex. 12:37-38; Josh. 8:35). They had a strong craving. The Hebrew underscores the intensity of their yearning; it reads, “they were craving a craving.”

The riffraff’s complaints stirred the Israelites. They again began to weep, or as some translations have it, began to wail or complain. The earlier complaining likely refers to Exodus 16:1-3. There, the Israelites grumbled to Moses and Aaron: “you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger” (v. 3). Now, they wanted meat.

The Hebrews stayed in Egypt for over 400 years—until the exodus. There, crops were bountiful and fish were abundant. Calling them “free,” though, indicates the people were minimizing or forgetting the strain of their slave labor back in Egypt. The phrase “but now” showed they were romanticizing their lives back in Egypt as if it had been blissful; but now, this was unbearable.

Why is it easy to romanticize “the good old days” but forget about the difficulties experienced during that time?



Day 2: Numbers 11:7-9

Reflect on John 6:51.

God began providing manna for His people as they traveled between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai—about a month after they left Egypt. They already were coming to loathe this food. They were turning up their noses at what God was supplying.

Verses 8-9 state how the people gathered and prepared the manna. It came with the evening dew. “When the layer of dew evaporated, there were fine flakes on the desert surface, as fine as frost on the ground” (Ex. 16:14). After picking up the flakes in the morning, people would grind them. They might use a pair of disk-shaped stones, each with a hole in the middle. The person would lay the bottom disk flat, cover it with seeds, and then put the other disk on top. A dowel in the center holes would keep the stones aligned as the person rotated the upper disk. Another option was to use a mortar and pestle, which was more common than stones. The manna softened as it boiled in water. While still moist, the cook would roll it into a ball, flatten it, and cook it in an oven.

Moses described the manna as “the bread the LORD has given you to eat” (Ex. 16:15). Jesus compared Himself to manna. He said He is “the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever” (John 6:51).

What does God’s providing manna to His people reveal about Him? How is He providing for you?



Day 3: Numbers 11:10-13

Consider what Moses's questions reveal about his emotional state.

The people were “weeping” in their tents. The complaints rang from everyone—“family after family.” Moses could not escape it. The people’s complaints made God “very angry.” The same word occurs in verse 1 of this chapter, describing the Lord’s reaction to the people’s complaints: “his anger burned.”

Moses previously interceded for the Israelites and served as their advocate when God became angry (Num. 11:1-3). Not this time. Moses was angry with the people. Three times Moses asked *why*. This wasn’t a request for information but an accusation—“why have you . . . why are you . . . why do you?” The questions reveal his frustration and despair.

Moses reminded God that he had not brought this on himself. In the Hebrew of verse 12, the “I” comes first, which places it in the emphatic position. In English, we might say, “I, did I conceive all these people?” It was a sarcastic yet rhetorical question, and the implied answer was a resounding NO! God previously told Moses “Israel is my firstborn son” (Ex. 4:22).

In verse 13, Moses moved to the pragmatic question. Where would he get meat to feed the people? He later questioned whether slaughtering flocks and herds or catching all the fish in the sea would be enough food (Num. 11:22).

When you’re going through difficult times, why is it easy to believe that God must be mad at you?



Day 4: Numbers 11:14-15

Highlight verse 14.

Moses declared in effect, “I can’t do it; it’s too much!” For a fourth time, he referred to the Israelites as “all these people.” The phrase drips with irritation and resentment. Moses’s words reveal he was emotionally and physically worn out. The responsibility and burden were too great for him to bear by himself.

Moses had expressed feelings of inadequacy when he first encountered God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:11; 4:1,10). There, he pleaded, “Please, Lord, send someone else” (Ex. 4:13). Now, having reached his breaking point, Moses uttered a more desperate plea: “please kill me right now.” His current frustration and feelings of helplessness eclipsed all the blessings God had previously supplied. His words reveal he blamed God for his plight. In the throes of a crisis of faith, he essentially prayed, “God if you have any regard for me at all, please put me out of my misery.”

Moses was not alone in bemoaning his life. Job cursed the day of his birth, as did Jeremiah (Job 3:1-13; Jer. 20:14-18). After a great victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah fled the threats of Jezebel, ran about 100 miles south, and prayed for God to take his life (1 Kings 19:1-4). It’s a reminder that even those with the strongest faith can still become frustrated and feel defeated. God, though, was not finished with any of these men.

How do you handle frustration and the feeling of defeat?



Day 5: Numbers 11:16-17

Consider how God responded to Moses's need.

God responded to Moses's anger with grace. He knew what was at the core of Moses's diatribe—Moses felt inadequate for the task. God declared He would meet Moses at his point of need.

Earlier, seventy elders had joined Moses plus Aaron and two of his sons for a covenant ratification ceremony at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:1-11). These “seventy” were not necessarily the same men as those at Mount Sinai. In the New Testament era, the Sanhedrin was comprised of seventy men. The number was likely based on the seventy elders and officers Moses chose here. The seventy were to approach “the tent of meeting.” God would speak with Moses there and reveal His will to him. The seventy would hear God speak to Moses.

God's response in verse 17 echoes Moses's earlier complaints. In verse 11, Moses had asked “why do you burden me with all these people?” Here, God promised him that the seventy would help bear the “burden.” In verse 14, Moses complained, “I can't carry all these people.” Verse 17 uses the same Hebrew verb when God said, “you do not have to bear it by yourself.” God never rebuked Moses for his tirade. Instead, He graciously provided what Moses needed.

When have you had to bear a burden by yourself?

How might God use you to help bear someone's else's burden?

APPLY THE TEXT

Even when we can see how God met our needs in the past, what causes us to panic when we face a new crisis? What can you do to help you remember God's past blessings?

JOURNAL



SESSION 3

The Land

NUMBERS 13:17-31

GOD REQUIRES OBEDIENT FAITH IN THE FACE OF FEAR.



Have you ever noticed how a project grows? You decide to clean out the backyard shed, the garage, or the closet. You are going to put down new liner paper in the kitchen cabinets. You are going to paint the kids' bedroom. You figure out how long it will take and can visualize what it will look like when you're finished. You begin—excited. But about halfway through, you say, “What was I thinking? This is a lot more complicated than I thought it would be.”

*WHAT WAS THE LAST PROJECT YOU HAD THAT WAS MORE COMPLICATED
THAN YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Moses led God's people out of Egyptian bondage. They passed through the Red Sea and arrived at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula at Mount Sinai. They stayed there for about a year while Moses met with God on the mountain. Afterward, they traveled up the eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula. To their right was the body of water known today as the Gulf of Aqaba. It separates the peninsula from Saudi Arabia. They came to the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba and continued northward through the Wilderness of Paran. In this context, “wilderness” means a vast desert land uninhabitable due to a lack of water and resources. The Israelites' trek continued to Kadesh (also called “Kadesh-barnea”). This oasis was between the Wilderness of Paran and the Wilderness of Zin. Moses and the Israelites remained in Kadesh while the spies went into Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham.

The climate and resources of Canaan were dramatically different from what the people had experienced before. A huge issue was water. Egypt had a major river system that fed canals and irrigation fields, making food

production possible. Not so with Canaan. The Canaanites depended on rainy periods to provide growing seasons for crops. The promised land had (and still has) essentially two seasons. Winter is cool and rainy. Summer, which lasts from mid-May to mid-October, is hot and receives no rain. The “early rains” break the annual drought and allow the farmers to work the fields and plant crops. The rain continues. About seventy percent of the annual rain falls from December to February. The “latter rains” come in March and April. In late summer the wheat and barley would have already been harvested. Workers would be harvesting grapes, figs, and almonds; olives would be visible on the trees but not yet ready for gathering.



17 When Moses sent them to scout out the land of Canaan, he told them, “Go up this way to the Negev, then go up into the hill country. **18** See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. **19** Is the land they live in good or bad? Are the cities they live in **encampments or fortifications**? **A** **20** Is the land fertile or unproductive? Are there trees in it or not? Be courageous. Bring back some fruit from the land.” It was the season for the first ripe grapes. **21** So they went up and scouted out the land from the **Wilderness of Zin** **B** as far as Rehob near the entrance to **Hamath**. **C** **22** They went up through the Negev and came to **Hebron**, **D** where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the **descendants of Anak**, **E** were living. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. **23** When they came to Eshcol Valley, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which was carried on a pole by two men. They also took some pomegranates and figs. **24** That place was called Eshcol Valley because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut there. **25** At the end of **forty days** **F** they returned from scouting out the land. **26** The men went back to Moses, Aaron, and the entire Israelite community in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back a report for them and the whole community, and they showed them the fruit of the land. **27** They reported to Moses, “We went into the land where you sent us. Indeed it is **flowing with milk and honey**, **G** and here is some of its fruit. **28** However, the people living in the land are strong, and the cities are large and fortified. We also saw the descendants of Anak there. **29** The Amalekites are living in the land of the Negev; the Hethites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan.” **30** Then Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said, “Let’s go up now and **take possession** **H** of the land because we can certainly conquer it!” **31** But the men who had gone up with him responded, “We can’t attack the people because they are stronger than we are!”

A. The spies were to assess the military strength of the inhabitants. Fortifications were more permanent, like a city wall, while encampments were weaker.

B. A rocky desert that stretched from Kadesh-barnea to the Dead Sea. It formed part of the southern border of Canaan and later Judah (Num. 34:3-4).

C. The term regularly described the northern border of Israel (Num. 34:7-8).

D. An ancient city in the hill country of Judah where Abram sojourned (Gen. 13:18) and purchased a cave to bury Sarah. Caleb asked that the city be deeded to him during the conquest forty years later (Josh. 14:12).

E. Anak was the patriarch of a clan of giants who were also known as Nephilim (Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33).

F. Later, Israel would spend forty years in the wilderness, one year for every day of the spies’ mission (Num. 14:34).

G. A metaphorical statement describing a land abundant in its agricultural bounty. “Milk” refers to an abundance of cattle, and “honey” refers to an abundance of food.

H. Ten spies saw only obstacles, while Caleb saw opportunities. The majority opinion, moved by fear, won out (v. 31).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Task Outlined

(Num. 13:17-20)

Believers can depend on God to instruct them in the tasks He has for them.

- **What was significant about the land of Canaan?**
- **What do you imagine the spies were thinking while Moses explained the information he wanted them to bring back?**
- **What would have caused them to be afraid?**

2. The Land Assessed

(Num. 13:21-25)

Obedience to God includes understanding what He is calling us to do.

- **How do we balance acting in faith with gathering information before acting?**

3. The Decision at Hand

(Num. 13:26-31)

Believers can face obstacles with faith, knowing that God is with them.

- **What kind of obstacles might prevent or delay us from obeying God?**

Apply the Text

- **What new ministry opportunity has the Lord put in front of your Bible study group?**
- **What actions (if any) have you taken to begin?**
- **What steps can you take to start implementing this ministry opportunity?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Father

God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. (See 2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Peter 1:3.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use multiple Scripture passages to better understand a Bible passage.

Review Numbers 13:27-31. Where does the unbelief show itself? Read Joshua 21:43-45 and 2 Corinthians 1:20. What do these verses reveal about God and His faithfulness to His promises? How should these verses guide us when we face challenging circumstances?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 13:30. Think of an example when the majority opinion was wrong.

The scouts sent by Moses reported back about the land and its fruitfulness. They said the land was good and its produce abundant. But they also reported that the cities were large and well fortified, and the people living in those cities were strong. Ten of the spies were of the opinion that the odds were stacked against them—there was no way the Israelites could conquer the land.

When have you struggled in choosing between faith and fear? When did fear win? When did faith win?

Caleb and Joshua were the only scouts who believed the Israelites should go up and conquer the land. They had seen the same challenges the other scouts saw. But instead of focusing on the obstacles, they focused on God's promises. The Canaanites were big, but God was bigger. The other scouts continued to insist that the obstacles were too great. Their fear overwhelmed their faith.

What difference will it make in your week if you focus on God more than on your circumstances?

Place Numbers 13:30 on your phone or a card and agree to memorize it this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 13:17-20

Consider why Moses needed to tell the spies to “be courageous.”

Moses revealed to the spies his two primary concerns: the land and the people. What was the land like? How densely was it populated? Were the people “strong or weak”? Were they “few or many”? Was the land “good or bad”? Certainly, Moses knew the land was good. God told him at the burning bush that He would bring them “to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8). Was Moses asking if God could be trusted to keep His word? No, the exact opposite. This detail would prove that God had kept His promise.

Moses asked about cities. Were they fortified, meaning walled? Was the land “fertile” or unproductive”? If the land were fertile, it would supply enough food to support the Israelite military and their families. That would mean a variety of foods and no more manna. The “trees” Moses mentioned would have been fruit-bearing. Bringing back fruit would prove what the land was like, whether it was fertile or not.

The instruction to “be courageous” in verse 20 can also mean “be determined.” This meant the spies had to be single-minded and tenacious about their task. Courage would be essential—especially if the Canaanites were strong and their cities were fortified.

What task or responsibility has God given you that requires courage or determination?



Day 2: Numbers 13:21-22

Compare these verses to verse 17.

The word “so” links the instructions in the previous verses with the actions described next. They “went up” and “scouted out,” exactly as Moses had told them to do (v. 17).

The “Wilderness of Zin” was the southern boundary for Canaan. Receiving less than two inches of rain annually, the Wilderness of Zin was uninhabitable. The northernmost region the spies scouted out was at the “entrance to Hamath.” This was near the headwaters of the Orontes River, which flows northward into the Mediterranean. This valley region was known as “Rehob.” “Negev” is a Hebrew word meaning “dry” or “parched.” This desert region receives eight to twelve inches of rain annually, significantly more than the Wilderness of Zin. The Negev’s powdery soil does not absorb water well; instead, it runs off. This hinders any agricultural efforts in the region. After Abram (later called “Abraham”) separated from his nephew Lot, God promised him the land, as far as he could see. Abram then moved to “Hebron” and built an altar there to God (Gen. 13:14-18). This was the first time Scripture mentions this location. “Zoan” was the capital city of some pharaohs in Egypt’s 15th Dynasty. Being older than the fortified city of Zoan helped bolster Hebron’s reputation. David’s first capital city was Hebron; he was anointed there (2 Sam. 2:1-4,11).

How do you balance acting in faith with gathering information before acting?



Day 3: Numbers 13:23-25

Pay attention to what the spies found.

The Hebrew word “Eshcol” means “cluster.” The Hebrew word translated “valley” refers to a wadi, a streambed or ravine that is dry except during rainy seasons. The spies named the site because of the grapes they cut there. Its exact location is unclear, yet it was evidently near Hebron. To this day, the region has excellent soil for growing grapes.

Many have wondered if the description of a cluster being carried on a pole was an exaggeration. Strabo, a Greek geographer and historian who lived about 63 BC to AD 24, described grape clusters harvested in Antioch that were two cubits, or about thirty-six inches long. The impressive fruit provided proof of the region’s abundant food resources. Further, it was dramatically different from the foods the Israelites had in Egypt: “cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic” (11:5). The spies’ haul fulfilled Moses’s final instructions: “Bring back some fruit from the land” (13:20).

Verses 21 and 25 show that the spies followed the instructions God had given through Moses (see vv. 2,17a). How far had the spies traveled? From the Wilderness of Zin northward to Rehob was about 250 miles one way. This would have required the spies to walk about twelve to thirteen miles daily.

How do you think the spies reacted when they saw the abundance of the land’s resources?

Consider what God has done for you. Are you still amazed by His grace?



Day 4: Numbers 13:26-29

Highlight the word “however” in verse 28.

Initially, the spies’ report focused on the land and how agriculturally productive it was. The phrase “milk and honey” highlights the rich resources of Canaan. God used this phrase at the burning bush to describe the land (Ex. 3:17).

Having described the abundance of the land, the spies focused next on their concerns. The word “however” stands like a massive barrier in the flow of the story. The Hebrew text’s word order emphasizes the spies’ apprehension. It reads, “strong are the people who inhabit the land.” The Hebrew word translated “strong” can also mean the people were harsh and fierce.

Excavations have shown that some Canaanite cities were “fortified” and virtually impregnable, having fifteen-foot-thick walls that stood thirty to fifty feet high. The “descendants of Anak” were known for their height. The spies reported that they (the spies) were “like grasshoppers” in their sight (Num. 13:33). A generation later, Joshua ran the Anakim out. They relocated to Philistine territory, including Gath, which, centuries later, was Goliath’s hometown (Josh. 11:21-22; 1 Sam. 17:4). Another group, the “Amalekites,” had a reputation for using brutal battle tactics. The “Jebusites” were the original inhabitants of Jebus, which came to be called “Jerusalem.”

What do you imagine the mood of the people was as the spies began telling them about the bounty of the land? How do you think the mood changed after the “however”?

What “however” do you need to stop saying?



Day 5: Numbers 13:30-31

Note the contrast between Caleb's report and the negative reports.

Caleb was the first to speak up after the spies' report. He "quieted" the people. The Hebrew word here is typically an interjection and sounds much like the English word, "Hush!" The people were upset by the spies' report.

Despite the troubling report, Caleb was ready to "go up now and take possession." His words ring with confidence. He was not denying the challenge ahead. He had seen the same cities, fortifications, and people the other spies had seen. Rather than be intimidated by what he had seen, Caleb was ready to conquer the land and overcome its inhabitants.

Verse 31 highlights the contrast between faith and fear. The other spies (except Joshua) vehemently disagreed with Caleb (Num. 14:5-9). Their declaration was the opposite of his. Caleb said "we can." They said "we can't."

When the time came for a decision, the ten spies could focus on their fears, weaknesses, and inadequacies. They failed to see the challenge through God's eyes and His strength. As we will see in next week's study, fear won—at least for now.

Why was Caleb so enthused and confident that the Israelites could take possession of the land?

What challenge do you need to look at through God's eyes?

APPLY THE TEXT

What act of obedience have you been delaying because you thought it would become too difficult? What steps do you need to take to move you closer to beginning that undertaking? What will you do this week to move you forward?

JOURNAL



SESSION 4

◀ *Rebellion and Judgment* ▶

NUMBERS 14:11-24

GOD BRINGS JUDGMENT WITH CONSEQUENCES ON THE DISOBEDIENT.



Most every parent has asked their child at some point: “If everybody jumps off the cliff (or bridge, roof, or into a fire), does that mean you should do it too?” The implied answer is, “No. I would never do that just because somebody else did.” Despite parents’ disapproval and internal warning bells going off, we’ve all made decisions that, years later, we regret. We look back and say, “If I only had the chance to do it all over again, I would have chosen differently.”

*HOW MUCH DOES THE OPINION OF OTHERS AFFECT YOUR
DECISION-MAKING? HOW MUCH SHOULD IT AFFECT IT?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Recall that Moses sent twelve spies into the land to scout it out and bring back a report (Num. 13:1-20). The report they brought back was not encouraging. They suggested that the obstacles in the land would be too difficult to overcome (13:21-29). Only two scouts, Caleb and Joshua, encouraged the people to go up and conquer the land (13:30). The others insisted the inhabitants were too strong to overcome (13:31-33).

When the Israelite community heard the scouts’ negative report, they wept (14:1). They complained to Moses and Aaron, suggesting they should have stayed in Egypt. Some suggested a return to Egypt (14:4).

Moses and Aaron fell facedown (14:5). Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in lament and encouraged the people to go up and take the land (14:6-9). But the people refused to listen (14:10).

Suddenly, the glory of God appeared at the tent of meeting. He expressed His displeasure over the people’s failure to trust Him. He stated that He would strike them down and make Moses into an even greater

nation instead (14:11-12). Moses urged the Lord to forgive the people, lest the nations hear about it and the act result in God’s name being tarnished (14:13-19).

The Lord told Moses He would pardon the people, yet they would face consequences. The generation that had seen God’s miraculous works in Egypt and the wilderness would not enter the land. Caleb and Joshua would enter, the others would not (14:20-24).

When Moses reported God’s words to the people, they grieved and determined to go up and take the land after all (14:39-40). Moses warned them not to try because they would suffer defeat since the Lord was not with them (14:41-43). When some of the people tried to enter the hill country, the Amalekites and Canaanites attacked them and drove them away (14:44-45).



11 The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people **despise** ^A me? How long will they not trust in me despite all the **signs I have performed** ^B among them? **12** I will strike them with a plague and destroy them. Then I will make you into a greater and mightier nation than they are.” **13** But Moses replied to the LORD, “The **Egyptians will hear about it**, ^C for by your strength you brought up this people from them. **14** They will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, LORD, are among these people, how you, LORD, are seen **face to face**, ^D how your cloud stands over them, and how you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. **15** If you kill this people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your **fame** ^E will declare, **16** ‘Since **the LORD wasn’t able** ^F to bring this people into the land he swore to give them, he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ **17** So now, may my Lord’s power be magnified just as you have spoken: **18** The LORD is **slow to anger and abounding in faithful love**, ^G forgiving iniquity and rebellion. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers’ iniquity on the children to the third and fourth generation. **19** Please pardon the iniquity of this people, in keeping with the greatness of your faithful love, just as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now.” **20** The LORD responded, “I have pardoned them as you requested. **21** Yet as I live and as the whole earth is filled with the LORD’s glory, **22** none of the men who have seen my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tested me these ten times and did not obey me, **23** will ever **see the land** ^H I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have despised me will see it. **24** But since my servant Caleb has a different spirit and has remained loyal to me, I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it.”

A. “To reject with disdain or contempt or to undervalue something or someone.” In this case, the people were rejecting God as their superior and treating him with contempt.

B. God’s works had forced Egypt to free Israel. They revealed God’s power. The miracle of manna was a sign of God’s provision.

C. Moses framed the question in terms of God’s reputation. The Egyptians would question why a God whose power they personally experienced chose to destroy His own people.

D. The Hebrew refers to one’s eyes. While not even Moses could see God’s face (Ex. 33:18-23), the Israelites had seen His presence with their own eyes.

E. Other nations knew about God. Rahab said the residents of Jericho knew about God’s works and His promises (Josh. 2:8-12).

F. Israel’s enemies would question God’s power and goodness, assuming that He could not do what He promised.

G. Moses quoted the description of God’s holy character given to him when God forgave Israel for idolatry with the golden calf (Ex. 34:6-7).

H. Israel had seen God’s glory. But because of their rebellion, they would never see (or set foot in) the promised land. They would die in the desert.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God's Judgment

(Num. 14:11-16)

Believers honor God by trusting Him.

- **How would you have felt if you were in Moses's situation as God considered wiping out the people and starting fresh with you?**
- **What impact does our faithfulness to God have on our witness?**

2. God's Glory

(Num. 14:17-19)

We can count on God to act according to His character.

- **Why was it important for Moses to appeal to God's character in his prayer for the people?**
- **What are some appropriate ways of appealing to God's character when praying?**

3. Future Consequences

(Num. 14:20-24)

We must understand that sin has consequences.

- **Since God is willing to grant forgiveness for our sin, why do you think He does not remove the consequences as well?**

Apply the Text

- **Moses was faithful in interceding for God's people. How might your Bible study group strengthen its prayer ministry?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Son

In His substitutionary death on the cross Jesus made provision for the redemption of men from sin. (See Romans 5:6-10; Colossians 1:14.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Compare an Old Testament and New Testament passage.

Read Numbers 14:11-24. Note how God pardoned the people, yet their unbelief brought sad consequences. The writer of Hebrews 3-4 referenced this story, drawing parallels between the Israelites' unbelief and his audience's struggle to believe God's promises. Read Hebrews 3:16-4:2,11. What consequences of unbelief and disobedience was the writer of Hebrews concerned about for his audience? What applications might we draw for Christian living today?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 14:18a. What does this verse reveal about God's character? Why is this good news?

Numbers 14:13-19 record the prayer of Moses. He was asking God to forgive the Israelites of their sin. When they heard the spies negative report about the inhabitants of Canaan, they complained and said they wanted to go back to Egypt (14:3-4). The Lord threatened to strike the people with a plague. Moses then prayed on their behalf.

When was the last time you prayed on behalf of someone who was struggling with sin and unbelief?

Moses based his prayer on the character of God, proclaiming Him to be slow to anger, abounding in love, and forgiving of sin. Moses was not suggesting that God ignore sin. Instead, he asked God to demonstrate His mercy and forgive their sin based on His character.

What is a prayer that you could pray for someone that is based on God's character? Spend time praying for others.

Put Numbers 14:18a on your phones or cards
and agree to memorize the verse together.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 14:11-12

Reflect on why the people failed to trust God.

God accused the people of two things: they had despised Him and not trusted in Him. The Hebrew verb translated “despise” means to spurn or reject someone due to contempt. Despite the “signs” God had done, the people still did not trust Him. The signs included His parting the Red Sea, sending plagues that struck Egypt, and providing food and water in the desert.

Next, God made two promises. One involved the Israelites and the other, Moses. He would strike the Israelites with a plague that would kill both man and beast. God would then enact His second promise—to make from Moses another, more powerful nation. This would reset God’s covenant with Abraham. God had made a similar statement when the Israelites had been worshiping the golden calf (Ex. 32:10). With the golden calf, the Israelites had participated in blatant idolatry. Currently, they expressed a lack of faith. Fear, rather than trust, had shaped the report of the ten spies and the people’s response. Saying He would destroy His people shows how offended God is when His people do not trust Him or His promises.

The people were trusting themselves more than they trusted God. To not trust God is to doubt His truthfulness, and Scripture teaches that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

How would you have felt if you were in Moses’s situation as God considered wiping out the people and starting fresh with you?



Day 2: Numbers 14:13-16

Pay attention to what caused Moses’s concern.

Moses’s concern was not what the Egyptians thought about the Israelites. His concern was what they thought about God. The Egyptians’ telling how God had destroyed His people would discredit the Lord’s name among the Canaanites.

Moses would have known what had happened to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He had seen firsthand what God did to the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. Thus, Moses knew the Lord could wipe out all the Israelites “with a single blow.” This detail underscores the fact that all the people had shown a lack of faith (Num. 14:1-2,10).

Moses mentioned God’s “fame.” He knew that the Lord’s protecting His people and providing for them was a testimony of who He was to the Canaanites and Egyptians. In essence, Moses was saying, “Lord, your reputation is at stake.”

Moses next hypothesized what people would say about God—that He “wasn’t able” to finish what He had begun. He had gotten the Israelites out of Egypt but couldn’t get them into the land of Canaan. This would call into question God’s power and reliability.

What impact has your faithfulness to God had on your witness?



Day 3: Numbers 14:17-19

Compare Numbers 14:18 to Exodus 34:6-7.

The message that God is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love resounds throughout the Old Testament (Neh. 9:17; Pss. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). God's "faithful love" refers to His loyalty based on His covenant relationship with the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and their descendants. In Hebrew, the word translated "forgiving" means to lift or carry, meaning God would lift and carry away the sinner's punishment. This was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Because God is holy and just, He punishes the guilty. God, however, does not punish children or grandchildren for the sins of their parents (Deut. 24:16). Breaking ungodly traditions may take generations; thus, the consequences continue.

