

Read Numbers 1

"Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel. Num 1:49

Do you know the first job created by the U.S. Army in the Revolutionary War? It wasn't the general or the infantryman. It was the chaplain. The Continental Congress recognized that as men went off to war, they would have many spiritual needs (being away from church, taking enemy lives, etc). They recognized that men have spiritual needs that must be met, even on the battlefield. Even in the wars our country faces today, chaplains are on the front lines with the soldiers, and leading them to Christ or a renewed relationship with their Lord.

God had the same agenda in wartime for Israel. They would be experiencing war as the people of Israel went into the promised land, but their relationship with God would still be paramount. The God who led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness would soon be leading them into battle. It was not the time that the people should ignore God, but depend on Him exclusively. As a result, the Levites (who were the priests of Israel) were excluded from the military census in order that they would continue to perform their works of atonement for the people left behind and for the nation as a whole. Faith wasn't put on hold when a national emergency arose. **Are there emergencies in your life that cause you to ignore your relationship with Jesus? Do you find yourself lacking time for the Lord, or do you find a need for Him in your distress more than ever? Use those times of difficulty and discouragement as a reminder of your need to rely on God. Don't become prayerless in your times of trouble. God has made it clear from His Word that He should always have the priority in our lives. And difficulties should not allow us to place Him any lower than first.**

Read Numbers 2

"Then the tent of meeting shall set out with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; just as they camp, so they shall set out, every man in his place by their standards. Num 2:17

We see great strategy in the setup of the camp of Israel by the Lord. The largest part of the fighting force, the camp of Judah, was to the east towards the sunrise. The purpose is simple: if someone attacks, they often do it at first light and from the east, so the sun will be in the eyes of the defending army. The smallest force was on the west side of the camp, the least likely side for attack, and then two intermediate forces at the north and south. Israel wasn't used to conflicts coming on their camp, so God in His wisdom gave them a plan for defense.

However, the Levites again are not counted in the fighting men, but instead are to set up the tent of meeting in the very center of the camp. The tent, also known as the tabernacle, was the place where the people met with God and sins were forgiven. Even though people had different duties all around the camp, everyone had equal access to the tabernacle of the Lord and to the priests. No one was hindered because of their family or location in coming to the Lord in His meeting place. **Is your local church equal access**

for all? If a visitor came into your church would he feel comfortable and immediately welcomed? Or would he be viewed as an outsider and never really approached. A church problem always exists on an individual level, and you have an opportunity to change problems in your church. Be a people person and welcome visitors into your church. You don't have to get their whole life story, but get their name and tell them yours and let them know you're glad they're in God's house. Churches will grow when Christians act like genuine Christians, not the unfriendly stereotype that the world points to.

Read Numbers 3

Now their duties involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all the service concerning them; Num 3:31

In my time of ministry, I've been able to serve in a variety of capacities. I worked with teenagers in 3 churches. In others I served the worship ministry, handling the technical aspects of the worship service and leading services. And now I am able to serve as a pastor. Sometimes people ask if the positions churches create, outside of the pastor's office, are really biblical to have. Is it biblical to have a worship leader, youth minister or outreach minister? Sometimes people feel that the church stretches authority out over too many people. However, this passage shows that dividing duties is a biblical and God-ordained pattern.

Some ministers were responsible for the curtains and temple hangings while others dealt with the ark and specific articles for atonement. God put certain people over certain things so that nothing would be missed. Early in my ministry, when asked what I was going to do, I said I was going to be a pastor. God has done that, but He used me in many other ways first. I've now learned to say, "I'm in ministry for the Lord and whatever He wants out of me." Dividing of duties isn't just for the ministers. We know that the church is a body and that everyone has a function. **Have you limited your functions in the church? Maybe you've always taught a certain Sunday School class and feel that's all you can/should do. I never thought I'd be useful in a music or worship ministry, but I was and it was one of my favorite times of serving. Truly seek out where God wants you. He may want you to step out of your comfort zone (such a cliché, but it applies here) and try something new. You're current ministry work may be something God has for a new member to work in. Just always be open to whatever God may want to do with you.**

Read Numbers 4

but they shall not go in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die." Num 4:20

When I was in college at Mizzou, I really enjoyed the Student Rec Center. I would play basketball at least an hour a day, and often more than that. It was fun to play with other students from across campus, but eventually basketball season was over and players from the men's team would show up. It was challenging to play against a team that had even

one of their players. I'll never forget being constantly guarded by the starting forward for the Tigers. He was 6' 8", but wouldn't block my shot. He'd just say "I'll give you that", and I'd airball it, I was so messed up. But, then you'd get to play on their team. Your confidence was up and your shots went down more often. I played on a team with them once, and almost passed out from exhaustion because we won 10 games straight and you don't quit until you lose!

