



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

NUMBERS

Week 1

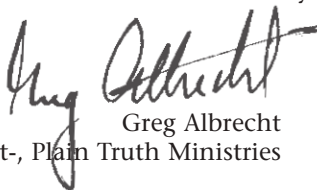
Before You Begin Your Journey...

As we study the history of the people of God in the Old Testament it is helpful to remember the words of Paul, "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (1Co 10:6).

The book of Numbers is an incredible chronicle. Israel has just been liberated, leaving Egypt and slavery behind. But on the threshold of entering the Promised Land and claiming their inheritance, the old covenant people of God lose faith. They disbelieve and then revolt. The 40 years of the "Wandering" begins. The people who had once been slaves, who left Egypt with high hopes about their new home, were now destined to die in the wilderness, without claiming their promised home. During these 40 years, the first generation of ex-slaves, who were counted at the beginning of the book, are gradually replaced with a new generation, numbered at the end of the book.

The lesson behind Numbers is that of a spiritual journey of the people of God more than it is a physical migration of a nation. It's a story that has repeated itself over and over again in the lives of men and women who begin their spiritual journey by accepting the salvation that God gives because of the work of Christ on the cross. But having accepted redemption and forgiveness, there is still a journey that follows. Christians are called to follow Christ by picking up their individual crosses and following Christ (Mt 16:24).

The story contained in the book of Numbers is both encouraging and sobering for Christians. We are not immune from the challenges to faith that the children of Israel encountered, and it is only through Christ that we can be "more than conquerors" (Ro 8:37). Enjoy your journey and the lessons God teaches you in the book of Numbers!



Greg Albrecht
President-, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. If you get behind, you can always catch up.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a new Bible. Plain Truth Ministries recommends the *New King James Study Bible* published by Thomas Nelson and the *New International Version Study Bible* published by Zondervan.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

• **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.

• **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.

• **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. the *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

8—Remember that while we may refer to the Bible as the word of God—the Eternal Word of God is noneother than Jesus, who inspired the Scriptures to be written by human instruments. Words on paper may tell us about him—but it is not the words that we worship—it is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

•Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey*—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

NUMBERS

God Chooses
a New
Generation

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Introduction to Numbers

Authorship: None of the books of the Pentateuch names its author. However, Hebrew and early Christian tradition has assumed Moses was the primary author and compiler of Numbers and most of the Pentateuch.

Date: Dating the book of Numbers depends on the dating of the Exodus event, among other things. See the introduction to the book of Exodus, in volume 3 of this series. The first verse of the book of Numbers places the beginning of the events on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Exodus.

Setting and purpose: In the vast Sinai desert, as well as the areas just south and east of Canaan, the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land. While Leviticus is a *thematic* continuation of Exodus, Numbers continues *chronologically*. The census (numbering) of the people in the first chapter of Numbers takes place just one month after the Tabernacle was set up in the last chapter of Exodus (compare Ex 40:17 with Nu 1:1). Numbers completes the the account of the wilderness wanderings and introduces a new generation of Israelites who will enter Canaan. Numbers emphasizes God's guidance and direction, as well as God's judgment on the first generation.

Distinctive features: The two major censuses were more than just a head count of the people. These numberings demonstrate how God "passed the baton" from a disobedient, doubting generation to the next generation.

The figures extrapolated from the second major census add up to an estimated total of more than 2,000,000 Hebrews. Scholars point out that the desert could hardly have supported 2,000,000. Such a population figure is greater than the Canaanite nations the Israelites displaced, and much more than can be extrapolated from 22,273 firstborn males taken in a smaller, separate census shortly after the first major census (3:43). Some scholars have suggested there may be a textual corruption, copyist error or translation problem (the Hebrew word for "thousand" could mean "clan," "unit" or "chief"). On the other hand, a large population figure

would suggest miraculous population growth (Ex 1:5-12)—a partial fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham (Ge 12:2; 15:5; 17:4-6).

The book of Numbers shows the consequences of rebellion and unbelief, as well as the blessings of belief and obedience. With Canaan in sight, judgment fell on the first-generation Israelites for their lack of faith. Forty years of wandering, denial of entrance into the Promised Land and death were the results of their rebellion. More than just a tale of the Israelites’ wanderings, the story is a strong warning against failure to believe in God’s promises.

The stage is set in Numbers for the Israelites’ physical reward—entry into Canaan. The book of Hebrews compares their reward to the believer’s everlasting reward—an entry into God’s eternal rest.

