The reaction to this sexual and spiritual immorality was swift and destructive, purging Israel of sin and its consequences.

Despite the continual ups and downs, God remained completely faithful. He was continually moving the people toward their arrival in their new homeland. Moses conducted a second census of the people, noting the size of each tribe and clan so they might have the proper allotment of land. In God’s economy, even the daughters of Zelophehad earned an inheritance (27:1-11), something unheard of in other similar cultures.

God also raised up a new leader. In response to Moses’ prayer that the people not be like sheep without a shepherd (27:17), God called Moses to present Joshua before Eleazer and the entire nation for commissioning. The victories and progress would not soon end. God was demonstrating His commitment to fulfill all He had promised.

Thank God for the victories He provides and promises He fulfills. Pray for an awareness of vulnerability in times of victory.

Saturday, February 25, 2017—Numbers 28-30

Those who follow the Lord may find themselves discouraged or defeated. They have stumbled in sin or have had setbacks at home or work, so they wonder, “What can I offer the Lord?” Make Him a meal.

Numbers 28 and 29 provide an overview of offerings and their regularity. Like a meal, these offerings included an animal, bread, and a drink. God had told Moses about these on other occasions, so this was a succinct reminder as the people were moving forward in their journey, dealing with the details of life, fighting battles as they arose. Every day, week, month, and season were opportunities to worship regardless of what was happening around them.

God was telling Moses this while the people were still wandering. Some days God’s people will feel like they, too, are wandering, yet each day can be on occasion to worship. How? Make Him a meal. Celebrate the covenant He has made with you through Jesus. Pray a prayer that offers the Lamb (Jesus), a drink (His blood), and the bread (His body).

When you think you have little to offer, remember He has clothed you with the righteousness of Jesus. Bring yourself to Jesus and celebrate Jesus’ victory over your circumstances. Remember what God has done for you, to you, and through You because of Jesus. Your worship of Jesus will be a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Your prayer will remind you, not Him, of all He has done and turn your prayer into a time of worship and encouragement. Enjoy the meal.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 8

Sunday, February 19, 2017—Numbers 7-10

With the tithe, God called His people to equal sacrifice. No matter your income—whether much or little—you gave the first 10 percent to the Lord. That equal sacrifice created a sense of community among all participating as well as ensuring a sense of justice—the expectation was the same for all people, in all places, at all times.

Other times, God called for equal gifts, not equal sacrifice. At the dedication of the Tabernacle, every tribe gave the same gifts despite the fact that some tribes were larger than others. Of course, every tribe had tens of thousands of members, so these gifts in Numbers 7, for example, were not a hardship on any of them. With an equal gift, they could all say they had equal responsibility in its operation and equal representation by the priests before Yahweh. Calling for equal gifts and not equal sacrifice demonstrated the wisdom and grace of God for His people.

All the preparation was complete. The Tabernacle was complete. The Levites were consecrated. The tribes had their assignments. “On the 20th day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle of the Testimony” (10:11). For 11 months and 20 days, God’s people had been stationary, but they had not been idle. Now, they were ready to put into action all He had taught.

When God seems slow, remember He is always at work preparing and equipping you. Remember His faithfulness to show grace and mercy.

Monday, February 20, 2017—Numbers 11-14

God calls His people to humility. We are created beings. He is eternal. He has made us in His image, but He allows us to choose each day whether we will submit to Him and His leadership. As Israel began their journey toward the Promised Land, they demonstrated their arrogance on numerous occasions as they complained about God’s plan and wished to be back in Egypt. Comfort was more important than freedom.

In contrast, Numbers 12:3 says Moses was the most humble man on the earth. While the people questioned God, Moses continually trusted Him, even when things looked bleak or confusing. This humility is crucial for all followers because God calls His children to hard tasks. Joshua and Caleb went to spy the land and came back with confidence, not in their own ability but in God’s. Everyone else lost heart because they looked at self.

Without humility, God’s people are destined for humiliation. Aaron and Miriam were rebuked by God, and she was unclean for a week. The spies who doubted died by plague, and the entire nation was sentenced to 40 years of wandering because they did not trust God’s grace and mercy in the past to be active in the future. Their attempt to obey after their pronouncement of judgment only brought more humiliation (14:45).