Verse 19 is the conclusion of Moses's intercession. Moses had been pleading with God to show mercy to the people. This is the picture of intercession—praying for someone else's needs with the same intensity that we would pray for our own. It is seeking God on behalf of someone else. Because God had forgiven His people in the past, Moses was asking Him to do it again. Because God has extended grace and forgiveness to others in the past, we should be confident we can ask on our behalf as well.

What are some ways you can appeal to God's character when praying for someone?



Day 4: Numbers 14:20-23

Take note of the consequence of sin.

The Lord responded to Moses by granting forgiveness. He spoke in past tense; He had already "pardoned" them. God was saying, "You asked Me to forgive them, I have done it." For God to pardon them did not mean they would not bear the consequences for their sin. This becomes evident in verses 22-23.

God spoke of those whom He had led out of Egypt. The phrase "these ten times" can mean time and again (see Gen. 31:7; Job 19:3). Or, "ten" could signify completion, as in the Ten Commandments. If this was the case, then God was saying He had His fill of His people rebelling.

In verse 23, God introduced the punishment. They would not see the promised land. Later in this chapter (vv. 28-35), He would describe the details: the Israelites would wander in the wilderness for forty years, one year for each day the spies had been in the land. Then, all aged twenty and older would die in the wilderness; their children would inherit the land.

God repeated the charge He introduced in verse 11—the people had "despised" Him. Interestingly, none of the spies had returned from their trek and said they despised God. None of the people said it. To despise someone is an internal thing. God knew their hearts—plus, their words and behavior revealed their hearts. He saw the peoples' not believing Him as treating Him with contempt.

Since God is willing to grant forgiveness for our sin, why do you think He does not remove the consequences as well?



Day 5: Numbers 14:24

Reflect on how Caleb had “remained loyal” to the Lord.

God’s turning His attention to Caleb in this way is reminiscent of how the Scriptures describe what happened with Noah. The text speaks of the great evil in the land and how God regretted creating mankind. Genesis 6:8, though, says, “*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*” (KJV, emphasis added). Noah stood in stark contrast to the culture around him. The same occurred with Caleb. He remained loyal amid a disobedient people.

God’s calling Caleb “my servant” was an honor. Before this, the Lord had spoken only of Abraham and Moses this way. Centuries later, He would also refer to King David with the same title (Gen. 26:24; Num. 12:7-8; 2 Sam. 3:18).

Verse 24 shows that God responds to the prayers of the faithful. Because he had brought back a favorable report and encouraged the people to proceed, Caleb was promised he would enter Canaan. Joshua, who had also brought a positive report, would be allowed to enter the promised land as well (Num. 14:6-9,30,38). Both men and their descendants would enter the land and receive what God had promised the patriarchs.

Consider ways your faithfulness to God can encourage other believers to be faithful. Pray for someone who needs that kind of encouragement.

APPLY THE TEXT

What can you do to prepare yourself to remain faithful to God when the crowd around you wants to do the opposite?

JOURNAL



SESSION 5

Lack of Trust

NUMBERS 20:2-13

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO TRUST HIM IN EVERY SITUATION.



People generally fall into two categories—those who read and follow the instructions and those who think they can figure it out as they go along. Those who fall into this latter category may do so because of heightened self-confidence, impatience, or a history of past successes. Sometimes, though, at the end of the project, those in the second category may be left with extra, unused parts or an end product that doesn't quite look like it was supposed to.

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF IN CATEGORY ONE OR TWO? WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS YOUR TENDENCY? ON WHAT KINDS OF TASKS IS IT MOST IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ALL THE WAY TO THE END?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Numbers 11:1 states that “the people began complaining.” This introduces a series of seven rebellions. In Hebrew writing, the climax of a series usually occurs in the middle. True to form, the fourth complaint was the most serious offense.

(1) Numbers 11:1-3 mentions a general complaint about hardships. Rather than being grateful for God's provisions, the people focused on their discomfort. God responded with fire. Moses prayed, and the fire and complaints ceased.

(2) Numbers 11:4-34 records the people complaining about their daily manna. Moses told God that the pressure was too great to bear. God instructed him to appoint seventy elders to help.

(3) Numbers 11:35-12:16 says Miriam and Aaron complained about Moses's wife. Their greater complaint was that God seemingly spoke only to and through Moses. God struck Miriam with a skin affliction. Moses prayed, and God healed her.

(4) Numbers 13:1-14:45 tells of twelve spies going into Canaan. Ten brought back a negative report, and the Israelites refused to enter. God caused the Israelites to wander in the wilderness for one year for each day the spies were in Canaan.

(5) Numbers 16:1-50 says Korah staged a rebellion against Moses. God was ready to destroy the Israelites. Moses interceded. The earth opened and swallowed Korah and his ring leaders. God then rained fire down on all the others. When the Israelites complained about what had happened, God sent a plague through the camp.

(6) Numbers 20:2-13 tells of the people again complaining about water. God provided water from a rock after Moses struck—rather than spoke to—the rock. This is the focus of today's study.

(7) Numbers 21:4-9 says the people complained about food and water. God sent serpents into the camp. The serpents bit the people, who then died. Moses prayed, and God told him to raise a bronze snake on a pole. All who looked upon it recovered.



2 There was no water for the community, so they assembled against Moses and Aaron. **3** The people **quarreled** **A** with Moses and said, “If only we had perished when **our brothers perished** **B** before the LORD. **4** Why have you brought the LORD’s assembly into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? **5** Why have you led us up from Egypt to bring us to **this evil place**? **C** It’s not a place of grain, figs, vines, and pomegranates, and there is no water to drink!” **6** Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the **tent of meeting**. **D** They fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. **7** The LORD spoke to Moses, **8** “Take the staff and assemble the community. You and your brother Aaron are to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will yield its water. You will bring out water for them from the rock and provide drink for the community and their livestock.” **9** So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence just as he had commanded him. **10** Moses and Aaron summoned the assembly in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels! **Must we bring water** **E** out of this rock for you?” **11** Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff, so that abundant **water gushed out**, **F** and the community and their livestock drank. **12** But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me to demonstrate my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will **not bring this assembly into the land** **G** I have given them.” **13** These are the Waters of **Meribah**, **H** where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD, and he demonstrated his holiness to them.

A. “Contended” (NKJV); “Argued” (NASB). The term often is used in a legal context (Prov. 25:8-9). The people accused Moses and Aaron of neglecting their responsibilities as leaders.

B. In Numbers 16, God had wiped out a group of rebels. Here, the people wished they had been struck down with them.

C. The Israelites had forgotten that they were wandering in the desert due to their own sin.

D. The tabernacle (Ex. 29:4-11). This was a portable worship center for Israel in the wilderness. Located in the center of Israel’s camp, it was God’s dwelling place among His people.

E. Moses spoke to the people instead of the rock. In doing so, he seemed to take some credit for God’s work.

F. Moses had sinned by striking the rock. Still, God had mercy and provided for the people.

G. Moses would not lead the people into Canaan. He would never get to enter the promised land.

H. A name meaning “strife” or “contention.” Ironically, this story took place in Kadesh (v. 1), which means “holy.”

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Problem

(Num. 20:2-5)

Believers can trust God even when current circumstances appear bleak.

- **Why do we tend to romanticize “the good old days,” even though they weren’t always so good?**

2. The Plan

(Num. 20:6-8)

We can turn to God with our needs and concerns.

- **What kinds of difficulties get you facedown—either literally or figuratively—before the Lord?**

3. The Result

(Num. 20:9-13)

Believers should recognize that ignoring God’s instructions leads to consequences.

- **What does it say about God’s character that He provided such an abundance of water?**
- **What do we communicate to God when we follow His instructions? What do we communicate to Him when we don’t follow His instructions?**

Apply the Text

- **Moses and Aaron fell facedown before the Lord (v. 6). Have you experienced “facedown” situations? What advice would you offer to members of your Bible study group about how to pray for those issues?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Father

God is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. (See Psalm 146:5-10; Isaiah 41:10.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a key Bible teaching.

Numbers 20:9-13 records the failure of Moses and Aaron to follow God’s instructions exactly. As a result, God did not permit them to enter the promised land. Read the passage, noting how the Israelites frustrated Moses and Aaron (v. 10), yet God held the leaders accountable for their disobedience. Do you think God holds leaders to a greater degree of accountability or the same? Explain your answer, using Hebrews 13:17 and James 3:1 for additional insight.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 20:12. Do you tend to ignore instructions? Can you give an example?

A water shortage led the Israelites to complain again (see also Ex. 15:24; 17:2). They questioned why Moses would bring them to such an inhospitable place. God instructed Moses and Aaron to speak to a rock, and water would come from it. But Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff.

What did Moses do wrong in this situation? Tell about a time you took matters into your own hands instead of doing it God's way? How did it turn out?

Because Moses didn't trust the Lord to provide water as He said He would, God declared that Moses would not lead the people into the promised land. While the Lord was gracious to provide water as He had promised, Moses had to face the consequences of his sin. God showed that He expects obedient trust from all of His people.

Why do you think God's judgment of Moses was so severe? What is the lesson to be learned here?

Memorize Numbers 20:12, considering the situations that call for you to trust Him this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 20:2-3

Compare Numbers 20:2-3 to Exodus 15:22-26; 17:1-7.

The Israelites were in the Wilderness of Zin, at Kadesh-barnea (v. 1). They had been there forty years earlier. From there, Moses had sent twelve spies into the land, and the people decided against entering Canaan (13:26). In the intervening years, they wandered in the wilderness. All aged twenty and above died during those four decades (14:26-35).

The need for water had been an ongoing problem. This was one of their earliest challenges after crossing the Red Sea (Ex. 15:22-26). Later, at Rephidim, likely just north of Mount Sinai, God supplied water by having Moses strike a rock (17:1-7). That was forty years earlier; most of this generation had not seen that miracle.

Verse 2 says the people “assembled against” their leaders. Although not violent, they were intense and assertive. The Israelites “quarreled” intensely with Moses and Aaron. When the people complained about a lack of water forty years earlier, they asked: “Why did you ever bring us up from Egypt to kill us . . . with thirst” (Ex. 17:3). Here they said they would have preferred to have “perished” with their “brothers” who had died. They likely were referring to those who died following Korah in his rebellion against Moses.

Give thanks to God for the ways He has provided for your needs.



Day 2: Numbers 20:4-5

Look for the irony in verse 5.

The Hebrews were not posing a question; rather, they were making an accusation. This is often the case with a question that begins with “why?”—especially if the why is followed by would, have, or did you. The terminology the Israelites used, the “LORD’s assembly,” repeats the phrase Korah and his followers used when they rebelled against Moses (Num. 16:3). These are the only two occurrences of the phrase in the book of Numbers. The phrase created a Moses-versus-them scenario and underscored the severity of both challenges to Moses’s leadership.

Verse 5 drips with irony. The “you” is plural; the people blamed Moses and Aaron for leading them from Egypt. They evidently had forgotten about the Lord’s deliverance “from the forced labor of the Egyptians” and their “slavery to them.” They gave no thought of God redeeming them “with [His] outstretched arm and great acts of judgment” (Ex. 6:6). Also, they called Kadesh-barnea “this evil place.” What an irony! God had led them to “an extremely good land . . . flowing with milk and honey” (Num. 14:7-8). This was Joshua’s and Caleb’s description of Canaan. The people could have been in “an extremely good land”; instead, they were in an evil place because of their lack of faith.

Spend some time praying for your church leaders. In what ways can you encourage them this week?



Day 3: Numbers 20:6-8

Highlight the word “facedown” in verse 6.

“Facedown” was the common position when interceding for God’s people. Moses and Aaron did this when the Israelites refused to enter Canaan. They also fell facedown when God threatened to destroy His people after Korah’s rebellion (Num. 14:5; 16:22). Jesus assumed this same position when He pleaded, “let this cup pass from me” (Matt. 26:39). The position communicates an anguished and humble attitude.

“The LORD spoke to Moses.” How simple, yet profound, is this statement. This was the voice Moses first heard at the burning bush (Ex. 3:4). It was the voice that spoke creation into being. This voice declared at Jesus’s baptism, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

God told Moses to “take the staff.” If this was Moses’s staff, he previously used it while tending his father-in-law’s flocks. It became a snake in the courts of Pharaoh. The Nile turned to blood when Moses struck the water with it. More likely, the staff was Aaron’s. In Numbers 17, God miraculously caused Aaron’s rod to bud, blossom, and produce almonds—all in one night. Afterward, God told Moses to “Put Aaron’s staff back in front of the testimony to be kept as a sign for the rebels.” Moses and Aaron were to “speak to the rock,” and water would come forth.

What kinds of difficulties get you facedown—either literally or figuratively—before the Lord?



Day 4: Numbers 20:9-11

Circle the word “we” in verse 10.

Moses took the staff “from the LORD’s presence,” meaning from the tabernacle. He did “just as” God had “commanded” him. This had been Moses’s practice since first encountering God at the burning bush. How long, though, would that last? Moses’s and Aaron’s patience was gone. The verb “summoned” carries the idea of convening a group for a specific purpose. The multitude gathered in front of the rock. This word referred to a bare-face cliff. Thus, Moses was bringing the crowd to the base of a cliff wall.

Emphatically, Moses demanded they listen to what he had to say. The Hebrew term for “rebels” typically refers to individuals who are defying God. The people had complained about a lack of water and food before. What was different this time? Moses had not responded like this before. His anger—rather than the people’s behavior—caused this outburst.

In asking, “must we bring water out?”, Moses was calling attention to Aaron and himself. “Must we” is radically different from must God. Any accolades and praises would go to him and Aaron. Even though Moses asked, “must we bring,” he evidently struck the rock alone. Despite God’s instructing Moses to speak to the rock, he instead struck it twice.

God did not withhold His blessing because of Moses’s disobedience. Water gushed out, enough to satisfy the thousands and thousands of people and their cattle.

Give thanks to God for the ways He has demonstrated His grace to you.



Day 5: Numbers 20:12-13

Consider how Moses and Aaron failed to trust God.

Instead of speaking to the rock (v. 8), Moses struck it. How did striking the rock indicate Moses and Aaron did not trust God to demonstrate His “holiness”? Scripture does not say, but a few connections could apply. To defy God’s instructions meant the person thought he knew better than God. Moses and Aaron placed their plan in front of God’s plan. God saw this as an act of rebellion (see v. 24). Further, hitting the rock to get water could appear to be a sorcerer’s trick. Or the assembly might have thought this was a skill Moses had learned as a shepherd. But for water to come out because someone spoke to the rock was beyond human explanation. Moses’s action moved the focus away from God and put it instead on Moses. Because they had not followed God’s instructions to the end, neither Moses nor Aaron would enter Canaan. This was the final and ultimate Moses- and Aaron-versus-them scenario in this story.

The word “Meribah” means “contention” or “strife.” The name reflected the people’s quarreling with God rather than trusting Him fully and obediently. Events at Meribah demonstrated God’s holiness in two ways. First, God showed He was faithful. Second, by punishing Aaron and Moses, God showed that He expects obedience from all of His people. A person’s status does not influence or dictate God’s expectations. He expects all of us to trust Him.

Ask God to forgive you for the times you have failed to trust Him.

APPLY THE TEXT

In what areas has God given you specific instructions? How closely are you following those? What changes do you need to make to get back on track?

JOURNAL



SESSION 6

God's Plans

NUMBERS 22:22-35

GOD CAN USE ANY MEANS HE CHOOSES TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL.



God speaks to us through His Word. He speaks to our hearts or makes holy impressions when we seek Him and His will in prayer. Sometimes, when we hear someone preach, teach, or sing a particular song, we know “those words were for me. That was the answer I needed.” The same can occur in a conversation. We realize that God has delivered a personal message in that moment. We sense an internal confirmation that we have heard from Him.

WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN SKEPTICAL ABOUT SOMEONE’S CLAIM TO
SPEAK FOR GOD? WHY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Forty years earlier, Pharaoh released the Israelites from Egyptian captivity, and God led them “toward the Red Sea along the road of the wilderness” (Ex. 13:18). They crossed through the Red Sea, camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, and sent spies into Canaan. Afraid, they refused to enter the promised land although they stood at its threshold. As a result of their disobedience and lack of faith, God caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. The generation of adults died during those decades. Today’s study brings the Israelites back to the threshold of Canaan (Num. 22:1).

Not only were the Israelites a different people because the previous generation had passed away; they also had gained a reputation because of their numbers and strength. Previously, the Israelites had been too afraid of the people in Canaan to enter. Now, they struck fear in the inhabitants of the land. They had been victorious over the Amorites. This intimidated the Moabites and their king, Balak (Num. 14:1-9; 22:2-6).

The Moabites and Israelites had a shared ancestry. The Moabites descended from Lot, Abraham’s nephew. Lot’s two daughters got their father drunk on two consecutive nights. Shamefully, each slept with and became pregnant by Lot. The first daughter named her son “Moab.” The other named her son “Ben-ammi.” The Moabites and Ammonites traced their roots to these sons (Gen. 19:30-38).

Balak was intimidated by the throng of Israelites approaching Moab on their way to Canaan. He decided to enlist the help of Balaam, a medium from Pethor, which was in upper Mesopotamia. Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites so they would not defeat the Moabites. This desire contradicted what God originally told Abraham; He promised to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. Thus, God was the only One with this power. The question of this study is what would happen when a pagan, Mesopotamian diviner tried to curse the people God had promised to bless?



22 But God was incensed that **Balaam**^A was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand on the path to oppose him. Balaam was riding his donkey, and his two servants were with him. **23** When **the donkey saw the angel**^B of the LORD standing on the path with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the path and went into the field. So Balaam hit her to return her to the path. **24** Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow passage between the vineyards, with a stone wall on either side. **25** The donkey saw the angel of the LORD and pressed herself against the wall, squeezing Balaam's foot against it. So he hit her once again. **26** The angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or the left. **27** When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she crouched down under Balaam. So he became furious and beat the donkey with his stick. **28** Then **the LORD opened the donkey's mouth**,^C and she asked Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?" **29** **Balaam answered**^D the donkey, "You made me look like a fool. If I had **a sword in my hand**,^E I'd kill you now!" **30** But the donkey said, "Am I not the donkey you've ridden all your life until today? Have I ever treated you this way before?" "No," he replied. **31** Then the LORD **opened Balaam's eyes**,^F and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the path with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam knelt low and bowed in worship on his face. **32** The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to oppose you, because I consider what you are doing to be evil. **33** The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I would have killed you by now and let her live." **34** Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the path to confront me. And now, if it is evil in your sight, I will go back." **35** Then the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you are to say **only what I tell you**."^G So Balaam went with Balak's officials.

A. A non-Israelite prophet from Mesopotamia (v. 5). An ancient inscription suggests that he was well-known internationally as a "seer" who could speak for various gods. The Bible calls Balaam a "diviner" or "soothsayer" (Josh. 13:22).

B. The irony was that the donkey could see spiritual realities that the "seer" could not.

C. One of only two animals in the Scriptures to speak with words. The serpent of Genesis 3 opposed God's will, but the donkey was doing God's will. God is not limited in how He speaks.

D. In his anger, Balaam did not stop to consider that he was talking with an animal. He had probably spoken to the animal many times in the past without receiving a verbal response.

E. Unaware that the donkey had saved him from the angel's "sword," Balaam now wished he had a sword to execute judgment on the donkey.

F. The Lord "uncovered" or "opened" Balaam's eyes to see and understand spiritual realities.

G. A message devised by Balaam could be swayed by money, but God would not allow that to happen. Balak wanted a curse, but God would only allow blessing. He could fill Balaam's mouth as He had filled the donkey's mouth.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Obstacles Met

(Num. 22:22-27)

Believers must recognize that obstacles may still arise as we are following God's plans.

- **Why do you think God lets us set out on a path, knowing He is going to change it along the way?**

2. Attention Gained

(Num. 22:28-31)

Believers must remain sensitive to God's leading, being intentional to seek Him regularly.

- **When has an unusual experience led you to seek God more intentionally?**

3. God's Plan

(Num. 22:32-35)

We should be willing to surrender our plans so we can follow God's plans.

- **What benefits or outcomes can we anticipate when we seek to follow God's plans?**

Apply the Text

- **Based on this week's Bible passage, what advice would you give to a new believer about how to know when God is directing his or her path? Be ready to share your thoughts with your Bible study group.**

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Psalm 103:19; Matthew 10:29-31.)

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to help understand a Bible passage.

Read the article about Balaam in a Bible dictionary. Note that he is mentioned both in the Old Testament (Num. 22-24; 31:8; Josh. 13:22) and New Testament (2 Pet. 2:15; Rev. 2:14). Read each passage that mentions Balaam. Why do you think Balaam did not remain faithful to God? What applications can we draw about our own walk with the Lord?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 22:38. When was the last time your words got you into trouble?

As the Israelites journeyed toward Canaan, Balak, king of Moab, became afraid because he didn't have the forces to defend his kingdom against Israel. So he sent for the prophet Balaam to come and curse Israel (Num. 22:6). God told Balaam not to go, for he was not to curse God's people (v. 12). Balak sent for Balaam a second time (v. 17). This time, God permitted Balaam to go, but the prophet could do and say only what God told him (v. 20). Along the way, God became angry with Balaam and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Apparently, Balaam had spoken words along the way that were unauthorized by God, disobeying the Lord's command to do only what He told him to do or say. The angel reiterated the necessity of Balaam saying only what God told him to say (v. 35).

What methods has God used to speak to you? How is that similar or different than how He spoke in biblical days?

Balaam was not a genuine prophet of the Lord but a “prophet for hire” who was willing to compromise truth to gain wealth. He stands as a reminder to us that not everyone who claims to speak for God is actually speaking God’s message.

With so many voices claiming to speak truth, how are you able to recognize God's voice? What are some practical steps you can do to remain sensitive to God's leadership in life?

Write “Can I say anything I want?” on a card and place it in a spot where you will see it each day this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 22:22-25

Underline the phrase “the donkey saw the angel” in verses 23 and 25.

God had earlier told Balaam to go with Balak’s men (v. 20), so why was He “incensed that Balaam was going”? Many interpreters believe God was angry because Balaam had asked Him a second time if he should go when God already had told him not to go (v. 12). Others suggest perhaps Balaam uttered a non-authorized oracle along the way. Evidently, Balaam was well-known throughout the region as one who practiced divination.

Part of the irony in this story is that this lowly “donkey saw the angel.” However, Balaam, the well-respected seer did not see the angel. Some have called him a “blind seer.” The donkey “turned off the path,” likely out of fear. Balaam hit her because he was angry at the stubborn animal and wanted nothing to derail his progress.

When preparing a field, farmers first removed the rocks and stones. Otherwise, plowing and planting were impossible. Farmers stacked the stones and made walls around their fields. Parallel walls formed a “narrow passage” between neighboring vineyards. Trying to walk around the angel, the donkey squeezed Balaam’s foot against the wall. The diviner found himself between a rock and a hard-headed donkey.

Pray that you would have the spiritual perception to see what God is doing around you.



Day 2: Numbers 22:26-27

Underline “the donkey saw the angel” again in verse 27.

The angel appeared a third time. Again, it “stood in a narrow place.” This time, though, the text does not mention vineyards. The root for the Hebrew word can refer to a deep place. Some believe the donkey was in a deep and thus narrow furrow in a field. Unable to turn to the right or the left, the donkey did the only thing it could to avoid running into the angel. It “crouched down.”

Balaam was angry the first two times his donkey “acted out.” This time, though, he was furious. The first two times he hit her, presumably with his hand. This time, he lost all control and beat her—not with “a” stick—but “with his stick.” The Hebrew word translated stick can refer to a staff or riding stick. In this context, though, it likely refers to a stick Balaam used in his divination practices. It would have been one of the tools of his trade. The Old Testament mentions this type of stick elsewhere. God accused the unfaithful, saying, “My people consult their wooden idols, and their divining rods inform them” (Hos. 4:12).

Another humorous irony in the story is that Balaam showed that he couldn’t dictate a single donkey’s actions. How did he think he could influence the actions of hundreds of thousands of people?

Has God ever put a roadblock in your path? What was your response?



Day 3: Numbers 22:28-31

Underline the phrase “the LORD opened” in verses 28 and 31.

The Creator who had opened the donkey’s eyes to let it see (v. 23) now “opened the donkey’s mouth” to let it speak. The only other time the Old Testament mentions an animal speaking was the snake in the garden of Eden. The snake spoke deception. The donkey, though, spoke truth.

“Balaam answered the donkey.” Instead of being shocked by a talking donkey, Balaam was so caught up in his rage that he didn’t slow down to consider what was happening. He was furious because the donkey had made him “look like a fool.” Balaam had responded to the donkey with fervent emotion (v. 29); the donkey replied with logic. In essence, she asked, “Didn’t my unusual behavior alert you that something was up?” This seems like the natural spot in the conversation for the donkey to tell Balaam about her supernatural encounters. Yet, she did not. She was going to allow the angel to reveal himself to Balaam.

The Creator who opened the donkey’s mouth now opened Balaam’s eyes. Suddenly, he could see what had caused her behavior. The word *then* reminds us that God is at work around us, though we don’t always realize it. The angel stood before Balaam and his donkey. Balaam knelt and bowed facedown in worship. The text offers no indication that the angel had to identify himself. Balaam knew this was a holy moment that called for worship.

What methods has God used to open your spiritual eyes?



Day 4: Numbers 22:32-33

Consider the reasons Balaam had not perceived God’s hand in this situation.

The angel addressed Balaam, who could now see him for the first time. The question, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times?” was the same question the donkey had asked (v. 28). It implies that Balaam should have known better than to treat her as he did. The angel was hinting that Balaam should have suspected God’s hand was at work in his animal’s strange behavior.

The angel affirmed “I came out to oppose you.” The word *oppose* conveys determination; the angel was going to make sure Balaam did not proceed with his journey. God was angry with Balaam and had sent His angel to get His message across. The angel affirmed that Balaam’s actions were “evil” in God’s sight. The original language conveys the idea of Balaam’s running recklessly into a situation God had told him to leave alone.

The angel’s affirmation “the donkey saw me and turned away” reinforced the reason for her apparent misbehavior. She was more perceptive to God’s work than the so-called prophet. The donkey had saved Balaam’s life by avoiding the angel to the best of her ability. Again, the text seems to imply Balaam should have perceived the situation and turned back—or never gone with the delegation after God initially told him not to go.

**In what ways have you struggled to understand what God is doing in your life?
What are some ways you can be more sensitive to His work in your life?**



Day 5: Numbers 22:34-35

Highlight the angel's instruction in verse 35.

Having heard both his indictment of evil behavior and how close he came to losing his life (vv. 32-33), Balaam responded with a confession: "I have sinned." Having been caught and confronted, he hoped to avert the angel's wrath; he offered to "go back." His offer, though, may not have been sincere or selfless. The condition for his going back was whether the angel thought Balaam's actions were "evil." The angel had already told Balaam his actions were evil (v. 32). Some scholars believe Balaam was making the offer yet still hoped he could continue his journey. This desire indicated his heart had not been changed.

Balaam had been going to Moab with the second delegation Balak had sent. Before Balaam left home, God had instructed him, "get up and go with them, but you must only do what I tell you" (Num. 22:20). Here, the angel gave Balaam almost identical instructions. The difference was Balaam was to "say only" what he had been told to say.

The angel's instructing Balaam to "go with the men" showed that the seer had learned the lesson God had for him. Balaam could not dictate the donkey's actions. He would not get the final say, God would. The Lord could stop Balaam any time He chose. And He could use any means to convey His message. After all that God had done to get His message to Balaam, the seer would obey exactly what God had instructed. Balaam was ready to continue his journey to Moab.

How will you demonstrate your willingness to surrender your plans to God's plans?

APPLY THE TEXT

In examining your own life, do you see a place where God has placed an obstacle and attempted to direct you with a new plan? What changes do you need to make to continue moving forward with God's new direction?

JOURNAL



SESSION 7

Instructions Given

NUMBERS 33:50-56; 34:13-15

GOD'S PLANS REQUIRE BELIEVERS TO ACT ON THE INSTRUCTIONS HE GIVES.



We've all seen it. The "For Sale" sign is removed from the plot of land. Workers show up and conduct the survey. They put little orange marker flags in the ground. Trenches and holes are cut and dug. The ground is leveled. Concrete trucks show up. Construction crews arrive at the site day after day. In a few months, the house, subdivision, or apartment complex is complete. Every step occurred according to a plan that someone developed beforehand.

*WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW THE PLAN WHEN DOING CONSTRUCTION?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

When God first called Abraham, He promised that he would have offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the shore. God also promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 13:14-17). He made the same promise to Isaac and Jacob (26:3; 28:13). The Lord, speaking through an angel, changed Jacob's name to "Israel" at Peniel (32:24-28).

From Jacob's twelve sons would come the twelve tribes of Israel, with the exception of Levi and Joseph. From Levi would come the Levites, those who would serve as the priests of God's people. Rather than inherit property in the promised land, they would be given a place in each tribal territory.

Concerning Joseph, recall he had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He became second in command in Egypt through God's providence. God used him to save his brothers from starvation when famine hit their homeland. Joseph eventually brought his entire family, including his father, Jacob, to live in Egypt. Scripture refers to Joseph as "the prince of his

brothers" (Deut. 33:16). Joseph's inherited property was divided between his two sons who were born in Egypt—Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:3-6).

Each tribe was made up of several "clans." A clan consisted of individual families that were related by blood or marriage. The head of each family was considered an elder; they helped guide and govern the family and thus the clan.

The social structure was therefore like a series of concentric circles. The smallest unit was the family, which was led by the elder. Families that were kin formed clans. The related clans formed the tribe. The twelve tribes made up the nation of Israel, both as a people and a land.



33:50 The LORD spoke to Moses in the **plains of Moab** **A** by the Jordan across from Jericho, **51** “Tell the Israelites: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **52** you must drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you, destroy all their stone images and cast images, and demolish all their **high places**. **B** **53** You are to take possession of the land and settle in it because **I have given you** **C** the land to possess. **54** You are to receive the land as an inheritance **by lot** **D** according to your clans. Increase the inheritance for a large clan and decrease it for a small one. Whatever place the lot indicates for someone will be his. You will receive an inheritance according to your **ancestral tribes**. **E** **55** But if you don’t drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, those you allow to remain will become **barbs** **F** for your eyes and thorns for your sides; they will harass you in the land where you will live. **56** And what I had planned to do to them, I will do to you.” (. . .)

34:13 So Moses commanded the Israelites, “This is the land you are to receive by lot as an inheritance, which the LORD commanded to be given to the **nine and a half tribes**. **G** **14** For the tribe of Reuben’s descendants and the tribe of Gad’s descendants have received their inheritance according to their ancestral families, and half the tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance. **15** The two and a half tribes have received their inheritance across the Jordan east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.”

A. A flat region south of Jericho on the west side of the Jordan River. Israel camped here (Num. 22:1) until after Moses’s death (Deut. 34:1).

B. Such pagan shrines on hilltops in Canaan were condemned by the prophets (1 Kings 13:2,32). They would be a perpetual sign that Israel allowed idolatry to remain in the land.

C. While possession of the promised land would require effort from the Israelites, God was fulfilling a promise He made to Abraham (Gen. 15:17). Through Him, victory was assured.

D. Each family’s inheritance was assigned by “lot.” The lot was not subject to chance. It ensured that God ultimately determined who would possess which piece of property (Prov. 16:33).

E. The twelve tribes of Israel. Eleven tribes received a parcel of land. The tribe of Levi, Israel’s priestly tribe, received forty-eight cities scattered among the other tribes (Num. 35:1-8).

F. Like a splinter in the eye, paganism among the people of God would lead to unending and debilitating suffering.

G. Most Israelites would live west of the Jordan. God allowed the tribes of Reuben and Gad, along with half of Manasseh, to settle east of the river.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Land

(Num. 33:50-53)

Following God often requires believers to remove potential distractions.

- **Why was it important to destroy the idols and high places devoted to false gods?**

2. The Task

(Num. 33:54-56)

Believers can expect to encounter challenges while following God.

- **What principles do you glean from these verses that can help you live a life of obedience to God?**

3. The Plan

(Num. 34:13-15)

We can trust God to keep His promises.

- **How do God's promises serve as a motivator to remain faithful to Him? Should they? Explain.**

Apply the Text

- **What promises have you seen God fulfill in your life? How does reflecting on those promises increase your faith? Be willing to share your thoughts with your Bible study group.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

To God we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. (See Deuteronomy 6:14-15; James 1:22.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to understand a Bible passage.

Read about Canaan in a Bible dictionary—the land, people, and gods. Ultimately, the Israelites did not drive out all the land's inhabitants, and God's warning of Numbers 33:55 came true. Joshua records how the Israelites conquered the Canaanites physically; the book of Judges records how the Canaanites conquered the Israelites spiritually. What factors do you think led the Israelites to fail to obey completely God's command to take the land and drive out its inhabitants? Why do Christians today sometimes stop short of keeping God's commands fully?

DID YOU KNOW?

Israel's history revealed that they failed to follow the Lord's commands in these verses. Their exile in Assyria and Babylonia was largely due to their persistence in pursuing the gods of the nations that surrounded them. (See Isa. 2:5-22; Jer. 9:12-16; Ezek. 5:5-6:14; Hos. 4:12-14; Zeph. 1:4-6.)

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Numbers 33:53. Take note of what the Israelites were to do and what God had already done.

God spoke to Moses while the Israelites were still camped on the Plains of Moab, just east of Jericho. He instructed Moses to tell the people that settling in the promised land would involve driving out the land's current inhabitants and destroy the idols and high places devoted to the worship of false gods. The land would belong to them. The only reason the Israelites could inhabit the land was because God had given it to them (see Deut. 9:5).

What is something God has given you that calls for your obedient response?

Taking possession of the land would be possible only because of what God had already done. But it also called for an effort on the part of His people. Only by following God's instructions could Israel experience all the blessings of living in the land of promise. God still expects His people to act on the instructions He gives. Further, following God still requires that we remove any potential distractions that would keep us from faithfulness to Him.

How can you help one another avoid spiritual distractions and temptations so that you more fully experience the life God intends for you?

Memorize Numbers 33:53, considering how God is calling you to respond to His faithfulness.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Numbers 33:50-52

Identify the two things the people were to do when they entered the land.

God's people had camped in "the plains of Moab," from which they could look across the Jordan Valley to the land they would possess. The Jordan River was the dividing line for the Israelites. On the east was their past; on the other side was their future, the land that God had promised His people.

Again, God told Moses what he was to say to His people. This showed that God was not finished with Moses, despite how Moses disobeyed Him by striking the rock rather than speaking to it (20:11). This reminds us that God can still use us, even when we have failed Him. Our past does not always define our future.

What were they to do when they came into the land? God's instructions were two-fold. First, they were to "drive out" the inhabitants. Right after God had given Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, He promised what He would do when His people reached the promised land. He said, "I am going to drive out . . ." (Ex. 34:11). The command in this verse (Num. 33:52) does not contradict God's earlier promise. He would drive out the inhabitants of the land, but He would use His people to accomplish this. Second, His people were to remove from the land any remnant of idolatry that had been embraced by the generations who lived there before the Israelites' arrival.

Why was it important to destroy the idols and high places devoted to false gods? What does this teach you about God?



Day 2: Numbers 33:53

Note how both God's grace and the people's responsibility appear together.

After ridding the land of its current inhabitants and destroying all vestiges of their pagan worship practices, only then could the Israelites take possession of the land. This meant the land they would inhabit would not be the same as what was there now. It may have been the same regarding its geography and climate, but little else. Its culture, belief systems, religious practices, values, government, and social organization were to be transformed.

God's grace and the people's responsibility appear together in this verse. God told Israel to take possession of the land and settle in it. However, He also reminded them of His promise: "I have given you the land to possess." The only reason the Israelites could inhabit the land was because God had given it to them (see Deut. 9:5). Note how God spoke of Israel's taking the land as something certain, as if they already had accomplished it.

While God had promised them the land, He also expected them to act on His words. They had to move forward as if they believed it was theirs. As they began the conquest, they would show themselves obedient to God's instruction and would receive His promise. They would need to avoid the fatal flaw that had doomed their parents' generation.

In what way do you need to step forward in faith, claiming God's promise?



Day 3: Numbers 33:54

Learn why the book of Numbers carries its name.

The land was an “inheritance.” God had told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would live in this land. People of this generation were to be the recipients and beneficiaries of the promise God made centuries earlier. God could give them the land because it was His. “The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the LORD” (Ps. 24:1). Each of us is merely a steward, a caretaker, who dwells here for a limited number of days.

The apportionment of land would be decided by casting lots. The Israelites did not see this as leaving it to chance; they understood God could work through that process (Prov. 16:33).

The book of Numbers carries its name because the numbers mattered. The book opens with the Israelites conducting a census (Num. 1:1-46). The book closes with a second census, taken on the Plains of Moab forty years later (26:1-63). The purpose of the censuses was two-fold. First, the numbers gave the leaders an idea of how many military-age men would be available to lead in the conquest of the land. Second, the larger clans would receive the larger territories, meaning more inhabitable space. Having all of the clans or family units living together in the space apportioned according to their forefather’s tribe gave greater importance to the tribe. No family or clan would be unimportant or excluded.

Give thanks to God that every person matters to Him. Who is someone who needs that reminder today?



Day 4: Numbers 33:55-56

Compare Numbers 33:55 to Judges 1:28-36.

The Lord warned what would happen if His people did not “drive out” the land’s current inhabitants. The word translated “barbs” referred to small but sharp objects that could splinter someone’s eyes. The result would be discomfort, infection, and maybe even blindness. The lesson was that even the smallest remnant could inflict unbelievable damage. The “thorns” in their sides could cause discomfort, pain, and even an infection. God’s purpose was not just to run the people out but also to remove their idolatrous beliefs and pagan practices. God knew the damage these traditions would do.

Verse 56 carried a powerful warning. As mentioned earlier, God had said He would drive out the people of the land (Ex. 34:11). In this verse, He was saying that just as He promised to drive the people out of Canaan, He would do the same to His people if they did not obey Him. He would drive them out of the promised land.

How serious was God’s command in this verse? The people’s lack of compliance and how they embraced the pagan worship beliefs and practices led to the Assyrians and Babylonians overtaking the people and conquering the land centuries later.

What principles do you glean from these verses that can help you live a life of obedience to God?



Day 5: Numbers 34:13-15

Read about the Christian's inheritance in Colossians 1:12 and Hebrews 9:15.

The opening verses of chapter 34 delineate the geographical boundaries of the land the Israelites were to inhabit. Verses 3-5 describe the southern border; verse 6, the western border; verses 7-9, the northern border; and verses 10-12, the eastern border. Verses 2 and 29 form a pair of book-ends, using the phrase “the land of Canaan” to describe the land and the leaders who would direct the conquest.

The property divisions were not decided by human design. It was according to what “the LORD commanded.” The land between the Jordan River Valley and the Mediterranean was to be home to “nine and a half tribes.” The “two and a half tribes” were the descendants of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. They earlier asked if they could live on the east side of the Jordan (Num. 32:1-24). They promised they would support the tribes on the west side of the Jordan as they fought for the land (32:18).

The tribes received these lands as an “inheritance.” They understood that the land was a gift from God. He promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would belong to him and his descendants. God was fulfilling His promise.

The New Testament explains that followers of Christ are beneficiaries of a spiritual inheritance. Because God always keeps His promises, we can also lift our voices and proclaim, “Great is thy faithfulness.”

Give thanks to God that He always keeps His promises.

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your life for the things that might draw you away from remaining loyal to the Lord. What actions can you take to safeguard yourself from the influence of beliefs and practices that are contrary to what God has outlined in His Word?

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SESSION 8

Remember

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-9,15-20

RECALLING GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS LEADS US TO WORSHIP HIM.



Older folks will remember family get-togethers that included porch sitting. After the evening meal, family members headed outside. A few sat in rocking chairs. Some were on the porch swing. Someone would ask, “What ever happened to so-and-so?” Then the reminiscing began. They talked about their happy memories and the hurdles. The kids didn’t do a lot of talking. Mostly, they listened, not realizing how much they would treasure these memories later.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FAMILY MEMORY? HOW DO YOUR FAMILY’S STORIES
GET PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The book of Numbers records events and lessons related to the children of Israel as they traveled from Mount Sinai to the Plains of Moab, which was across the Jordan River from the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy focuses and expands on the law God gave at Mount Sinai. Deuteronomy teaches God’s people how to live in covenant in the promised land. Some terms appear in these opening chapters that deserve attention. Understanding their usage will aid in our study of Deuteronomy.

Great—This word appears thirty-nine times in Deuteronomy. Only in Psalms (66), Jeremiah (50), and Revelation (46) does the word appear more times. In Deuteronomy 4, the word is used to speak of God’s great power (v. 37), of God bringing great terrors on Egypt (v. 34), and of His sending great fire on the earth (v. 36). Surprisingly, God referred to Israel as a “great nation” (vv. 6,8). Israel—a great nation! A generation earlier, the Israelites had been captive in Egypt and serving as slaves. Israel’s greatness was not because of its accomplishments. They were great because

of the power and presence of God among His people (see 3:24).

Today—The repetition of this word (4:4,8,26,38) highlights the sense of urgency for obeying God’s law. Moving forward, God’s people would have to commit themselves to obedience every today.

Statutes and ordinances—This phrase appears seventeen times in Deuteronomy; five are in chapter 4 (vv. 1,5,8,14,45). The root word for “statutes” alludes to engraving or etching; “ordinances” has to do with judging. In Deuteronomy, the terms are almost indistinguishable; they refer to God’s covenant requirements.

This entire law and the Ten Commandments—These terms appear only once each in this fourth chapter (vv. 8,13). Their scarcity does not indicate an unimportance. The Ten Commandments are the core around which all the law is built. The first five books of the Bible are referred to as the Torah, which in Hebrew means the Law. The Torah contains a total of 613 commands.



1 “Now, Israel, **listen** **A** to the **statutes** **B** and **ordinances** **C** I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. **2** You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you. **3** Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at **Baal-peor**, **D** for the LORD your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal of Peor. **4** But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today. **5** Look, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess. **6** Carefully follow them, for this will show your wisdom and understanding **in the eyes of the peoples**. **E** When they hear about all these statutes, they will say, ‘This **great** **F** nation is indeed a wise and understanding people.’ **7** For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call to him? **8** And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today? **9** Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you **don’t forget** **G** the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren. (. . .) **15** Diligently watch yourselves—because you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you out of the fire at **Horeb** **H** — **16** so you don’t act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of any figure: a male or female form, **17** or the form of any animal on the earth, any winged creature that flies in the sky, **18** any creature that crawls on the ground, or any fish in the waters under the earth. **19** When you look to the heavens and see the sun, moon, and stars—all the stars in the sky—do not be led astray to bow in worship to them and serve them. The LORD your God has provided them for all people everywhere under heaven. **20** But the LORD selected you and brought you out of Egypt’s iron furnace to be a people for his inheritance, as you are today.”

A. The command requires more than an auditory activity. It involves truly hearing to pay attention and obey.

B. “Statutes” suggests engraving something to make it permanent. “Ordinances” indicates judgments made by an authority, in this case God Himself.

C. People have no authority to alter God’s Word (see 1 Pet. 1:25). Throughout history, people have made a grave mistake of supplementing, mutilating, or ignoring His commands.

D. At Baal-peor, Israel kindled God’s judgment by embracing Baal worship (Num. 25:1-9). As a result, 24,000 people died.

E. Other nations would envy the Israelites, whose true wisdom was rooted in the character and righteousness of God.

F. The definition of greatness rested in obedience to God, which would be noticed by surrounding peoples.

G. This command appears five times in Deuteronomy, and “remember” is used fifteen times. It stresses the importance of remembering both God’s acts and His words.

H. In general, a synonym for Mount Sinai. Some see “Horeb” referring to a region, while “Sinai” refers specifically to the mountain.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Obedience

(Deut. 4:1-4)

We are to obey God's commands.

- **Why do you think Moses kept emphasizing that the words he was speaking were from God?**

2. Wisdom

(Deut. 4:5-9)

We are to value and seek the wisdom that comes from the Lord.

- **How will obeying God's Word set believers apart in today's world?**

3. Worship

(Deut. 4:15-20)

We can rejoice that God has called us to be His people.

- **What kinds of idols do we need to refrain from worshiping today?**

Apply the Text

- **What makes worship, worship? What makes worship meaningful to you? What hinders your worship? What can you do to help eliminate those hindrances? Be ready to discuss your thoughts with your Bible study group.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. (See Isaiah 40:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible atlas and Bible dictionary to locate and learn about places mentioned in Scripture.

Find the location of Baal-peor in a Bible atlas. (Tip: Check the atlas index or search on the internet.) Then use a Bible dictionary to learn more about the place. What are some significant facts about this location and the incident that took place there (Deut. 4:3; Hos. 9:10)?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 4:9. What are the most important lessons you learned from your parents?

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses instructed the Israelites how to live as God's people in Canaan. If they obeyed God's commands, they would be viewed as wise by surrounding nations. Their covenant with God would be viewed as the source of their wisdom, and they would be considered a great nation as a result of their covenant relationship with God. Moses stressed the importance of remembering God's acts and His Word, and teaching God's truth to their descendants.

Is there anything about your life that sets you apart as a follower of Christ?

God assigned to parents and grandparents the responsibility of passing His truth to the next generation. This emphasis runs throughout Scripture (Ex. 12:24-27; Josh. 4:1-9; Ps. 78:1-7; Eph. 6:4).

What specific actions can we take to help our children and grandchildren embrace God's truth?

Put Deuteronomy 4:9 on your phones or on cards and agree to memorize it together.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 4:1-2

Consider what it means to say God's Word is sufficient.

Deuteronomy 1-3 contains Moses's reiteration of what had happened from the time the Israelites left Mount Sinai until they arrived at the Plains of Moab. Chapter 4 verse 1 marks a transition. Rather than looking back, Moses, speaking for God, would be giving instructions about how to live as His people in Canaan.

In Deuteronomy, the terms "statutes" and "ordinances" referred to God's covenant requirements. With the requirement of what the people were to do came a three-fold promise of what they would receive. The first promise, that they would live, was significant. These Israelites would not be like those who died during their wilderness wanderings. Second, they would "enter." Fear would not keep them from advancing. Third, they would "take possession of the land." They would receive what God promised. The land of Canaan belonged to God and was His to give. They would receive it, but not passively; they would take possession.

Verse 2 emphasizes that the commands from Moses were "the commands of the LORD." It also affirms the sufficiency of God's instructions. They would provide the guidance God's people needed for living in Canaan. His people were not to "add" or "take anything away from" God's Word. It is sufficient always and in all ways.

How can you make sure you are not adding to or taking away from God's Word?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 4:3-4

Note the meaning of the phrase "remained faithful."

These verses speak of a recent event that would have been fresh in the people's minds. The Israelites knew they were to worship God alone. At Baal-peor, they had done the opposite. The Israelites began to "prostitute themselves with the women of Moab . . . and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods. So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger burned against Israel" (Num. 25:1-3). Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, God brought a plague; 24,000 of His people died. Verse 3 reminds us of Moses's instruction in verse 2 not to add or subtract anything from the Lord's commands.

Moses contrasted God's judgment on rebellious Israelites with those who "remained faithful" to Him. The Hebrew word literally means "cling" or "cleave" and occurs in Genesis 2:24 to describe the union between a husband and wife. When God's faithful people faced temptation to compromise, they clung to the Lord. They refused to yield to the enticements of Baal worship.

Moses affirmed that they were "all alive today" because of their wise decision. God's judgment had not swept them away. Only those who had denied Him had died. Again, the Israelites had seen for themselves God's judgment on the disobedient and His preserving grace toward those who remained loyal (v. 3).

What does it look like to cling to the Lord? How are you clinging to Him?



Day 3: Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Pay attention to how the Israelites' obedience to God would impact surrounding peoples.

“Look” signaled the urgency of the instructions that would follow. The “them” in verse 6 were the statutes and ordinances God had given (vv. 1,5). Following them would ensure the Israelites could live safe and productive lives in the promised land. Further, obeying God’s statutes and ordinances would be a witness in the eyes of the other peoples. As others observed the Israelites living by God’s principles, they would recognize the wisdom that governed their lives. Living by God’s standards would set His people apart. Ultimately, that differentiation would point people to God. The expected response to the rhetorical question of verse 7 is “None.”

The Canaanites worshiped more than twenty deities. These deities supposedly controlled war and weather, dusk and dawn, fertility and fire, and diseases and death. But no Canaanite god was near when people called out to them. Canaanite gods were merely statues based on someone’s imagination. The people had no idea how to please and appease these so-called gods. It was all speculation, trial, and error. People believed the gods were remote and angry. Not so with Yahweh. He had given His people ordinances and statutes so they would know how to worship and live in harmony with Him. These statutes and ordinances were “righteous” because God was their source.

How has obeying God’s Word set you apart in the world? What does your life communicate to others about God?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 4:9

Compare Deuteronomy 4:9 to Ephesians 6:4.

To “be on your guard” meant being vigilant in spiritual matters. God’s people could not allow themselves to become lax in observing what mattered to Him. The imperative phrase “diligently watch yourselves” carries the idea of building a hedge of protection. This is not something a person accomplishes passively or without effort; it requires determination.

Failing to guard and watch would result in the people forgetting what they had seen and experienced. Deuteronomy warns the people not to forget (1) God’s covenant with them, (2) how He led them out of Egyptian slavery, (3) that He was their God, and (4) how God’s people had rebelled against Him (4:23; 6:12; 8:11; 9:7).

In verse 5 Moses said he taught the people what God had instructed. Verse 9 challenged the Israelites to teach the next generation God’s statutes. In essence, Moses was passing the baton to those standing before him.

The responsibility to pass God’s truth to subsequent generations is repeated throughout Scripture (Ex. 12:24-27; Josh. 4:1-9; Ps. 78:1-7). Christ’s followers have the same responsibility today (Eph. 6:4).

What is the connection between “watch yourselves” and “teach . . . your children”?



Day 5: Deuteronomy 4:15-20

Compare Deuteronomy 4:15-18 to 1 John 5:21.

Verses 10-14 recount events from forty years earlier at Mount Sinai. There, God called the people to assemble at the foot of the mountain. He made His presence known with fire and smoke. The people could hear His voice but not see Him. Recalling those events had to bolster the Israelites' faith.

After recounting those events, God instructed the Israelites: "Diligently watch yourselves." Canaanite religions had physical representations of their false gods. The Israelites could easily be lured into wanting God to be represented visually. If they did that, God would be personified as an idol. To portray Him in a visible form would violate the commandment, "Do not make an idol for yourself" (Ex. 20:4). Moses repeated the word *any*. Don't make an idol in the shape of any figure. From there, Moses mentioned the forms that an idol might take (Deut. 4:16-18). Finally, God warned His people not to worship the sun, moon, or stars. God alone is worthy of our worship.

Verse 20 offers a climax to this teaching. Out of all the earth's inhabitants, God had selected one group, Abraham's descendants, to receive His grace. Hearing their cries in Egypt, God remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He brought them out. This is always God's work of redemption. He brings us out—from darkness to light, from death to life, from the yoke of slavery to freedom in Christ, and from condemnation to righteousness.

What kinds of idols do you need to refrain from worshiping today?

APPLY THE TEXT

If God's Word gives us wisdom and understanding, why do we sometimes find reading it to be a challenge? How are you doing in spending time in God's Word? What changes can you make this week to make Scripture reading a regular habit in your life?

JOURNAL

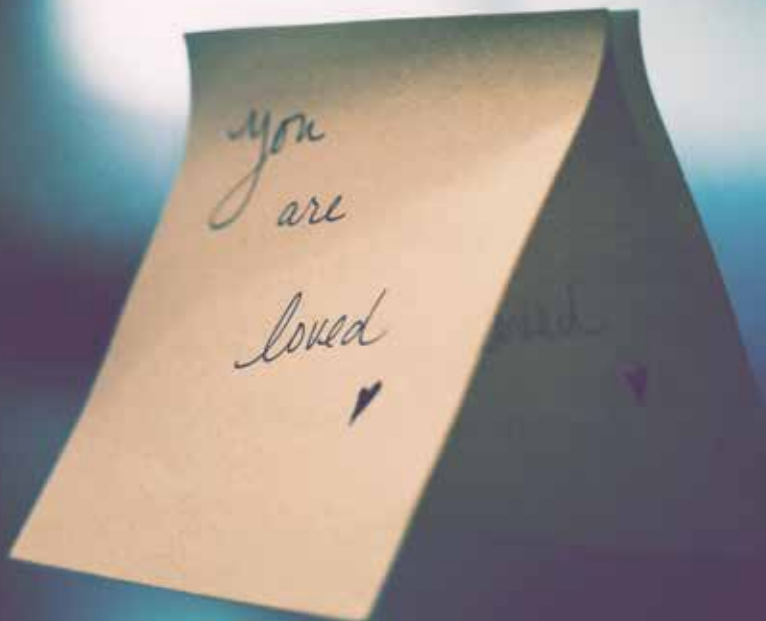


SESSION 9

Love

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9, 20-25

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS DEFINED BY LOVE.



Decades ago, some parents began putting labels on items around their house. You might see a label with the word “Curtain” pinned at the window. Or “Toybox” in the playroom. Or “Switch” beside the door. Labels were on many items in the house: “Chair,” “Table,” “Bed,” and “TV.” This is a type of passive information saturation. Studies showed that the system helps children incorporate reading into their lives without realizing they are learning.

WHAT'S AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO HELP A CHILD LEARN?
WHY IS THIS METHOD EFFECTIVE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The name Deuteronomy comes from a Greek translation that means, “second law.” The source of the name comes from Deuteronomy 17:18, which instructed a king to “write a copy of this instruction for himself on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.” The book of Deuteronomy is an amplification and further explanation of the law God gave Moses at Mount Sinai. The book serves as a celebration of the Israelites renewing their covenant with God.

