



5 bible studies in

# Numbers

## ‘playing for sheep stations’





# Numbers... 'playing for sheep stations'

Some preliminary comments – with each question, sometimes there's a follow up question or two included at the same number. This is to just help draw it out a bit more. You may get it with the first one so don't panic if you end up saying the same thing in thinking about the follow up question and therefore just move on. Also, don't panic if you can't quite see what a question might be driving at. These questions are not the Bible. Feel free to move onto the next one. The questions are just an attempt to help us get into the passage/issue. Let the passage drive things at the end of the day. The questions are of course still meant to be a lead in to what could be very important with what God has in front of us here. So at least think about it before moving on. It's good to dwell for a bit and often, it then becomes a little more obvious, though it is hoped that the questions are not totally useless!

In terms of this brief look at Numbers itself - we're obviously not taking in everything about the book—a lot more studies would be necessary for that! But we are looking at incidents that are unique to Numbers.

Exodus and Deuteronomy relate 'a number' of the same stories found in Numbers as God's people made their way to the promised land of Canaan after the great Exodus from Egypt with Moses. But Numbers adds to the picture as they made their way through the desert towards the land God had set aside for them — a bit like how the different Gospels each bring additional information to help us better see who Jesus is.

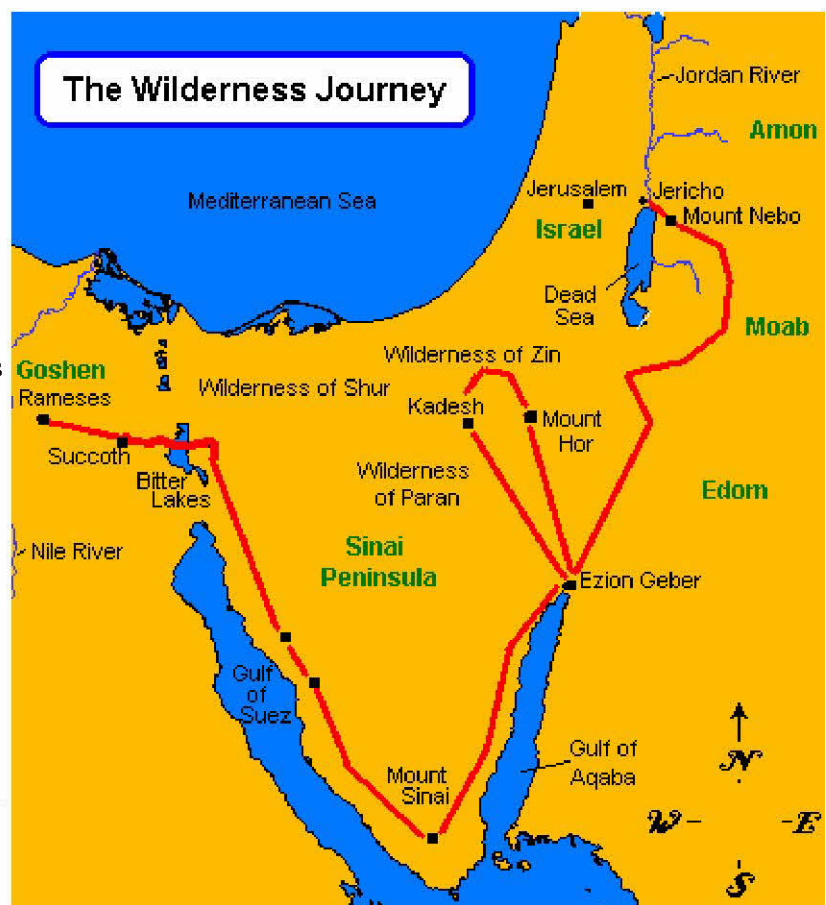
Numbers helps us see how God was keeping His promises to His people of old, first made to the father of the Israelite or Jewish nation, Abraham... "... go the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you..." (Genesis 12:1-2).

Numbers particularly brings out the promise to do with land.

God certainly blessed the people with His presence through thick and thin as the pages from Genesis 12:1-3 show. The great Exodus saga develops how God was keeping the people aspect to the promise, how despite ongoing impossible circumstances, there was quite a lot of people heading out of slavery, as Numbers literally reminds us at its beginning.

