

Numbers & Deuteronomy

Personal Study Guide (CSB)

Fall 2025



STEP BY STEP

In poetry and music, various metaphors have been applied to life. One song tells us "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 life is more like a choice between "two roads." 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.

The ancient Israelites had started a journey on pretty solid footing. They escaped the slavery of Egypt, walked through the Red Sea, and received God's game plan 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." Now, their journey entailed forty years of walking around in circles until an entire generation died out. But God was leading them—step by step—toward a second chance at Canaan. That's the story of Numbers and Deuteronomy. It's about God leading and protecting imperfect people through a wilderness as they learned to trust Him.

That's not just the story of the Israelites. 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 step toward Him. 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. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **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.

CONTENTS



FEATURES

Word Wise	6
Bible Reading Plan	7
Biblical Background	8
• Jesus's Use of Deuteronomy	127
Coming Next Quarter	130

SESSIONS

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

Sept. 7	Session 1:	The Journey (Num. 9:15-23)	10
Sept. 14	Session 2:	Provision (Num. 11:4-17)	19
Sept. 21	Session 3:	The Land (Num. 13:17-31)	28
Sept. 28	Session 4:	Rebellion and Judgment* (Num. 14:11-24)	37
Oct. 5	Session 5:	Lack of Trust (Num. 20:2-13)	46
Oct. 12	Session 6:	God's Plans (Num. 22:22-35)	55
Oct. 19	Session 7:	Instructions Given (Num. 33:50-56; 34:13-15)	64
Oct. 26	Session 8:	Remember (Deut. 4:1-9,15-20)	73
Nov. 2	Session 9:	Love (Deut. 6:1-9,20-25)	82
Nov. 9	Session 10:	Undivided Worship (Deut. 12:1-11,29-32)	91
Nov. 16	Session 11:	Covenant Relationship (Deut. 28:1-6,15-19)	100
Nov. 23	Session 12:	Fully Committed (Deut. 30:11-20)	109
Nov. 30	Session 13:	God's Power (Deut. 33:1-5,26-29)	118

^{*}Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITER





G. B. Howell wrote this study of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Dr. Howell graduated from Carson-Newman University (Bachelor of Religion), Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity; Master of Biblical Archaeology), and Oxford Graduate School (Doctor of Philosophy). He served as content editor of Biblical Illustrator until his retirement.

Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide CSB (ISSN 2330-9539; Item 005850602) is published quarterly by Lifeway Christian Resources, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2025 Lifeway Christian Resources.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher.

For ordering or inquiries including Autoship, visit Lifeway.com, call 1-800-458-2772, write Lifeway Resources Customer Service, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, or fax 615.251.5933. For address changes, email subscribe@lifeway.com. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, visit Lifeway.com/Autoship, email orderentry@Lifeway.com, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. Read Lifeway's full doctrinal guideline online at lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline. The Key Doctrine statements in this study guide are adapted from these guidelines.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

The suggestions for pronouncing Bible names are from *That's Easy for You to Say:*Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names by W. Murray Severance, © 1997 by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Used by permission.

Explore the Bible Adult Personal Study Guide Fall 2025 Volume 3, Number 1

Amber Vaden Team Leader

Mike Livingstone Content Editor

Gia Thornburg Production Editor

Darin Clark Design Team Leader

Jocelyn Humphries Contributing Graphic Designer

Dwayne McCrary Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

John Paul Basham Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to the team by email: ETB.adults@lifeway.com; or by mail to Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707.

Printed in the United States of America

FROM THE TEAM LEADER



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

Explore Discover



Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Anak [AY nak]—patriarch of a clan of giants who were also known as Nephilim (Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33)

Asherah [uh SHEE ruh]— Canaanite fertility goddess, considered the mother of Baal

Baal-peor [Baal-peor]—place where Israel kindled God's judgment by embracing Baal worship (Num. 25:1-9). As a result, 24,000 people died.

Balaam [BAY luhm]—non-Israelite prophet from Mesopotamia. 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).

Balak [BAY lak]—king of Moab who sent for Balaam to curse the Israelites (Num. 22:2-6)

Hamath [HAY math]—term used to describe the northern border of Israel (Num. 34:7-8; Josh. 13:5; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 14:25,28)

Hebron [HEE bruhn]—ancient city in the hill country of Judah where Abram sojourned (Gen. 13:18) and purchased a cave to bury Sarah. When Moses sent the twelve spies into Canaan, the tribe of Anak lived in Hebron (Num. 13:22).

Horeb [HOH reb]—a synonym for Mount Sinai. Some see "Horeb" referring to a region, while "Sinai" refers to the mountain.