Reading outline: In most cases, each capital letter in the outline below corresponds to a day of reading.

I. ISRAEL AT SINAI: READY FOR DEPARTURE, 1:1–10:10

- A. First Major Census of the People, 1:1–4:49
- B. Absolute Purity in the Camp, 5:1–9:14
- C. Travel Instructions for the Journey, 9:15–10:10

II. SINAI TO KADESH: WHINING ALL THE WAY, 10:11–12:16

- A. “Are We There Yet?” 10:11-36
- B. Quail—Again? 11:1-35
- C. Complaints from Miriam and Aaron, 12:1-16

III. AT KADESH: REBELLING AGAINST MOSES, 13:1–20:13

- A. Report from the Field, 13:1-33
- B. Homesickness from the Rank-and-File, 14:1-45
- C. Laws to Keep Order in the Ranks, 15:1-41
- D. Rebellion from Among the Leaders, 16:1–17:13
- E. New Generation Raised Up from the People, 18:1-32
- F. Blood Cleanses, Water Works, 19:1–20:13

IV. KADESH TO MOAB: WINNING ON THE WAY, 20:14–22:1

- A. Detour Around Edom, Death of Aaron, 20:14-29
- B. Defeat of Israel’s Enemies, 21:1–22:1

V. AT MOAB: NEARING THE PROMISED LAND, 22:2–32:42

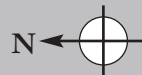
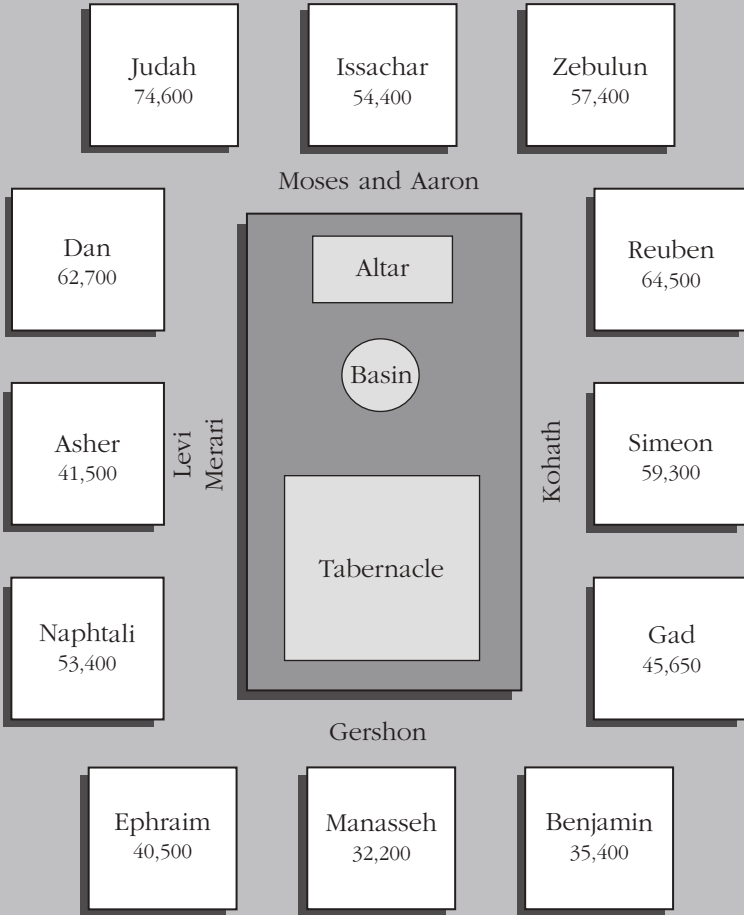
- A. Balaam’s Encounter with God, 22:2–24:25
- B. Israel’s Flirtation with Apostasy, 25:1-18
- C. Second Major Census of the People, 26:1-65
- D. Instructions for the New Generation, 27:1–30:16
- E. Clearing and Settling the Land, 31:1–32:42

V. FLASHBACKS AND FORWARDS, 33:1–36:13

- A. Travel Slides of the Journey, 33:1-56
- B. Inheritance of Land to Come, 34:1–35:34

ISRAEL'S ENCAMPMENT

Numbers 2:1-2:34



Coming to Your Census

DAY 1

Numbers 1:1–2:34

Suppose you got together with all your relatives for a family camp-out. Who would be the life of the party? Who would have the hardest time getting along with everyone else?

