

one thing: God promised to guide us. When we have no clues, we must remember that God is omniscient—all wise. When we run out of time, we must remember that God is omnipresent—all time is in His hand. When we are weak, we must remember that God is omnipotent—all power belongs to Him.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



People often say that hindsight is 20/20, meaning that things are obviously much clearer when we can review our experiences. We can know the mistakes we made and learn to choose more wisely in the future. But foresight can also be 20/20. Although we don't know what will occur, we can obtain the peace of knowing that God will take care of everything for us. That kind of peace can only come through prayer. In this already hectic world, it seems ironic that the answer to many of our worries comes in such a simple form. Yet, God's world wasn't meant to be complicated. Let us remember to take a moment out and commune with God, allowing His goodness to rule in our hearts. Then we may be able to see the things around us just that little bit clearer.

Lesson 11

The New Generation

Listed Scriptures

Num 20, 21, 22, 24:10, 33:16, 31:8, 27-30, 35

Lesson Aim

1. To learn about the events that occurred after the 38 years of wandering
2. To resolve not to be stubborn and to take time to think about our actions and words

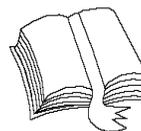
Memory Verse

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Numbers 20-22, 24, 27-30, 35

BIBLE BACKGROUND



The Bible doesn't record in detail what occurred during the thirty-something years of wandering. Right after the Israelites tried to enter the land on their own and failed miserably (Num 14), no major event is noted until the new generation had grown up and was ready to enter Canaan (Num 20). Between Numbers 15-19, Moses repeats some of the laws regarding worship as well as the regulations concerning the priests (Num 15, 18, 19). The people also continued to rebel, most notably, the rebellion of Korah who was a descendant of Levi. Along with 250 other leaders, they rose up against Moses and Aaron. God was so angry at their continued disobedience that He opened up the earth and it swallowed them alive with all their households and possessions. 14, 700 other grumblers also died from a plague sent by God (Num 16:2-3, 32-34, 41-49). In order to put an end to their constant complaints and prove to the people that Moses and Aaron were God's chosen vessels, God told Moses to get twelve staffs from the tribes of Israel. Then they were placed before the ark. The next morning, only Aaron's rod had sprouted and budded, producing almonds. Later the staff was placed in the ark as a reminder of God's provision and guidance (Heb 9:4).



The Bible doesn't say what happened to the Israelites during their many years of wandering. Do you think they still continued to complain or did the older generation realize their mistakes and humbly accepted their fate? While we may never know the answer, we do know that the young children had grown up and were ready to complete what their parents could not. How did they fare? Let's take a look.

B I B L E S T U D Y

Part 1
*Continued
Rebellion*



After being condemned to wander for almost 40 years from the time they left Egypt, those who had complained time and again had died off in the desert. Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb were just some of the few who still remained, and they had another opportunity to make things right with the new generation. Like the first spy mission, they were camped at Kadesh once again, ready for another chance at Canaan. But instead of trusting in God, the people repeated many of their parents' mistakes.

A . Striking the Rock

When the story picks up almost 38 years after their wandering, the first thing that is recorded was the Israelites' complaint that there was no water to drink (Num 20:2-3). This was not exactly a good start to their renewed attempt at conquering Canaan. Even though Moses was well advanced in years, he still pleaded with God on behalf of the people. After being told to speak to the rock so that water would pour out, Moses gathered the people together. But in a moment of anger, he struck the rock twice. As a result of his disobedience, Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan (Num 20:12).

B . The Bronze Serpent

After defeating King Arad, the people continued to journey around Edom, heading closer to the entrance to Canaan (Num 21:1-4). But along the way, they began to

complain once again about their predicament. God sent poisonous snakes and after being bitten, many Israelites died. When they realized their sin, they pleaded with Moses to speak to God once more. God relented and instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole. Whenever anyone was bitten and looked at the bronze serpent, he lived (Num 21:5-9).

Teaching Tips

Have a map ready so that the students can follow the journey the Israelites make. You may wish to have a copy available to each student so that they can highlight the names or chart the journey of the Israelites.



Part 2
God Gives Success

A . Israel Defeats Kings Sihon and Og

As the people continued their journey toward Canaan, they had to pass through many existing and established territories. Each time, Moses first sent out messengers to ask the king for safe passage, but each king refused, afraid the Israelites might plunder the land once they gained access. Moreover, King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan gathered their armies and fought against Israel after their refusal to let them pass. But both lost in turn because God was with the Israelites (Num 21:1-3, 33-35). After taking possession of their lands, the people set out once more and camped at the plains of Moab, just directly across from Jericho, divided only by the Jordan River.

B . Balaam the Sorcerer

When King Balak of Moab heard of all that Israel had done, he was afraid (Num 22:2-3). He was so anxious that he sent messengers to summon Balaam, a well-known sorcerer to call down curses on Israel (Num 22:5-6; Deut 23:4; Josh 13:22). Although Balaam likely believed in all sorts of gods in his line of work, God still used him to accomplish His will. God appeared to him and told him not to go with the messengers because the people of Israel were blessed. Balaam did as he was told but when the messengers returned a second time with more money, his greed changed his mind. Knowing full well that Balaam's heart was not with God,

allowed him to go. Although God repeatedly tried to stop him along the way, Balaam was persistent in getting to Balak, ignoring even a talking donkey (Num 22:22-35). But once there, God turned whatever curses Balak had expected into blessings instead. On a side note, Balaam did not turn to God after experiencing both His wrath and display of power. Perhaps in an effort to gain back the money he had lost, he later seduced the men of Israel with the women of Moab in acts of immorality and idolatry (Num 24:10, 33:16). This kindled God's anger; 24,000 Israelites were struck by a plague and died as a result of their sins (Num 25:1-9). Ultimately, Balaam died by the hands of Israel (Num 31:8). Only God can give blessings or curses, success or defeat.



Part 3 Final Preparations

A. The Second Census

After a long, 40-year journey filled with complaints and problems, the Israelites finally arrived on the east side of the Jordan River. According to God's command, a second census was taken. Compared to the one taken 38 years ago, the population had decreased slightly to 601,730. The inheritance of the land they were about to conquer was to be apportioned according to the size of each tribe (i.e. the number of people). In fact, three of the tribes came to ask Moses for their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan since they had already taken those lands (Num 32:1-1-5, 16-33).

B. Joshua

Knowing that he was not going to enter the land of Canaan, Moses asked God to appoint a successor to lead the people. God chose Joshua, son of Nun, a man who was filled with God's spirit (Num 27:1-5). However, even after Joshua was picked, Moses did not forget the people. He remained concerned and repeatedly reminded them to remember God's laws and commands (Num 28-30).

C. The Cities of Refuge (Num 35)

Just before their entry into Canaan, God instructed the Israelites to set up six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan. If someone killed another by mistake, he could flee to one of these places to seek refuge from avengers until a trial could be arranged. These six cities were set up within the 48 given to the Levites (Num 35:6-7), since they acted as judges when disputes arose. If the accused was found to be innocent (i.e. accidental killing), he could live in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest (Num 35:25). Then he could return home a free man. But if he were to leave the city of refuge on his own before that time, he could be killed and no one would be guilty of his death. Today, there is no city of refuge for us to flee to when we are guilty of sin. But we know that God is our refuge and He will protect us when we choose to turn to Him for help and ask for forgiveness.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 After serving God for most of his life, it seems unfair that Moses lost out on the inheritance because of one small incident. After all, didn't he have the right to be a little angry? He was yelled at, murmured against and threatened over and over by his own people. If you had been Moses, what would you have done?
- 2 The younger generation probably didn't want to repeat their parents' mistakes. Is there something you see in your parents that you want to make sure you don't repeat as a parent in the future? Is there something that you want to pass down to your children?
- 3 Why was Joshua chosen as the successor to Moses? What kind of qualities did he have that made him a good choice?
- 4 Describe the purpose of the cities of refuge.
- 5 From the moment the Israelites left Egypt until they arrived at Canaan, God punished them many times for their sins. But if we were to look closely, He also blessed them and protected them. How do you see God in your life, one who punishes constantly or one who blesses?

Take Two

Steve was a Christian senior in high school who knew that drinking was wrong, but he'd go to parties with his friends to hang out anyway. Nothing serious, just for fun. But within a month he was pulled into trying one glass of beer...then another, then another.

His testimony for the Lord and all of his good intentions were shot. He wanted to get out of this rut, but he realized that would mean he'd have to quit going to parties, something that would likely cost him his friends. After nearly getting into a car accident, he finally came to his senses. First, he sincerely asked God for forgiveness, then he informed his friends he was going to quit partying and start going back to his youth group at church. Steve finally turned around and was committed to change.

Steve had the sense to stop in his tracks before things really got out of hand. He took the opportunity to turn his life around. He didn't want to wait for a second chance because sometimes, we don't get second chances in life. But even if we did, would we realize the need to take hold of that moment and change? If you could go back in time and change something you regretted doing, what would it be? Why did you choose this incident? Would your life have been affected for the better or worse? Although it may not seem like it, God gives us many second chance. But in order to grab hold of those opportunities, we must see the need for changes. That may mean not being so stubborn all the time or not insisting that our way is the best way. It could mean being more open-minded and accepting of others' opinions. It also means we need to admit we are wrong and ask for forgiveness. How do we do that?

First, we need to humbly ask for God's forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." All of us know how good it feels to be forgiven. However, it is the next step that is more challenging – we need to repent. This is not the same as asking for forgiveness. And it doesn't mean that you go and cry in your prayer for two hours. Repent means to change your mind about something, to slam on the brakes and turn around. It means that you are sick of the choices you've been making and truly want to get away from the circumstances that cause you to keep falling into the same rut.

Think back to that incident once more. It's not possible to alter the past. So what can you do today to turn that experience into something positive for the future?



Sometimes, we resolve to change things in our lives. But it is not always as easy as it seems. More often than not, we revert back to our old ways. We convince ourselves that it's useless, or we give in to our weaknesses. If there is something that really needs to be addressed in your life, write it down on a piece of paper and place it somewhere visible. It can serve as a healthy reminder of your commitment to change. But more importantly, don't forget to pray for the strength from the Holy Spirit to guide you. With God, all things are possible!