



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

CHRIST-CENTERED, KINGDOM-FOCUSED HOMES



Bible Reading Plan Journal

April 2022

Why we have a church-wide Bible reading plan: God speaks to people through His Word. It is what He uses to transform our lives by revealing truth to us and aligning our heart toward what He loves. The aim of this reading plan is not to merely check a box off a list, but to encourage our church body to spend time hearing from God. Reading the Bible is critical to a Christian's growth. But it is especially powerful to read the Bible with others. This reading plan is the basis for all of our D-Groups, and we hope it fosters deeper spiritual conversations in our families and between our members.

How you can use this booklet: Each day has a passage of Scripture for you to read. There are one to two questions to prompt your study of the passage. We encourage the H.E.A.R. method for reading Scripture, especially if it is a new discipline for you. First, highlight a verse or verses that speak to you from the passage. Then, explain what those verses mean in relation to the broader context and how they support the main idea the author is trying to communicate. Next, apply this verse to your everyday life. What does this passage teach us about God? How does this passage point you to your need for Jesus? How do your thoughts, emotions, or actions need to change in light of this passage? Application should always be done in a spirit of prayer, as you are asking God to reveal to you how it applies. Finally, respond. This may be a specific action God is leading you to do. Very often it will be a prayer, either of thanksgiving, of confession of sin, or of petition asking for God's help.

Each new section in the biblical book is preceded by an introduction to help you focus on some key ideas of that book. There is also a general outline to that section to help you keep the overall context in mind as you read each day. This is important for every book of Scripture, but it is especially important for the larger books in the Bible.

Memory Verse: Because Scripture is God's Word, it is important that a Christian spend regular time memorizing God's Word so that he or she can always find encouragement and guidance from God. This month's memory passage is provided on the next page in the ESV, NIV, and NLT.

Deuteronomy 5:16-18**ESV**

16 “ ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

17 “ ‘You shall not murder.

18 “ ‘And you shall not commit adultery.

NIV

16 “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

17 “You shall not murder.

18 “You shall not commit adultery.

NLT

16 “Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God commanded you. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

17 “You must not murder.

18 “You must not commit adultery.

Introduction to the book of Numbers

In the Hebrew Bible, this book is called “In the Wilderness,” which better summarizes the contents of the book rather than our English title, Numbers. This book details the wilderness journey of Israel after they leave Sinai and until they reach the edge of the land of Canaan. More specifically, the book details the transition from one generation, the one that left Egypt, to the next, which will actually be the one to enter the land of Canaan.

The book begins with a high level of excitement. They have built the tabernacle, and God’s presence has filled it. Now they are ready to head to the land of Canaan. The first several chapters detail the preparations until Israel finally sets out from Mount Sinai in ch. 10. And they immediately rebel against the Lord. And this happens again, and again, and again, to the point where they refuse to even enter to land. For this reason, they are condemned to die in the wilderness until a new generation rises up, which will instead enter the land. That may be perhaps the most interesting part of the book: how little we know about those 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Clearly the point was not to detail every single event but instead to show that, despite the people’s rebellion, God fulfills his promises to bring his people back to the land of Israel.

The structure of the book seems haphazard. Narrative and law occur together, sometimes without a clear connection. For this reason, it can be difficult to provide a clear outline for the book. But scholars generally agree that there are two significant sections to the book marked by the two censuses taken in the book (ch. 1 & 26).

Book Outline: Numbers

- I. The Wilderness Generation (chs. 1-25)
 - A. Preparations to leave Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:36)
 - B. Disbelief, Rebellion, and Judgment (11:1-21:35)
 - C. Balaam blesses Israel (22:1-24:25)
- II. The New Generation (chs. 26-36)
 - A. The transition to a new generation (26:1-27:23)
 - B. Offerings, Festivals, and Vows (28:1-30:16)
 - C. The Defeat of Midian (31:1-54)
 - D. On the East Side of the Jordan (32:1-36:13)

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 1 | **Numbers 1**

Explain:

Who is included in the census of Israel? Why do you think this count was commanded?

Day 1 | Numbers 1

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

Try to draw a diagram of the Israelite camp.

Compare different Bible translations of 3:5-10 (for example, NIV, ESV, and KJV). What was the job of the Levites in relationship to the priests?

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: There are clear instructions about the layout of the Israelite camp as well :
: as in what order the tribes should travel. Importantly, God's tent is at the center :
: in all situations, and it is guarded by the Levitical clans. Throughout, there are :
: connotations that this is a military camp. In fact, these instructions make the :
: Israelite camp sound like the camps of other Ancient Near Eastern nations :
: when they went out to war. The king would have traveled at the center of the :
: camp. But for Israel, they had no human king. Rather, Yahweh dwelt in the :
: center of their camp. He was their king, and we will also see that he will fight :
: his people's battles. :
:

Day 2 | **Numbers 2-3**

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

What was the special task of the Levites?

What were the names of the three divisions of the Levites (their “clans”)?

What was each responsible for?

Day 3 | Numbers 4

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

The test for adultery in this chapter may seem primitive or even magical to us today. But what does this law reflect about God and his concern for justice and sin?

Day 4 | Numbers 5

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

Throughout the Old Testament, we see people make vows to God in hope of his action or deliverance. The Nazirite vow was a rather significant type of vow an Israelite might make to God. What did this vow consist of?

Day 5 | Numbers 6

Apply:

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 1 | **Numbers 7**

Explain:

What do you think is the point of the clear repetition in this chapter?
(Consider comparing it with the variation we find in ch. 2.)

Day 1 | **Numbers 7**

Apply:

Every tribe participated fully and equally in this extravagant offering. Imagine a parallel situation today where people both fully participate and feel equally valued as everyone else. What would such a community feel and look like?