1. Why wasn't the tribe of Levi counted with the others (1:47-53)?
2. If people who weren't Levites approached the Tabernacle, they would die (1:51; also 3:10, 38; 18:7). What made the Tabernacle so extraordinary (see Ex 40:34)?
3. Why do you think God put each tribe in a certain place around the Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle)?

1. Would you have wanted to be counted in the census, as part of God's army? Or would you have preferred guarding and taking care of the Tabernacle? Why or why not?
2. Israel spent considerable time clarifying genealogical relationships and structuring themselves for taking marching orders. Have you given any time to finding your place in the history of the body of Christ, and how your spiritual roots equip you to serve others?

*The **main purpose of the census** (1:2) was to build a roster of those able to serve in the army, not to enroll people for taxation or other socio-political purposes. The only Israelites counted in the census were men over the age of twenty who were fit for battle. If there were 603,550 of these men, excluding Levites (1:46-47; 2:32-33), then the total population of Hebrews—including women, children and Levites—may have been more than two million. (See Introduction to Numbers: Distinctive features.) The **Tent of Meeting** (where God met Moses; 1:1; 2:2, 17) was also called the Tabernacle of the Testimony, because the Ten Commandments, written in stone, were housed there (1:50).*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Firstborn Sons

Numbers 3:1-51

OPENING
up to the Word

Are you a firstborn, somewhere in the middle or the baby of the family? What are the advantages (or disadvantages) of your particular place in the birth order of your family?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "unauthorized fire" to the Lord and were consumed by it (3:4; see Lev 10:1-2). Why such terrible punishment? (a) fire was hard to get, (b) fires were even harder to put out, (c) God was making a point about obedience.

2. How many were the clans of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (3:22, 28, 34; but see 3:39 and NIV text note)? How does that total compare with the total number of "firstborn males a month old or more" (3:43)?

3. How were the 273 males, in excess of the number of Levites, to be "redeemed" (3:44-51)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. If God allowed your sons to die because they broke the rules, how would you respond? (a) They will be done, (b) where is God's grace? (c) with grief but with submission. Why?

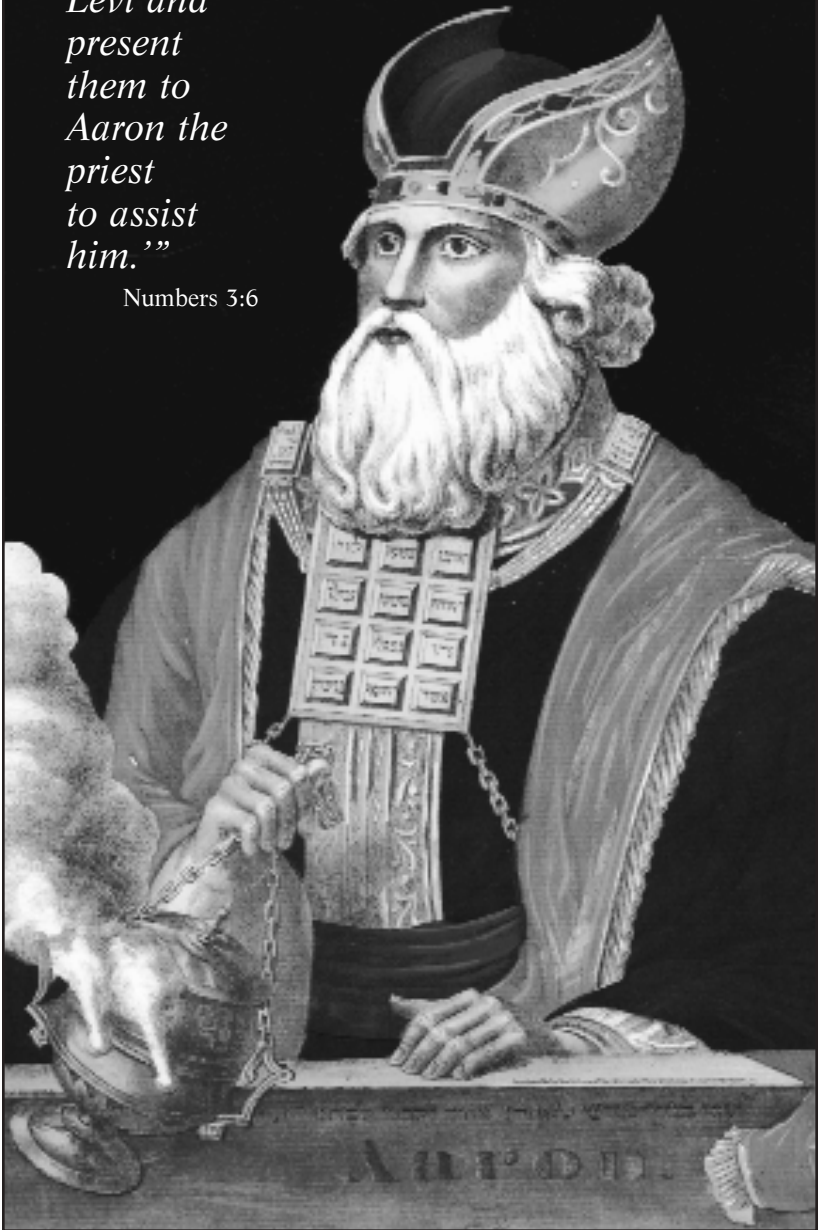
2. Which character(s) in this chapter best matches your present situation? (a) Nadab and Abihu—doing your own thing and living dangerously, (b) Aaron—a grieving parent who keeps pressing on, (c) Eleazar and Ithamar—in awe at what God has called you to do, (d) a Levite—just happy to be serving God, (e) one of the "extra 273"—redeemed at a price.