Recall that those aged twenty and above at Sinai died during the four decades of wilderness wanderings (Num. 32:10-13). Thus, the words of Deuteronomy were for a new generation, those who had not heard God’s words at Sinai. In chapter 5, Moses recounted the Israelites’ experience at Mount Sinai. He told how God had appeared and spoken to them from a fire on the mountain. Then, Moses began to retell what God said.

As we read Deuteronomy 5, we recognize familiar words from Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments. God’s people were to

have no other gods before Him, no idols. They were to honor His name and observe the Sabbath (Deut. 5:7-15). The commandments continue through verse 21. It was an amplification of what God had spoken to an earlier generation at Sinai.

Chapter 6 focuses on the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:34-38). The first and last verses of the chapter alert us to this focus. They mention “the command” (v. 1) and “these commands” (v. 25). These two words help frame a unified thought.

Within the chapter, verses 1-3 mention that a command is coming up; verses 4-25 explain the command. Thus, some of the terms in verses 1-3 occur again in verses 4-25—for instance, “fear” (vv. 2,13,24); “follow” (vv. 1,3,24,25); “keep” (vv. 2,17,25). The most significant terms that are repeated are “command,” “statutes,” and “ordinances” (vv. 1,2,17,20,24,25).



1 “This is the command—the statutes and ordinances—the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you may **follow them in the land** **A** you are about to enter and possess. **2** Do this so that you may **fear the LORD** **B** your God all the days of your life by **keeping all his statutes and commands** **C** I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. **3 Listen, D** Israel, and be careful to follow them, so that you may prosper and multiply greatly, because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey. **4** Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **5** Love the LORD your God with **all your heart, E** with all your soul, and with all your strength. **6** These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. **7 Repeat them to your children. F** Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **8** Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. **9** Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates. (. . .) **20** When your son asks you in the future, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ **21** tell him, ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand. **22** Before our eyes the LORD inflicted great and devastating signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his household, **23** but he brought us from there in order to lead us in and give us the land that he swore to our ancestors. **24** The LORD commanded us to follow all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God for our prosperity always and for our preservation, as it is today. **25 Righteousness will be ours G** if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.’”

A. God’s instructions were designed to teach Israel how to live in the promised land. He never issues rules for the sake of having rules. He always has a purpose.

B. Reverence. It is an attitude of respect that acknowledges who God is and His authority.

C. Obedience to the Lord’s commands is a demonstration that one truly “fears” Him.

D. The Hebrew term *shema* means “to listen to, embrace, and obey.” Deuteronomy 6:4, commonly called “the Shema,” has long served as a creed recited by Jewish families at home and as a part of their corporate worship.

E. The center of the person’s being, where one thinks, makes decisions, and holds affections. Along with “soul” and “strength,” it highlights active and absolute love for God.

F. Parents are responsible for demonstrating what loving God looks like. They are to impress His truths into their children’s lives by “repeating” them in various, practical ways.

G. The Old Testament does not define salvation as being “lost” or “saved,” but by a right standing with God (Gen. 15:6). Prosperity and preservation were important (Deut. 6:24), but righteousness is always God’s ultimate purpose for His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Fear of the Lord

(Deut. 6:1-3)

Believers demonstrate their love for God by obeying His commands.

- **What are some practical ways to “fear the Lord” each day?**
- **In what way(s) has God lavished His blessings in your life? When have you been particularly aware of those blessings?**

2. Devoted

(Deut. 6:4-9)

We are to be intentional about putting God at the center of our lives, making everything else revolve around Him.

- **What is a practical way we can keep God’s Word and commandments at the forefront of our lives?**

3. Righteous

(Deut. 6:20-25)

Remembering God’s past faithfulness helps us to follow God’s commands today.

- **How does our behavior reflect what we believe about God?**
- **What does walking in righteousness look like in the life of a believer today?**

Apply the Text

- **How ready are you to explain your faith to your children and/or grandchildren? What would you tell them if they asked? Share with your Bible study group ideas and tips for explaining your faith.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Family

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (See Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Read and reflect on a Bible passage.

Read the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9) slowly and reflectively. Note how it encourages God’s people to love Him with all they are, to pass the faith to the next generation, and to observe carefully His commands and decrees. Also read Mark 12:28-33, where Jesus declared the Shema the greatest commandment. What does it mean to you to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength? Consider Matthew 5:16 and 1 John 2:5-6. How does faithful obedience to God’s commands bless both us and others?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 6:4-5. How do you define love?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is known as the Shema, the foundational confession of Jewish faith. These verses exhorted Israel to live out its faith intentionally. Specifically, they were to love the Lord their God. The term “love” signifies wholehearted commitment. The phrases “with all your heart” and “with all your soul” encompassed the intellect, emotion, and volition. The phrase “with all your strength” emphasized that a commitment to God requires an act of the whole person.

For some people, faith in God is little more than an intellectual assent that God exists. For others, faith in God involves little more than performing certain rituals. How do these verses correct these misguided beliefs?

Faith in God involves the whole person; loving Him is comprehensive. We are to love Him with all we are, think, feel, and do.

In what ways will you demonstrate your love for God this week?

Agree to text Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to each other over the next few days as a reminder to live out your love for God this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 6:1-3

Contemplate the connection between obedience and blessing.

Deuteronomy 5 contains the Ten Commandments. In chapter 6, Moses transitioned his focus to instructions about fulfilling the first commandment, which called God's people to have no other gods besides Him (5:7). All the "you" and "your" pronouns in verse 1 are plural. In verse 2, they are singular. While we may have a spiritual family, we are each individually responsible for our relationship with God.

To "fear the LORD" means to revere Him. The external evidence of that reverence would be keeping God's "statutes and commands." Jesus taught this principle. He told His disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15).

Heart-motivated obedience would result in God's blessing. God promised that once His people were in the land, they "would prosper and multiply greatly" (see also Gen. 15:1; 26:4). The verb "prosper" connotes a life filled with blessing as people lived by God's ways. A "land flowing with milk and honey" referred to the rich resources of the land and to God's abundant blessings. The phrase is a reminder that God lavishes His blessings extravagantly. He abundantly pardons (Isa. 55:7). Further, He saves "to the uttermost" those who come to Him (Heb. 7:25, KJV).

In what way(s) has God lavished His blessings on you? When have you been particularly aware of those blessings?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to Matthew 22:34-38.

Verses 4-9 are known as the Shema. This is the Hebrew verb for "hear" or "listen," reflecting the first word of verse 4. Jews consider the Shema one of the most important Old Testament passages.

The phrase, "the LORD our God" indicates that the Jews were called to be a family of faith. They were known as God's people, His children.

To refer to the Lord as "one" stood in contrast to Egyptian and Canaanite beliefs. They worshiped multiple gods. The Lord being one does not negate the Trinity. Quite the contrary; understanding His unity and uniqueness paves the way for us to affirm that He is three in one. In His unity as three in one, the Lord's plan of redemption was fully revealed in His work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We obey God's law because we love Him. Our love for Him is to be comprehensive; we are to love God fully. The "heart" referred to one's will or intellect; the "soul" was the center of a person's being and what he desired. One's "strength" did not mean muscle power but what a person put his or her energies into. The three terms together pointed to the totality of a person's existence and effort. Stated as a confession: I am to love God with all I am, think, feel, and do.

How are you demonstrating your love for God?



Day 3: Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Reflect on how the Israelites were to incorporate God's commands into their lives.

When we memorize something, we might say, “I know that by heart.” The statement means we recall the words with virtually no effort. The better we know the words, the more we can incorporate their meaning into our thinking, lives, and conversations. That is the intent of verse 6.

God's instructions were also to be on their lips. The Lord's command was to be the topic of conversation both at home and beyond, in the evening and in the morning.

Verse 7 calls us to recite God's commands verbally; verses 8 and 9 tell us to remember them visually. Having God's words in one's heart (v. 6) requires an intentional effort. Through the years, Jews have debated whether the directions in verses 8-9 were literal or figurative. Some believe this was not a literal requirement. Instead, it meant people were to have God's commands always before them, even unseen. A literal interpretation, though, has become the norm. An orthodox Jewish man will use leather straps to attach a small leather box to his forehead and another to his arm. In the box is a small piece of parchment. On it are the words of Exodus 13:1-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and 11:13-21. The boxes are called *tefillin* (also called phylacteries).

What is a practical way you can keep God's Word and commandments at the forefront of your life?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 6:20-23

Underline the word “when.”

God knew the parents' lifestyles would raise questions in their children's minds. Thus, He did not say “if the questions come” but “when.” Those questions would provide parents with teachable moments. There are both singular and plural pronouns in verse 20. Your (singular) son (or daughter) will ask you personally. He will ask, “What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you (plural)?” This singular/plural arrangement sends a two-fold message to parents. First, every parent should be ready to explain his or her faith. Second, parents should be living out their faith alongside other believers.

Parents were to explain God's covenant in the form of a story. The emphasis was to be what God had done. The parents would tell about the “signs and wonders,” meaning the plagues God brought on Egypt. These acts bore witness to His mighty power. They showed the Lord was greater and mightier than even the most powerful nation and ruler on earth.

Moses's description of what God had done was both concise and crystal clear. The Lord had brought them out in order to lead them in. He brought them out of persecution and led them into His promise; out of bondage and into blessing. God fulfilled His promise to the Israelites' ancestors, meaning the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Pray for teachable moments—that you would be ready for them.



Day 5: Deuteronomy 6:24-25

Compare Deuteronomy 6:24-25 to 1 John 5:3.

The parents' explanation would now focus on what God expected of His people in return. He expected them to obey His statutes and to "fear," meaning revere, Him. Again, following God's statutes is the external evidence of our internal reverence for Him. The New Testament echoes this same principle. (See 1 John 5:3.)

Fearing and following God's commands would result in "prosperity" and "preservation" in the promised land. Offering proof, Moses told the people to look at their current lives—"as it is today."

Our obedience to God honors Him. Our behavior points to Him as the One who deserves our reverence. How we conduct ourselves says something about who we believe God is.

The reason behind all the decrees, statutes, and ordinances was so God's children could live in righteousness—a right relationship with Him and He with them.

What about righteousness today? Our righteousness is made possible through what Jesus did on the cross. Paul wrote, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

In what ways does your behavior reflect what you believe about God? What needs to change?

APPLY THE TEXT

Think about your own life. In what way are you not demonstrating a wholehearted love for God? What changes can you make in order to deepen your love for Him?

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SESSION 10

Undivided Worship

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-11, 29-32

BELIEVERS ARE TO AVOID IDOLS AND WORSHIP GOD ALONE.



We've all heard the statements. "I don't need to go to church to worship. I can worship just as well while walking on the beach, working in my garden, or hiking in the mountains." Well, those statements may contain a kernel of truth, but the experiences aren't the same, are they? To worship with God's people in a place set aside for that distinct purpose centers our focus. Corporate worship draws our hearts to Him like nothing else can.

*DO YOU THINK GOD CARES ABOUT WHERE AND HOW
PEOPLE WORSHIP HIM? IF SO, WHY?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Deuteronomy contains a series of messages God delivered to His people through Moses. Moses's first message (1:1-4:49) reviewed the history of the Israelites, beginning with their leaving Mount Sinai (also called Horeb). It concluded with a challenge for the Israelites to follow the Lord's commands.

This week's study comes from Moses's second message (5:1-26:19). Some biblical scholars have called these chapters the "Code of Deuteronomy." They compare it to Exodus 20:22-23:19. Although the two share similarities, the Deuteronomy passage contains details not in Exodus. Deuteronomy offers specific applications for God's people as they entered and inhabited the land of Canaan. The Exodus passage was given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai; Moses delivered the Deuteronomy message to a later generation, as the previous had died out during their forty years of wilderness wandering.

The earlier part of Moses's second message (5:1-11:32) reviewed the Ten Commandments and emphasized obeying the first

of the ten (5:7). Last week's study came from this earlier part of Moses's second message. This week's study comes from the latter part of Moses's second message (12:1-26:19). This section explains how to apply the remaining nine commandments. These applications addressed specific matters the Israelites would face in the years ahead. Moses's words would teach the Israelites how to live as God's people in the land He was giving them.

Thoughts that connect the two parts of Moses's second message include God's giving the land to His people (6:1-3; 26:9-19) and His delivering them from Egyptian captivity (7:8,17-19; 26:5-8). Both emphasize the importance of remaining faithful to God (6:4-19; 26:16-19). Both also warn God's people not to become entangled in the religious practices of the Canaanites (7:16-19; 12:29-32).



Deuteronomy 12:1-11,29-32

1 “Be careful to follow these statutes and ordinances in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess all the days you live on the earth. **2 Destroy completely** **A** all the places where the nations that you are driving out worship their gods—on the high mountains, on the hills, and under every green tree. **3** Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, burn their **Asherah poles**, **B** cut down the carved images of their gods, and wipe out their **names** **C** from every place. **4** Don’t worship the LORD your God **this way**. **D** **5** Instead, turn to **the place the LORD your God chooses** **E** from all your tribes to put his name for his dwelling and go there. **6** You are to bring there your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and personal contributions, your vow offerings and freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. **7** You will eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice with your household in everything you do, because the LORD your God has blessed you. **8** You are not to do as we are doing here today; everyone is doing whatever **seems right in his own sight**. **F** **9** Indeed, you have not yet come into the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. **10** When you cross the Jordan and live in the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and he gives you rest from all the enemies around you and you live in security, **11** then the LORD your God will choose the place to have his name dwell. Bring there everything I command you: your burnt offerings, sacrifices, offerings of the tenth, personal contributions, and all your choice offerings you vow to the LORD. (. . .) **29** When the LORD your God annihilates the nations before you, which you are entering to take possession of, and you drive them out and live in their land, **30** be careful not to be **ensnared** **G** by their ways after they have been destroyed before you. Do not inquire about their gods, asking, ‘How did these nations worship their gods? I’ll also do the same.’ **31** You must not do the same to the LORD your God, because they practice every detestable act, which the LORD hates, for their gods. They even **burn their sons and daughters in the fire** **H** to their gods. **32** Be careful to do everything I command you; do not add anything to it or take anything away from it.”

Key Words

A. The Hebrew here is the strongest intensive possible, suggesting that nothing was to be left.

B. Wooden poles carved in the image of the Canaanite fertility goddess, Asherah. She was considered the mother of Baal.

C. In the ancient world, names carried power. To desecrate a deity’s shrine would desecrate its name, proving it had no true authority or power.

D. Acceptable worship reflects God’s nature and holiness, rather than imitating worldly rituals.

E. The command to visit a central place to worship implies the regular worship of Israel, especially around the tabernacle and the ark. Ultimately, God would identify where that place would be.

F. Israelite worship was not as cohesive as it would be once a central site was identified. In Judges, this phrase describes the chaos of the people embracing idols and rejecting God’s ways.

G. The image here is of an animal or bird lured in and caught in a trap (Deut. 7:25).

H. God was about to judge Canaanite immorality, vividly illustrated by the abominable act of child sacrifice (2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Remove Idolatry

(Deut. 12:1-7)

Believers should be prepared to recognize and avoid false gods.

- **Why was it important for the Israelites to focus first on ridding the land of the pagan worship sites and related objects?**

2. Worship God

(Deut. 12:8-11)

We are to worship the Lord by bringing our offerings to Him.

- **Why is it dangerous to follow our own ideas about worshiping God instead of following His design?**
- **Why did God want to designate a certain place for His people to worship Him? Why was that important to Him—and to them?**

3. Stand Firm

(Deut. 12:29-32)

Believers should be strong spiritually, worshiping God alone.

- **How do we draw the line so we practice only what God finds acceptable in worship?**

Apply the Text

- **How is giving our tithes and offerings an act of worship? What would help our giving feel more like a celebration rather than an obligation? Be ready to discuss your ideas with the Bible study group.**

KEY DOCTRINE: The Scriptures

Scripture reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. (See Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a biblical concept.

Read the article “Sacrifice and Offering” in a Bible dictionary. Note the various kinds of offerings and their distinct purposes. How does bringing our offerings of time, talent, and treasure to our house of worship bring praise to God and bless others?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 12:10-11a.

Moses reaffirmed that once the people possessed the promised land, God would decide where He would have “his name dwell.” Moses stressed the importance of allowing the Lord to determine how and where His people would worship Him. God’s people would face many temptations to compromise spiritually as they entered Canaan. They would see practices that seemed enticing to them, but God wanted them to experience life as He designed it.

Why was it important that God determine the place of worship?

God's concern in instructing the Israelites to worship in only one place was to protect the Israelites from the dangers of being pulled into the practices of pagan religions and becoming acclimated to the pagan culture. It may be difficult for us to fully comprehend the importance of the temple of God to the Israelites since no one building is as integral to our lives as the temple was to the Israelites. In the eyes of the Israelites, however, the temple constituted the dwelling place of the God, and every aspect of their lives centered around Him.

If every aspect of your life centered around God, how would your life look different?

Memorize Deuteronomy 12:10-11a, looking for ways to keep God in the center of your life.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 12:1-3

Highlight the word “completely.”

Four times Moses spoke of God’s people obeying His “statutes and ordinances” (Deut. 5:1; 11:32; 12:1; 26:16). These mark the beginning and ending of both parts of Moses’s second message. Like parentheses, the terms indicate the framework for this message. Statutes and ordinances, taken together, refer to the whole law. What will follow are details about following and applying that law.

Worship was the initial focus of these statutes and ordinances. The Lord was calling His people to worship Him in a radically different way. This was because God was radically different from the so-called gods other nations worshiped.

God called His people to “destroy completely” all the pagan worship sites. These were easily identified. Canaanites put them atop “high mountains” and hills, believing this allowed the worshipers to be closer to their gods. Canaanites also set up places of worship under specific trees. Further, they were to destroy all objects that represented the Canaanite gods or that the people used as a part of their worship. God did not want His people tempted to go to these sites and participate in their worship.

By destroying the locations and objects of worship, the Lord intended to erase the false gods’ names from the land and thus, the people’s minds.

Ancient idols were easily identified. How can you recognize idols today?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 12:4-7

Underline the word “instead” and note the contrast.

Verse 4 raises two significant questions. First, why was God to be worshiped differently? Simply put, He was unlike the false gods and deities the Canaanites worshiped. He alone is God. All other supposed deities were the products of people’s imaginations. Second, what did this prohibition include? The Israelites could not involve themselves in the Canaanites’ pagan worship practices. They could not try to mix Canaanite and Hebrew worship practices. God allowed no compromise. Verses 2 and 3 mentioned “all the places” and “every place.” The Canaanites worshiped their numerous gods, deities, and idols in multiple places. Verse 5, though, talks about “the place”—singular. The Israelites were to worship at a singular place, the tabernacle. God’s “name,” His essence and glory, dwelt there. The Israelites were to “turn to” it and “go there.”

The people were to bring their offerings and gifts to the designated place. God spoke about the tenths or “tithes.” The Hebrews paid these out of gratitude for what their Sovereign Lord had done and would continue to do. The tithe was a tenth of the produce from the peoples’ fields and herds. The Hebrews typically gave these during the Feast or Festival of Weeks (Deut. 26:1-11). The “freewill offerings” were given spontaneously; “vow offerings” were planned.

How might worldly practices find their way into Christian worship?



Day 3: Deuteronomy 12:8-11

Consider what God's "name" refers to in verse 11.

The people had not yet come "into the resting place," meaning where they would settle on the other side of the Jordan. They had not yet received "the inheritance" God had promised. Thus, worship felt temporary and transitory, rather than firmly established in the land. Life on the other side of the Jordan would differ from what the people had experienced while enslaved in Egypt and traveling in the wilderness. God described Canaan as "the resting place" (v. 9). In doing so, He was not describing a life of leisure where the people would do no work or have no responsibilities. God promised to give His people rest from all their enemies.

Verse 11 echoes verses 5-6. The "then" comes as part of a sequence introduced in verse 10. When you cross, when you live in the land, when He gives you rest, and when you live in security—then—the Lord would reveal where His "name" was to dwell. God's name was more than a title. It indicated His essence, glory, and power.

The Lord would dictate the details about "the place" He would "choose." God had chosen Israel to be His people (Deut. 7:6-7), had chosen to deliver them from Egypt (4:37), and had chosen the Levites to serve as the Hebrew priests (18:1-7). Where His name would dwell would also be the Lord's decision.

Why was the place the people worshiped important to God? Is it important today? Explain.



Day 4: Deuteronomy 12:29-30

Compare Deuteronomy 12:30 to Psalm 106:36.

Verses 29-32 state the three-fold essential emphasis of Deuteronomy: God would lead His people successfully into the promised land, they were to worship Him alone, and they were to remain faithful to His full law.

The Hebrew word translated "annihilates" carries the idea of something being destroyed. God earlier promised Moses, "For my angel will go before you and bring you to the land of the Amorites, Hethites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out" (Ex. 23:23). These were the "nations" God would annihilate. However, the destruction would come at the hands of God's people. Thus, God said the Hebrews would "drive them out."

Having promised His people military victory, God knew the Israelites faced another threat—spiritual defeat. He did not want His people to go after foreign gods. A concern was that the Hebrews would attempt to incorporate some of the Canaanites' religious practices and beliefs into Judaism. The word for this type of mixing is "syncretism."

God was telling His people not to become curious about the Canaanite gods. He knew that if they began to "inquire," they might become enamored by those religions and become "ensnared" in their beliefs and practices. The root for the Hebrew word translated "ensnared" means to be entrapped, as with a noose.

Why did God tell His people not to be curious about Canaanite gods? What does this mean for you?



Day 5: Deuteronomy 12:31-32

Highlight the word “everything.”

As does verse 30, verse 31 twice mentions “their gods.” The Egyptians and Canaanites worshiped multiple gods. Verse 31, though, speaks twice of “the LORD,” singular. Worshiping one God differentiated the Israelites from all other people groups.

Moses declared that “the LORD hates” Canaanite worship. God said the Canaanites “practice every detestable act . . . for their gods.” The one practice God mentioned here is that they burned “their sons and daughters in the fire.” They sacrificed their children as burnt offerings. We find a description of other detestable practices a few chapters later (18:9-11; 23:17). Concerning the possibility of adopting any Canaanite beliefs and practices, God said emphatically, “you must not.”

Verse 32 repeats two thoughts Moses stated earlier: follow God’s commands and do not add to or take anything from them (Deut. 4:2,4). God’s Word is altogether sufficient.

God made amazing promises to those who would obey His commands. He would affirm them as his own possession. Further, God said He “will elevate you to praise, fame, and glory above all the nations he has made, and that you will be a holy people to the LORD your God as he promised” (26:19). Just a generation earlier, these same people were Pharaoh’s slaves. God promised to bless them with a land and life they could have never imagined. What a promotion!

How can you make sure your worship is acceptable to God?

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your life for “gods” that might draw you away from remaining loyal to the Lord alone. What actions can you take to safeguard yourself from being drawn away?

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SESSION 11

Covenant Relationship

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-6,15-19

BELIEVERS FIND GOD'S BLESSINGS THROUGH OBEDIENCE.



We've all seen it. The parent is down on one knee, talking to her child on the first day of a new school year. "Now, you have your backpack? Good. Remember to do what the teacher tells you. No acting up. Don't forget to bring home any papers I need to sign. Don't lose your lunch money. And have fun!" At this point, the parent isn't telling the child anything new. He or she is reinforcing and putting a new emphasis on what the child has heard countless times.

*WHAT WISE "MESSAGES" DID YOUR PARENTS REPEAT TO YOU OVER AND OVER AGAIN?
WHAT IMPACT DID HEARING THOSE WORDS HAVE ON YOU?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Deuteronomy contains Moses's messages to the Israelites before they entered the promised land. The first (1:1-4:49) recalled their history as they traveled from Mount Sinai to their then-current location on the Plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River and across from Jericho. His second message (5:1-26:19) reviewed the Ten Commandments and how to apply them in the promised land.

The final verses of Moses's second message (26:16-19) serve as a summary of chapters 12-26. They remind God's people to obey God's commands. Doing so affirmed that the Lord was their God. Additionally, God promised to elevate His people above all other peoples. These four verses firmly connect what came before (chaps. 1-26) with what came afterward (chaps. 27-28).

Twice, verses 16-19 use the word "today," undergirding the commitment God has for His people and His people have for Him. Ancient Near Eastern covenants and/or treaties included statements of mutual commitment. These covenants and treaties also

included promised rewards for honoring the agreement and, in contrast, consequences of disobeying it. This is the emphasis of today's text, Deuteronomy 27-28.

God instructed His people to have a ceremony once they entered Canaan. They were to celebrate their entrance into the land and seal the terms of the covenantal agreement. This ceremony was to take place on two mountains in Samaria. Mount Ebal, the northern of the two, rises to about 1,400 feet; Mount Gerizim rises to 2,850 feet. Half the tribes would gather on Mount Ebal and the others on Mount Gerizim. The people were to set up an altar on Mount Ebal and offer sacrifices to God there.

In the saddle between the two mountains is Shechem. This was the site of Jacob's well, where, centuries later, Jesus met a Samaritan woman. Her forefathers had worshiped on "this mountain," meaning Mount Gerizim (John 4:20).



1 “Now **A** if you faithfully obey **B** the LORD your God and are careful to follow all his commands I am giving you today, the LORD your God will put you **far above C** all the nations of the earth. **2** All these blessings will come and **overtake D** you, because you obey the LORD your God: **3** You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. **4** Your offspring will be blessed, and your land’s produce, and the offspring of your livestock, including the young of your herds and the newborn of your flocks. **5** Your basket and kneading bowl will be blessed. **6** You will be blessed when you **come in E** and blessed when you go out. (. . .) **15** But if you do not obey **F** the LORD your God by carefully following all his commands and statutes I am giving you today, all these **curses G** will come and overtake you: **16** You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. **17** Your basket and kneading bowl will be cursed. **18** Your offspring will be cursed, and your land’s produce, the young of your herds, and the newborn of your flocks. **19** You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.”

A. Moses had talked about God’s expectations for “this day” or “today” (Deut. 26:16-19) before shifting to life in Canaan (27:2). Chapter 28 returns his attention to “now” and “today.”

B. “If” highlights that God’s blessings were not automatic. They were based on Israel’s obedience to His commands.

C. Moses had said that God would exalt Israel (26:19), but this verse again highlights obedience. He did not elevate the Israelites for their own sake, but for His glory. He would be honored when His people lived in holiness.

D. “Accompany” (NIV). The Hebrew suggests a pursuit or chase. It also could relate to reaching a goal. God’s blessings always find God’s people when they remain faithful to Him.

E. The Hebrew word relates to a trip or journey. For four decades, Israel’s travels had been part of God’s judgment. Through obedience, their travels in Canaan would yield prosperity.

F. The curses are not inevitable. Like the blessings, they were conditional. But if the people chose to disobey, they would face the consequences.