Christians don't understand holiness like they should, because it's not taught like it should be. To say that God is holy, you are saying He is uniquely set apart from everything and everyone else. While the Missouri Tigers are not holy, they were certainly set apart amongst the competition of the general student body. You had more confidence playing with them than against them. And that's how the Christian life feels; once I knew Jesus as Savior and Lord, I had a new confidence. No longer was I playing against God, but for Him! My life is now different and lived with a purpose. **Do you have confidence that you are serving the kingdom of God? Or are you hoping that God is pleased with you and you're satisfied to find out after you die. That's a bad choice, since it will then be too late. Your lack of confidence with God comes from lack of relationship with Christ, or a lack of holiness in your own life. As a Christian, you need to live a life that is different and set apart from the world. We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16).**

Read Numbers 5

The sons of Israel did so and sent them outside the camp; just as the LORD had spoken to Moses, thus the sons of Israel did. Num 5:4

When I was in kindergarten, I came down with the chickenpox. I had seen several kids in my class miss school because of them. So when I got sick, it was disappointing because I liked going to school. Cartoons got boring after a few days and I asked mom when I could go back. She said I had to wait until all the bumps disappeared and then probably another day. I wanted to go so bad, but she told me if I did, other kids in my class could catch it. Being held out from school was for my benefit and the benefit of my class.

God sets out for Israel how they were to deal with uncleanness in their midst. The person had to be removed from the camp. If they had leprosy, this made medical sense, but the real uncleanness was a spiritual one. God was preparing these people for the conquest of the promised land. One day they would be there, and there would be "unclean" peoples all around, that God was bringing judgment on through Israel. The people of God were not to tolerate those pagans among them once they entered into God's promised land. **Is there some uncleanness that you allow to remain in your life? Do you refuse to separate yourself from sin and disobedience? When you succumb, you will find yourself living in guilt and remorse, and while God is pleased with brokenness He desires it to come from humility towards Him and not the guilt of repeated sin.** Recognize that keeping sin in your life can be contagious. Your friends and family may see your life and determine that since you don't take all sin seriously, maybe they don't have to either.

Read Numbers 6

'All the days of his separation he shall not eat anything that is produced by the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin. Num 6:4

I have a very close friend that I made in seminary. He encouraged me to share my faith by the way he shared his, and we had many conversations about deep spiritual things, and some that were not so deep. I recall telling him about a website that I really liked, and he told me he didn't have internet access. It wasn't because of the cost, but the temptation. He didn't want to have any ability to bring in temptation directly into his apartment, so he only accessed the internet at school where there was accountability. I consider the internet a valuable tool, but I never encouraged him to change his mind. God gave him that conviction because of past sin in his life that he wanted to avoid.

The Nazarites in this chapter took similar precautions. These were people who were set aside for special service unto the Lord (Samson may be one of the most recognized examples). God wanted them to keep from certain things, and alcohol was one of them. But, they weren't just to stay from alcohol, but from any product of the grape vine, either fruit or juice. This would have been a difficulty, because sometimes what came off the vine was the only drink available. Water wasn't always safe or available, but this was the condition God set to help them avoid sin. **How far will you go to avoid sin? Jesus said if your eye or hand cause you to sin, you'd be better off maiming yourself than to allow the sin to easily come upon you (Matt. 5:25-30). Some would think my friend made a crazy decision, but he chose to have some inconvenience in his research, than to have access to sin. Is there something or someone you are knowingly allowing into your life, though you know as a result you are more likely to sin? Then you are not taking your sin seriously. Remove yourself from the sin, and find the blessings and peace that come from avoiding sin and guilt. You know how you feel when you realized you have sinned. The feeling when you recognize sin before hand and avoid it, is unmatched.**