WINDOW
on the Word

*After the first Passover, as the Israelites were leaving Egypt, God told Moses to **dedicate all firstborn** (see Ex 13:2). But in Numbers, God replaced the firstborn Israelites with all the men from the tribe of Levi (3:11). They were set apart to care for the Tabernacle as aides to the priests, who were descended from Aaron (3:6-9). In this capacity, the Levites ministered to all the people.*

*“Bring the
tribe of
Levi and
present
them to
Aaron the
priest
to assist
him.”*

Numbers 3:6



DAY 3

Start Packing

Numbers 4:1-49

OPENING
up to the Word

The last time you moved, how long did it take you to pack? How did you package your most valued possessions so they wouldn't break?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why cover the ark with three heavy layers before the carrying poles could be put in place (4:5-6)? (a) as a dust cover, (b) as a shield so no one would see or touch it and die, (c) because that's what God said to do.

2. Who were the only ones who could directly handle the "most holy things" (4:4, 15)?

3. For the Kohathites, what "don't look, don't touch" policy was imposed (4:17-20)? What was the consequence of not following instructions?

4. Who had authority over the Gershonites and Merarites (4:28, 33)? What were their respective duties?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you generally respond when your boss tells you exactly what to do? (a) anxious to please, (b) questioning authority, (c) outwardly compliant, but inwardly rebellious.

2. Do you believe God has placed you in charge of something or someone? Why or why not?

3. Do you believe God has placed someone in charge of you? If so, for what purpose?

4. Are you currently serving God in the prime of your life? How many years of dedicated service will you give him? Will you retire from serving him?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Israelite soldiers could be as young as 20 years, but **Levites had to be 30 to 50 years of age** (4:3) to work in the Tabernacle, plus five years of apprentice work beginning at age 25 (see 8:24 and related note). Of the 22,000 Levites (see 3:39), 8,580 were old enough to serve (4:36, 40, 44, 48). For twenty years, they packed, carried, unpacked and reassembled the most holy things—each time the Israelites moved. At age 50, these Levites had to retire (see 8:25). To serve in the Tabernacle, God required of these men the prime of their lives.*

Law of Jealousy, Test of Adultery

DAY 4

Numbers 5:1-31

Were you ever kept away from people because of something contagious? What was it?

1. Why separate the sick (5:1-4)?
2. Why set the payback for wrongdoing so high—at 120% restitution (5:5-10)? (a) to help the victim, (b) to deter crime, (c) to pay for the victim's pain and suffering, (d) to show that payment for sin has a high price.
3. Consider the ancient jealousy law as it relates to adultery and perjury (5:11-31). What is the meaning of the curse? How might this law have been subject to abuse?
4. What did this law say about marital faithfulness? About oaths, perjury and false accusations?