G. An expression of ill will, often taking the form of God’s wrath. Here, the curses for disobedience parallel the blessings for obedience.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Faithfulness

(Deut. 28:1-6)

Believers should enjoy the blessing that comes from following God's commands.

- **What do these verses say about the faithfulness of God toward His people? How would these promises encourage God's people to remain faithful to Him?**
- **How do these promised blessings differ from the prosperity theology that is commonly taught and preached today?**

2. Disobedience

(Deut. 28:15-19)

Choosing to disregard God's commands leads to humiliation.

- **What do these curses say about God's nature and character?**

Apply the Text

- **God blesses us so that we can be a conduit of His blessings to others. In what way do you share His blessings?**
- **Be ready to discuss with your group specific ideas about sharing those blessings with someone. What action plan can you make to be a blessing to a certain individual?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See John 1:16-17; Romans 5:20-21.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Read and reflect on a Bible passage.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Try to imagine a life where every aspect of it experienced God's blessing. What would that look like in your life? How and where would God's blessing manifest itself? Now read verses 15-19 and try to imagine life totally apart from God's blessing. How might the thought of such an awful alternative motivate people to live faithfully by God's commands? God wanted to see His people demonstrate their faith in Him through obedience to His commands. How does James describe that concept (Jas. 2:18)?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 28:9. What is the promise in this verse?

The relationship between God and Israel was a covenant relationship. Faithfulness to God's commands would be rewarded. God would exalt the Israelites above all other nations. They and their children would be blessed, and their land and crops would be prosperous.

What blessings can we expect to experience if we obey God and walk in His ways?

Moses put before Israel two options. As a people, they would have to decide which they would choose: obedience that would lead to life, or disobedience that would lead to destruction. We face the same choice today. When we choose to walk in God's ways, we experience the blessings that come with obedience. But if we choose to disregard His Word and His way, we will experience the consequences of our disobedience. God's desire is to bless His people.

How can we encourage one another to walk in God's ways?

Use a Sharpie to write “walk in His ways” on the bottom of your shoe. Each time you put on or take off your shoes, reflect on what it means to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 28:1-2

Highlight the word “overtake.”

The word *bless* occurs seven times in verses 2-6. It appears in verse 2 in noun form as “blessings”; the remaining six are verbs. The emphasis of these verses is on God blessing His people.

The root behind the Hebrew verb translated “overtake” means to reach or take hold of something or someone. It was used in the story of the Egyptian army pursuing Moses and his people as they neared the Red Sea. Scripture says, “The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, his horsemen, and his army—chased after them and *caught up with* them as they camped by the sea” (Ex. 14:9, emphasis added).

One does not passively overtake something or someone. Determination and effort are involved. The promise was that God’s blessings would actively pursue His people. With the promise, though, came a contingency. God’s blessings would pursue and take hold of His people because they made it their practice to “obey the LORD.”

The Lord stated one of His blessings in verse 1. God promised to place His people “far above all the nations of the earth.” Again, this was not something the people could achieve under their own power. They had neither the resources nor training to make such an achievement. Only the power and presence of God could make that happen.

What is the connection between obedience and blessing?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 28:3

Read James 1:17 and identify the source of all blessings.

The term translated “blessed” carries the idea of being prosperous. In modern culture, we tend to think of prosperity in terms of financial resources. The Hebrew word did not have this limitation. To be blessed meant to have one’s life filled with benefits. God is the ultimate source of all blessings. Further, the Hebrews understood that God gave His blessing so the recipient might be a blessing. In other words, the original recipient was a conduit through which God’s blessings flowed to others. Being able to bless others was a sign of living a prosperous life.

This is a far cry from the false teaching about prosperity theology that many proclaim today. Many claim that God will give people material goods and riches if they will only—fill in the blank. What God was promising the Israelites was to honor those who honor Him with proper actions and motives. God will not be mocked and cannot be manipulated. He expects those who serve Him to do so out of love and gratitude, not out of selfish greed. What God desires is a broken spirit and a humble heart (Ps. 51:17).

How do these promised blessings differ from the prosperity theology that is commonly taught and preached today?



Day 3: Deuteronomy 28:4-6

Underline the repeated words in verses 4-6.

Fertility among flocks, fields, and families was the most important contributor to the long-term survival of a household, people, or nation. The text uses the same Hebrew word three times in this one verse to refer to fertility. The literal translation is “fruit” or “fruitfulness.” Thus, the verse declares, “Your fruit will be blessed, your land’s fruit, and the fruit of your livestock will be blessed.” The picture is of abundance.

Context affected how the Hebrews heard this message. The Israelites were going into the land of Canaan. Baal and Astarte, the primary deities of the Canaanites, were known as fertility gods. Pagans worshiped them, prayed to them, and gave them offerings, believing that these so-called gods could bring an abundance of children, harvest, and cattle. Worshipers of these deities often participated in sexual activities, believing their actions would motivate the gods to bless their harvests and homes. This lure was part of the reason God repeatedly told His people to destroy every vestige and site of Canaanite worship.

What an affirmation of the Lord, the God of the Hebrews. He alone was the One who could cause families, cattle, and harvests to be fruitful. For His people, God’s bounty and abundance were comprehensive. Every area of their lives would be blessed.

How do the promises in these verses encourage you to remain faithful to Him?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 28:15-16

Underline the repeated words in verses 15-16.

Just as faithfulness to God’s commands would lead to blessings, failure to follow God’s commands would lead to curses. The list of prescribed disasters and miseries (vv. 15-68) is longer than the list of blessings for obedience (vv. 1-14). This was common in ancient agreements. Evidently, negative reinforcement was more effective in eliciting compliance than promised future rewards.

To be cursed “in the city” and “the country” meant the person was cursed wherever he or she was. Being opposites, and yet used together, city and country meant everywhere. This grammatical device is similar to our saying that we’ve searched high and low for something. That means we’ve searched everywhere we can imagine. This thought of being cursed everywhere had to be horrifying. It meant that all of life’s activities were cursed. It was a life of hardship and humiliation, of difficulty and deprivation. These verses outline some of those challenges.

One thing that is clear throughout these verses is that the consequences for disobedience come from the hand of God. “The LORD will send against you curses, confusion, and rebuke in everything you do until you are destroyed and quickly perish, because of the wickedness of your actions in abandoning me” (v. 20).

What do you think a “cursed” life looks like today?



Day 5: Deuteronomy 28:17-19

Underline the repeated words in verses 17-19.

For one's "basket" and "kneading bowl" to be cursed meant that obtaining the most basic necessity of daily life was going to be a hardship. In other words, God's curses were going to hit people right where they lived.

The curses affecting the Israelites' offspring, produce, herds, and flocks would come as diseases and drought (Deut. 28:22-24,60-61). Many would die. God said, "Though you were as numerous as the stars of the sky, you will be left with only a few people, because you did not obey the LORD your God. Just as the LORD was glad to cause you to prosper and to multiply you, so he will also be glad to cause you to perish and to destroy you" (vv. 62-63a).

The picture in the curses is of a life of misery. This, though, is not God's desire. The purpose of the curses was to draw God's people back to Himself. He is holy; it is His nature and His character. He calls His people to be holy and wholly devoted to Him (Lev. 20:26; Deut. 26:16; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:16). He is still calling His people to commit ourselves to Him today and all our "todays" going forward.

What do these curses say about God's nature and character? Praise Him for those things.

APPLY THE TEXT

This week, as you "do good deeds," ask yourself, "Why am I doing this—to bring glory to God or myself?" What actions can you take to make sure your works come from a pure heart?

JOURNAL



SESSION 12

Fully Committed

DEUTERONOMY 30:11-20

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY A WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT TO GOD.



Do you remember when people sat for a professional family photo? Afterward, somebody must decide which photo was best. One of the best ways to pick the favorite is to not consider multiple options at once. Instead, look at only two. Of these two, which is better? Set aside the not chosen one. Place a new picture beside the chosen one and ask, which is better? By comparing only two, you eliminate choice fatigue. Eventually, you've chosen the best photo.

IN WHAT SITUATION HAVE YOU HAD SO MANY OPTIONS THAT IT WAS OVERWHELMING TO PICK ONLY ONE? HOW DID YOU EVENTUALLY DECIDE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

For forty years, Moses had been leading God's people from Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula. He and the Israelites were now east of the Jordan River, across from the city of Jericho, on the Plains of Moab. At this point, he was an old man. He had spent his first forty years in Egypt, his second tending to his father-in-law's flocks, and his final forty leading the exodus. God's people were standing on the threshold of the promised land. Moses would only be able to view it from a distance; he would never be allowed to enter.

This week's passage would be Moses's last formal message to the Israelites. It was not for a select few. He "summoned all Israel" and began to speak (29:2). This message would apply to everyone.

In this message, Moses covered three main points. First, he spoke about God's past faithfulness. He reminded them of the Lord's mighty acts that led to the Hebrew slaves being freed from Egyptian captivity. Moses highlighted God's faithful love, grace, and care for His people.

Second, Moses emphasized God's covenant with His people. God had spoken His covenant with Moses at Mount Sinai. God's message at Moab was a renewal of the covenant made at Sinai (29:1-2). God directed His people to obey this covenant because He wanted them to succeed in everything they did. Plus, this covenant would establish them as His people (vv. 9,13).

Third, God was giving His people a basis for hope in the future. Knowing God had shown His power and demonstrated His faithfulness in the past would reassure them of His continued care and protection. The people would certainly face challenges in Canaan. Recalling what God had done in the past would encourage them during challenging days ahead.



11 “This **command** **A** that I give you today is certainly **not too difficult** **B** or beyond your reach. **12** It is **not in heaven** **C** so that you have to ask, ‘Who will go up to heaven, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?’ **13** And it is not **across the sea** **D** so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?’ **14** But the message is very near you, in your mouth and **in your heart**, **E** so that you may follow it. **15** See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity. **16** For I am commanding you today to **love the LORD your God**, **F** to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. **17** But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are led astray to bow in worship to other gods and serve them, **18** I tell you today that you will **certainly perish** **G** and will not prolong your days in the land you are entering to possess across the Jordan. **19** I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, **20** love the LORD your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For **he is your life**, **H** and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

A. While stated in the singular, the phrase refers to the entirety of God’s covenant demands.

B. Obeying God’s law is not easy, but it also is not reserved for a privileged few. All those in a covenant relationship with Him can understand and obey His instructions.

C. Moses’s first metaphor described accessibility to God’s law. The Lord did not keep His instructions out of reach or impossible to grasp.

D. Moses’s second metaphor emphasized that God’s law does not require great effort to obtain. Essentially, the ancient Israelites were land dwellers. So, for them, placing God’s law across the sea made it virtually impossible to retrieve.

E. To have God’s Word “in your heart” is to know and embrace it internally, not merely by rote. It should affect our actions (Deut. 6:5; 11:18).

F. We express our love for the Lord by two actions: “walk in his ways” and “keep his commands.”

G. The Hebrew states the truth emphatically. Rebelling against God would have devastating consequences for Israel.

H. Life is not found in the law, but in the God who gives and sustains it. Apart from Him, there is no life. Jesus made the same claim (John 14:6).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Command

(Deut. 30:11-14)

We can trust God to give us the ability to obey His commands.

- **How can you respond to people who say it is too difficult to know God's will or to obey His commands?**
- **If people think God's truths are confusing and unattainable, how might that affect their openness to God's Word?**

2. The Commitment

(Deut. 30:15-18)

People must choose whether they will follow God or not.

- **How are people today fooled into thinking there is no penalty for sin?**
- **Based on these verses, what does loving God look like?**

3. The Challenge

(Deut. 30:19-20)

Our desire to follow God influences our descendants' choices to follow Him.

- **What does it mean for you to say God "is your life"? In this context, what does it mean for you to "choose life"?**

Apply the Text

- **Discuss the following: What can you do to understand God's Word better? How can your Bible study group help people with little Bible knowledge to better understand God's Word?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3:6-7; James 1:14-15.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Read multiple Bible passages to understand a biblical concept.

Read Deuteronomy 30:19-20; 32:46-47; John 17:3; and Colossians 3:1-4. Reflect on what it means that God is our life. Practically speaking, what does that look like? How does the truth these verses communicate challenge you to adjust your priorities?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 30:16. How is love for God expressed according to this verse?

Moses had just reminded the people that God's commands were not beyond their reach (vv. 11-14). God had made His will for His people perfectly clear. His commands were not too difficult to understand. His truth was fully accessible to all who desired to obey it. The apostle Paul used this same passage to show that salvation is accessible to all who will believe in Christ (Rom. 10:6-8). In light of this fact, Moses entreated the people to obey God's commands. He repeated the promise that if they did so, God would bless them in the promised land. Moses also made a connection between loving God and obeying God. Jesus taught the same truth, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15).

What objections might people offer to obeying God and walking in His ways?

What God expects of us is neither unrealistic nor arbitrary. God's commands are understandable, doable, and in our best interest.

Name one way you will demonstrate your love for God this week.

Memorize Deuteronomy 30:16, looking for ways to do the actions called for in the verse.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Summarize these verses in a sentence.

God repeatedly called His people to keep His commands. “This command” was not beyond comprehension nor “too difficult” to understand or obey. His command “was not in heaven” or “across the sea.” To be “in heaven” would mean God’s covenant was lofty and unattainable. Although God’s message to His people originated in heaven, it was not beyond their reach. One did not have to be an expert to understand, explain, or apply it. What a contrast to the Egyptians’ and Canaanites’ beliefs about their so-called gods. Worshipers hoped to earn their gods’ favor, but their efforts were a hit-or-miss proposition, like playing darts blindfolded.

Rather than being unattainable, God’s message was near. The Hebrew word translated “message” in verse 14 is singular. This underscores the unity of God’s instruction to His people. God has not left us an incoherent rambling of disconnected thoughts and teachings. He has given a unified single message to His people.

To have the message in one’s “heart” meant God’s command and covenant had been woven into the hearer’s very being. Having it in one’s “mouth” meant the person could articulate the content of God’s message. The Lord had a reason for wanting the Israelites to achieve this heart and mouth level of understanding; He wanted His people to “follow” His covenant.

What would you say to someone who claims God’s commands are too difficult?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 30:15-16

Highlight the contrasts in verse 15.

In Hebrew thought, “prosperity” was not limited to having abundant financial resources. Prosperity could also refer to experiencing kindness and living joyfully. In contrast, “adversity” referred to experiences that were unpleasant or hurtful.

Moses reiterated the command that God’s people were to love and obey Him (Deut. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9). These two actions were, by definition, interwoven. Jesus understood this. He told His disciples, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23).

Verse 16 points to three benefits of walking in God’s ways and obeying His commands. God’s people would live in the land, multiply in the land, and be blessed in the land they would possess. This was the life and the prosperity mentioned in verse 15. What a far cry from the preceding generation. They had been slaves in another land; someone else possessed them. Due to God’s blessing, they would have a land and would possess it. What a great reminder that God can take our worst circumstance and turn it into a blessing.

God’s people are not immune from difficulties. We are “born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). We don’t have to face those troubles, though, by ourselves. God is still at work.

List some benefits of walking in God’s ways and obeying His instruction.



Day 3: Deuteronomy 30:17-18

Pay attention to the progression of action in verse 17.

Numerous times, God had called His people to follow His statutes and ordinances (Deut. 4:5,6,14; 6:1; 11:22). But what if their “heart turns away” from God, meaning they reject Him? Verse 17 contains a progression of action. The first step begins in the heart. Surrounded by the pagan Canaanites, a person could begin to think, “I really am tired of these restrictive customs and laws.” Second, the person no longer listens to what God has said. This leads to step three; the person is “led astray.” Growing more comfortable in the presence of the ungodly can lead to steps four and five. The person will begin to bow in worship and ultimately serve the other gods. Those false gods will get the person’s time, attention, energy, and resources. This is what it means to “serve them.”

God is fair and just. He warned His people and told them the consequences of having a heart that turns from Him. The consequences were two-fold, loss of life and loss of longevity. “You will certainly perish” echoes God’s warning to Adam and Eve about eating the forbidden fruit in the garden (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve did not physically die that day; yet they were banished from the garden because of their sin and eventually died. God’s people were eventually banished from the land where He was about to place them. They had gone after foreign gods. Sin had consequences—and still does today.

Why do people get fooled into thinking sin has no consequences?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 30:19

Circle the phrase “choose life” in verse 19.

As if in a courtroom setting, the Lord called His two witnesses against His people, “heaven and earth.” The phrase referred to all of creation. No being, either human or heavenly, could ever deny that God gave His people ample opportunity to make the right choice. The word today added a sense of urgency. Moses’s time with the Israelites was coming to an end. The time to decide was now.

The decision was between “life” and “blessing” or “death” and “curse”—the very options Moses had been describing. Several times in Deuteronomy Moses had urged God’s people to choose life (4:1; 5:33; 6:2; 8:1; 16:20). Here, he clearly laid out the only two options the Israelites had.

The decision they made this day would affect them and subsequent generations. The decision was not merely a mental or academic one. No one could say, “I am going to choose that one, but it’s not going to change my life.” No, the choice would have major life implications.

Pray today for someone who is struggling with a decision that could lead to blessing or curse.



Day 5: Deuteronomy 30:20

Highlight the phrase “he is your life.”

Like mixing water and dye, which cannot be separated, loving, obeying, and remaining faithful to God affects every area of life. Why the connection? Because God “is your life.” He had created His people. He had chosen them. He had led them. Apart from Him, the Israelites would not have existed as a people or individuals. He was the only one who could fulfill the promise He had sworn to the Israelites’ ancestors. They would live in the land for a prolonged period of time. This was the essence of the old covenant.

It is also the core of the new covenant in Christ. Death could not win over Him because “in him was life” (John 1:4). He said of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6). At one point in His ministry, many in the crowd quit following Jesus. He challenged His disciples, asking if they too were going to walk away. “Simon Peter answered, ‘Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life’” (6:68). Peter knew that in Jesus alone was life. The same is true still today.

The disciples had a decision to make. The Israelites had a decision to make. We have a decision to make. It’s the decision every person must make for themselves. The choice is between life and blessing—or death and curse. Today, which do you choose?

What does it mean for you to say God “is your life”? In this context, what does it mean for you to “choose life”?

APPLY THE TEXT

The enemy lures people away from God incrementally rather than in one huge leap. How might this apply to you? Do you sense you are not as close to God as you once were? What changes will you make this week to renew your commitment to God?

JOURNAL



SESSION 13

God's Power

DEUTERONOMY 33:1-5, 26-29

BELIEVERS CAN LIVE WITHOUT FEAR KNOWING THAT THEY SERVE THE ONE TRUE GOD.



In this scene, we may have been the parent or the child. The child is standing on the side of the pool. The parent is in the water, arms outstretched and saying, “You can do it. I’ll catch you. I promise you’ll be fine.” The child is hesitating. “Ready? On the count of three.” Still hesitant, but finally the child lunges and is grabbed safely just as he reaches the water.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FEAR AND INSECURITY?
BETWEEN TRUST AND SECURITY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Deuteronomy records what occurred while the Israelites stood at the threshold of the promised land. They had left Egypt forty years before.

The story involving Egypt actually began when Joseph’s jealous brothers sold him into slavery. He ended up in Egypt. While there, Joseph experienced a complete reversal of status. He went from being a nobody to a somebody, becoming the second in command in all of Egypt. Joseph, and eventually his entire family, came to know the luxuries of the house of Pharaoh. For 400 years, Joseph’s descendants, the Hebrews, remained in Egypt.

During that time they also experienced a complete reversal of status. They came to know the misery of back-breaking, forced labor. They knew what it was to have no home, no land to call their own.

God, though, would raise up a man who would lead them from Egypt to the land He promised to Abraham and his descendants. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers record events that occurred during their journey.

Once again, the Israelites’ situation was about to completely change. They had been sojourners; they were about to be inhabitants of Canaan. The people had known only Moses as their leader. But Moses’s successor, Joshua, would lead them into Canaan.

Deuteronomy 31:1–34:12 contains the last recorded words of Moses. It tells of his commissioning Joshua to be his successor. Chapter 32 contains a hymn that extols God’s goodness and calls His people to live faithfully by the covenant. Chapter 34 tells of Moses’s death.

This week’s study focuses on God’s blessings for His covenant people—His protection, presence, and provision. The text will include words and concepts we encounter in the New Testament: blessed, loved, happy, everlasting, and saved. It affirms the great message of Scripture—none other is like our Lord; He alone is God and worthy of our worship.



1 This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, gave the Israelites before his death. **2** He said: The LORD **came from Sinai** **A** and appeared to them from Seir; he shone on them from Mount Paran and came with **ten thousand holy ones**, **B** with lightning from his right hand for them. **3** Indeed **he loves the people**. **C** All your holy ones are in your hand, and they assemble at your feet. Each receives your words. **4** Moses gave us instruction, a possession for the assembly of Jacob. **5** So he became King in **Jeshurun** **D** when the leaders of the people gathered with the tribes of Israel. (. . .) **26** There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who **rides the heavens** **E** to your aid, the clouds in his majesty. **27** The God of old is **your dwelling place**, **F** and underneath are the everlasting arms. He drives out the enemy before you and commands, “Destroy!” **28** So Israel dwells securely; Jacob lives untroubled in a land of grain and new wine; even his skies drip with dew. **29** How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will **cringe** **G** before you, and you will tread on their backs.

A. Using poetic imagery, Moses described how God revealed Himself to Israel at points throughout their wilderness journey.

B. The Hebrew suggests a divine Hero, leading an angelic army in protecting and providing for Israel. From God’s perspective, forty years of wandering was an unstoppable march toward His ultimate purposes.

C. God’s love for Israel is reiterated across Deuteronomy. He loved the forefathers (4:37; 10:15), chose Israel as His own (7:8), and multiplied them (7:13). His presence and protection demonstrated His love (23:5).

D. A term of endearment that means “upright” (32:15; 33:26; Isa. 44:2). Despite missteps, God saw Israel as true to her name, responding in love to her King.

E. Canaanites thought their god, Baal, rode on the clouds, but Moses corrects that theology. The Lord alone rides in the heavens to support His people (Pss. 18:10; 68:33; Isa. 19:1; Ezek. 1).

F. God had made His dwelling among His people, but Israel’s security in the promised land would depend on them taking refuge in Him.

G. Israel’s enemies would be revealed as false and would be forced to submit to God’s people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. King

(Deut. 33:1-5)

Believers can trust in God's love for them.

- **Why do you think the Bible portrays God in so many ways, such as a Warrior, King, and Shepherd?**
- **Which biblical portrait or title comes to mind first when you think of Him and why?**

2. Dwelling Place

(Deut. 33:26-29)

Believers should find their security in God alone.

- **What does it teach us about God that He is our "dwelling place"?**

Apply the Text

- **How have you seen God to be sufficient in times of need? Discuss with your Bible study group why people tend to look for security in something they can see and touch.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

There is one and only one living and true God. (See Isaiah 46:9; 1 Timothy 2:5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words and concepts.

In Deuteronomy 33 Moses blessed the tribes of Israel. Focus on the word "blessing" in verse 1. Look up the word in an English dictionary to discover its basic meaning. Read the article on "bless, blessing" in a Bible dictionary to discover the biblical usage of "bless." Write any insights you learn in the space below. Read examples of blessing others in Genesis 27:27-29; Numbers 6:22-27; 2 Corinthians 13:13; and Hebrews 13:20-21. Finally, on a separate sheet of paper, write a blessing for each member of your family.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 33:29. According to this verse, why was Israel blessed?

In Deuteronomy 33, Moses spoke a blessing over the Israelites before they entered the promised land. He reminded the people of the greatness of their God. The Lord had led them from Egypt to the promised land, and He would continue to lead them in the days ahead. Moses assured them they would know security in the land He had given them because He is a faithful God. This was reason to rejoice.

In what ways is God your shield? In what ways is He your sword?

The identity of God's people was grounded in God's saving acts. Everything God had done for them in the past provided confidence for the present and future. The God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage would be their Shield, Protector, and Sword. This distinguished God's people from all other people: "Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD?" (v. 29).

What distinguishes you as a follower of Christ?

For the next seven days, make “He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in” a repeating event on your smart-phone calendar.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 33:1-2

Note the warrior imagery in verse 2 and consider how that would encourage the Israelites as they were about to enter the promised land.

Verse 2 depicts God as a Divine Warrior. The imagery would encourage the Israelites as they faced military opposition on the other side of the Jordan. They would not be going alone or under their own power; God would be going before them (Deut. 31:3,8).

God marched, leading His people from Mount Sinai. The “them” is the Israelites mentioned in verse 1. Seir is the southern wilderness of Edom, which at the time began at the southern tip of the Dead Sea and stretched southward toward the Gulf of Aqaba (Red Sea). Today, we associate this region with ancient Petra. Mount Paran is the wilderness region west of Moab. The emphasis in this verse, though, is not on the geography or route; the focus is on the Lord as He led His people.

That God “shone” on His people refers to His gleaming brilliance (see Ps. 104:2; Hab. 3:4). Some scholars believe the “ten thousand holy ones” were angelic beings. The New Testament teaches that angels were involved in transmitting the law to God’s people (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). Others believe the holy ones were God’s people, the Israelites. God had called them to be holy as He is holy (Lev. 11:44; 20:26). The second option is the more likely one; the lightning in God’s “right hand” was “for them.”

How does the image of God as warrior encourage you today?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 33:3-4

Underline “he loves the people.”

Verse 3 declares that God loves His people. Giving evidence of that love, the Lord’s having His people in His hand meant they belonged to Him; He protected and provided for them. In response, God’s people assembled at His “feet.” This was where the student sat—at the feet of the teacher. Sitting there was an indication of humility and loyalty to the teacher. At God’s feet, His people would receive His words.

God gave His words to the Israelites, here called “the assembly of Jacob.” The term pointed back to Jacob calling his sons while on his deathbed. This unique word of instruction was for the Israelites. Earlier, God asked through Moses, “And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today?” (Deut. 4:8). Both in content and intent, God’s instruction to the Israelites was unlike any other religious teaching. It remains so today. God’s Word is a light that illuminates our lives (Ps. 119:105). It is our source of spiritual nourishment (1 Pet. 2:2). It is a sword that penetrates to the core of our being (Heb. 4:12-13). It is a mirror that reveals to us our true selves (Jas. 1:23).

Give thanks to God for the evidence of His love.



Day 3: Deuteronomy 33:5

Compare Deuteronomy 33:5 to Psalm 24:8-10.

Verse 2 identified God as the Victorious Warrior. In verse 5 He is proclaimed to be the “King in Jeshurun,” which is a poetic name for Israel. It means “upright one.” The title King underscores God’s ultimate authority. That God is King is a theme throughout Scripture. The Bible declares that God is King over all the earth (Ps. 47:7).

The King had the authority to gather the leaders and the tribes unto Himself. He did this to speak His blessings over them (Deut. 33:7-25). Because God alone is King, He could fulfill those blessings.