But a nation also needs a land. Again, seemingly impossible as the people had been up till this point always living in other people's land. Numbers tells how this was being fulfilled, relating the people's struggle to trust God for this.

We can learn a lot from their struggles even though the land for us today is very different. We too need to trust God because sometimes it can look unlikely for us as well. And the stakes are equally as high for us as they were for them.



# what number would you like it to be?



kick off

When have you been in a situation you felt was hopeless?



key verse

Numbers 13:30...

"We should go up and take possession of the land..."



big idea

We can't limit God.



investigate

## read Numbers 13

1. Where are we up to in God's plan at the start of this chapter? (*ie what's happened in broad terms to this point from Genesis to Numbers?*)
2. As Moses gave the brief to the men to explore the promised land or Canaan to see how good it was, should they have been expecting anything less? (v1-20)
3. What is similar/dissimilar to the garden of Eden? (v21-25)
4. How is the report back misleading? (v26-29)
5. Why was Caleb right to challenge this assessment? (v30) *See Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 13:11, and Deuteronomy 1:6-8 where Moses recounts the history 40 years on.*
6. How do things deteriorate from misleading to downright lies? (v31-33) *Compare v33 with Genesis 6:4. Is their negativity anything new? (a quick scan of Numbers 11 or thinking about the Exodus story will confirm whether history repeats)*
7. What is the promised land for us today given Jesus has now come? In other words, what has God promised us today? (*see Acts 13:32-41, Galatians 3:14*)
8. What kind of things do people baulk at from taking possession of this 'land' today?
9. What is the core thing we need to remember like these Israelites needed to remember? How does that help us to take possession of what God wants us to 'take' today?
10. In what ways are we still awaiting the promised land? (*see 1 Corinthians 13:12*)



think &amp; apply

## Pray in response to this chapter...



prayer points



through the week



read: Numbers 14

\* \* \* Ordinary people following an extraordinary God \* \* \*

# taking matters into your own hands



**kick off**

When can DIY turn ugly?



**key verse**

Numbers 14:41.... "Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed!"



**big idea**

We've got to let God do His job.



**investigate**

## read Numbers 14

1. How are the Israelites wanting to take matters into their own hands in the light of the negative reports they'd received about the promised land? (v1-4)

2. Why are Moses and Aaron "falling facedown" and Joshua and Caleb "tearing their clothes"? (v5-12)

3. Is God going over the top with His response? Explain.

4. Is Moses twisting God's arm from v13 to 19?

5. What kind of forgiveness is it in v20? Is it really forgiveness given v21-23?

6. What is motivating the Israelites at the end of the chapter? (v39-45)



**think & apply**

7. Is it ever justifiable to be angry at God? Do people in general society think there will ever be any consequences for thinking we don't need God in our lives?

8. Does Moses remind you of anyone? (see *Genesis 18:16-33, Hebrews 7:23-25*) How does Jesus show us even more the crucial need to have a sober view of our capabilities? (see *Ephesians 2:1-10*) Different to how our world thinks?

9. When have you tried to make it happen in your own strength, even as a Christian? What are we revealing about our attitude towards God when we do?

10. How does God give people grace and time today to stop relying on themselves?



**prayer points**

## Pray in response to this chapter...



**through the week**



**read: Numbers 16**

\* \* \* Ordinary people following an extraordinary God \* \* \*



# a bridge too far



kick off

What is the unforgivable sin?



key verse

Numbers 16:7...  
"You Levites have gone too far!"



big idea

If you play with the spiritual matches, you will get burnt.



investigate

## read Numbers 16

1. Why is the delegation disgruntled at the start of chapter 16? (v1-3)
2. Are there any grounds for their case? (v4-14) How privileged had they been in their role and was it really that great back in Egypt? (*see Leviticus 3:5-10, Exodus 2:23-25*)
3. How does God show He is fair and just in dealing with this matter? (v15-27)
4. Did it matter whether they listened to God's warnings? (v28-40) How could they have thought anything else would happen? Hadn't God warned them?
5. How does the last part of the chapter reveal that many were still not listening? (v41-50)
6. Was Moses once again twisting God's arm to be not so angry and spare some of the Israelites? (remember the events of chapter 14 from the last study)
7. What clouds our thinking to downgrade the Lord's great blessings to us? How do we sometimes think like Dathan and Abiram?
8. How does this sorry day in Israel's history show us what the unforgivable sin really is? (*see Matthew 12:31*)
9. Who does Moses once again remind you of at the end? How is this person even greater? (*see Hebrews 3:1-6*)
10. Does it help our soft 'post modern' western thinking to understand God's stern reaction here? What sober warnings are there for us even as Christians? How does this passage make a mockery of universalism and spur us on to evangelise?