1. By the standards of modern judicial fairness, what seems lacking in this OT ordinance on purity in marriage? What "equal protection of law" amendment would you add?
2. Why do you think there was no similar and equal law for unfaithful men?
3. Consider Jn 8:3-11—the story of the woman taken in adultery. Why do you think Jesus did not invoke the law found in Nu 5:11-31? Which passage do you imagine would be more appealing to a religious legalist?
4. What's better—the sweet water of grace or the bitter water of the law?

*The issues that led to **impurity** in the camp were not just physical, but also social. Acts of adultery or false accusation can be just as infectious as some diseases. To keep such social sins from spreading, a dreadful curse was pronounced—in this case, a miscarriage and/or barrenness, which is the meaning of the figurative language concerning disfigured thighs and abdomens (5:21-22, 27-28).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 5

Sticking Out Like a Sore Thumb

Numbers 6:1-27

OPENING
up to the Word

Does anything about you stick out like a sore thumb? (a) your life-style, (b) your hair, (c) your clothes, (d) your diet, (e) your _____.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. During the period of consecration, what were Nazirites not to do (6:3-6)? What were they supposed to do (6:5)?

2. How did a Nazirite deal with the unexpected or unplanned events of daily life (6:9-12)?

3. What happened to Nazirites who did not keep their vow? Would they have been better off not to have promised anything at all, than to have made a vow and fallen short?