The declaration that God is King is significant. Reading through the story of Moses, one of the things we notice is that the Pharaoh of the exodus is not named. He is called either Pharaoh or the king of Egypt (Ex. 5:1,4). Biblical scholars have long speculated about his identity. Egyptians believed their pharaohs were divine; they worshiped them as gods. Omitting the pharaoh’s name was intentional; the only King and God who mattered was Yahweh. God alone was (and is) worthy of worship.

God’s being King should give us security and comfort. We have put our trust in the only One with the authority, power, and resources to fulfill all His promises.

Why do you think the Bible portrays God in so many ways, such as a Warrior, King, and Shepherd? Which biblical portrait or title comes to mind first when you think of Him and why?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 33:26-27

Pay attention to how these verses indicate God as both above His people and underneath them.

Verses 6-25 record Moses’s blessing the descendants of Jacob and their tribes. Verses 26-28 focus on the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The declaration begins by proclaiming that no other god is like Him. God riding “the heavens” and “the clouds” meant He was the triumphant King riding his stallion either to war or in victory. Being the triumphant King, He alone could give Israel (here called Jeshurun), aid. He alone was clothed in majesty. God would also be a refuge for His people. Only the Lord could provide the security His people would need. Only He would have “everlasting arms.”

Some commentators link God’s “dwelling place” with the heavens and clouds mentioned in verse 26. Thus, verse 27 highlights that God is above His people and His everlasting arms are beneath. Nothing could better picture God’s dependable protection and security for His people. Like a strong and loving Father, He safeguards His own in His caring embrace.

At the same time, He drove out the enemy before them. Thus, God was above them, His arms were beneath them, and He was at work in front of them. It is the picture of complete security. The New Testament takes this a step further. God is not only above, below, and before His people. The beloved disciple wrote, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Turn verses 26-27 into a prayer of praise to God.



Day 5: Deuteronomy 33:28-29

Circle the words “shield” and “sword” in verse 29.

The Hebrew verb translated “dwells” carries the idea of settling down and abiding. Since God would drive the enemy out and destroy it, Israel could settle down and live securely and untroubled in the land. This, of course, was speaking in the most idealized of terms; God’s people would experience battles and struggles. Israel’s real security would come only in God. The land would provide both peace and plenty. To people who had eaten manna for forty years, the thought of grain and drink had to be incomprehensible. Something besides manna would fall from the sky!

God was their “shield” and their “sword.” The shield was for protection; the sword was for fighting. He was both defender and warrior, battling on behalf of His people. God’s people could be assured that they would have victory, regardless of what they might face in the land of Canaan. That their “enemies” would “cringe” before them indicates the enemies’ previous boasting would be silenced. To place one’s foot on the “backs” of the conquered opponent was the ultimate symbol of victory. The Israelites did tread on the backs of their defeated. Joshua instructed his soldiers to each place a foot on the necks of five defeated kings. “So the commanders came forward and put their feet on their necks” (Josh. 10:24).

The Israelites had been victims in Egypt. By God’s hand and power, they would enter Canaan and be victorious!

**What do you put your trust in for security?
What kind of security does God offer you?**

APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on your own spiritual journey. Have you ever doubted that God loved you? What were you going through that made you feel alienated from Him? Who do you know that might be going through something similar? What can you say or do to offer hope and reassurance?

JOURNAL



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.
- If a QR code is available in the Leader Helps, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage.

Through the Week

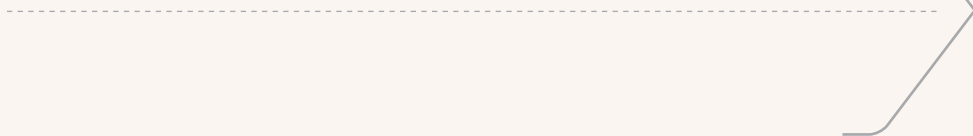
- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.

The Day before Group Study Time

- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.



After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **VISIT THEM.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **ASK THEM.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **TELL THEM.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **SHOW THEM.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **INVITE THEM.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
 - Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
 - Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
 - You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
 - Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
 - As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.
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Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
 - Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
 - Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
 - Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
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Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here's how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **STEP 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You're just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **STEP 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **STEP 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **STEP 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **STEP 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **STEP 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **STEP 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.



The Journey

Session 1 • Numbers 9:15-23



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 1** (Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab) and **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy). Make copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line).

INTRODUCE: As adults arrive, encourage them to share about a recent trip. Ask them to share where they went and why, as well as sites they visited along the way. Find out if they used a GPS on any part of the trip.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 13.

ASK: Think of a time when bad directions led you somewhere unexpected. How can getting just one detail wrong disrupt our travels? (p. 13)

EXPLAIN: Share that this session is the first in a study of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab). Provide copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line) for additional context for the books. Point out that in these books, Israel moved through the wilderness, but they always had a solid Source of direction: the Lord's presence.

TRANSITION: As you reflect on the journey Israel was undertaking, think about your own spiritual walk. Consider times when you've followed the wrong guide and where those experiences led. Ask God to help you go where He wants you to go for His glory.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Share the following information in **Understand the Context** (p. 13) to help set the background for the book of Numbers: *The book of Numbers presents three primary scenes, and geographic locations identify each. The first part (chaps. 1–10) occurred while the Israelites were still at Mount Sinai. The second describes their journey from Sinai toward Canaan (chaps. 11–25). The final section (chaps. 26–36) describes God's people on the Plains of Moab—across the Jordan River from Jericho.*

IDENTIFY: Use **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy) to show where this session falls. Explain that the first several chapters of Numbers describe a census of the people. Note that in Numbers 9:15, Moses returned to the narrative.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 9:15-16 as the group listens for God's actions in the verses.

EXAMINE: Emphasize that God wanted to dwell among the Israelites, so He made His presence known above the tabernacle.

- **(9:15)** The term “tabernacle” comes from a word that means “to dwell” and describes God’s dwelling place among His people. The word first appears in Exodus 25:8 and denotes a tent that Israel could transport through the wilderness. Solomon built the temple 480 years later as a permanent structure where God’s people could worship Him (1 Kings 6–8; see 6:1).
- **(9:15)** The cloud of God’s glory is significant, as it was a common companion with Israel in the wilderness. When God’s people left Egypt, God showed His presence with a cloud (Ex. 13:21). The cloud was a visible manifestation of His guidance; the people did not need to fear, because God led them! By covering the tabernacle, God also confirmed that His glory/presence would dwell there.

ASK: How do you think the visible evidence of God’s presence made the Israelites feel? How can you be assured of His presence in your life? What are some ways you can benefit from His presence (p. 15)



The Tabernacle

Scan here to discover more about this place of worship built by the Israelites.

READ: Direct the group to read silently **Numbers 9:17-21**, considering Israel’s response to God’s revelation of Himself.

ACTIVITY: Prior to the session, collect several board games that require players to move around the board. During the session, show adults the games and encourage them to share how players determine their movements. Point out that knowing where and when to move is an important skill in life.

DISCUSS: Draw two columns on the board: *Move* and *Not Move*. Encourage the group to share how Israel determined whether they needed to move or stay put. Lead a brief discussion about why they were willing to follow God’s presence.

RECAP: Emphasize that at times, the cloud stayed in place for many days. Other times, the wait lasted only a few days. These verses are a reminder that the Lord sometimes compels us to wait. He may call us to sit still—which can be difficult to do. Many times we wait without knowing why.

ASK: Have there been times when God made you wait for an answer or solution from Him? How did that experience affect your faith? (p. 15)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Numbers 9:22-23** as the group reflects on how God set the timeframe for Israel’s journey.

EXAMINE: Explain the two implications from “lifted up”: abrupt action that suggested prompt obedience and decisive leadership that followed God’s plan with no questions asked. Encourage adults to suggest why both of these are important to experiencing God’s presence and following Him well. Note that we can afford to act “abruptly” when we are confident in God’s leadership.

READ: Read verse 23 aloud once again. Emphasize the “LORD’s command” and the “LORD’s requirement.” Share that through all the focus on the movement of God’s presence, we can learn much from Israel’s obedience.

- **(9:23)** While God could have told them everything in advance, He chose a different path. He commanded them to follow Him as He revealed the way. Most of the time, God does not reveal His entire agenda at once. As humans, we might feel overwhelmed, and our faith would be hindered. Instead, He graciously reveals His purposes on a “need to know” basis. This allows us to trust Him and obey one step at a time.

ASK: Why does it matter that we follow the Lord’s lead? Why do we sometimes delay doing what He wants us to do? (p. 15)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers can be assured that God is with them and can provide trustworthy guidance.
- Following God’s guidance will require believers to act on His instruction.
- Following God in faith means that we act on His timeframe and not our own.

IDENTIFY: Encourage adults to consider the three statements and to identify the one that presents the greatest challenge to them. Provide an index card and direct them to write

a prayer, asking God to help them lean into His presence and help as they address this issue during the week.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 15. Allow adults to suggest ways the group can be more involved in an existing ministry or start a new ministry. Urge them to make this a matter of prayer during the week.

PRAY: The **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** provides weekly prayer prompts based on this quarter’s Bible passages. Encourage adults to scan the QR code on page 15. Be prepared to lead a prayer based on Numbers 9:15-23 using the prompts in the prayer guide: *Thank God for His constant presence in your life. Thank God for the ways He has directed and guided you. Ask God to give you the wisdom to know when to wait on Him and when to step out in faith. Pray that you would be faithful to God where you are right now.*

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Remind the group of the suggestions they came up with for existing or new ministries. Challenge them to prayerfully consider the options during the week and to bring their top two options to the next session. Urge them to seek God’s leadership as they reflect on where God might be leading them.



Provision

Session 2 • Numbers 11:4-17



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Make copies of **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line*) and **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness*).

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 21.

ASK: When has some difficulty kept you from being able to do what you needed to do? How did you feel when someone came through with a solution? (p. 21)

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to talk about a recent project they completed and the obstacles they had to overcome to get the job done. Emphasize the importance of perseverance in life.

IDENTIFY: Share that this session continues the study of the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and show where today's passage can be found on the outline. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line*). Allow adults to scan the handout to gain more insight into Israel's travels in the wilderness and the context of this session.

TRANSITION: As we look into today's session, don't forget that God has a purpose for your life. He has called you to take the lead in some way, and He has given you the tools you need to get the job done. Consider how you can lean into Him to fulfill His plans, even when you face opposition or challenges.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Numbers 11:4-9** as the group listens for Israel's complaints in the verses.

ASK: What comes to mind when you hear the word "riffraff"? What did Moses mean when he talked about "riffraff" in verse 4?

SHARE: Share the following explanation of the word "riffraff."

- **(11:4)** The term *riffraff* is used only here in the Bible, but it is related to the word "gather." It describes a group that gathered to complain. Some interpreters suggest that they were part of the "mixed multitude" of non-Israelites who left Egypt with God's people (Ex. 12:38). Their disgruntled attitudes and words were contagious and quickly spread.

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness*). Point out Numbers 11 and note this was not the first or last time Israel would complain about something.

EXAMINE: Direct adults to scan verses 4-6 and identify the dangers in their attitudes. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Emphasize that redefining “the good old days” led the Israelites to question God’s goodness and to take His provision for granted. Point out that God had been gracious to provide manna in abundance, but the Israelites were starting to despise His generous gift of grace.

- **(11:5-6)** The Israelites were guilty of “selective memory.” They remembered the food in Egypt, but they had forgotten the difficult working conditions, oppressive taskmasters, the death of Hebrew baby boys, and more. The challenges they faced in the wilderness already had caused them to remember Egypt as a better place than it really was for them.

ASK: What does God’s providing manna to His people reveal about Him? What blessings from God might we tend to overlook? (p. 23)

READ: Direct the group to read silently Numbers 11:10-15, noting evidence of Moses’s frustration.

EXAMINE: Write *God’s response* on the board. Direct adults to read verse 10 again and determine how God reacted to the people.

ASK: Why do you think God was so angry at His people? We often applaud Moses for his great faith and obedience. What does verse 15 say about Moses? (p. 23)

- **(11:10)** While God was “very angry,” Moses was provoked. The expression literally reads, “In the eyes of Moses it was evil/bad.” We may understand the words in one of two ways. First, they could mean Moses shared God’s anger at the people’s complaints. Perhaps he also believed the people deserved God’s wrath for their rebellion! As a second option, the expression could communicate Moses’s aggravation at the situation, not just at the people. Their grumbling exhausted him and fed his feelings of inadequacy. Consequently, he took his concern to God.

COMPARE: Encourage adults to compare and contrast God’s anger and Moses’s frustration. Highlight Moses’s imagery about giving birth and talk about how that demonstrated his exasperation. Point out that it’s easy for us to get frustrated, but such frustrations often lead us in the wrong direction. Share that during those times it’s best to follow Moses’s example and bring our feelings to God, no matter how confused or irrational they might seem in the moment.

ASK: How do you handle frustrations? What can you change based on these verses? (p. 23)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Numbers 11:16-17 as the group reflects on how God was ready to respond to Moses’s dilemma.

SHARE: Point out that God had a plan for Moses to delegate responsibility to seventy leaders. These leaders may have included some of the men who had joined Moses and Aaron on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24.

DISCUSS: Highlight that God placed some of His Spirit on each man, giving him the kind of wisdom and discernment the Lord had shared with Moses. Lead a brief discussion on why the Spirit's guidance would be important for this assignment.

- **(11:17)** God said that He would instill some of the Spirit who guided Moses on the elders. Most interpreters believe God was referring to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. God told Moses that He would take from the Spirit He had given Moses and place the Spirit on the seventy leaders so they could assist him in God's power. This did not imply Moses lost anything or that each leader would have only a portion of the Spirit's power. Rather, each leader assisted Moses as the Spirit empowered him. The leaders would need discernment to make good choices, and the Spirit would be the One who directed them and provided solid counsel.

ASK: What did God reveal about His character by supplying Moses's specific and stated needs? (p. 23)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers should be careful not to take God's provisions for granted.

- We can always take our concerns to God, telling Him what we need.
- We can trust God to provide what we need to carry out the tasks He gives us.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 23. Allow adults to suggest ways the group can work together to share burdens and concerns.

CHALLENGE: Encourage adults to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 25-27 to dig deeper into God's Word during the week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to help adults avoid complaints, avoid frustration, and embrace help when He provides it.

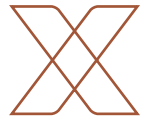
AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Remind the group that God is at work in their lives and challenge them to remain grateful for the way He provides each day. Suggest that they consider journaling what God shares with them about His work and to use those journal entries as prayer prompts in their lives. Encourage them to share any needs they might have so you can pray for them more effectively as individuals and as a group.



The Land

Session 3 • Numbers 13:17-31



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Journey of the Spies*). Make copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: *Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line*) and **Pack Item 9** (Handout: *Complaints in the Wilderness*).

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 29.

ASK: What was the last project you had that was more complicated than you imagined it would be? (p. 29)

INTRODUCE: Encourage adults to share about a project that had some unexpected twists and turns. Affirm that we all face situations that are more complicated than originally thought, whether it's a home improvement task or stepping out with faith in God.

IDENTIFY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: *Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line*). Point out the information for 1445 BC. Remind adults that Israel had spent a lot of time at Mount Sinai receiving the law and the instructions for the tabernacle. Now they found themselves on the brink of Canaan, the land that God had promised their ancestors centuries earlier.

TRANSITION: *In today's session, we'll examine how the Israelites responded to God's faithfulness in bringing them to the border of the promised land, especially after they realized the task was going to be more challenging than they expected.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 13:17-20 as the group listens for the instructions Moses gave the men who would be scouting the land.

ASK: What was significant about the land of Canaan? (p. 31)

RECAP: Direct adults to scan Numbers 13:17-20 again to identify the two main concerns of Moses.

- **(13:17-20)** Moses's two primary concerns were the land and the people. What was the land like typographically? What challenges would the people face? Moses wanted to know how densely the land was populated and how the people looked militarily—were they strong or weak? He wanted to know if the inhabitants were capable of defending their cities and homes. The text never suggests that not entering the land was even an option. The purpose of sending in the scouts was to

determine how, not if, the Israelites would enter the land. God would provide them the victory.

ASK: What do you imagine the spies were thinking while Moses explained the information he wanted them to bring back? What would have caused them to be afraid? (p. 31)

HIGHLIGHT: Point out Moses's command to be courageous. Briefly discuss how believers find courage to fulfill God's plans. Note that once the spies received their marching orders, they set out on their mission. Share that over the next forty days, they thoroughly explored Canaan, just as Moses had directed them.

READ: Direct the group to read silently Numbers 13:21-25, underlining the locations mentioned in the text.

EXPLAIN: Allow volunteers to identify the various places they underlined as they read the passage. Show adults **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: The Journey of the Spies*) and highlight those locations. Note that they started in a desert region known as the Negev.

ASK: How do we balance acting in faith and gathering information before acting? (p. 31)

DESCRIBE: Explain the thoroughness of the scouts' mission from south to north and what they found in Canaan.

- **(13:21)** The Hebrew spies scouted out an area known as "the Wilderness of Zin." This was the southern boundary for Canaan.

The northernmost region the spies scouted out was at the "entrance to Hamath." The text thus highlights the thoroughness of the scouts' mission from south to north.

- **(13:22)** Around Hebron, the spies also caught their first recorded glimpse of the enemies they would face: the descendants of Anak. Known as "Anakim" (which means "long-necked" or "strong-necked"), the relatives of Anak included three powerful leaders in Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi. The Anakim were giant people related to the Nephilim (Gen. 6:4) and would have presented a significant challenge to conquering the land—a fact some scouts later pointed out (Num. 13:33).
- **(13:23-24)** The cluster served as proof that God was faithful to make good on His promises. Unfortunately, the people's amazement would not overcome the fears and doubts planted in their hearts by the ten unfaithful spies (Num. 13:27-29, 32-33).

DISCUSS: Write *fear* on the board and encourage adults to list things that create fear in people's lives. Lead a brief discussion on the power of fear and how it can overwhelm a person's thinking and actions. Allow volunteers to share ways they overcome fear.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Numbers 13:26-31 as the group reflects on the contrast between the ten spies and Caleb.

EXAMINE: Direct adults to identify the "pros" and "cons" of entering the promised land. Highlight how fear affected the spies' faith in God and His promises.

SUMMARIZE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness*). Point out the complaints related to Numbers 13. *In the middle of the fear, Caleb took a stand for faith. He understood God's promises and refused to take his eyes off what the Lord wanted to do among His people.*

- **(13:30-31)** Caleb and Joshua were the only scouts who believed the people should go up and conquer the land. They had seen all the same challenges the other spies saw. However, they focused on God's promises rather than circumstances. Unfortunately, the negative report of the ten spies resonated with the people. Their fear overwhelmed their faith.

ASK: What kind of obstacles might prevent or delay us from obeying God? (p. 31)

PRAY: Encourage adults to use the prayer prompts in the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15) to pray this passage: *Ask God to give you the boldness and faith of Caleb. Ask Him to help you see challenges through His eyes and His strength. Seek forgiveness for the times when doubts and fears have weakened your faith and kept you from obeying Him. Ask God to show you what steps of obedience you need to take this week.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers can depend on God to instruct them in the tasks He has for them.

- Obedience to God includes understanding what He is calling us to do.
- Believers can face obstacles with faith, knowing that God is with them.

DISCUSS: Challenge adults to consider the direction God may be moving them. Remind them that faith overcomes fear, so identifying our fears and giving them up to God is a powerful first step toward overcoming those doubts and anxieties.

CHALLENGE: Encourage adults to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 33-35 to dig deeper into God's Word during the week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to help adults recognize their fears and to respond in faith when they face tasks that seem too difficult or complicated for them.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Remind the adults that God is faithful and will keep all the promises He has made. If possible, share an example from your own life of how God has helped you overcome fear or doubt so you could move forward in obedience. Emphasize the role of trust, noting that fear robs us of our ability to depend on God. Let adults know that you will be praying for them as they confront choices between fear and faith this week.

Rebellion and Judgment

Session 4 • Numbers 14:11-24



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Journey of the Spies*) and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *Key Verse: Numbers 14:18a*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (Handout: *Complaints in the Wilderness*).

INTRODUCE: As adults arrive, enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph (p. 37). Lead a discussion about times when they asked (or were asked by their parents) about jumping off a bridge, roof, and so forth.

ASK: How much does the opinion of others affect your decision-making? How much should it affect it? (p. 37)

EXPLAIN: Point out **Pack Item 3** (Map: *The Journey of the Spies*) and remind the group that Moses sent out spies to scout the promised land. Mention both the positives of the spies' report (milk and honey) as well as the negatives (giants in the land). Explain that today's session is the continuation of that story and focuses on the reaction of the people to the spies' report—and the consequences of that response.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Distribute **Pack Item 9** (Handout: *Complaints in the Wilderness*). Summarize

Numbers 14:1-10. Remind adults that the negative report of the spies had led the people to reject God's plan and consider returning to Egypt.

SAY: *While the people mourned and wept, they also complained about the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Of course, this was the equivalent of complaining about God's leadership. And while Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb all tried to convince the people to change their hearts and minds, nothing could move the people back toward God and His plan.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Numbers 14:11-16** as the group listens for God's reaction to the Israelites' complaints.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to recall signs God had performed for the people. Record their responses on the board. Point out that despite His faithful care in the past, the Israelites did not trust the Lord to guide and protect them as they entered Canaan. Share that God said He would destroy the nation with a single blow and restart with Moses.

ASK: How would you have felt if you were in Moses's situation as God considered wiping out the people and starting fresh with you? (p. 39)

SUMMARIZE: Use the following content to highlight Moses's concern for God's reputation.

- **(14:15-16)** Moses knew that the Lord's protecting His people and providing for them would be a testimony of who He was to the Canaanites and Egyptians. In essence, Moses was saying, "Lord, your reputation is at stake." If God wiped out Israel "with a single blow," it would affect how the nations viewed Him. Moses suggested that the Egyptians would twist the narrative from a God who had led His people out of bondage to a God who couldn't bring them into the promised land. He would be equated with the impotent deities of the pagans.

ASK: What impact does our faithfulness to God have on our witness? (p. 39)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 14:17-19 and direct the group to listen for words that describe God's character.

REFLECT: Encourage the group to share the words they noted. Record responses under the heading. Lead a brief discussion on how God's character often is misunderstood by our culture.

REVIEW: Read the following content for verse 18:

- **(14:18)** Moses's words echoed part of what God had said about Himself when He passed in front of him on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:6-7). The message that God is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love resounds throughout the Old Testament.

The Hebrew word translated "faithful love" is *hesed* (HEH-sed), which occurs about 250 times in the Old Testament. This word has many translations, including "lovingkindness," "goodness," "loyalty," and "favor." For example, the word appears in every verse of Psalm 136: "His faithful love endures forever."

SHARE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Key Verse: Numbers 14:18a). Explain that this is the memory verse for this session. Point out the "Key Doctrine" on page 39. Remind adults that God's greatest act of love was sending Jesus to die for our sins. As time allows, walk adults through the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover.

SAY: *Moses's prayer was an intercessory prayer, appealing to God to forgive the people's rebellion. He based his requests on God's character, which is always a powerful way to pray.*

ASK: What are some appropriate ways of appealing to God's character when praying? (p. 39)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 14:20-24 as the group listens for God's response to Moses. Direct them to underline the consequence the people faced because of their sins.

EXAMINE: Encourage adults to scan the information for verses 20-23 (**Daily Exploration**, p. 42) to learn more about God's response to Moses. Allow a few volunteers to share their thoughts. Highlight both God's forgiveness and the consequences the people faced because of their decisions.

Point out the honor God bestowed on Caleb by calling him, “my servant” and contrast that to the judgment meted out to the rest of the nation.

- **(14:24)** The Lord also emphasized that Caleb possessed a different spirit that set him apart from the ten unbelieving scouts. While they saw only the obstacles, Caleb trusted God’s promise and power. He had remained loyal to God, a quality also emphasized when he actually entered the promised land in the book of Joshua (Josh. 14:8,14). Caleb and Joshua were the only two spies who urged the people to take the land. As a result, each received an inheritance in Canaan when the time came (14:6-14; 19:49-50).

REFLECT: Lead adults to reflect silently on some consequences they have faced for their sin. Affirm that the consequences still leave a mark even when the sin itself is forgiven. Invite a volunteer to share an experience from his or her own life.

ASK: Since God is willing to grant forgiveness for our sin, why do you think He does not remove the consequences as well? (p. 39)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers honor God by trusting Him.
- We can count on God to act according to His character.

- We must understand that sin has consequences.

IDENTIFY: Guide adults to point out verses from today’s session that correspond to the statements above. Lead them to rank the statements from least to most difficult to apply in their own lives. Allow a few volunteers to share why a particular truth is difficult for them to apply.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to examine the **Apply the Text** set of questions on page 39. Lead adults to compile a list of prayer requests that include intercessory prayers for people they know.

PRAY: Close in prayer. Pray for the requests on the list you have just completed. Ask God to help adults recognize His glory in the world and to act faithfully in honoring Him each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

Lead adults to continue intercessory prayers by emailing the prayer list you compiled at the end of the session. Challenge them to add other requests to the list by asking family members, friends, and coworkers how they might pray for them this week. Encourage them to look for God’s glory around them and to make His glory known among the people they interact with this week.

Lack of Trust

Session 5 • Numbers 20:2-13



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness).

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph on page 45.

ASK: Do you find yourself in category one or two? Why do you think that is your tendency? On what kinds of tasks is it most important to follow instructions all the way to the end? (p. 45)

SUGGEST: Mention that sometimes even people who normally follow directions skip them because they think they know what they should do. Point out that sometimes this could lead to serious difficulties or unintended problems.

TRANSITION: Today's study passage comes from Numbers 20. It's an account of a time when Moses, usually a person who followed God's directions, made a choice to act according to his own plan. As a result, Moses experienced a painful consequence.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Using **Pack Item 1** (Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab), explain the location of the people of Israel. Summarize the activities of Moses and the Israelites in Numbers 15:1–20:1.

SAY: In Numbers 16, a Levite named Korah stirred up a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Again, God was ready to destroy the nation, but Moses interceded on behalf of the people. Hearing Moses's pleas, God opened the earth, and it swallowed Korah and his family. The Lord also rained fire from heaven, killing 250 others. When Israel complained about God's judgment, He sent a plague that killed more than 14,000 Israelites. Again, Moses went to God for the people, and He ended the plague.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud **Numbers 20:2-5** and guide the group to follow along in their Bibles. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness). Guide adults to underline and call out the complaints listed by the Israelites against Moses.

RECAP: Explain why the people quarreled with Moses by summarizing the following. Emphasize that their quarrel with Moses

and Aaron was really a quarrel against God and His ways.

- **(20:2-3)** The primary issue was a lack of water. This was not the first time that water had been in short supply (Ex. 17:1-7). Yet, God's previous provision did not move the needle for the Israelites in this setting. Instead of trusting God to do what He had done already, they grumbled and "assembled against" Moses and Aaron. They presented a unified (and dangerous) front. The verb "quarreled" denotes a contentious dispute, as the people verbally assaulted Moses and Aaron over their hardship. In reality, they were quarreling with God! They let their current challenging circumstances override their confidence in His promises.