Read Numbers 7

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Let them present their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar." Num 7:11

My youth group always took great missions trips, but they were expensive. So our church would hold a garage sale, and we always had a ton of stuff donated by the church that we sold in a three-day rummage sale. On the last day after lunch, everything was a dime so we could get rid of everything. Some of the youth working the sale would hide things and hold them until the dime day, which I always thought was tacky. They had the opportunity to do this (though our youth minister wouldn't have been happy) and get a better deal, though it wasn't really fair to the people who came in to buy things.

Sometimes people think they deserve special treatment or rules. However, the leaders of the tribes of Israel set a great example to us here in Numbers 7. Each one brought exactly the same offering as laid out by the Lord regarding what they should give. No one tried to

get away with anything less than what was expected. The other beautiful thing is the time they took. Each one presented their offering on one day. They didn't rush through this process, but did it one at a time. This way a leader could have the entire day to talk with the priests, pray and offer their sacrifices to the Lord. **What if we really gave the Lord some quality time? Instead of rushing through our giving and our time with the Lord, what if we really sought Him out? We would find ourselves in a very satisfying relationship with the Lord, simply because we're more open to what He wants to accomplish in our lives. Let's ask forgiveness for the times we rushed through our "time" with God and only gave Him moments. And let us not consider what we can "get away with" in our giving, but how we can bless the Lord through our obedience.**

Read Numbers 8

"They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep an obligation, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations." Num 8:26

When the Florida Marlins became a baseball team in 1993, they needed some help in the area of pitching. Filling the position players (catcher, infield, outfield) wasn't too tough, but good pitching can be hard to come by. So they turned to 44 year old Charlie Hough. While he was at an age that most pitchers would have long since retired, he pitched for the next two years and provided an important influence among the younger players that were getting playing time. His effectiveness on the mound may have diminished, but his ability to compete and lead were very important.

God set out a time of retirement for the Levites, who served as the priests in the Lord's house. Even though they were to be done with full-time service at 50, it did not mean that they were just to sit somewhere alone and atrophy. They would have valuable experience that could be passed on to those who were just becoming priests. God wasn't trying to get them to check out all together, but that they would become mentors for the younger men. **Do you serve to mentor anyone? Perhaps at your workplace, do you attempt to help others do better or do you prefer to withhold information to benefit yourself? Do you ever offer your testimony to those in situations you have been through, in order to further their walk with Christ? Are you older and feel that your time of usefulness is complete, and it's time for the "younger" people of the church to do the work? If you have a pulse, you have a purpose. It's up to you as a child of God to determine how the Father would most like to use you.**

Read Numbers 9

If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out. Num 9:20

When I was in artillery, I hated moving positions. An important aspect of artillery is communication, and as a result we usually had at least three antennas set up in a position. I'm sure in the regular army they probably had some snazzy antenna where you pressed a

button and it simply popped out. But, in the National Guard, I think we were using a Vietnam Era antenna that was effective, but also came in about 30 pieces and required 30 minutes to put one up. They had all kinds of guide wires that you staked to the ground to hold the antenna up, and it was a real headache. But, in real warfare, you can't remain in a position too long, before the enemy traces the trajectory of your rounds and targets you back. So when the commanding office says it's time to move, no matter what you're in the middle of, you move.

Israel had a similar situation. They never knew how long the Lord would keep them in a particular place as they continued their journey from Egypt. Everyone had their own tents to dismantle and reassemble with each move. And the tabernacle was very complex in moving. We read previously about a group that had to come in and cover the sacred elements before other people could even move them. And you didn't set up God's tabernacle haphazardly, but very precisely. So they might set it all up in the morning, and tear it down within 24 hours. It was all about obedience. When the Lord went, so did they, and when He stayed so did they. They never tried to set up ahead of God and anticipate His move, but settled directly beneath His cloud. **What about you? Are you ready to be moved by God in a moment's notice? Or are there moves with people or places that you would not accept? Do you try to get ahead of God and lead Him to do what you want, or do you seek to be patient and find what He wants? The best place to be is smack dab in the center of God's will. Don't look for the edges, but the center.**