think &amp; apply

Pray in response to this chapter...



prayer points



through the week



read:  
Numbers 22

\* \* \* Ordinary people following an extraordinary God \* \* \*

# look who's talking now



kick off

What are some of the unusual things that come to mind from the Bible for you?



key verse

Numbers 22:20...

"...but do only what I tell you."



big idea

We always need to be open to listening to the Lord's Word in our lives.



investigate

## read Numbers 22

1. Why is the King of Moab's reaction such a turn around? (remember Numbers 13) And why is it in the end not surprising, despite Israel's penchant for timidity? (*see Moses and Miriam's prophetic song after they had just escaped Egypt—Exodus 15:15, and Deuteronomy 2:25*)

2. Why was God talking to a pagan prophet? (v9) Did Balaam have a personal relationship with God? (*a clue in the author's reluctance to use "LORD"—see Exodus 3:13-14 and also 2 Peter 2:15-16, Jude 11*)

3. Is God contradicting himself, one minute telling Balaam not to go with the Moabites (v12), then that he should (v20), but then becoming angry when he does (v22)? Think about what Balaam's original purpose was compared to what God wanted in v20.

4. How does the incident with the donkey and the angel of the Lord reveal where Balaam really was at? (v21-30) What's he blind to?

5. What enabled him to at least see the obvious on this occasion? (v31) Is he really converted? (compare v34 with 31:7-8—what was he doing fighting God's people?)

6. How does Balak reveal the same problem? (v36-38) A brief survey of the next 2 chapters continues the same virtual comedy that Balaam experienced with the donkey.



think &amp; apply

7. When have you been blind to the obvious? Has God ever put up road blocks to make you think, but you've just kept on ploughing on?

8. Any justification from this incident for our ministers before Bible talks and Home Group leaders before Bible studies and you in your own reading, opening with prayer?

9. What kind of things make us less open to hearing God's Word? (good to contemplate "Balaam's error")

10. Why is it important to have more than just a knowledge of the Bible? How does Jesus help us with this? (*see John 1:1-18*)



prayer points

## Pray in response to this chapter...



through the week



read: Numbers 27

\* \* \* Ordinary people following an extraordinary God \* \* \*

# when your number comes up



What are you working towards in your life?



key **verse**

Numbers 27:5...

"So Moses bought their case before the LORD..."



big **idea**

We live in the sure and certain knowledge that God's plans are being fulfilled through Jesus.



investigate

## read Numbers 27

1. What was the problem for Zelophehad's daughters? (v1-4)
2. How did Moses deal with it? (v5)
3. Why was the LORD in agreement with the daughters? (6-11) *As time permits, see Genesis 12:1, 15:7, 23:1-20, 50:22-25 to confirm what's at stake here (for the really keen, check out Leviticus 25:8-12, 23-28 and the very colourful story in 1Kings 21:1-19, 22:37-38).*
4. Do you think Moses was hard done by? (v12-14) *Go back to Numbers 20:1-13 for the important background—had Moses shown a lack of faith on that occasion?*
5. Why was it so important to have a successor for Moses? (v15-21)
6. Why would Joshua be an appropriate choice to succeed Moses, given the way the author of Numbers notes the importance of taking God at His word? (v22-23)
7. What lead can we take from the way Zelophehad's daughters and Moses dealt with the problem?
8. What is our inheritance that we've got to hold onto today?
9. When we are disobedient, does it foil God's plans? Does someone else get the privilege of being involved in something special? *(see Matthew 6:19-21)*
10. What's the point of all these leaders when even the best of them fall short? *(see Joshua 9 for an indication of how Joshua's record, like Moses' wasn't without blemish)* How do they end up pointing us to and appreciating Jesus?



think & apply



prayer points

**Pray in response to this chapter...**



through the week



read:  
**1 Peter 1:3-9**

\* \* \* Ordinary people following an extraordinary God \* \* \*