Those who trust God find hope in their humility that empowers them to do the hard things which bring Him glory and stretch their faith. Thank God for His greatness. Walk humbly in gratitude and obedience.

Tuesday, February 21, 2017—Numbers 15-17

The Law is unattractive to the flesh because the Law points out all the flaws in humanity and describes the penalties required to cover that sin. The Law also assures these actions of repentance and atonement are “pleasing to the Lord” (15:3). In dozens of passages, the Law describes offerings and aromas as bringing pleasure to Yahweh. When God’s people can move their motivation from self to Him, they begin to live their lives with His pleasure as their primary goal. Sin becomes less attractive. Service brings pleasure to Him and them. The Law tutors us toward godliness.

God knows the weakness of humanity, so He describes in Numbers 15 the procedure for unintentional sin. Whether the entire community or an individual does so, God provides a way to make restitution. The one, however, who sins defiantly (15:30) has no recourse. The community was to cut him off because his sin remained on him. He brought no pleasure to Yahweh and had no desire to please Him, so he was to be cut off to be with his god—himself.

The price of rebellion against God was on clear display with the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They all perished because of their critical stance toward God’s appointed leaders, yet there were many others who remained doubtful about Moses and Aaron. Many of them died as well, yet Moses and Aaron pleaded for their forgiveness and restoration.

Pray for a life that brings pleasure to the Lord and to those He has put in leadership over you.

Wednesday, February 22, 2017—Numbers 18-20

“That’s not my job.” “I didn’t sign up for this.” “That’s someone else’s responsibility.” These and countless other comments like them pepper the conversations in office spaces and living rooms worldwide. Being accountable is often not an enjoyable or enviable task, so we look for ways to place it on someone else or, at the least, rid ourselves of it.

God was clear with Aaron. He and his family had responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary (18:1). To be sure, the rest of the Levites had responsibilities as well, and God called them a gift from Him to Aaron and his family (18:6). The opportunity to take responsibility over such weighty, spiritual matters was an act of grace from Yahweh, the great I Am.

One of the tasks of the priests was to burn a red heifer, a most unusual animal, outside the camp so its ashes might be used in ceremonial cleansing (19:1-22). If someone did not apply this cleansing water, they were to be cut off (19:13, 22). This paints a picture of Jesus who was sacrificed outside the city and whose work cleanses only those who are willing to apply its effects to their lives.

Moses had great responsibility, too. He was to speak to the rock with the staff in hand, yet he struck the rock. God passed a grave sentence on him for not fulfilling his responsibility (20:12).

Thank God for the privileges and responsibilities of being a priest in Him. Thank Him for Jesus, the Great High Priest, who makes it possible.

Thursday, February 23, 2017—Numbers 21-24

The exodus account discusses the continual conflict between God and His people. Their freedom from slavery did not produce constant joy. Instead, the people failed to believe God would provide and guide them safely into the land He promised.

From the pages of Exodus until Number 21, the only combat against foreign forces had been conducted by God Himself. In Numbers 21, the people finally take up arms themselves and destroyed the Canaanites. They also fought against Kings Sihon and Og, capturing their land and settling in them. This resulted from a nation which never fought before. Imagine, then, what they might have been able to accomplish had they gone into the Promised Land as God instructed.

From physical battle, Numbers 22-24 turn to the unseen spiritual battles facing Israel. Balak, king of Moab, saw all God had done through His people and was terrified. He called on Balaam to curse this seemingly unstoppable force. Despite three attempts, Balaam could not curse what Yahweh had blessed. This whining bunch which wanted to return to Egypt many times was bringing glory to God through their actions.

The grace of God to save us is the grace of God that will sanctify us. He has given us faith to know Him and to trust Him. He will act in the future as He has in the past, so we can be confident of His ability to keep us from sin and shape us in character. He is worth the sacrifice and self-discipline because He is sufficient and pleasing.

Friday, February 24, 2017—Numbers 25-27

After significant spiritual victories, we can be most susceptible to pride and temptation. Our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual resources are often low, having been spent in the battle, and Satan can slither in with some of the very issues against which we fought so diligently.

Israel had requested passage through Moab in Numbers 21, but the kings of the region had refused. Israel then defeated the kings and took their land. In Numbers 25, the women of that region seduced the Israelite men into sexual immorality. Israel succumbed to feelings and not swords.