Jeshurun [jih SHOO ruhn]— another name for Israel (Deut. 32:15; 33:5,26; Isa. 44:2)

Meribah [MEHR ih buh]—rocky desert between Kadesh-barnea and the Dead Sea in southern Canaan. It later became part of Judah (Num. 34:3-4; Josh. 15:1,3).

Moab [MOH ab]—region south of Jericho on the west side of the Jordan River. Israel camped in this area (Num. 22:1) until after the death of Moses (Deut. 34:1) when Joshua led Israel across the river.

Negev [NEH gehv]—the root word means "to be dry," the basic meaning is "south"; region where the Amalekites lived (Num. 13:29)

Paran [PAY ruhn]—wilderness area north of Sinai where Israel camped after leaving Sinai; from there Moses sent out the twelve spies (Num. 13:3,26)

Wilderness of Zin—desert region stretching from Kadesh-barnea to the Dead Sea; formed part of the southern border of Canaan and later Judah (Num. 34:3-4)

BIBLE READING PLAN

Q

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
☐ 1. Numbers 1:1-54	☐ 1. Numbers 20:1-29	☐ 1. Deuteronomy 8:1-20
2. Numbers 2:1-34	2. Numbers 21:1-35	☐ 2. Deuteronomy 9:1-29
☐ 3. Numbers 3:1-13	☐ 3. Numbers 22:1-41	☐ 3. Deuteronomy 10:1-22
☐ 4. Numbers 3:14-39	4. Numbers 23:1-30	☐ 4. Deuteronomy 11:1-32
☐ 5. Numbers 3:40-51	☐ 5. Numbers 24:1-25	☐ 5. Deuteronomy 12:1-32
☐ 6. Numbers 4:1-20	☐ 6. Numbers 25:1-18	☐ 6. Deuteronomy 13:1-18
☐ 7. Numbers 4:21-33	☐ 7. Numbers 26:1-27	☐ 7. Deuteronomy 14:1-29
■ 8. Numbers 4:34-49	☐ 8. Numbers 26:28-65	☐ 8. Deuteronomy 15:1-23
9. Numbers 5:1-31	9. Numbers 27:1-23	9. Deuteronomy 16:1-22
☐ 10. Numbers 6:1-27	☐ 10. Numbers 28:1-31	10. Deuteronomy 17:1-20
☐ 11. Numbers 7:1-23	11. Numbers 29:1-19	11. Deuteronomy 18:1-22
☐ 12. Numbers 7:24-47	12. Numbers 29:20-40	12. Deuteronomy 19:1-21
☐ 13. Numbers 7:48-71	☐ 13. Numbers 30:1-16	13. Deuteronomy 20:1-20
☐ 14. Numbers 7:72-89	☐ 14. Numbers 31:1-30	14. Deuteronomy 21:1-23
☐ 15. Numbers 8:1-26	☐ 15. Numbers 31:31-54	☐ 15. Deuteronomy 22:1-30
☐ 16. Numbers 9:1-23	☐ 16. Numbers 32:1-19	☐ 16. Deuteronomy 23:1-25
☐ 17. Numbers 10:1-36	☐ 17. Numbers 32:20-42	☐ 17. Deuteronomy 24:1-22
☐ 18. Numbers 11:1-15	☐ 18. Numbers 33:1-56	18. Deuteronomy 25:1-19
☐ 19. Numbers 11:16-35	☐ 19. Numbers 34:1-29	19. Deuteronomy 26:1-19
20. Numbers 12:1-16	20. Numbers 35:1-34	20. Deuteronomy 27:1-26
21. Numbers 13:1-33	2 1. Numbers 36:1-13	21. Deuteronomy 28:1-26
☐ 22. Numbers 14:1-25	22. Deuteronomy 1:1-21	22. Deuteronomy 28:27-44
23. Numbers 14:26-45	2 3. Deuteronomy 1:22-46	23. Deuteronomy 28:45-68
24. Numbers 15:1-26	24. Deuteronomy 2:1-23	24. Deuteronomy 29:1-29
☐ 25. Numbers 15:27-41	2 5. Deuteronomy 2:24-37	25. Deuteronomy 30:1-20
☐ 26. Numbers 16:1-30	☐ 26. Deuteronomy 3:1-29	26. Deuteronomy 31:1-30
27. Numbers 16:31-50	☐ 27. Deuteronomy 4:1-24	27. Deuteronomy 32:1-27
☐ 28. Numbers 17:1-13	28. Deuteronomy 4:25-49	28. Deuteronomy 32:28-52
29. Numbers 18:1-32	29. Deuteronomy 5:1-33	29. Deuteronomy 33:1-29
☐ 30. Numbers 19:1-22	30. Deuteronomy 6:1-25	☐ 30. Deuteronomy 34:1-12
	☐ 31. Deuteronomy 7:1-26	1

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND



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.