4. What special blessings did God promise the Israelites (6:22-26)?

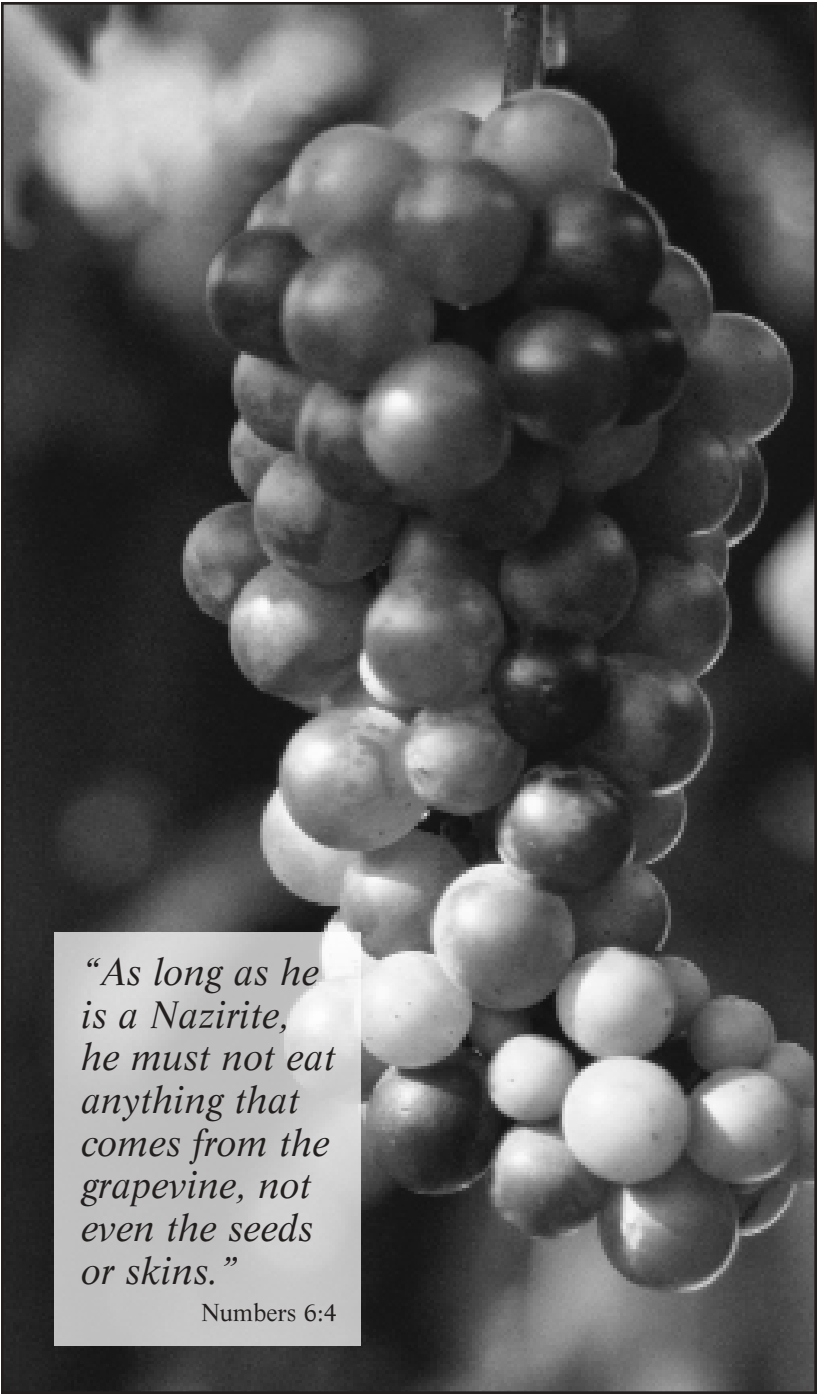
LIVING
out the Word

1. What would make you want to become a modern-day Nazirite—one who makes special promises to the Lord for a time? Do you think such a vow is even appropriate for a follower of Christ under the new covenant?

2. What promises would you make right now, as a sign of your commitment to God?

WINDOW
on the Word

***A vow... as a Nazirite** (6:2) could be taken for a period of days or for a lifetime. It was voluntary, with two exceptions—parents could take the vow for their young children (as Hannah did for Samuel) or it could be God-appointed (as with Samson and John the Baptist). Analogous to the Nazirite vow is the vow that some within Christendom make during Lent—doing without something they want, to more closely identify with Christ in his sufferings. However, such vows and commitments in the name of “spiritual discipline” while well-intentioned, can easily become nothing more than an expression of religious legalism. Remember—no matter what you do, God will never be more pleased with you than he is right now, by his grace and the work of Jesus on the cross.*



*“As long as he
is a Nazirite,
he must not eat
anything that
comes from the
grapevine, not
even the seeds
or skins.”*

Numbers 6:4

A Gift of Love

Numbers 7:1-89

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you received a gift that still means a lot to you? What makes it so special? What gift have you most enjoyed giving? Why?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What gift is offered by each tribe? What striking similarities do you notice?

2. How do you think each tribe ended up giving the same offerings, and why? (a) for the sake of unity, (b) only so many things were available in the Sinai desert, (c) to keep up with the Joneses—and the other tribes.

3. Why such expensive gifts? (a) nothing was too good for the Tabernacle, (b) only the best for a holy God, (c) to show off, (d) they felt they had to, (e) it wasn't that expensive, considering the number of people in each tribe.

4. Why do you think a whole day was given to each tribe? (a) to allow for pomp and circumstance, (b) to make each tribe special, (c) because God takes careful notice of every gift, (d) to encourage generous giving.

5. What was significant about God speaking directly to Moses at the end of the twelve days (7:89)? (a) God was pleased with the offerings, (b) God could now give more instructions, (c) Moses was being rewarded for his obedience, (d) the people now had an advocate in Moses.

LIVING
out the Word

1. What do you think about giving such costly gifts to God?

2. What gift is God asking of you? How “costly” is your gift?

WINDOW
on the Word

All twelve tribes, though not equally rich, gave exactly the same offerings without any variation. By this identical giving, they all had the same share in the altar, as well as an equal interest in the sacrifices offered upon it.

Rites of Passage

DAY 7

Numbers 8:1-9:14

What changes in life were difficult for you? (a) kindergarten, (b) puberty, (c) college or military service, (d) first job, (e) marriage, (f) parenthood, (g) mid-life crisis, (h) retirement. What ceremonies marked these changes?

1. Compare God's specifications for setting apart the Levites (8:5-26) with regulations for ordaining the priests (see Lev 8). (a) Who was made holy? ...made ceremonially clean? (b) Who was anointed and washed? ...was sprinkled? (c) Who was given new garments? ...had their old garments washed? (d) Who had blood applied to them? ...had blood waved over them?

2. What ceremony did the Israelites repeat every year to remind them of their passage out of Egypt (Nu 9:1-5)?

3. What if an Israelite failed to observe the Passover in a timely manner (9:9-13)?

1. What ceremony does insitutional Christianity perform to set apart people for ministry?

2. How would you respond if drafted into full-time Christian service from age 25 to 50? (a) resentful, (b) scared, (c) honored, (d) unworthy.

3. To what extent is your commitment to God like that of the Levites? How is it different?

4. What would it take for you to pass over to a life of total commitment to God?

The Levites could begin their service as early as twenty-five years of age (8:24), but but were not allowed to carry the Tabernacle and its contents until they reached age 30.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word