Read Numbers 10

"Make yourself two trumpets of silver, of hammered work you shall make them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out. Num 10:2

If you've ever been on a military base during sunset or sunrise, usually there is an event that everyone has to take notice of. At these two times, most bases raise and lower their largest American flag for the day. Reveille is played over loudspeakers across the base, and you are to turn in the direction of the flag, even if you can't see it, and salute. If you are driving, you need to pull over, and some will even pull over and get out and salute. I can recall as a child on a military base, people being pulled over by Military Police for continuing to drive during reveille. Everyone could hear it, and everyone knew what it meant. It was a call of respect for the flag of the country those soldiers have volunteered to defend.

One day as Christians we will listen for our own reveille. One day the trumpet will blow, and those who are alive on the earth will be raptured straight to Christ. Those who died and whose souls are in Heaven, will be reunited with their new and improved resurrection bodies. It's similar to this trumpet in Numbers 10. People listened and when they heard it they knew it called them to worship, or to move, or for meetings. But they were listening for it, knowing it could blow at any moment. **Do you believe that regarding the trumpet of the rapture? All Christians know that Christ is returning some day, but few live that way. If we really believed it, we wouldn't hesitate to share the gospel.**

We wouldn't hesitate to move in any direction that God has led us. We show not that we don't believe it, but that we don't expect it, when we live as if Christ is not close to returning. A great CD title is "Run the Earth, Watch the Sky." Let's do the work that is necessary, but remember there is a glorious and incredible day coming. Let our work be molded by that coming day!

Read Numbers 11

The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not." Num 11:23

When we moved to Memphis to attend seminary, I looked for a long time to get a job. I searched want ads, and sent out tons of resumes, and filled out online job inquiries whenever I wasn't in class. 5 months later, I still had no job. My wife had been praying a prayer, that I would find one job, full-time, that would meet our needs. I honestly didn't pray that, because I didn't see anyway that could happen. Eventually the Lord turned me from looking for secular work, to ministry positions. Again, Nikki prayed the prayer, and again I doubted it would happen. Who would pay a full-time salary to a full-time student who could only give the church part-time hours? About 3 months of searching for a church to serve, a church called me as a full-time youth and childrens minister. It was one of the most rewarding ministries I have ever been a part of, and it came about because my wife prayed and believed.

Is the Lord's power limited? No. But, sometimes our faith is. Sometimes, the reason we don't see the spiritual accomplishments we'd like, is simply because of our own inability to believe God for the situation. The children of Israel had seen incredible works of God in their midst, and still they didn't trust God's power. I was missing some of the works He had done in my life, and when you forget to thank the Lord, you forget all He's done for you. **Do you trust the power of the Lord? Or do you pray and then wonder how it's ever going to happen? It's time to just lift up your prayer, trust God for it, and leave the situation in His hands. Instead of dealing with God in an unsure way, let's simply trust Him and see His results. They'll surely be better than anything we could accomplish.**

Read Numbers 12

and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the LORD heard it. Num 12:2

When I came back to SEARS after basic training, I was disappointed to find that my old job was gone, even though they had a responsibility to keep it. So I started working the stock room, helping to bring items out on the floor. The pay was lower and hours terrible, but I had to take something. One day I was putting paint away and the next isle over I heard my boss and a store boss talking. The store boss, Mark, my boss how bad an employee I was. My boss said that I was doing a brand new job and needed time to learn it, but Mark said I should probably be fired. I finally had to walk around the corner to get to the stockroom, and walked right towards them. Mark looked at me and said "Hey Heath, how you doin' man?" I didn't say a word and walked right by and I'm sure he

knew I had heard him. Mark never talked to me again, and I left about two weeks later for a fantastic job with an insurance company (God is good!).