OUTLINE



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)



The Journey

GOD GIVES DAILY GUIDANCE TO HIS PEOPLE.

NUMBERS 9:15-23

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.

V	unexpected. our travels?		•		

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

NUMBERS 1:1-10:10

The book of Exodus divides into three parts, which are separated by geographic location. 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.

Q	Read Numbers 9:15-23 in your Bible and underline the phrase "at the LORD's command" each time it appears. In what ways did the people demonstrate their faith in God?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

GOD'S PRESENCE (NUM. 9:15-16)

¹⁵ On the day the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and it appeared like fire above the tabernacle from evening until morning. ¹⁶ It remained that way continuously: the cloud would cover it, appearing like fire at night.

VERSES 15-16

Verse 15 serves as an introduction to the next part of the narrative—God's people would soon begin their travels from Sinai toward Canaan. The verse also echoes an event Scripture has mentioned twice before (Ex. 40:2; Num. 7:1). The people erected the *tabernacle*. This is a retelling of that same event.

The tabernacle was a movable, tent-like structure. It consisted of two primary parts. The outer courtyard measured 150 by 75 feet. Surrounding the courtyard were sixty wooden posts overlaid with bronze. Curtains hung between the posts. Inside the courtyard stood another tented structure. Whereas the courtyard was open to the sky, this smaller structure was completely covered with skins and cloth. This structure was the tabernacle itself; it measured 45 by 15 feet. Inside this covered structure were two rooms. The larger room, which one entered first, measured 15 by 30 feet and was known as the Holy Area. It contained the table of showbread, the lampstand (or "menorah"), and the altar of incense (Ex. 25:23-30,31-40; 30:1-10). The smaller room, measuring 15 by 15 feet, was the Most Holy Area (or "Holy of Holies" in some translations). It contained the ark of the covenant (25:10-22).

The Hebrew word translated *tabernacle* means "dwelling place." Thus, 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" (25:8).

The **tent of the testimony** points specifically to the small, enclosed tabernacle 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 word *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 (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.

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

FAITHFUL DIRECTION (NUM. 9:17-21)

¹⁷ Whenever the cloud was lifted up 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 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, 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 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.

VERSES 17-18

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 in three ways. 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 ritualistically 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. It does not explain how long it took for the cloud to reposition itself or how far it hovered above the tent. These details, thus, were not the emphasis or focus of what was happening. 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 biblical 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."

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.

VERSES 19-21

The final chapter of the book of Exodus described the setting up of the tabernacle and its furnishings for the first time. The priests were in place with their sacred garments. The instruments and people involved were anointed according to the Lord's command. The structure would have been impressive with its fabrics, woods, and metals. 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. Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, 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.

Many times we wait without knowing why.

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.

0		e bee rom H			•			or	
	 		 	 		 	 		 _
	 		 	 		 	 		 -
	 		 	 		 	 		 _

ACTIVE OBEDIENCE (NUM. 9:22-23)

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. They carried out the Lord's requirement according to his command through Moses.

VERSES 22-23

The previous verse spoke of the tabernacle being in place only overnight. Verse 22 describes the opposite side of the pendulum's swing. The phrase *two days*, *a month*, *or longer* is all-inclusive. It covers any length of time the cloud remained in place.

The succinct phrase, when it was lifted, they set out, conveys two ideas—first, an abrupt action. The people followed the Lord's directive promptly. Some commentators believe Moses assigned people to watch the cloud day and night. This would have ensured the Israelites did not miss the Lord's lead. Second, the phrase emphasizes that God's people followed His lead decisively and consistently. Nowhere do we get a hint that the phrase would ever be followed with, "except when. . . ." Because of the way the Lord led the Israelites, they knew each day where they were supposed to be.



KEY DOCTRINE: God

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

With a crescendo, verse 23 reaches the finale of the "Song of the Journey." It 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). The literal translation of the Hebrew phrase is, "at the mouth of the Lord." 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*. Each of these verbs has been used multiple times in the preceding verses.

The dual emphasis of verse 23 is on the Lord's directive and the people's obedience. The overall message is clear. They would not move forward apart from God's direction. They were dependent on Him for leadership and guidance. When He led, they obeyed.

They would not move forward apart from God's direction.

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 final verse of the "Song of the Journey," the people carried out God's directive He had given *through Moses*. They knew that in obeying Moses's words, they were obeying God's commands.

Why does it matter that we follow the Lord's lead?

•	Why do we sometimes delay doing what He wants us to do?
•	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?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + 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.

How might the Lord be leading your Bible study group or church

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

	into a new ministry? What can the group or church do to follow His lead?
Q	Examine your own life. How are you doing at following the Lord's lead? How can you become more attentive to His guidance?
>	Memorize Numbers 9:23. Prayer Needs



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

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