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 2 | **Numbers 8-9**

Explain:

Why were the Levites separated from the rest of the tribes of Israel?

Day 2 | **Numbers 8-9**

Apply:

Imagine living in the Israelite camp. What do you think it would have been like to follow the cloud of God's presence?

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 3 | **Numbers 10-11**

Explain:

Why do the people complain? How does Moses respond? How does God respond?

Consider the severity with which God responds to Israel in ch. 11. What is at issue here that requires such a devastating response?

Day 3 | **Numbers 10-11**

Apply:

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 4 | **Numbers 12-13**

Explain:

Why do Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses and his leadership? How does God respond?

Why does Moses find it necessary to send spies into the land?

Day 4 | **Numbers 12-13**

Apply:

What parallels do you notice between these chapters and your own life
and relationship with God?

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 5 | **Numbers 14**

Explain:

What do the people think will happen if they enter the land? What does this reflect about their belief in God?

Day 5 | **Numbers 14**

Apply:

God's judgment is ironic: he will cause the peoples' worst fears to come about. They will in fact die, except it will be in the wilderness rather than in the land. And yet he has also pardoned them (14:20). How can God both forgive and still not bring his people into the land? Does that have any implications for how God deals with us today?

Respond:

Explain:

Why would a sacrifice still be required for unintentional sins? What happens to the person who sins “with a high hand,” that is, intentionally and defiantly?

Ch. 16 tells the story of several “high-handed” sins that people commit. How does God deal with the various sins in this chapter?

Day 1 | **Numbers 15-16**

Apply:

Do you view sin with the sort of severity it requires? Why or why not?

Respond:

Explain:

Ch. 17 continues and completes the narrative from the preceding chapter. What is the purpose of this situation with the staffs? Why do the people respond the way that they do (v. 12)?

How does God take care of and provide for the priests and the Levites? Because of this, what do they not receive that the rest of the tribes do?

Day 2 | **Numbers 17-18**

Apply:

Chs. 16-18 serve to legitimate not only Aaron but all his descendants as priests to the Lord along with the special role of the Levites. Based on the significant calling and responsibilities of the priests, do you see any implications that this might have for us or our church today?

Respond:

Explain:

Ch. 19 is a clear example that uncleanness did not necessarily imply immorality. People would inevitably become unclean by experiencing death (e.g., in war v. 16, or the death of a loved one, v. 14). What was important was dealing with that uncleanness properly. What do you think the Israelites would have learned about death by keeping these particular laws?

Day 3 | Numbers 19

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

These chapters tell two new stories of rebellion in the wilderness. What circumstances lead to the people's rebellion? How do similar circumstances in your own life tempt you to rebel against God?

The people set out from Kadesh (20:22) and begin heading toward the land of Canaan by going around Edom (20:14-21) then through the land of the Amorites and the Moabites. These people were the immediate neighbors to Canaan to the south and east. How should their experience on this part of their journey give them confidence about entering the land of Canaan itself?

Day 4 | **Numbers 20-21**

Apply:

John 3:14 makes explicit reference to Numbers 21:4-9. How does the story of the bronze serpent help us understand Jesus and our faith in him?

Respond:

Explain:

How would you describe the character of Balaam? Is he portrayed in a positive or a negative light?

How can a man with less spiritual sensitivity than a donkey speak what the Lord has spoken?

Day 5 | **Numbers 22-23**

Apply:

What does this passage teach us about how God works and whom he uses?

Respond:

Numbers: The Wilderness Generation

Day 1 | **Numbers 24-25**

Explain:

What is the effect of having ch. 25 right after chs. 22-24? What are the main ideas of these two sections, and how do they relate to one another?

Day 1 | **Numbers 24-25**

Apply:

The king of Moab is terrified of Israel, and Israel is worshipping Moab's gods and seeking out their women. What parallels do you see between these stories and your own relationship with God?

Respond:

Explain:

This is the second census taken in the book (cf. ch. 1). What seems to be the purpose of another census being taken?

Day 2 | **Numbers 26**

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

The account of Zelophehad's daughters deals with a rather practical situation. In a society in which land was typically passed down to male descendants, they would have to decide what happened if someone had no male descendants. Why was a person's inheritance, and especially the passing down of land, so important in Israel?

Day 3 | **Numbers 27**

Apply:

Respond:

Explain:

These chapters detail the regular offerings that were offered in the temple daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. These were each times appointed for sacrifice and worship. Why is it important to have these regular, repeated, scheduled times for worship?

Day 4 | **Numbers 28-29**

Apply:

Do you have similar rhythms for worship in your own life? If not, should you?

Respond:

Explain:

An Israelite would make a vow (to offer a sacrifice) as a part of prayer to show God how earnest they were in seeking his help. This chapter shows how seriously vows were taken. Should Christians make vows today? Why or why not?

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This is one of several similar stories in the Old Testament that is very troubling for us today. There are a few things to consider regarding the ethics of the situation. First of all, war in general, and particularly in the Ancient Near East, was brutal but common reality. Israel, as a nation, was involved and would continue to be involved in military conflicts. Second, the Israelites carry out God's judgment against the Midianites (probably because they lead Israel astray: Num. 25:16-18). God's judgment is often incredibly harsh. Situations like these are more difficult because God does not directly punish; rather, he uses flawed vessels (here, the Israelites) to accomplish his purpose. He will do this later on in Israel's history against Israel itself by using different nations. The fact that God uses people in this way does not mean that they are necessarily righteous or without sin. This also should not be understood as legitimizing any similar behavior today. These sorts of situations were given in particular circumstances based on a specific word from the Lord.

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Day 5 | **Numbers 30-31**

Apply:

Why does God send his people to destroy the Midianites? How do you explain the obvious ethical difficulties in this story?

Respond:
