

Numbers

Numbers 1:1-36:31

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-02-03

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Introduction - Numbers was basic training for Israel (see Deut. 8:2)

So far in this series we have seen that Genesis was the book of beginnings, Exodus describes the redemption of a sinful people out of slavery in Egypt. After redemption comes sanctification, so Leviticus taught Israel how to worship and serve God in holiness. Numbers is about preparing God's people to be a powerful fighting army ready to invade the land of Canaan. And Deuteronomy then gives the blueprints for life once they get into that land. So there is a logical order in all five books.

You can think of the book of Numbers as describing God's basic training of the army - kind of like a boot camp. Christianity is not just about getting saved (that would be the book of Exodus) or about learning how to be holy (that would be the book of Leviticus). It is also about training, warfare, discipline, and learning how to work together as a cohesive unit that can conquer the world for Christ. And Israel was anything but a cohesive unit. There was constant division and bickering and complaining.

But you can expect disorder at the beginning of any boot camp. That's why boot camp's are needed. And just as the Navy Seals' extra-long training-program tends to weed out a majority of the applicants, many people never made it through Israel's boot camp. Most of them saw some war, but there was definitely a weeding out process and even some court-martials that happened. I understand that of the 1000 candidates that begin Navy Seal training every year, only about 200-250 complete the training. Well, most of the first generation of Israelites were disqualified within the first year. God gave them other duties, but they couldn't take on the prestigious task of conquering the land of Canaan.

But that's not to say that the first generation didn't get any training. They did. And God even used the first generation to test and train and purify the next generation. And those who made it through the forty years of training became the most faithful generation of warriors in Israel's history - with David's army being a close second. But if you compare the census in chapter 26 (which had 601,730 soldiers) with the census forty years earlier in chapter 1 (which had 603,550 soldiers), there was actually a net loss of 1,820 soldiers during that forty years. Not everyone could hack it.

Deuteronomy 8:2 looks back on those forty years and says this: “And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, in order to [Here comes the purpose for those forty years which are recorded in the book of Numbers: “in order to”] humble you (that’s an important part of boot camp) and test you (that is another important aspect of boot camp), to know what was in your heart (Oh, yeah. Bootcamp will expose bad attitudes very quickly), whether you would keep His commandments or not (learning to submit to leadership was also a major part of bootcamp).” So the wilderness wanderings became a testing ground.

I. Theme word of Numbers - “camp”

There is a lot of debate on what the theme word for Numbers might be. Some say it was wanderings,¹ but the word “wander” only occurs one time. Yes they wandered, but that wasn’t the focus. There was a purpose for those long marches, and wandering aimlessly was not that purpose. I think you will see that by the time we get through this sermon.

Others say that the key word is “testings.” I would agree that Deuteronomy 8:2 gives testing as one of the four purposes. But as far as key words are concerned, the word “testing” only occurs one time, and it was with regard to Israel testing God (14:22). It’s not a key word.

The word “march” only occurs one time, even though a lot of marching happened.

Wilderness occurs 44 times, and it is a very significant word because that is where their boot camp was located.² So wilderness gives the context for a good part of their boot camp - but not all of it.

We are looking for a key word that is constantly used and that summarizes the entire book, and I believe the key word is “camp.” The Hebrew word for “camp” occurs 123 times in the book of Numbers and speaks to God’s careful organization of the people as He prepared them in basic training at Sinai, in the wilderness, and testing them with a few practice battles. This book is a book about training camp; boot camp. By the time they entered the land of Canaan, they had finally been trained to be a united, disciplined, obedient army who took over the land of Canaan in a remarkably short period of time.

Why study this book? Well, the concept of boot camp is important for all

1 For example, Thomas Nelsons, The Open Bible, gives “wanderings” as the key word.

2 The Hebrew Bible names the book “Wilderness” based on the occurrence of that word in the first verse.

four governments: self-government, family-government, church-government, and civics. And I'm going to be applying it to all four governments. When our kids acted up, they went through a literal boot camp in our home that would last for hours a day. The boot camp of church is much easier, but it involves the four things that Deuteronomy 8:2 says were the theme of the whole book of Numbers. Let me read that again: "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you (without humility we do not have God's favor, and James says that even on a simple task like asking the elders to pray for healing you need to humble yourselves by confessing your sins to them) and test you (there are many tests of Christian character in the church), to know what was in your heart (The Spirit of God takes the preaching of God's Word and exposes things in the heart that you didn't even realize were there. And then He says lastly:), whether you would keep His commandments or not (The church seeks to develop loyalty to God above everything else)."

II. Theme passage - Numbers 10:34-36

Let's take a quick look at the theme passage in Numbers. I couldn't narrow it down to one verse, but Numbers 10:34-36 give three verses that give the heart of what this book was driving people towards. It says,

34 And the cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp.

That cloud guiding them symbolized the fact that God was the commander in chief of the armies. He provided for them, gave them marching orders, and expected them to submit and to become a disciplined people who would follow Him into battle. And the word LORD is in all capital letters, which means it is the name Yehowah, God's covenant name. And that name indicates that He was in covenant with them. He was committed to them and they to Him. Verse 35:

35 So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You."

He is teaching Israel their battle cry, and it is a God-centered battle cry, not a man-centered one. Israel started off being man-centered to the core when they first came into boot camp, and boot camp was going to drive that selfishness out of them and promote discipline, character, humility, vision, and courage. Those things are not automatic. They are things that must be trained. And if you don't have some equivalent to systematic training in boot camp, those things will not automatically happen to your children. God was not going to take them to Canaan until they were ready. And we didn't want

our kids married until they were ready. Moses was making sure that the focus of this army was correct. It's not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that the armies of God gain the victory. Verse 36: 36 And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel." God pitched His tent in the midst of Israel as a symbolic gesture that their lives revolved around Him, not around them. When they joined the army, they gave up their old life and committed themselves to be soldiers of the cross. And Jesus said the same thing. He said, "whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Anyone who lacks the four qualifications for His army laid out in Deuteronomy 8:2 are left behind. That may not seem nice, but spiritual warfare is a life and death struggle and God wants the church to be a humble, godly, disciplined, loyal army.

III. The Christ of Numbers

Of course, like everything else in the Bible, what God requires of us He provides for us through Jesus. It's all of grace. Though it requires our hard work, we work by faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. So Jesus is not only the General of the Army who guides us, and the Sergeant who corrects us, and the Medic who heals us, but the Shepherd who loves us and cares for us. So let's take a few minutes to look at the Christ of Numbers. We must have a Christo-centric and grace-filled view of this boot camp.

A. Tabernacle (1:1,50,51,53; etc; with John 1:14; Heb. 9; Rev. 21:3; etc)

First of all, chapter 1 begins by making the glory cloud and the tabernacle in the heart of the camp with all of the tribes facing that tabernacle. John 1:14 says that Jesus is the tabernacle of God, as does Hebrews 9, and Revelation 21:3. We looked at the symbology of this in the book of Exodus. But the significance for boot camp is that God is with us to oversee every detail of our training, and to provide for us, and to encourage us on. We as parents can't change our kids hearts and we as elders can't change your hearts. We are just trying to get on board with what God is doing by taking advantage of providential difficulties and blessings to point people Jesus. In fact, Jesus underwent the boot camp trials without any failure so that He could lead us.

B. The Cloud Pillar (9:15-23; John 1:9,14; 2 Cor. 3:6-18; 2 Cor. 6:16)

To save time, I'll skip over the next point - that Jesus is our pillar of cloud

who guides us.

Some passages point to the pillar of cloud as being the Holy Spirit, and others point to it as a symbol of Jesus. Actually, it was the visible manifestation of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in their midst. It's not either/or. So I've listed three Scriptures that seem to indicate that it is a type of Christ as well as the Spirit, the reason being that it is through Christ that we receive the Spirit. But again, in context of Numbers, they were led every step of the way by the glory cloud. Jesus is our commander in chief who speaks to us through the Word and guides us.

C. The Passover Lamb (Numb. 9; 28:16; 33:3)

In Numbers 9 Jesus is the Passover Lamb who takes away the judgments we deserve. We are secure from the enemy in His blood. He doesn't call us to lay down our lives without having first shown that He was willing to lay down His life for us.

D. Manna (Numb. 11 with John 6:26-58; 1 Cor. 10:3)

In Numbers 11 and John 6 we see that Jesus is the manna that sustains us and nourishes us.

E. Moses as the prophet who speaks to God face to face and is faithful over God's house (Numb. 12:6-8 with Heb. 3:1-6; Acts 3:22-23; John 1:1,18)

In Numbers 12, we see Moses as the prophet who is God's friend and speaks face to face with God, unlike all other prophets. That passage also speaks of Him as being faithful over God's house. And in my notes I have a whole bunch of other ways in which Moses was a type of Christ designed to let people know that they didn't have to do this on their own.

Well, Hebrews 3:1-6, Acts 3:22-23, and John 1:1,18 pick up on each of those points and show how Moses was a type of Christ. Christ was the ultimate prophet since He was the very Word of God. But He is also our ruler. Acts 3 says that those who refuse to listen to Jesus will "be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). But Jesus is also the friend of God who is in the bosom of the Father and who reveals the Father's will to His people. Hebrews says that just as Moses was faithful over God's house, Jesus is faithful over God's house. So though we can't get into it today, Moses in His intercession, His prophecies, and His leadership was a beautiful type of Jesus.

F. The red heifer sacrifice (Numb. 19:1-22 with Heb. 9:13-14; 13:12)

Numbers 19 points to Jesus as the red heifer sacrifice. Kathy and I just got to that passage in our family devotions this morning. An entire sermon could be preached on that chapter. It's an incredibly rich image that shows our walk is entirely of grace.

Though it was a sin offering, it was totally different from all other sin offerings. It was sacrificed outside the camp, even as Jesus was sacrificed outside the camp. This symbolized the fact that Jesus was forsaken by God and banished from God's fellowship for the three hours of darkness as Psalm 22:1 says. Just as the heifer had to be without blemish, Jesus was without blemish (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). Just as this heifer was never yoked to a plow, Jesus was a free man and voluntarily offered himself up for us all. Just as this sacrifice was only made once (until the ashes ran out), Christ was sacrificed once (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:10). Just as this heifer was for both Jew and Gentile (Numb. 19:10), Jesus died for the sins of Jews and Gentiles. In fact, the universality of His atonement is symbolized by the redness of this heifer since the word "red" is related to the word for Adam. Adam, red, and ground all come from the same root word. Just as the heifer was totally consumed by fire, Jesus offered Himself entirely to bear the fire of God's judgment (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 9:18, Psa. 22:14). The burning to ashes represents the total consumption and destruction of sin and sinners (Mal. 4:1, 3), which Jesus did as our substitute. The ashes were stored for future use and were mixed with water to continually purify God's people just as we have the cleansing of Christ purging our consciences (Heb. 9:13, 14; Zech. 13:1).

G. The Rock from whom we find the waters of refreshment (20:7-13 with 1 Cor. 10:4; John 4:10-14; 7:37-38; note disobedience of Numb. 20:7-13 with Heb. 9:25-28)

In chapter 20, Jesus was the Rock from whom the waters of the Holy Spirit flow. And maybe I will comment on that for a bit. Why did God judge Moses so severely for striking the rock? Well, in Exodus, the book on redemption, Moses was commanded to strike the Rock once in order to produce water just as Jesus had to be struck by God one time on the cross to provide atonement for our sins. But in Numbers, these people are already redeemed. Jesus doesn't have to be struck a second time. All Moses was supposed to do was to speak to the rock, and waters would flow, just as we need but ask Jesus, and daily He will give us His Holy Spirit. Jesus doesn't need to be struck over and over as Roman Catholic Mass falsely proclaims and as Hebrews 9:25-28 counters. It's a beautiful symbol that Moses messed up.

Let me read Hebrews 9:25-28 to show the theological point that Moses messed up on. It says,

> 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

H. The bronze serpent who continues to bear our sins and forgive us (21:4-9 with John. 3:14-15)

In Numbers 21, Jesus is symbolized by the bronze serpent. John 3:14-15 says,

4 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

When God sent His people snakes to bite them as a judgment, the people were dying off by the thousands. At God's command, Moses erected this bronze serpent on a pole and all it took was a look at that serpent and the people were instantly healed of the snake bite. 1 Corinthians 11 says that Christians can get sick and even die when they break covenant with the Lord. But all it takes to be restored, is faith in Jesus who can wash us from our rebellion and sin. It's a marvelous type of Jesus.

I. The Star out of Jacob (24:17 with Rev. 2:28; 22:16; cf. Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:25; Rev. 20:10,14)

In Numbers 24 Jesus is the Star out of Jacob who was destined to destroy our enemies and to rule His people. What an encouraging symbol that victory is of the Lord.

J. The cities of refuge (35:1-34; with Heb. 6:18; 7:23-25; cf. Ps. 9:9; 91:2,4,9; 142:5; 144:2; Prov. 14:26)

In Numbers 35 Jesus is the city of refuge. When a man accidentally killed another person, he could flee to the city of refuge and be protected from the avenger of blood. That city acted as a refuge as long as the High Priest was alive. Well, Hebrews 7:23-25 says that when we flee to Jesus for our refuge, He is a high priest who never dies, but ever lives to make intercession for us.

So you can see that for every failure that God's people made in the book of Numbers (and they did have a lot of failures), Jesus was a sufficient solution - if and only if they looked to Him in faith and availed themselves of His resources. They didn't have to go through boot camp alone. He had promised that if they submitted to Him in unconditional surrender, He would make them succeed. His boot camp was designed to make them succeed by His grace.

IV. The structure of the book - divided in two or in three parts?

I'm going to skip over the debate on whether the book should be divided

into two or three sections.³ You can see by the visual outline that I side with the majority who say that there are three sections related to three locations and three stages in God’s preparing His people. I think it is quite clear.

Numbers: The Basic Training of God’s Army																								
The Army’s Order Planned				The Army’s Disorder Dealt With						The Army Made Ready for Conquest														
Mount Sinai				Wilderness						Plains of Moab														
Duration = 20 days				Duration = 38 years 3 months and 10 days						Duration = About 5 months														
1:1-----10:36				11:1-----25:18						26:1-----36:13														
Identification of resources Census	Organization for mobilization Army Camp	The faith of the army Levites	The purity of the army Special laws	The empowering of the army Blessing and worship	The commander of the army Guidance from God	Murmuring at Taberah	Murmuring at Kibroth- Hattaavah	Insurrection at Hazeroth	Crisis at Kadesh	Rebellion of Korah & cong.	Re-establishing authority	Crisis over water	2 nd generation tested in war	2 nd generation tested in heart	2 nd generation tested with demonic attacks	2 nd generation tested with sex	2 nd generation leadership and inheritance	Authority in civics (27:12-23), church (28-29) & family (30)	2 nd generation tested in battle	Inheritance & commitment	Review of the past	Call to conquer	Establishing boundaries	Laws of family inheritance
1	2	3-4	5:1- 6:21	6:22- 9:14	9:15- 10:36	11:1- 3	11:4- 35	12:1- 16	13:1- 14:45	15- 16	17- 19	20	21:1- 3	21- 4-9	21:10- 24:25	25	26:1- 27:11	27:12- 30:16	31	32	33:1- 49	33:50- 56	34- 35	36

V. Outline of the book

So let’s take a whirlwind tour through this book to see how God’s boot camp works.⁴

3 There is a great deal of debate about the structure of the book, and particularly whether you should divide it into two parts or three parts. You can see from my outline chart in your bulletin insert that I side with a majority who see three quite distinct sections related to three locations.

But there are a minority of commentaries that divide the book into two parts because of thirteen purported parallel themes that are repeated a second time in chapters 26-36. I won’t go through all of those parallels, but let me give you seven of the clearest parallels. I think our three-fold structure explains this repetition of themes much better than their two-fold division does.

- Chapter 1 has a census of the first generation and chapter 26 has a census of the second generation.
- Chapter 3 has a census of Levites as does chapter 26.
- Chapter 5 has a legal discussion of women and chapter 27 has a legal discussion of women, though I would point out that the two chapters deal with utterly different topics.
- Chapter 6 discusses Nazarite vows and chapter 30 discusses women’s vows.
- Chapter 7 and 15 have lists and laws related to offerings as does chapters 28 and 29 for the second generation.
- Chapter 9 discusses the Passover and chapter 28 discusses instructions for a future Passover.
- There are two sendings of spies, one in 13 and one in 34.

And I am not convinced that the other parallels are parallels at all. But if you look at my chart, you will see why the true parallels are needed once Israel has been prepared to take the conquest.

The first section covers ten days and shows God’s plans for the order of the army. They are perfect plans. But as sometimes happens in boot camp, people buck those plans or don’t live up to those plans. Almost immediately the immaturity, lack of discipline, and rebellion in the ranks becomes evident, so the next eleven chapters show God dealing with the disorder that is quite apparent. He is training both the first generation and the second generation in what it will take to conquer the land of Canaan. Second generation discussions do not start in chapter 26, as the two-fold division people insist. Both generations are learning throughout all of chapters 1-36. By the time the first generation has mostly died off in chapter 26, God is ready to give them some initial tests of their readiness for battle. And those preparatory times take about five months. Once they are ready to enter the land, Moses gives them the blueprints for the land in Canaan, and he passes on the leadership to Joshua.

4 And if you want to study Numbers in depth, I highly recommend Joe Morecraft’s book, *The Inheritance of God’s People: The Conquest and Occupation of the Earth: Studies in the Book of Numbers*. Of the 86 commentaries that I have on the book of Numbers, I think that is by far the best one. For one thing it is

A. The Army's Order Planned (Numbers 1-10)

In chapters 1-10 God's people are at Mount Sinai for 20 days. And during those twenty days they are organized and resourced for the conquest of Canaan. If it had not been for their rebellion, insecurity, selfishness, laziness, and other issues that arose, their boot camp might have been much shorter. But God was willing to take as long as it needed to bring them from immaturity to maturity.

Census (1)

In chapter 1 there is a census. Our God is a God of order and organization. He highly values administration, and the logistics of organizing, moving, supplying, etc can never be taken for granted by an army. If every detail of their organization had not been planned for, it would be hard to even go to the bathroom without it causing problems for everyone. We are talking about a minimum of 3,000,000 people. So census comes first.

Army Camp (2)

Then the army is organized in chapter 2. And there are all kinds of principles for armies, and families, and churches today. Let me just make one application to a literal army. God provides for decentralization and local loyalty. Look at verse 2:

“Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house...”

As you move down the chapter you will see that there were standards for the clan, for the tribe, and for the nation. They didn't mix them all up. Why? It was a check and balanced against tyranny. Tyrants in Israel's history tried to erase any family, clan, or tribal loyalties by deliberately keeping such separated into different units. But God wants each clan head, and each tribal head to think through the legitimacy of the battles they are called to. Can that lead to trouble? Yes, and we will see such troubles in the book of Numbers. But it was also a check against tyranny. It provided a very clever means of interposition.

A second benefit is that you are much more likely to be faithful in fiercely fighting if fleeing will leave your own family in jeopardy. You fight for each other because you value each other. So it makes for a much better fighting unit.

Even though we don't have time to show it, the literal applications of this

short, but more importantly, it is practical. My outline and general take are slightly different, but a lot of his applications are superb.

book to armies and nations are very practical. America's armies were originally set up the same way Israel's were, and it stay that way until after the War Between the States. But it was still the central leadership that organized all these units from counties and states into a well-oiled fighting machine.

Chaplains (3-4)

Chapters 3-4 describes the chaplains of the army and the pastors who stayed behind. Levites could go into battle as chaplains, but they were exempted from the selective service. And the Levites were the palace guard, or what Bush calls the "sacred legion around the palace of the Great King."⁵ But this illustrates that even literal armies need to be saturated in God's Word.

Regs (5:1-6:21)

Then in chapter 5 and the first 21 verses of chapter 6, God lays down some regulations to govern their behavior. Every boot camp has regulations. I won't cover those regulations, but the benefited the unit, the individuals, and their wives and children.

Since it was a holy war, ceremonially unclean people were excluded in the first verses. Then came regulations for getting things right when they blew it in the next verses. There were regulations for their wives and for their vows. If you don't have a healthy family, it will affect the morale of the army, so God in various parts of this book tries to make sure that the women and the families are not harmed.

God's commitment to Israel and Israel's commitment to God (6:22-9:14)

But in chapter 6:22 we see God's commitment to Israel via the Aaronic benediction that I pronounce upon you every week, and in chapter 7 and following there was Israel's commitments to God. Each of the tribal leaders gave offerings in chapter 7, there was Levitical commitment to God in chapter 8, there was every individual's commitment to God in the Passover of chapter 9:1-14. And actually, each of those symbolic commitment ceremonies involved the mutual commitment of God to the people and the people to God. But it started with God and His promised grace.

God's guidance & signals (9:15-10:36)

In the rest of chapter 9 and all of chapter 10 there were God's promises of guidance for the army. God told them that He would lead them with His

5 George Bush, Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Numbers (London; New York: Trübner & Co.; Ivison & Phinney, 1858), 26.

cloud. When the cloud lifted up and moved, they were to follow. It didn't take a lot of thinking to do that, but in boot camp people have to learn to follow and not question. And this involved following the human leaders as well, so in chapter 10 there were silver trumpets that gave various signals of what the armies were supposed to do.

And God then practiced with them. He never gave instructions without practicing the instructions to see if the people would do what He told them to do. In our families we need to practice obedience. Don't just assume that one correction is going to do it. So in 10:11-13 He practiced with them exactly what He had just said that they should do.

Num. 10:11 Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. 12 And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. 13 So they started out for the first time according to the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Boot camp is off to a good start. Everybody is having a jolly good time. They are learning the war cry even when there is no war. This is kind of fun.

But God, as a good leader, almost immediately tests how far these people are prepared to follow. Boot camp's are full of tests - even if people don't know they are being tested, they are being tested and evaluated. Well, initially, these men are not the wisest that they are traveling into a pretty difficult testing ground. Look at the last verses of section 1. Numbers 10:33-36.

Num. 10:33 So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. 34 And the cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp.

Num. 10:35 So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You. 36 And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel."

But where does God's guiding cloud lead them to? To the miserable wilderness of Paran. Deuteronomy 32:10 looks back to these days and says that it was the perfect testing ground for Israel. And it was motivated by God's love. It says that God led them...

... in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.

He never gave them more than they could handle, but He sure gave them more than they thought that they could handle. A good boot camp does that. It stretches people beyond what they think they can do without breaking them. And God knew that this wilderness would bring to the surface every bad characteristic that they had. And He wanted it brought to the surface so that He could deal with it. That's what the whole second section of the book

is about - dealing with these bad character issues as they arise one by one. He was determined to turn them into a disciplined, strong, lean, mean, fighting machine. And He was successful. God is always successful in everything that He does. Do not think of the book of Numbers as one failed experiment after another. God knew what He was doing. And I will demonstrate the wisdom of His exercises.

B. The army's lack of discipline and disorder dealt with (11-25)

And so, being in the tough wilderness of Paran, we are not surprised when chapter 11 begins - "Now when the people complained..." It's tough, and that's the first natural response of immature people - to complain. And just as sergeants yell at people and try to get them in line, verse 1 of chapter 11 shows God's displeasure with the pathetic shape these people were in. He was going to change that. Chapters 11-25 are devoted to turning disorder into order, lack of discipline into discipline, complaining into faith, cowardice into courage. It's an amazing series of lessons when you really dig into them. And if you think of every one of those lessons as a boot camp challenge, you can see what God is doing.

The problem of discontent and complaining (11)

The first complaint discipline (11:1-3)

Chapter 11 deals with deliberate exposure of these people to circumstances that would allow their discontent and complaining spirits to manifest. They complain. Then verse 1 goes on to say, ...it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. 2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. 3 So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.

So there is discipline and removal of the kind of people who will undermine the army if they are not removed. God knew who they were. And even the naming of the place after the discipline would be a constant reminder to this army of what boot camp is all about. Get with the program and things will go easier for you. Notice that the discipline was on the outskirts. When Joel's family was reading this section last week they guessed right what was going on. These were grudging laggards that God knew would be harmful to others. There is not a single person killed by God in this book that wasn't deserving of it.

The second complaint dealt with (11:4-35)

Complaining over chow (11:4-10)

The next complaint comes from the mixed multitude in chapter 11:4-10. And this time they were complaining over the chow; over the food. I bet this happens in the army boot camps of the United States. Can chow be a test of whether you will work well in the spiritual Navy Seals? Absolutely. I didn't dare take people to China or India if they constantly complained about bad food. No way would they work out. Their finickiness would ruin the mission and bring us home early. So I tested them in many different ways before we went to the field, and unusual chow was one of the tests.

Moses complaining about the people (11:11-15)

Of course, this was a test of Moses' own leadership, and he responded to complaining by complaining himself. Complaining can become infectious, and even we leaders can stumble into it. God knew that even Moses needed a little testing. Over time Moses gets it quicker than the people do, but God does two things to help this situation of complaining.

God distributes responsibility and authority (11:16-30)

In verses 16-30 God distributes both responsibility and authority to seventy other leaders. Though the buck stops with Moses, there are others who can share in the blame and share in the authority and responsibility. And I'll tell you what - it has been so wonderful to have other elders and deacons to share in the leadership in this church. Solo church planting is not a good idea - especially if the church members have the characteristics of Israel.

Giving them so much of what they wanted that they are sick of it (11:31-35)

Anyway, moving on. In verses 31-35 God gives them what they asked for - so much of it that they got sick of it. And was there further discipline? Yes. But God knew ahead of time exactly how they would respond. He deliberately put them into situations that would expose the problems of the heart, and as they surfaced, He clearly identified the problem and dealt with it. God was not afraid of problems, and we parents should not be afraid of problems arising in our children's lives. We should hope they arise so that we can disciple them out of the problems. It's a blessing when character issues are exposed early so that they can be dealt with early. If you hope your kids will outgrow their problems, you are doomed to failure as a parent. Nobody outgrows anything. We must be systematically disciplined.

The problem of Miriam's rebellion and Aaron's passivity (12)

And by the way, there is always a spiritual component that must be prayed against. And we won't have time to point out all the hints of the demonic in this book. But demons must have been having a hay day in Israel, because the problems surfaced everywhere. Moses would deal with a problem in one place and it would pop up in another place. And the stress this put on Moses was almost unbearable. In chapter 12, his own sister and brother turned on him. It's discouraging when the very leaders who should be sharing the burden become part of the burden. But this drove Moses more and more to prayer. Let's take a little closer look at this particular problem in chapter 12.

Miriam clearly has issues with racism (vv. 1,10-13) and rebellion (vv. 2-8)

I see Miriam as the instigator here and Aaron as the passive leader who followed a critical spirit without correcting it and without realizing the implications. But there were two distinct character problems that appear to have driven Miriam.

The first problem was racism. Verse 1 says, "Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman." But then come their words, and their words have nothing to do with the Ethiopian woman. Their words are entirely a rebellious rejection of Moses' authority. What gives? Why does God say that their opposition was because of the Ethiopian woman? Well, it is to illustrate that sin has a way of masquerading itself as something different - something more spiritual. If they had just said point-blank, "You shouldn't be married to an Ethiopian," it would have been easy for Moses to say, "Where there is no law, there is no sin. Show me the law that says I can't marry an Ethiopian? You won't find it. In fact, making something out to be a sin that the Bible doesn't make a sin is form of legalism and of taking the reigns of authority from God." It would have been very easy to deal with head-on racism. But they didn't talk about the race issue even though that was the underlying thing that drove them to their rebellion. They pointed to Moses' leadership and claimed that he was prideful and refusing to share authority and that he should step down from office, or at least quit bossing them around. It's really hard to defend yourself against an attack like that. If you defend your position, you look prideful. But in verse 3 God says clearly that Moses was not prideful. It was a false accusation. Beginning to read at verse 2

2 So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

Yet how many times do humble people get accused of pride and abusive leadership? It's a very hard accusation to defend yourself against. There is such a thing as abusive leadership, but Moses should not have been accused of it.

In verses 4 and following God commands them to come to the tabernacle of meeting, and they know they are in trouble. God tells them that their attack on Moses' authority was an attack on God. You cannot undermine the chain of command without undermining God Himself. In our egalitarian age people take attacks on authority too lightly.

Aaron clearly has problems with being influenced by her critical spirit (vv. 1-5 with vv. 10-12)

If you read through the whole chapter you will see that Aaron's main problem was that he had allowed himself to be manipulated by his sister, Miriam and he had failed to lead by failing to correct her. She complained about authority. She arrogated authority to herself and to her brother that God had not given. The very pride that she falsely accused Moses of having, she herself had. Her feminism was coming to the forefront.

God's rebuke (vv. 4-16)

And the reason I say that the primary issue was with Miriam was because she was the only one to get disciplined. And look at the nature of the discipline in verse 10:

And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. It was racism that was driving Miriam, and since Miriam prided herself in her lighter colored skin, God made her skin absolutely white - leprous white; horrifyingly white; dead fish white. The discipline fit the sin. That whole section is a rebuke against Kinism - and I don't have time to get into that this morning. But it is there. And it is even a rebuke against milder forms that forbid intermarriage.

Now, in all of this, I want to emphasize that God didn't avoid situations that would be stressful. That's our tendency - "Let's just avoid the stress; let's not address the problem." In contrast, God planned for stressful situations to arise in order to cause those in leadership to grow and to cause those under leadership to learn. Don't shield your children from difficult work, difficult stress, or difficult people. Granted, there are some people that we must avoid at all costs - for example, God calls us to not so much as to eat with divisive people. God takes out divisive people in this book. But difficult people can actually cause character issues to rise in our children that we hadn't realized

were there, and to deal with those issues. They can be a blessing. The stresses were opportunities for growth.

The problem of ten spies fomenting discouragement and people refusing to follow orders (13-14)

In chapters 13-14 God allowed twelve spies to see the land, knowing full well that ten of them would bring back a bad report. Why didn't God send only people who would all be like Joshua and Caleb? Because He knew that his children were not ready for the conquest. They still had a lot to learn. This was not an accident. God knew that they still needed more boot camp. Until they came to the place that they had joyful submission to God in difficult situations, they were not ready to take on the world. This boot camp was a perfect place to learn character.

And I have preached on the twelve spies before. You are constantly running across the pessimistic ten spies on Facebook and on the News. It's not like the ten spies always have fake news. Most of the things that these ten spies said was true, but it was said in a way that completely took the wind out of everyone's sails. The way they said it did not raise faith; it destroyed faith. And the news media is designed to demonically destroy your faith and discourage you. Turn off CNN. You need to read Christian news outlets like Worldview in Five Minutes that will instill faith. Joshua and Caleb agreed that there were giants in the land, but they had a faith that added that God had promised the land and God could enable them to take the land. They sought to instill faith in the people.

In chapter 14, the people were ready to stone Moses and Aaron to death. That's astonishing after all the miracles that God had done for them. These Israelites were a tough crew to lead. And when God offered to kill them all, Moses, the selfless leader that he was, plead with God not to do so. He was willing to continue to lead them in a boot camp of learning. And as such, he stands as such a wonderful type of the intercession and the loving shepherding of Jesus.

So God spares Israel, but He still destroys the worst of the rebels. It was clear to all that the rebels would kill God and kill God's representatives if they could, and not one of those killed by God deserved to live. Don't feel sorry for them. God knew that letting them continue to live would jeopardize the success of the entire nation. Some people need to be given the boot rather than the camp.

The problem of Korah's rebellion (15-16)

This was especially revealed in Korah's highhanded rebellion in chapters 15-16. It was such an overt attempt to overthrow God's order and chain of command and replace it with an egalitarianism of God's people that it could not be tolerated. By the way, if you want a great description of God's attitudes towards the Reconstructionist anarchists who call all members of Reformed churches to leave and to join their Facebook church, these two chapters would be it. There are so many parallels to their definitions of authority and service. The rebellion of Korah is alive and well in the church of Jesus Christ in the 21st century. But God's attitudes to it are pretty severe.

Prefaced by a reminder our commitment to Christ requires us to fulfill our vows (15:1-21), and though God's grace can cover unintentional sins (15:22-29), God will take outright rebellion very seriously (15:30-31)

But it is interesting how God develops this story. He never blindsides His people. He tells them what He expects and when they don't do it, they receive the consequences and then He practices with them again. And He keeps practicing until they get it right. Too many parents make up rules on the spot. They blindside their kids. Their rules are not constant. And they don't practice. Of course, parents must love on their kids and saturate their homes with the Gospel just as God through the Gospel images in this book loved on the Israelites and saturated their lives with His grace.

So how did God instruct them about His expectations? In chapter 15 God prefaces what He knows will soon happen by telling them in the first 21 verses that He expects them to keep their vows and promises. You cannot make any progress in God's boot camp if you are a liar. Without total honesty and integrity and follow-through, it is hard to move forward in any of the governments that God has established among men.

There were two sins that received much tougher discipline in our home - outright rebellion and lying. And those were the two sins that God insisted beforehand that He would not tolerate in this chapter. Our kids knew that it was much better to fess' up and take the discipline than to lie, get caught, and get far far worse discipline. And God was the same way in this boot camp. He expected people to do what they had said they would do.

Then in verses 22-29 God tells them that there is forgiveness for unintentional sins. Yes, there are still consequences and restitution is still required, but there is a covering over of regular sins.

But in verses 30-31 God warns them that outright rebellion will not be

tolerated under any circumstances. Some of you parents would do well to discipline rebellion and deceitfulness (even half truths that are deceitful) with greater severity than other sins. In any case, the Israelites knew ahead of time exactly what was going to happen. He didn't blindsides them.

Prefaced with two symbolic reminders to stay the course: sabbath (15:32-36) and wearing tassels (15:37-41)

Then God gives two symbols that would help to remind the Israelites every day and every week that they had made this covenant with God. They signed up for boot camp, and these symbols showed that they knew the rules. The first symbol was the sabbath and the second symbol was the wearing of tassels. Some parents put up an if-then chart on their walls to remind their children of the rules.

This is what makes Korah's rebellion against God's authority structure so high-handed and so inexcusable (16:1-40)

So ahead of time they knew what God expected. And this is what made Korah's rebellion against God's authority structure in chapter 16 so high-handed and inexcusable. It's like they were testing the lines. Children will sometimes do that. You will draw a line in the sand, and they will stick their toe over it just to see if you will follow through. When you are consistent disciplinarians, the problems will fairly quickly get nipped in the bud, and the other children who are watching won't even need to test the line. But when you fail to do that, the problems will just get worse and worse and get entrenched.

This is what makes the congregation's rebellion against God's authority structure so high-handed and so inexcusable (16:41-50)

And there was no excuse for the children of Israel who joined in Korah's rebellion in verses 41-50. We don't have the time to apply all of these chapters in detail, but there is much you can learn from God's actions in how we deal with our children. But make sure you distinguish God's role and the role of Moses. We parents can't play God. And what a messy rebellion Korah's rebellion was. We don't have time to get into it, but it is a chapter worth exploring.

God responds by re-establishing commitment to the chain of command (17-19)

So once the discipline has happened, God goes back to instructing everyone who witnessed the rebellion. He has no problem with using the discipline of one person to instruct others in the same vicinity.

They had rejected Aaron's leadership, so God has all of the leaders present their walking sticks to Moses along with Aaron's walking stick. And God miraculously had Aaron's not only bud and grow leaves, but overnight it grew ripe almonds. It's a cool story of God's support of Aaron.

Chapter 18 gives further support for the leaders. Though not as fun as the miracle, the instruction from the Word that is given related to submission to leadership and financial support of leaders was crystal clear. Sometimes people will withdraw financial support as a way of undermining leadership. They are breaking their covenant vows and God treats that as rebellion. Anarchism has no place in the church of Jesus Christ.

The problem of lack of trust (20)

Both Moses and Israel failed (20:1-13), though God illustrated that faith should be directed to God, not Moses.

Chapter 20 brings up yet another problem that needs to be dealt with - failure to trust God's Word. Interestingly, it wasn't just the people who failed. Moses himself failed to trust God's word. I described earlier how God commanded Moses to simply speak to the Rock and it would produce water, but in anger Moses said in verse 10:

"Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

Wait a minute! Must we? Moses had no intrinsic power to bring water out of the rock. Only God did. And rather than speaking to the rock, verse 11 says, Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank

Anger can make leaders do foolish things and say foolish things. It is absolutely imperative that leaders learn to conquer their anger. But the faith of Moses was tested by this water incident.

Israel's faith tested at Edom (20:14-21) - passed

Israel's faith was tested again by Edom's refusal to let them pass through. Would they too respond in anger and force the issue? Thankfully they did not. It appears they passed the test and patiently moved on.

Israel's faith tested with death of Aaron (20:22-29) - passed

Israel's faith was tested with the death of Aaron in chapter 20:22-29. Will the people continue worship even without this charismatic leader? Was their devotion to man or to God? They appeared to pass that test.

A series of maturity tests in the wilderness (21)

Tested with real war against Canaanites (21:1-3) - passed

And from the outline you can see that there were a whole series of tests in chapter 21. God knows what He is doing when He deliberately puts tests into their lives.

They passed the test where God allowed the Canaanites to attack them. And God gave them victory. Not all is failure in this boot camp. We see many examples of Israel growing up and passing the tests that God brings. Don't get discouraged by all the failures of your children. When you persevere, God will give victories. It does get better. You will notice toward the end of the outlines that more and more tests have my evaluation of having passed in bold print.

Tested with attitudes (21:4-9) - failed

In verses 4-9 God tested their attitudes by having them travel in a very difficult terrain. They knew that there were easier routes to travel on than the ways God was having them march through, and they got discouraged and started to get uppity and started to resist the leadership of Moses and to complain to God. In effect they were telling Moses (and by implication God), "You guys are idiots for once again putting us in miserable dangerous circumstances."

And God brought snakes to clean out of the camp even more of the applicants to this Navy Seal's training ground. But He is merciful, so He also brought immediate relief to those who had faith to seek forgiveness. He's not a meanie. I don't know why it is so hard for some people to humble themselves and admit that their way doesn't work - even though it is obvious to everyone else that their way doesn't work. Some people just persist in rebellion even when it is counterproductive and makes them even more miserable. It's irrational. But those who simply looked at the snake were healed. Anyway, that's another failed test.

But the failures were becoming fewer and fewer. That's what boot camp does. I highly recommend that parents establish boot camp training where you practice the same things over and over until the kids are doing the right thing with the right countenance and the right attitudes and the right speed. They learn best by practicing over and over and getting disciplined over and over. When they know that you will be consistent and always follow through, you will find that you have to discipline far less frequently and boot camp will actually be fun. Now, it is notoriously hard the first weeks that

you do it, but it does get easier. And for our kids, it eventually became fun. I was reading some testimonies of people who loved their experience in military boot camp. They said that if your attitudes are right, it can actually be fun. So let's whiz through the next few tests.

Tested with patience (21:10-15) - passed

Chapter 21, verses 10-15 tested their patience with yet another brutal journey - and it seemed like an unnecessary journey. Wait a minute! Hadn't God already tested them with a brutal journey? Yes He had. But they failed. Remember? So He is putting them through the same paces to see if their attitudes have changed. And they had. They passed the test. Praise God! They got it! They had finally got it!

Tested with water (21:16-20) - passed

In verses 16-20 he tests them once again with lack of water. They had failed that test twice, right? But they not only pass this with flying colors, but they sang in faith to God before God gave the water - while they are digging the well. It is a song of faith that God will provide. Look at chapter 21:16-18 Num. 21:16 From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." 17 Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it— 18 The well the leaders sank, Dug by the nation's nobles, By the lawgiver, with their staves."

The "Then" that begins verse 17 says that the song happened right at the beginning of the digging. But it is a song that acts as if it is already done. It's a statement of faith. I think this is marvelous. You can tell a person has learned his lesson of discipline when he obeys with joy and singing, not simply with a grudging obedience and a scowl on the face. Our kids knew that when they obeyed in boot camp, but with a scowl on the face, that they still got discipline. Why? Because we aren't Pharisees who are satisfied with mere outward conformity. The scowl reveals that the heart is not right, and we want to reach the heart. We want joyful obedience. So boot camp after boot camp continued with our kids till the changes went beyond action and began to grip the heart. God was modeling in this book how to draw people away from their sinful hearts.

Now, there will be some who will never learn and might have to be cut loose, but we can have faith that most will get through boot camp as godly people - especially since we live in the age New Covenant - the time of the full pouring out of the Holy Spirit. There should be greater success now than with the wilderness generation. But there are no guarantees that your boot camp will succeed with 100% of your children. It didn't in God's. The only

guarantee is that things won't turn out well if you don't have some kind of analogous and rigorous training of character.

Tested with more real war with Sihonites (21:21-32) - passed

In verses 21-32 they pass a test of another real war. These guys are getting more and more ready to take on the conquest of Canaan.

Tested with more real war with Bashanites (21:33-35) - passed

And in verses 33-35 there is another sweet success as God has the Bashanites war against them. We don't have time to get into them, but these are wonderful stories of success. Boot camp works! It really does!

Tested with intimidation by Moab and demonic curses of Balaam(22-24) - passed

Next, Satan pulls out all the stops by having Moab amass a giant army against Israel to try to intimidate Israel.

When that doesn't work, and its actually the Moabites who are afraid, then Satan brings Balaam. Balaam was a demon-possessed prophet who was hired in order to curse Israel. Curses are real. When demon-possessed people curse you, you better reject that curse because there are demons who try to follow up and enforce that curse. But God had already promised to protect Israel, and Israel believed it. So Israel passed this test as well. And because of their faith, Balaam couldn't prophesy what he wanted. God kicked out the demons, and the Spirit prophesied blessing through Balaam rather than cursing. He was forced to bless.

So by the time this boot camp is almost done, Israel is doing fantastically. Yes, they have the occasional failure, but for the most part they are self-disciplined.

Self-discipline tested with sex (25) - failed

But there is one area of life they hadn't been tested with. Pornographic seduction by Moab's experienced temple prostitutes. And many of the Israelites failed this test miserably. Maybe they were naive and hadn't been trained - who knows? But it was a sad day. They fell down sexually. And 24,000 soldiers died of a disease that Rushdoony thinks was likely contracted from the women. I tend to think he was right. And the ugliness of this failure was a lesson that would help this generation to fear God and to shun evil.

C. The Army made ready for conquest of Canaan (26-36)

The census of 2nd generation implies they are preparing for conquest (26)

So when you move into the last section of the book, you see an army made ready for the conquest of Canaan. They weren't perfect and still needed occasional testing, but they were pretty much ready.

So in chapter 26 there is another census. The army had dwindled a bit despite a large birth rate. But though it was a smaller army than 40 years before, it was a powerful army.

Discussions of fine details of inheritance (including a woman's rights to the land) shows expectation of inheriting the land (27:1-11)

In chapter 27:1-11 God discusses the fine details of the inheritance they are about to enter by discussing women's rights in the land. It's an important lesson. But by finally discussing inheritance, God excites these Israelites. It shows that God is ready and He thinks they are ready. How exciting! We are about to get out of boot camp and start fighting the Canaanite! This is what God made us for!

Clear-cut lines of authority in civics (27:12-23), church (28-29), and family (30) are all preparatory to inheriting the land

And though authority lines had already been discussed and challenged and reestablished before, God doesn't take this issue for granted. He once again gives clear-cut lines of authority they would need to follow in the new land they are inheriting. These lines of authority cover civics in verses 12-13, church in chapters 28-29, and family in chapter 30. There are actually over six almost identical parallels between the first third of the book and this last third of the book. And one of those parallels was a disproportionate instruction on the church. Why was there way more coverage of church than civics? Because way more of their life would be intersecting with the church leaders than with the civic officers. We already saw that in Exodus 18.

In our egalitarian age, none of those lines of authority are popular. But if you destroy those lines of authority, you have destroyed your ability to take this world for Christ. God will not honor your conquest. And egalitarians need to realize this.

Chapter 30 is a chapter that is mocked by the world. And my response is,

“Who cares? What does the world know anyway? Nowadays they are confused on the difference between a guy and a gal and forty other so-called genders. Who cares what the world thinks?” But apparently, there are a lot of immature Christians in the 21st century who seem to reflect the attitudes of the world toward authority within the marriage. 1 Corinthians 14:34 appeals to this chapter when discussing women asking their husbands at home and not undermining the lines of authority. The authority of a father over his wife and over his children must once again be established if the church is to have an army ready to take on the world. It absolutely must.

And making sure that our word is as good gold (one of the most important lessons in Numbers 30), must be once again established in the family. Rather than commenting on it, I’m just going to read the whole chapter and let you argue with God.

Num. 30:1 Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 2 If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.>

Num. 30:3 “Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds herself by some agreement while in her father’s house in her youth, 4 and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand. 5 But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will release her, because her father overruled her.>

Num. 30:6 “If indeed she takes a husband, while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself, 7 and her husband hears it, and makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand. 8 But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it, he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the LORD will release her.>

Num. 30:9 “Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.>

Num. 30:10 “If she vowed in her husband’s house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, 11 and her husband heard it, and made no response to her and did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand. 12 But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard them, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her. 13 Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void. 14 Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard them. 15 But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her guilt.”>

Num. 30:16 These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house.

Second generation tested in war again with Midianites (31) - passed

Chapter 31 is another fun story. It is the war against Midian. Israel has learned its lessons. It is quickly becoming apparent that they are ready to take on the world. The boot camp may not have been pleasant, but they are about to graduate with great appreciation for what God has taught them. He has indeed turned them into a victorious army.

Beginning to inherit the land, yet testing the commitment of all to persevere (32) - passed

In chapter 32 they are actually beginning to inherit the land east of the Jordan. But before they can call it quits, those tribes who will settle east of the Jordan river must commit themselves to helping the rest of the tribes enter into their inheritance. In other words, it's not just about me and getting what I want. It's about the body as a whole. And our goals for our children should not stop when our family is blessed. We should always seek to teach our children to think of others ahead of ourselves - to think in terms of the whole body.

Reviewing the past helps us to not make the same mistakes (33:1-49)

In chapter 33:1-49 Moses reviews all of the past. This was not to make them feel bad, but for the newbies to learn from everyone's mistakes. One of the most effective lessons you can teach your children is for you to be honest about your mistakes and sins and to catalog them to your children. It will help your children to avoid those same mistakes. But if you are too proud to rehearse your mistakes, they may have to learn them the hard way. And for you children I would say, "Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself."

A call to conquer and instructions for conquest help to preclude further complications (33:50-56)

In verses 50-56 God calls Israel to settle for nothing less than total conquest of all of life. We must never be satisfied until every square inch of planet earth is placed under the feet of King Jesus. The warning of verse 55 should be heeded by modern Christians who have embraced pluralism. It says, But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be

that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. 56 Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.”

Does this impact the immigration debate of Islam? Yes it does. But more importantly is the underlying spiritual lesson. God hates compromise. He hates pluralism. He calls for a Christian America, not a pluralistic America.

Establishing the boundaries for the land gives anticipation and solidifies the goals for conquest (34-35)

And as boring as the geographical boundaries in chapters 34-35 might be to you, they were pretty exciting to the Israelites. Just as you enjoy every square inch of a property that you have purchased and are curious about all the details, they had a similar curiosity of their inheritance.

Instructions for inheritance and how they intersect with women's rights (36)

And finally, God gives special instructions in chapter 36 for inheritance and how inheritance of land intersected with tribal issues and the rights of women. He had already given huge women's rights to inheritance in chapter 27. And both chapters speak strongly against the modern idea that the state owns and controls our land. Property taxes are a symbol of the state's ownership and the fact that we are simply vassals, and God's judgments rest on any nation that robs citizens of their land, whether man or woman.

But this chapter adds to women's rights that chapters 27 and 30 had already addressed. Contrary to the assertions of modern hyper-patriarchs who think women should be passive in the search for a husband and that they don't need to be giving their opinions, verse 6 says, "Let them marry whom they think best..." Obviously their opinion is critical. Now, he goes on to say that their desires for marriage must be within God's general guidelines for marriage. But they had rights. "Let them marry whom they think best..." 1 Corinthians 7:9 says much the same - "she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." And there are other women's rights issues in that chapter.

If you want a family that is strong enough to take on the world, the woman needs to be a free participant in it. In other words, Numbers is not just a book for tough Navy Seals. It thinks of the problems faced by the wife and kids of those Navy Seals and actually calls the wives and the kids to have some of the same characteristics. Strong families make for a strong church and a strong nation. If you want strong families, study God's methods in the boot camp of Numbers. Amen.