

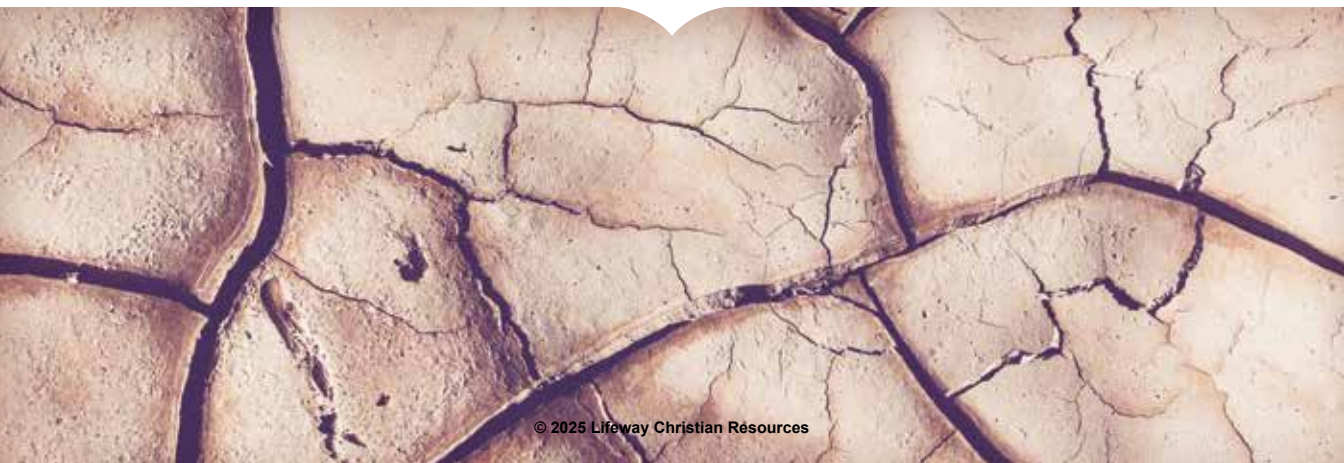


EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**
Adults

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

amber.vaden@lifeway.com

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?

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