ASK: Why do we tend to romanticize "the good old days," even though they weren't always so good? (p. 47)

TRANSITION: *In addition to the bondage of Egypt, the people also forgot that they weren't enjoying prosperity because of the nation's sin. They still struggled to take responsibility for their own actions.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read Numbers 20:6-8. Direct half of the group to listen for actions that Moses and Aaron took and half of the group to listen for what the Lord told them to do. Allow volunteers to report what they discovered.

EXPLAIN: Describe how Moses and Aaron positioned themselves in prayer before God by summarizing this information:

- **(20:6)** When Moses and Aaron went from the complaining assembly to the tent's "doorway," they symbolically were bringing their concerns before the Lord. They demonstrated proper reverence and honor by falling "facedown." This was (and continues to be) an appropriate act of worship and humility when seeking God. Moses and Aaron did this when the Israelites refused to enter Canaan. They also fell facedown when God threatened to destroy His people after Korah's rebellion (Num. 14:5; 16:22). Jesus assumed this same position when He pleaded, "Let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39). Each instance was of a desperate prayer. The position communicates an anguished and humble attitude.

ASK: What kinds of difficulties get you facedown—either literally or figuratively—before the Lord? (p. 47)

RESTATE: Briefly share how Moses used his staff in Exodus 17 to bring water from a rock. Note that in Numbers 17 God also had used Aaron's staff to quiet Israel's complaints. Point out that in verse 8, God instructed Moses to use a staff to assemble the people and to speak to the rock to bring out water.

READ: Guide the group to read Numbers 20:9-13 silently and to consider what Moses and Aaron's attitudes were like as they assembled the Israelites.

EXAMINE: Group adults into four teams and direct each team to scan verses 9-13 and the related content on pages 50-51. Encourage one group to identify the people's demands, one group to reflect on Moses and Aaron's

attitude, one group to examine Moses striking the rock, and one group to focus on God's response. After a few minutes, allow teams to report on what they discovered.

SAY: *Failing to follow God's instructions, Moses struck the rock. Because of this disobedience, he and Aaron would not enter the promised land.*

ASK: What does it say about God's character that He provided such an abundance of water? (p. 47)

EXPLAIN: Explain the meaning of "Meribah":

- **(20:13)** The word *Meribah* means "contention" or "strife" and is related to the word translated "quarreled" in this verse. The name reflected the people's quarreling with God rather than trusting Him fully and obediently.

ASK: What do we communicate to God when we follow His instructions? What do we communicate to Him when we don't follow His instructions? (p. 47)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review the following from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers can trust God even when current circumstances appear bleak.
- We can turn to God with our needs and concerns.
- Believers should recognize that ignoring God's instructions leads to consequences.

REFLECT: Guide adults to consider times in their lives when they haven't followed God's instructions completely. Lead them to turn to God and ask Him for forgiveness. In addition, encourage them to seek His continued guidance in their lives, even when the circumstances are difficult.

DISCUSS: Call attention to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 47 and lead adults to share advice about how to pray for "facedown" issues.

PRAY: Guide adults through a few moments of silent, directed prayer, praying for known requests, needs of your church, and their own personal needs. Conclude the prayer by asking the Lord to grant wisdom and strength in following His instructions obediently each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

In a group text or email, encourage the group to pray for their "facedown" issues during the week. Remind them also to use the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15) for prayer prompts based on this week's Scripture passage.

God's Plans

Session 6 • Numbers 22:22-35



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab*). Make several copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: Balaam: All We Know*). Secure several sticky notes. Address note cards to each member of the class for the “After the Session” activity.

READ: Direct adults to form groups of two or three and to read the opening paragraph (p. 53). Encourage them to share experiences when they sensed God speaking to them. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their experiences.

ASK: When have you been skeptical about someone's claim to speak for God? Why? (p. 53)

EXPLAIN: Use **Pack Item 1** (*Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab*) to explain that the Israelites had moved from Kadesh-barnea to the Plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho. Summarize this background:

- Balak, king of Moab, heard about Israel's victory over the Amorites, and his people were quite concerned (Num. 22:2-4). So, he sent messengers to Balaam, a diviner who lived near the Euphrates River, and asked him to come and curse the Israelites (22:5-6). When Balaam inquired

of God, the Lord told him not to go with the Moabite leaders (22:7-14). The officials returned and informed Balak that Balaam had refused to come. Balak then sent another delegation and offered Balaam an even greater reward (22:15-17). Again, Balaam inquired of the Lord. This time, the Lord told him to go. So, Balaam saddled his donkey and accompanied Moab's leaders (22:18-21).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

EXAMINE: Group adults into teams of three or four. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: Balaam: All We Know*) to each person and direct the teams to review the content of the article. After a few minutes, encourage volunteers to share things that stuck out to them from the article.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 22:22-27 as the group listens for how Balaam's actions compare with his donkey's actions.

SUMMARIZE: Briefly summarize verses 22-27. Note how the third encounter ended by reading this content from page 57:

- **(22:26-27)** The angel appeared a third time. Again, it stood in a narrow place. This time, though, the text does not mention

vineyards. The root in the Hebrew can refer to a deep place. Some believe the donkey was in a deep and thus narrow furrow in a field. Unable to turn to the right or the left, the donkey did the only thing it could to avoid running into the angel. It crouched down. . . . This time, [Balaam] lost all control and beat her—not with “a” stick—but with his stick.

ASK: Why do you think God lets us set out on a path, knowing He is going to change it along the way? (p. 55)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 22:28-31 as the rest of the group considers the humor in this story.

REFLECT: Direct attention to the **Key Doctrine** on page 55. Encourage the group to suggest ways God demonstrated providential care for both the donkey and Balaam.

DISCUSS: Highlight two “shifts” in the story: God opened Balaam’s eyes as He had opened the donkey’s mouth, and the donkey Balaam threatened to kill had saved him from being killed. Lead adults to discuss why God might choose to work through such unusual means to communicate with Balaam. Add to the discussion by summarizing the following content:

- **(22:28)** Until that moment, only the donkey had seen the angel and recognized the danger Balaam faced. Now the Lord took the encounter to a new level as He “opened the donkey’s mouth,” enabling her to speak!

- **(22:31)** The expression the Lord “opened Balaam’s eyes” generally parallels the Lord’s opening the donkey’s mouth in verse 28. However, here the word translated “opened” literally means “uncovered.” The Lord removed the barrier and allowed Balaam to see the angel of the Lord for the first time. The omnipotent God who can allow donkeys to talk can also remove the blinders and let wayward prophets see things from His perspective.

ASK: When has an unusual experience led you to seek God more intentionally? (p. 55)

READ: Read aloud Numbers 22:32-35 as the group focuses on Balaam’s response to the angel.

EXAMINE: Direct adults to work in pairs to read verses 32-33 and to consider why God called Balaam’s actions evil. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share. Encourage the group to discuss what motivated Balaam—and how seeing the angel changed him. Add to the discussion by summarizing the following content:

- **(22:32)** The angel affirmed, “I came out to oppose you.” The word “oppose” is the same word that occurred in verse 22. God was angry with Balaam and had sent His angel to get His message across to this wayward diviner. The angel affirmed that Balaam’s actions were “evil” in God’s sight. The original language conveys the idea of Balaam’s running recklessly into a situation God had told him to leave alone.

- **(22:33)** The angel's affirmation that the "donkey saw me and turned away" reinforced the reason for her behavior. Again, the donkey was more perceptive to God's work than the so-called prophet. The donkey had saved Balaam's life by avoiding the angel to the best of her ability. The text does seem to imply Balaam should have perceived the situation and turned back—or never gone with the delegation after God initially told him not to go.

EXPLAIN: Emphasize that the angel restated the original directions from God for Balaam to say only what God told him to say.

ASK: What benefits or outcomes can we anticipate when we seek to follow God's plans? (p. 55)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Read these application points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers must recognize that obstacles may arise as we are following God's plans.
- Believers must remain sensitive to God's leading, being intentional to seek Him regularly.
- We should be willing to surrender our plans so we can follow God's plans.

EVALUATE: Distribute a sticky note to each person and direct them to create two columns labeled *LOA* (level of agreement) and *WTI* (willingness to implement). Guide adults to rank from 1 to 5 (low to high) their level of agreement with and willingness to implement each of the three application points.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 55. After a moment of silence, guide a discussion encouraging adults to share advice they would give to new believers for recognizing God's leading in their lives.

PRAY: Review the prayer prompts from the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (scan the QR code on page 15) and challenge adults to continue praying for eyes that are open to see the Lord at work around you. Close the session in prayer, asking God to also give them ears to hear His voice each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

As the group dismisses, distribute notecards addressed to each person in the group. Make sure each adult has a card with someone else's name and information. Guide them to pray for the person to whom their card is addressed and to write them a note of encouragement during the week. Suggest they encourage one another to continue looking for God's presence and work in their lives each day. Remind them that God can use any method He wants to accomplish His purposes.



Instructions Given

Session 7 • Numbers 33:50-56; 34:13-15



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Make copies of **Pack Item 12** (Handout: *Why This Land?*).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 61. Briefly discuss new construction they are seeing in their areas. Note again that every construction project needs a master plan to work.

ASK: **Why is it important to follow the plan when doing construction? What happens when we don't?** (p. 61)

LEAD: Guide adults to discuss other examples in life when it is important to follow instructions and the consequences of failing to do so.

TRANSITION: *As we study this last session in the book of Numbers, we will see God's instructions to the Israelites for occupying the land of Canaan. We will read the promises God made to Israel if they were faithful in obedience. As you look at these verses, reflect on how important obedience to God is for the health of our church and for your own spiritual growth.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SUMMARIZE: Point out **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Explain that Numbers 33:50–34:15 (today's focus) reveals some specific instructions God gave regarding Israel and the promised land.

READ: **Direct adults to read silently Numbers 33:50-53** and to underline the directions God gave Moses for Israel. After a few moments, call on volunteers to share what they found.

EXPLAIN: Highlight God's commands to drive out the Canaanites and destroy everything related to their idolatry.

- **(33:52)** The Lord gave the people three objectives to accomplish in Canaan. First, they were to “drive out all the inhabitants of the land.” Allowing pockets of the current residents to remain would keep idolatry alive in the land, which would be a snare to Israel. Second, God's people were to “destroy all their stone images and cast images.” The Canaanites made stone and metal images to represent the gods they worshiped, but God had forbidden His people to worship Him in that manner (see Ex. 20:4-6). Third, God's people were commanded to “demolish”

all their high places. The Canaanites often established their pagan worship sites atop hills or mountains, and God told the Israelites to rid the land of any trace of such practices. However, the Bible records how God's people continued to worship on high places in the land throughout their history, in violation of God's command (1 Kings 3:3; 15:14; 2 Kings 14:4; 15:4; 21:3).

ASK: Why was it important to destroy the idols and high places devoted to false gods? (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *God knew that the idolatry in Canaan would distract the Israelites from Him. As we continue the study, notice that these instructions came with both promises and consequences.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 33:54-56 while adults listen for God's promises and consequences for failing to follow His directions.

LIST: Make two columns on the board, *Promises* and *Consequences*. Guide adults to call out the promises and consequences they found as they listened to the Scripture.

EXPLAIN: Use the content below to explain the visual image God used to describe the negative influence of the Canaanites:

- **(33:55)** God would send terrible consequences if Israel didn't drive out the inhabitants of the land. The Lord used a powerful metaphor to describe the Canaanites' effect on God's people: "barbs for your eyes and thorns for your sides."

The word translated "barbs" referred to small but sharp objects that could splinter someone's eyes. The result would be discomfort, infection, and maybe even blindness. The lesson was that even the smallest remnant could inflict unbelievable damage. The thorn in their sides could cause discomfort and pain. God's purpose was not just to run the people out but also to remove their idolatrous beliefs and pagan practices. God knew the damage these traditions would do.

ASK: What principles do you glean from these verses that can help you live a life of obedience to God? (p. 63)

TRANSITION: *God wasn't finished with the instructions for settling in the promised land. Upon entering Canaan, He would direct the people to divide the land tribe-by-tribe.*

SUMMARIZE: Use the following to summarize the first twelve verses of Numbers 34:

- The opening verses of chapter 34 delineate the geographical boundaries of the land the Israelites were to inhabit. Doubtless, the spies who scouted out the land gave information to Moses, information he used to describe the land to be inherited. The property divisions were not decided by human ingenuity or design. It was according to what the Lord commanded.

READ: Read aloud Numbers 34:13-15 as adults jot down information about the inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. Remind adults that in Numbers 32 these tribes had asked to live on the east side of the Jordan River.

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Why This Land?*). Encourage adults to scan the article and to summarize an answer for the question, “Why this land?” Point out that while Israel remains politically and geographically important, it is most vital because this is the land where God sent His Son and where He launched the gospel to the “ends of the earth.”

PRAY: Emphasize the blessing of the Israelites’ finally having their own land. Guide adults to make a list of blessings they have received and to spend a few moments offering thanksgiving to God for His blessings.

ASK: How do God’s promises serve as a motivator to remain faithful to Him? Should they? Explain. (p. 63)



Tribal Allotments of Land

See how the promised land would be divided up among the twelve tribes.

EVALUATE: Guide adults to evaluate which statement they believe is the hardest for most people to accept. Lead them to consider which one is most difficult for them. Remind them that past blessings are wonderful reminders of God’s faithfulness and care as we await the fulfillment of His promises.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to review the **Apply the Text** questions on page 63. Lead them to share fulfilled promises and how their faith has been increased because of those promises.

PRAY: Close the session in prayer thanking God for His faithfulness in fulfilling promises and for His provisions for our lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Email or text the group following the session to remind them of the **Apply the Text** questions on page 67. Encourage them to spend time reflecting on things that negatively influence their relationship with the Lord and how they might guard against those things in the future.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Following God often requires believers to remove potential distractions.
- Believers can expect to encounter challenges while following God.
- We can trust God to keep His promises.

Remember

Session 8 • Deuteronomy 4:1-9,15-20



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (Handout: *Remembering God's Faithfulness*). Gather enough notecards so each adult can have one.

DISCUSS: What is your favorite family memory? (p. 69) Give each adult in the group a notecard. Guide them to record their responses on the card. Invite a few volunteers to share what they wrote.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 69.

ASK: How do your family's stories get passed down from one generation to the next? (p. 69) Discuss responses.

EXPLAIN: Point out **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Share that this session shifts from the book of Numbers to the book of Deuteronomy. Mention that the study reminds us of how recalling God's past faithfulness leads us to worship Him.

TRANSITION: *Deuteronomy is built on a series of speeches or sermons Moses delivered on the border of the promised land. As we dig*

into a portion of Moses's first message to the people, reflect on how his challenges to the Israelites are applicable in your own journey.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Summarize the following background of Deuteronomy 1-3:

- As the Israelites camped in the Plains of Moab, God gave Moses His words to share (1:1-5). Moses then recounted Israel's tragic spiritual failure at Kadesh-barnea (1:19-45). In judgment, God decreed that the entire unbelieving generation would die in the wilderness. Now, their children stood at Canaan's borders.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 4:1-4 as adults listen for Moses's instructions.

EXAMINE: Encourage the group to read the passage again and to call out the words and phrases Moses used to direct the people to follow God's commands. Lead a brief discussion about why our past experiences with God can move us forward in faith.

- **(4:2)** Moses stressed the importance of keeping God's Word pure. The people could not add "anything," for doing so would put their own human words on the

same level as God's words. They also were warned against trying to "take anything away" from it by choosing which of God's words they wanted to retain and which they wanted to lay aside.

- **(4:3)** Baal-peor was where the people had compromised their faith through sexual sin with foreign women (Num. 25:1-9). The term "Baal of Peor" denotes an image of Baal, the chief god of the Canaanites. Supposedly, he was the god of the storm and of fertility, and his worship often involved illicit sexual rites. God sent a plague against the Israelites who worshiped this pagan god, and 24,000 died (Num. 25:9). Verse 3 reminds us of Moses's instruction in verse 2 not to add or subtract anything from the Lord's commands. God desired pure worship because His ways were best.

ASK: Why do you think Moses kept emphasizing that the words he was speaking were from God? (p. 71)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 4:5-9 as adults listen for two groups who would be influenced by the faithful obedience of the Israelites.

LIST: Call on adults to call out the groups mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:5-9 and write their responses on the board. Point out that other nations and the Israelites' descendants would learn from the example of positive, godly obedience.

EXPLAIN: Use the following content to describe how the Israelites' faithfulness would be viewed by surrounding nations:

- **(4:6)** "Wisdom" denotes the ability to apply knowledge to a situation. The term "understanding" is related to the word "between," suggesting the ability to distinguish between truth and error. Knowing and fearing God leads to both (Prov. 9:10). As neighboring peoples heard of God's commands and saw the Israelites living by them, they would conclude that Israel was a great nation comprised of a wise and understanding people. Living by God's standards would set His people apart. They would be seen as a great nation. Ultimately, that differentiation would point people to God.

ASK: How will obeying God's Word set believers apart in today's world? (p. 71)

DISCUSS: Lead a brief discussion about the role of parents in pointing their children toward God. Allow a few volunteers to share practical ways they have nurtured their own children's spiritual growth over time. Take a moment to pray for parents and their families.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 4:15-20 as adults underline references to idols in these verses. Ask volunteers to share what they underlined.

REFLECT: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness*) and lead adults to work in pairs to make a list of what God had done for Israel. Encourage the pairs to make a second list of things God has done for them. Allow a few volunteers to share. Direct them to keep the handout in their Bible and to add items to the list that may come to mind in the next several days.

ASK: What kinds of idols do we need to refrain from worshiping today? (p. 71)

DISCUSS: Call attention to the list of pagan idols from other cultures mentioned in verses 16-19. Emphasize that God called His people to live distinct from other nations (v. 20).

- **(4:16-19)** Moses described forms these idols might take. The examples he gave all appear in Genesis 1, which describes God's act of creation. It made no sense for people to worship what had been created; rather, they should worship the Creator alone.
- **(4:20)** Out of all the earth's inhabitants, God had selected one group, Abraham's descendants, to be His special people. Hearing their cries in Egypt, God remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He brought them out. This is always God's work of redemption. He brings us out—from darkness to light, from death to life, from the yoke of slavery to freedom in Christ. God had given the Israelites a new identity, and they were called to respond by worshiping and serving Him in the way He instructed. In time, if Israel remained faithful, people of other nations would see their uniqueness and be drawn to their God.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Briefly overview these points from this week's Bible passage

- We are to obey God's commands.

- We are to value and seek the wisdom that comes from the Lord.
- We can rejoice that God has called us to be His people.

EXPLAIN: Point out that even though believers in Christ rely on His grace rather than their works for salvation, obedience is still an important part of the Christian life. Remind adults that Jesus equated love with keeping His commands (John 14:15).

DISCUSS: Direct attention to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 71. Lead a brief discussion on the meaning of worship and things that might hold us back from true worship. Suggest that a lack of obedience is a key hindrance to worship. Lead adults to consider how they can better obey the commands of Jesus and, in doing so, draw closer to God in worship.

PRAY: Lead a time of directed prayer, guiding adults to speak aloud a prayer of thanksgiving for how God has been faithful to them in the past. Close the prayer by asking God to strengthen our love for Christ and our faithful obedience to Him.

AFTER THE SESSION

After the session, email or text adults and encourage them to continue to add items to the list they started on **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness*). Challenge them to use the list in their daily prayers to strengthen their reliance on God's faithfulness. Suggest they make a specific plan to share a meaningful story about God's faithfulness with someone this week.

Love

Session 9 • Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 20-25



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 5** (Poster: *Key Verse: Deuteronomy 6:4-5*). Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 77.

ASK: What's an effective way to help a child learn? Why is this method successful? (p. 77)

SUMMARIZE: Refer to the outline on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and explain that Moses's second speech to the Israelites begins with Deuteronomy 5. Recap the information from **Understand the Context** (p. 77):

- Those aged twenty and above at Sinai died during the four decades of wilderness wanderings (Num. 32:10-13). Thus, the words of Deuteronomy were for a new generation, those who had not heard God's words at Sinai. In chapter 5, Moses recounted the Israelites' experience at Mount Sinai. As we read Deuteronomy 5, we recognize familiar words from Exodus 20, the Ten

Commandments. This was an amplification of what God had spoken to an earlier generation at Sinai.

TRANSITION: As we study today's passage, notice how Moses's words challenged the Israelites not just to know and obey the commands of God, but also to teach them to their children. Consider what content from God's Word you should know and obey as you teach the next generation how to live to honor God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Deuteronomy 6:1-3** while adults listen for the guidance Moses gave the people and the promise God gave if they followed His words.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to share Moses's directive and God's promise that followed. Summarize this content from page 81 and lead a brief discussion on what it means to "fear of the LORD."

- **(6:2)** "To fear the LORD means to revere Him. The external evidence of that reverence would be the keeping of God's statutes and commands. Jesus taught this principle. He told His disciples, 'If you love me, you will keep my commands' (John 14:15)."

ASK: What are some practical ways to “fear the LORD” each day? (p. 79)

PARAPHRASE: Distribute a sheet of paper to each adult. Guide them to describe the promise God made Israel by paraphrasing Deuteronomy 6:3. After a few moments, call on volunteers to share what they have written.

ASK: In what way(s) has God lavished His blessings in your life? When have you been particularly aware of those blessings? (p. 79)

READ: Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 as adults highlight words that stick out to them. Allow a few volunteers to share what they marked.

SAY: *Verses 4-9 are known as the Shema (sheh-MAH), the foundational Jewish statement of faith. The Hebrew word shema is the first word of verse 4 and means “listen.”*

MEMORIZE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (Poster: Key Verse: Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Share that these are this session’s memory verses. Challenge adults to memorize them this week.

EXPLAIN: Share this content and discuss why Jews might take the commands of Deuteronomy 6:8-9 literally:

- **(6:8)** Moses instructed Israel to treat God’s words like “a sign on your hand” and “a symbol on your forehead.” Most interpreters believe Moses used figurative language here in urging Israel to keep God’s commands before them, just as their hands typically were in front of them and their foreheads would determine their direction. Many Jews take these

commands literally and strap prayer boxes (called “phylacteries” or “tefillin”) on their hands and between their eyes. But the main idea is that God’s people should let His Word function as the lens that lets them see the world as God sees it.

- **(6:9)** Moses told the Israelites to inscribe God’s words on their doorposts as a reminder of their obligation to Him. The Hebrew word used here is *mezuzah* (meh-zoo-ZAH), which Jewish people use to describe fixtures on their doors that contain a small scroll with the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 on it. Writing God’s words on city gates also reminded its citizens and travelers that the town’s inhabitants lived by God’s decrees.

ASK: What is a practical way we can keep God’s Word and commandments at the forefront of our lives? (p. 79)



Prayer Boxes

Learn more about how God’s people have taken His instruction from Deuteronomy 6:8 to heart.

READ: Read aloud Deuteronomy 6:20-25 as half the adults listen for what God had previously done for Israel and the other half listen for why God desired Israel to follow His commands.

LIST: Guide adults to share what they heard and write their responses on the board.

EXPLAIN: Use the following information to explain what and how parents were to teach their children:

- **(6:20-21)** Verses 20-25 focus on passing along the principles of faith to the next generation. “When your son asks you” assumed teachable moments would occur. At some level, the Israelites’ children should have experienced God’s “decrees, statutes, and ordinances.” But they may have wondered about their significance. The parent’s answer took story form, recounting how God’s people were “slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt”; however, God rescued them with a “strong” hand.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 6:24-25. Encourage adults to define “righteousness” in their own words. Discuss how the Israelites were to claim righteousness for themselves.

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Encourage adults to pray Deuteronomy 6:24-25 using the prompts in the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15).

ASK: What does walking in righteousness look like in the life of a believer today? (p. 79)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Call attention to the following points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers demonstrate their love for God by obeying His commands.

- We are to be intentional about putting God at the center of our lives, making everything else revolve around Him.
- Remembering God’s past faithfulness helps us to follow God’s commands today.

IDENTIFY: Call on volunteers to share how they have observed someone demonstrate love for God by obeying His commands. Ask adults to share a memory of God’s past faithfulness that encourages them still today.

DEMONSTRATE: Guide adults to review the **Apply the Text** questions on page 79. Direct them to form groups of two or three and to spend a few moments sharing how they would explain their faith to their children or grandchildren.

PRAY: Close the session by leading adults in prayer, asking God to help them recall specific times when He has demonstrated faithfulness to them. Urge them to continue using **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) to pray through Deuteronomy 6:24-25 during the week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Email or text the group, encouraging them to continue memorizing and reflecting on Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Suggest that they invite a child or grandchild to join them in memorizing these verses. Challenge them to look for “teachable moments” when they can share spiritual truth with this younger generation.

Undivided Worship

Session 10 • Deuteronomy 12:1-11,29-32



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 85. Encourage adults to create a list of reasons why people don't come to church. Record their responses on the board and discuss which excuses might be the easiest to use and why.

ASK: Do you think God cares about where and how people worship Him? If so, why? (p. 85)

EXPLAIN: Share that a significant issue that God led Moses to address with His people was how and where they worshiped Him, especially compared to how other people in Canaan worshiped their deities.

TRANSITION: *As the Israelites prepared to enter the promised land, God provided specific instructions about their worship practices. He had high expectations for them to follow those instructions. As we dig into those expectations in this passage, reflect on your own worship and any adjustments God might be leading you to make in that area.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SUMMARIZE: Use this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 85) to overview briefly Deuteronomy 12:1–26:19:

- This week's study comes from the latter part of Moses's second message (12:1–26:19). . . . These applications addressed specific matters the Israelites would face in the years ahead. Moses's words would teach the Israelites how to live as God's people in the land He was giving them.

READ: Point out **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*). **As a volunteer reads aloud Deuteronomy 12:1-7**, direct adults to listen for the parts of the covenant listed on the poster. Invite adults to match words and phrases from the Scripture passage with the parts of the covenant.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to review Deuteronomy 12:1-7 and to look for God's instructions about idolatry in the promised land. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they found. Lead a brief discussion about how Israel's worship of God should differ from pagan worship in Canaan.

- **(12:2-3)** The Canaanites often used high mountains and hills as holy sites because

they believed it put them closer to their gods. They also might establish a shrine under a green tree that could suggest fertility. The Israelites often violated God's command against worshiping Him at the high places (Deut. 12:13-14). Kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah tried to rid the land of these sites, but with limited success (2 Kings 18:4; 23:8-9). The Israelites were to "tear down" their altars and "smash their sacred pillars" that represented the gods of Canaan. "Asherah poles" were wooden poles that represented Asherah, the consort of Baal, Canaan's chief god. God's people were to burn these, along with cutting down "carved images." The Israelites were to "wipe out their names" from the land. Only the name of Israel's God would stand in Canaan!

ASK: Why was it important for the Israelites to focus first on ridding the land of the pagan worship sites and related objects? (p. 87)

TRANSITION: *The Lord knew that pagan influences would compromise Israel's worship. He also knew that adopting His standards would help Israel avoid idolatry in the future.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 12:8-11 as adults listen for the differences between the Israelites current behavior and what they would experience in the promised land.

ASK: Why is it dangerous to follow our own ideas about worshiping God instead of following His design? (p. 87)

EXPLAIN: To explain God's plan for the Israelites' worship in the promised land, share this content:

- In the wilderness the Israelites sacrificed whatever and however they wished. Rather than having multiple or even a portable worship hub, they needed a centralized site where they could celebrate, worship, and participate in their God-directed rituals and services. Having a set place would give the Hebrews a sense of permanence.

ASK: Why did God want to designate a certain place for His people to worship Him? Why was that important to Him—and to them? (p. 87)

DISCUSS: Highlight the ideas of "resting place" and an "inheritance" for the people. Lead a brief discussion on how the promised land would provide those things for the Israelites and how that should have informed their worship of God. Emphasize how attractive security and stability would have been to a people who had wandered in the desert for forty years.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 12:29-32 while adults listen for what God would do and what the Israelites were to avoid in taking possession of the land.

LIST: Draw two columns on the board, *God* and *The People*. Direct adults to scan Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and call out actions of God and actions of the Israelites. Record responses in the proper columns on the board.

DISCUSS: Facilitate a discussion about the dangers the Israelites faced. Summarize the following:

- “Having promised His people military victory, God knew the Israelites faced another threat—spiritual defeat. He did not want His people to go after foreign gods. A concern was that the Hebrews would attempt to incorporate some of the Canaanites’ religious practices and beliefs into Judaism. The word for this type of mixing is ‘syncretism.’ . . . Verse 31 twice mentions their gods. The Egyptians and Canaanites worshiped multiple gods. Temples and altars dotted the landscape. Verse 31, though, speaks twice of the Lord, singular. Worshiping one God differentiated the Israelites from all other people groups”

ASK: How do we draw the line so we practice only what God finds acceptable in worship? (p. 87)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: List the following points on the board from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers should be prepared to recognize and avoid false gods.
- We are to worship the Lord by bringing our offerings to Him.
- Believers should be strong spiritually, worshiping God alone.

RANK: Guide adults to reflect on the statements and to rank them from easiest to most difficult. Allow volunteers to share which

statements they find easiest or most difficult to do and to explain why.

REFLECT: Direct adults to find the **Apply the Text** question on page 91. Guide them to consider how they can avoid being drawn away from faithfulness to God in their daily lives.

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Lead adults to use the prompts on the handout to pray Deuteronomy 12:32 back to God. After a few minutes, close in prayer, asking God to help adults honor God and His Word through genuine worship.

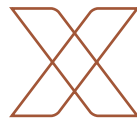
AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email adults to remind them of the prayer exercise from the Challenge activity. Encourage them to continue using the prompts from **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) to pray that the Lord will lead them to remain faithful to Him as they worship and serve Him.



Covenant Relationship

Session 11 • Deuteronomy 28:1-6,15-19



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *Ancient Covenant Structure*).

INTRODUCE: Guide adults to read the opening paragraph on page 93.

ASK: What wise “messages” did your parents repeat to you over and over again? What impact did hearing those words have on you? (p. 93) Record responses on the board.

DISCUSS: Review the list and encourage adults who are parents to share how many of these messages they have repeated to their children. Encourage them to share additional messages they share regularly with family members. Lead a brief discussion on why passing down wisdom from one generation to the next is so important. Suggest that this can be seen as an act of love based on a parent’s desire to see the best for their children.

EXPLAIN: Reference **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and mention that Deuteronomy contains Moses’s messages to the Israelites before they entered the promised land. Moses’s first

message (1:1–4:49) recalled their history as they traveled from Mount Sinai to their then-current location on the Plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River and across from Jericho. His second message (5:1–26:19) reviewed the Ten Commandments and how to apply them in the promised land. This week’s Bible study passage is part of the third address of Moses to the Israelites. Point out that while some of the content may seem repetitive, each new generation of Israelites benefited from the continual reminders of their covenant obligations to the Lord.

TRANSITION: *Today, as we study these verses from Deuteronomy 28, reflect on the blessings of faithfulness and obedience to God. At the same time, examine your life in light of the consequences God promised to those who rebel against His commands.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Deuteronomy 28:1-6** as adults listen for the blessings promised by God.

LIST: Create two columns on the board: *Blessings* and *Curses*. Guide adults to call out the blessings from verses 1-6 and write their responses on the board. Examples include:

- Verse 3: Israel would be blessed in all areas.
- Verse 4: Children, agriculture, and livestock would multiply.
- Verse 5: God would meet the families' most basic needs.
- Verse 6: God's people would be blessed in all respects.

DEFINE: Ask adults their definition of the word “blessed.” Add to the discussion with this content:

- **(28:2)** Moses’s words were not some promise of prosperity theology. The blessings he described did in fact apply to many different aspects of life, but God’s blessing far exceeded material things. The Lord would honor the people’s covenant relationship with Him, a personal relationship established through faith and obedience.

ASK: How do these promised blessings differ from the prosperity theology that is commonly taught and preached today? (p. 95)

TRANSITION: Using **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*), guide adults to identify elements of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Explain that the next section parallels this passage.

READ: Read aloud Deuteronomy 28:15-19 and encourage adults to listen for elements of God’s covenant.

SAY: *The list of prescribed disasters and miseries (vv. 15-68) is longer than the list of blessings for obedience (vv. 1-14). This was common in ancient agreements. Evidently, negative reinforcement was more effective in eliciting compliance than promised future rewards.* (p. 98)

COMPARE: Complete the list on the board by asking adults to call out curses mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:16-19. Record their responses in the “Curses” column. Discuss the similarities between the blessings and curses. Emphasize that obedience and disobedience are what make the difference.

- **(28:15)** Previously, Moses had highlighted the curses God would bring upon the people if they disobeyed His commands (Lev. 26:14-39). He now restated them because he wanted the Israelites to have both the blessings and the curses fresh in their minds as they entered the promised land. The topics in verses 15-19 closely parallel verses 1-6. However, Israel would experience God’s curses instead of His blessings if the people were not “carefully following” God’s ways.

ASK: What do these curses say about God’s nature and character? (p. 95)

BIBLE SKILL: Direct adults to read and reflect on the **Bible Skill** activity on page 95.

- **Read and reflect on a Bible Passage:**
Read Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Try to imagine a life where every aspect of it experienced God’s blessing. *What would that look like in your life? How and where would God’s blessing manifest itself?* Now read

verses 15-19 and try to imagine life totally apart from God's blessing. *How might the thought of such an awful alternative motivate people to live faithfully by God's commands?* God wanted to see His people demonstrate their faith in Him through obedience to His commands. *How does James describe that concept (Jas. 2:18)?*

SAY: *God set before His people blessings and curses, and Moses encouraged them to choose God's blessings. Living according to God's commands leads to life as God designed it, and His people experience joy. Conversely, disobeying God's commands brings humiliation and disaster.*

DISCUSS: Lead adults in a brief discussion about the potential of a life filled with God's blessings and a life devoid of His blessings.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review the following statements from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers should enjoy the blessing that comes from following God's commands.
- Choosing to disregard God's commands leads to humiliation.

REFLECT: Lead adults to evaluate the statements and select the one they believe is easiest to explain to a child. Encourage them to consider writing their thoughts in a journal as they review these verses and application points during the week.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to review the **Apply the Text** questions on page 95. Lead them to make plans to be a conduit of God's blessing

to someone in the coming week. Suggest they review their motivations for good works using the **Apply the Text** question on page 99 during their prayer times this week.

CHALLENGE: Remind adults to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 97-99 to dig deeper into God's Word during the week.

PRAY: The **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** provides weekly prayer prompts based on this quarter's Bible passages. Encourage adults to scan the QR code on page 15. Be prepared to lead a prayer based on Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 15-19 using the prompts in the prayer guide.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group an email or text to remind them of the plans they made to seek to be a conduit of God's blessing to someone this week. Challenge them to view these plans as a way to bring glory to God—not to themselves. Encourage them to continue expressing gratitude for the things He has done and is doing in their lives.



Fully Committed

Session 12 • Deuteronomy 30:11-20



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *Moses's Final Appeal*). Review the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover.

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph (p. 101).

ASK: In what situation have you had so many options that it was overwhelming to pick only one? How did you eventually decide? (p. 101)

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to share situations where making a single choice is vital. Note that some choices are fairly mundane, while others could spell the difference between life and death.

OVERVIEW: Summarize the following from page 101 to set the context for this week's passage.

- For forty years, Moses had been leading God's people from Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula. He and the Israelites were now east of the Jordan River. . . . He had spent his first forty years in Egypt, his second tending to his father-in-law's flocks, and his final forty leading the

exodus. God's people were standing on the threshold of the promised land. Moses would only be able to view it from a distance.

TRANSITION: *This week's passage would be Moses's last formal message to Israel. It was not for a select few but applied to everyone. As we work through these verses, think about the choices you make—and how you can demonstrate wholehearted commitment to God each day.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SUMMARIZE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *Moses's Final Appeal*). Briefly overview the article and encourage adults to use it for additional personal study of the Scripture passage.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Deuteronomy 30:11-14** while adults listen for how Moses described God's covenant. Share that Moses was calling Israel to obey God wholeheartedly.

SHARE: Remind adults again that Israel's forty-year journey through the wilderness was moving toward its completion. Note that they could see the promised land in the distance, and it provided a powerful backdrop for Moses's final words.

SAY: *As they looked toward their new home, the people of God would remember His faithfulness and anticipate the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham centuries earlier.*

HIGHLIGHT: Use the following information from page 105 to explain the nearness of the covenant:

- Rather than being remote and unattainable, God’s message was near. Significantly, the Hebrew word translated “message” in verse 14 is singular. This underscores the unity of God’s instruction to His people. God has not left us an incoherent rambling of disconnected thoughts and teachings. He has given a unified single message to His people.

DISCUSS: Lead adults to share what they believe having God’s message in their mouths and hearts means—and how that could help believers follow Him more closely.

ASK: **How can you respond to people who say it is too difficult to know God’s will or to obey His commands?** (p. 103)

TRANSITION: *After emphasizing the availability of God’s covenant to His people, Moses turned his attention to their responsibility before God. Once they entered the promised land, the people would have a choice to make—trust God or go their own way. They needed to understand that each option would produce a unique outcome.*

RESEARCH: Guide adults to work in pairs and provide each pair with paper and pencils. Direct one person in each pair to read

and write a paraphrase for Deuteronomy 30:15-16, while the other person does the same for Deuteronomy 30:17-18. Suggest adults use content from pages 105-106 to assist them. Encourage adults to share with one another what they found.

DISCUSS: Invite volunteers to share their paraphrases. Guide adults to provide additional clarification they may have discovered during their research. Summarize this content to emphasize the seriousness of Moses’s warnings:

- **(30:17)** Verse 17 contains a progression of action. The expression “if your heart turns away” describes the people abandoning their commitment to the Lord. When that happened, the people would no longer “listen” to His words. Once they abandoned God’s righteous standards, they could easily be “led astray” into sin. They would give in to the temptation to “bow in worship to other gods and serve them” in the land of Canaan. The book of Judges records how this happened (Judg. 2:10-23).

ASK: **How are people today fooled into thinking there is no penalty for sin?** (p. 103)

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 30:19-20** while adults listen for the choice Moses put before the Israelites and how he challenged them to choose life.

EXPLAIN: Emphasize the challenge that Moses put before the Israelites. Mention the witnesses he called, as well as the urgency of the decision he presented. Point out that Moses made a strong appeal for the

people to choose life so that they and their descendants would live in the land God was giving them.

ASK: What does it mean for you to say God “is your life”? In this context, what does it mean for you to “choose life”? (p. 103)

- Moses explained why the people should love God so deeply: “he is your life.” Their relationship with God was more than their most important relationship in life; it was life itself! Everything would flow from that core relationship. It still does for God’s people.

PRESENT: Explain that individuals still have a choice. Share the Plan of Salvation from the inside front cover and urge those who have not followed Jesus to make that choice today.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review the following points from this week’s Bible passage:

- We can trust God to give us the ability to obey His commands.
- People must choose whether they will follow God or not.
- Our desire to follow God influences our descendants’ choices to follow Him.

REFLECT: Guide adults to select one statement that is most relevant for their lives. Ask: **Why did you choose that statement?**

DISCUSS: Direct adults to read the **Apply the Text** questions on page 103. Challenge them to consider ways they can get to know

God better through His Word. Lead them to list some ideas in teams of two or three. After a few minutes, allow the teams to share their ideas and record them on the board. Encourage adults to adopt one idea from the list this week.

PRAY: Encourage adults to spend a few minutes praying Deuteronomy 30:19 using the prayer prompts in the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15). After a few minutes, encourage adults to identify silently one person they know who needs to choose life in Jesus. Invite a volunteer to close the session praying that each adult will get a chance to share the gospel with their person this week.

AFTER THE SESSION

To follow up on this session, send the group an email or text with an encouragement to continue living faithful lives that draw them closer to the Lord. Remind them to be praying for an opportunity to share the gospel with people who still need to follow Jesus. Reach out to any adults who professed faith in Jesus for the first time as a result of presenting the Plan of Salvation.

God's Power

Session 13 • Deuteronomy 33:1-5, 26-29



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) on a focal wall. Prepare copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jesus and Deuteronomy*).

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph on page 109.

ASK: What is the connection between fear and insecurity? Between trust and security? (p. 109)

DISCUSS: Facilitate a discussion on why people trust some people or groups and don't trust others. Draw two columns on the board: *Trust* and *Distrust*. Allow adults to share groups that might fall into each column. Encourage them to share why they would put a particular group in each column.

REVIEW: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and remind adults that you are coming to the end of a study of these books. Allow them to share ideas and action points from these studies that have made a difference in their lives.

TRANSITION: Share that the passage for this session comes from the section identified on the poster as "Final Days of Moses." State that in Moses's final words to the Israelites, he sought to prepare them for the next major events in their journey. He also reminded them why they had every reason to trust God as they moved forward into Canaan.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 33:1-5 while adults listen for the blessing that Moses spoke over Israel.

EXPLAIN: Explain that Deuteronomy 33 contains Moses's final blessing over Israel before his death. Summarize the information below:

- **(33:1)** Moses knew that his death was coming and that he would not enter Canaan (Num. 20:12). Consequently, chapter 33 contains Moses's last recorded message to the Israelites. His final blessing over Israel included three parts. First, his blessing exalted God as Israel's King (33:1-5). God had demonstrated His power in leading His people from Sinai to the promised land. Second, Moses addressed Israel's twelve tribes by name (33:6-25). Each tribe had a special place in God's purpose, and each would

experience God's blessings for obedience. Third, Moses again reminded Israel of God's uniqueness (33:26-29). He was their dwelling place, and He would bring victory and provide security.

EXPLAIN: Share the following to summarize the tone of verses 2-5 in the original language:

- In verse 3, the pronouns change person from third person "he" to second person "you." The shift indicates a heightened sense of intimacy and closeness. No longer were the words *about* God, they were *to* Him. God's action and theirs—His holding and their listening—had caused the relationship to go deeper. God's words came through Moses. He was the conduit through which God communicated His message.

DEFINE: Use the following information to explain the meaning of "Jeshurun." Highlight God's desire to be the people's righteous King with ultimate authority in their lives.

- **(33:5)** The expression "became King" also has been rendered "was king." Of course, God was already King over all Israel, but the original text emphasizes that God had powerfully demonstrated Himself as King by leading His people from Sinai to Canaan. "Jeshurun" is a poetic reference to Israel. It comes from a root that means "straight" and carries the concept of uprightness and justice. Sadly, Israel did not always live up to this poetic name. Moses also mentioned how the leaders and the tribes came together. The reference may be to Mount Sinai,

where the people together affirmed God's covenant (Ex. 24:7).

EXAMINE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jesus and Deuteronomy*). Guide adults to read a few of the Scriptures that show how Jesus taught from Deuteronomy. Encourage them to review the rest of the verses during the week.

ASK: Why so you think the Bible portrays God in so many ways, such as a Warrior, King, and Shepherd? Which biblical portrait or title comes to mind first when you think of Him and why? (p. 111)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 33:26-29 as adults underline phrases that represent security for Israel.

SHARE: Summarize this content from page 114 to encourage adults to reflect on the power of Moses's blessing:

- Some commentators link God's dwelling place with the heavens and clouds mentioned in verse 26. Thus, this verse highlights that God is above His people and His everlasting arms are beneath. Nothing could better picture God's dependable protection and security for His people. Like a strong and loving Father, He safeguards His own in His caring embrace.

DISCUSS: Highlight "shield" and "sword" to illustrate God's power and protection. Guide adults to discuss how God's protection and His promise to fight for Israel was a source of comfort and security for the nation. Direct them to scan the verses again and call out the words they previously underlined when

the Scripture was read. As each word or phrase is mentioned, ask adults to explain how it represents security for the nation.

- **(33:29)** Moses used the words *shield* and *sword* to describe the Lord's protection. He defended them against attack, and He fought for them. They would have a role to play in conquering Canaan, but ultimately the credit belonged to God (Josh. 21:43-45).

ASK: What does it teach us about God that He is our “dwelling place”? (p. 111)

- **(33:27)** The expression “God of old” connotes the Lord's presence from throughout time. He spoke the world into existence and existed long before He called Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). The prophet Habakkuk also used this Hebrew word to affirm God's agelessness (Hab. 1:12), while Micah used it to describe Jesus the Messiah (Mic. 5:2). This everlasting God was Israel's “dwelling place.” God's people would capture Canaan, but ultimately, their home would be with God. The everlasting arms highlights how God would support them and carry them in their relationship with Him. His presence was the supreme blessing that came from His covenant. Any enemy in Canaan would face God's judgment, and He would destroy them (Lev. 18:24-25; Deut. 9:5).

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: List the following application points on the board from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers can trust in God's love for them.
- Believers should find their security in God alone.

EVALUATE: Lead adults to discuss how these application points are related to one another. Ask them to rank their own trust and security levels on a scale of one to five, with one being “needs work” and five being “on target.”

REFLECT: Guide adults to review the **Apply the Text** questions on page 111. Direct them to join two or three other people to discuss their thoughts about trust and security.

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and ask adults to take a few moments to complete the handout. Invite volunteers to read the prayers they have written as you close the session. As an alternative, share this week's prayer prompts in the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15) and spend a few moments in prayer.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email adults, suggesting they review and reflect on the chart on **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jesus and Deuteronomy*). Encourage them to continue their study of how Jesus referred to Deuteronomy during His ministry. Challenge the group to find their security in life by placing their faith in Christ alone.

VISUAL IDEAS

These items are available in the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (see goExploreTheBible.com) or you can use these descriptions to create your own.

Pack Item 1

Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab
Sessions 1-13

Locate a map that highlights the route taken by the Israelites from Kadesh-Barnea to Moab

Pack Item 2

Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy
Sessions 1-13

Refer to page 9 of the PSG or a study Bible to create a poster that outlines Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Pack Item 3

Poster: The Journey of the Spies
Session 3

Use a study Bible or a Bible dictionary to locate a map that shows the movements of the Israelite scouts as they spied out Canaan in Numbers.

Pack Item 4

Poster: Key Verse: Numbers 14:18a
Session 4

Create a poster with the text of Numbers 14:18a.

Pack Item 5

Poster: Key Verse: Deuteronomy 6:4-5
Session 9

Create a poster with the text of Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Pack Item 6

Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure
Sessions 10-12

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a poster that outlines the basic structure of ancient “suzerain” treaties.



COVENANT CATEGORIES	WHAT IT MEANS
Title	Identifies the superior party (suzerain) and the lesser party (vassal).
Preamble	Shows how the superior partner has cared for the subordinate one in the past, thereby inspiring gratitude and obedience within the subordinate partner.
Stipulations/Laws	Lays the laws given by the superior partner, which are to be obeyed by the subordinate partner. The suzerain has cared for the vassal in the past, thereby inspiring gratitude and obedience with the subordinate partner.
Exhortations/Warnings	Provides for the preservation of the text in the temple of the subordinate partner.
Witnesses	Witnessed and guaranteed by the gods of both parties. In the case of God, he often called heaven and earth as witnesses.
Blessings/Curses	Pronounces blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.
Copy/Ceremonies/Sanctions	The covenant is ratified by an oath and a ceremony. The sanctions are announced officially against those who break the covenant relationship.

LEADER PACK SAMPLE POSTER

Pack Item 7

Handout: Numbers, Deuteronomy Time Line
Sessions 1-13

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to Numbers and Deuteronomy. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references to provide context.



Pack Item 8

Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy Sessions 1-13

Create a handout to help adults pray through verses in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Provide these prompts: session/verse, thoughts from the passage, what the passage teaches about God, how adults will respond to what He reveals, and space for a written prayer.

Pack Item 9

Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness Sessions 2-5

Create a chart that lists Israel's wilderness complaints in the book of Numbers. Include the passage reference, the specific complaint, who was complaining, and the target of the complaint.

Pack Item 10

Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness Session 8

Create a handout that includes a two-column chart. One column provides space for adults to list ways God showed His faithfulness to Israel in the wilderness. The other column provides space for adults to list ways God has shown His faithfulness in their lives.

Pack Item 11

Handout: Balaam: All We Know Session 6

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that highlights key facts about Balaam's life.

Pack Item 12

Handout: Why This Land? Session 7

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that describes what made the promised land so appealing to God's people.

Pack Item 13

Handout: Moses's Final Appeal Session 12

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that outlines Moses's final message to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 30.

Pack Item 14

Handout: Jesus and Deuteronomy Session 13

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a chart that shares how Jesus used Deuteronomy during His ministry on earth and encourages adults toward further study of the book.

COMING NEXT QUARTER



Matthew 1-13

Session 1: **Affirmation** (Matthew 3:13-4:11)

Session 2: **Invitation** (Matthew 4:12-25)

Session 3: **Worship the King** (Matthew 2:1-12)

Session 4: **True Righteousness** (Matthew 5:13-20,43-48)

Session 5: **Treasure** (Matthew 6:19-34)

Session 6: **Authority Acknowledged** (Matthew 7:15-29)

Session 7: **Every Life Valued** (Matthew 8:1-4,14-17; 9:1-8)

Session 8: **Mercy Extended** (Matthew 9:10-19,23-26)

Session 9: **Loyalty Tested** (Matthew 10:16-20,26-34)

Session 10: **Confronting Doubts** (Matthew 11:1-6,16-24)

Session 11: **Rejecting Legalism** (Matthew 12:1-14)

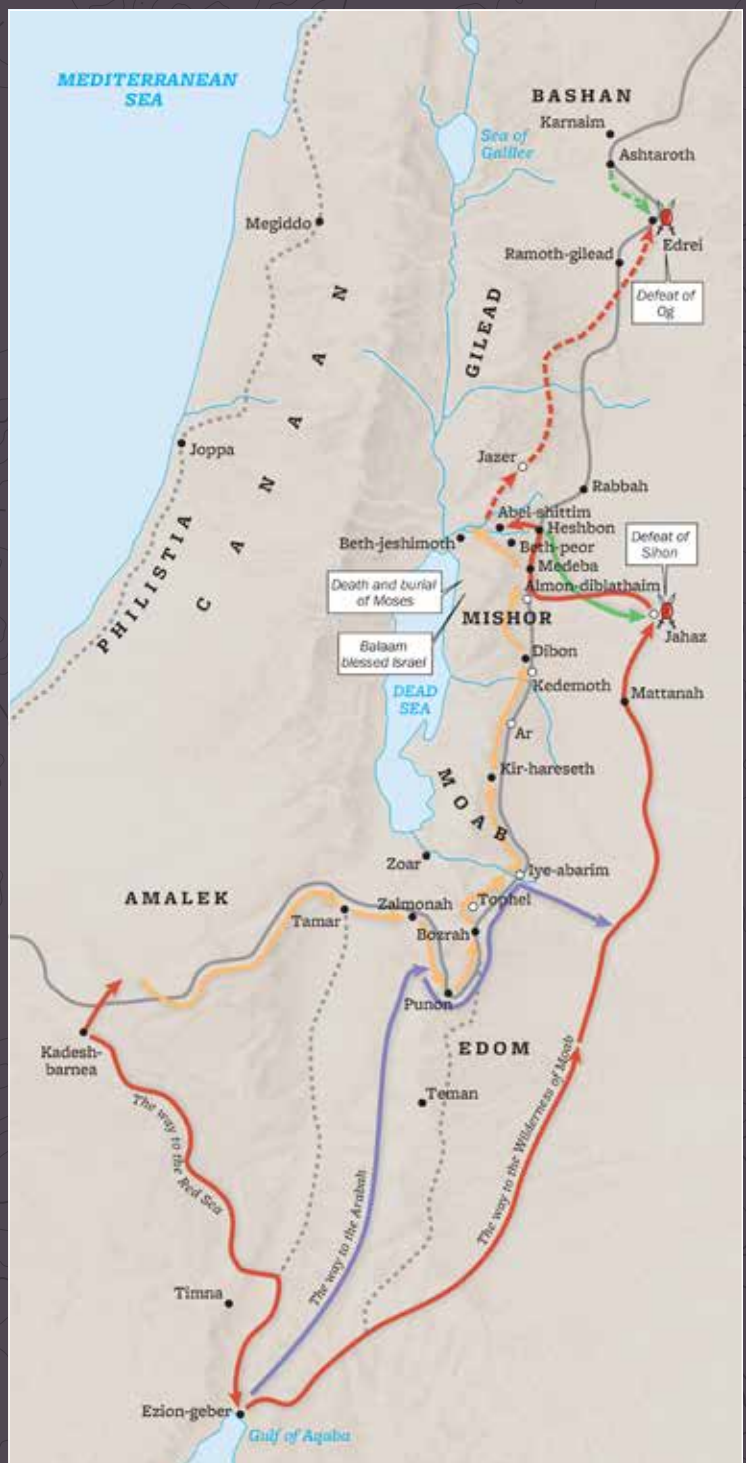
Session 12: **Judgment Coming** (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43)

Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

THE JOURNEY FROM KADESH-BARNEA TO MOAB

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ← Possible routes from Kadesh-barnea to the Plains of Moab
- ← Possible alternate route I
- ← Possible alternate route II
- ← Israelite battle missions
- ← Sihon attacks
- ← Og attacks
- ⚔ Battle
- King's Highway
- Other routes



"The Journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Moab" is taken from the Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1981), p.71. Used with permission.

NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY

As road trips wind down, travelers start thinking about the work waiting for them back home. The ancient Israelites were no exception. The books of Numbers and Deuteronomy recount how the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness for four decades and how God taught them to be His people as they approached the promised land. He wanted to remind them how much still needed to be done once they got “home.” As you study these final two books of the Pentateuch, ask God to show you what He longs to accomplish in you and through you. Learn how to avoid a life of spiritual wandering and embrace the best He has to offer.

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