We often have some careless words to account for. Perhaps we talk about someone in a setting that is too public and allows someone else to hear the "news". If someone ever comes up to me to talk about a problem with another person, I don't allow us to be anywhere that others can hear. Most everyone has been hurt by careless words that we either spoke or overheard. **But, do you realize that God is hurt as well? James says the same tongue should not offer praises to God and curses to men (James 3:10). Do you realize that your careless words offend God as well as others? He created the tongue you carelessly use and the people your words are directed at. Take some time today to apologize to God for the words that you have used. Seek from Him wisdom to help you watch your words.**

Read Numbers 13

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." Num 13:31 There are many things in my life that seemed difficult until I learned the proper way to do them. I remember a particular obstacle course in basic training. There was a thin metal cable going over a river, and we were supposed to cross using the cable. Person after person fell off, as the cable was very slick. One guy in our unit had been in the military years before and had left for some unknown reason. He had a special forces tab on his uniform, but no one ever heard why he had left, and was now back in. He had been out of the Army long enough that he was required to go through basic again, but he still knew what to do. He climbed on top of the cable, and slowly inched his way along. We all had been trying to hang upside down and cross, but he knew the proper technique. After watching him, a lot more guys made it across.

The report from the spies was correct; the people of the land were too strong for Israel. But, they were not too strong for the God of Israel. It's always interesting how we "trust" God when there is nothing difficult going on in our lives, and we pray and talk about Him. Then a difficult situation comes up, and we forget to pray and find ourselves not trusting God now that the circumstances are different. **Are there circumstances that cause you to quit trusting God? Do you look at a situation and recognize your inability to handle it? That's a good thing, as long as you then recognize God's ability to handle it. Our impossible situations are never beyond God's solutions. Pay attention as you read the Word and seek wisdom from godly people that you know. Ask them how they deal with difficulty.**

Read Numbers 14

"If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Num 14:8 Numbers 14 may be the saddest chapter of the entire Bible in my mind. The people get to the promised land in Chapter 13 and see an intimidating enemy. 10 of 12 spies bring a bad report to the people, indicating

the victory can't be won. So in Chapter 14, God ordains that Israel will not enter the promised land because of their disobedience to do so the first time. God then tells Moses He will destroy the entire nation, but Moses pleads for the people. I believe God did this to help Moses finally throw his lot in with these people. Moses viewed them as God's people, but finally he saw them as his as well. So Moses gives the Lord's command to turn back to the wilderness. The people realized they missed a blessing, so they decide to disobey and attack the promised land anyway. But, God's promise and protection had been put on hold due to Israel's disobedience. As a result, Israel gets a major beat down and has to run away.

In verse 8, Moses gave some important information; God would give the land to Israel, if He was pleased with them. Their actions and attitudes certainly eliminated any chance of that. And even after God said no, the people proceeded anyway. Lives were lost as a result of that disobedience. The Lord doesn't just randomly bless disobedient people. As humans, we're never going to be totally perfect. But, God isn't asking for perfection in accomplishing His will, but that He is pleased with us. When we are striving for godliness and to please Him, that causes Him to bless us. **Is the Lord pleased with your life as of today? Is there sin that specifically jumps into your mind as you try to answer that question? Simply repent of it. Turn from it and do the opposite. Allow your life today to be pleasing to the Lord, as an offering to Him. That's what your life truly is.**

Read Numbers 15

'Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one year old female goat for a sin offering. Num 15:27 I was never a great baseball player, although I certainly enjoy the game. I told my mom the reason I didn't want to play was because I was afraid of being hit by the ball. So she would take me outside for batting practice, and bean me a few times. I'm sure she was trying to get me over my fear, but it only confirmed my fears of being hit! So in my first year of little league, I was standing at the plate and I always had trouble really watching the ball. Sure enough, early in the season a friend of mine from the other team let one slip and it hit me right in the face. I dropped, and his mom rushed out and grabbed me. I was crying, and my friend was complaining that his mom was taking my side as she got onto him for his wild pitch. But, his pitch was just that. It was wild. It was one that got away. And in the process, someone got hurt.

Sometimes sin can be that way. We don't have any intention of sinning or hurting someone, but in a selfish moment, that's exactly what we do. Are we allowed to just write it off and say that's not who we really are? The Bible says no. Certainly inadvertent sin occurred, but you were still responsible for it. Just as my friend didn't intend to throw the pitch that way, he was responsible for it. **Is there sin you're not admitting responsibility for? You've written it off as a crazy moment, or an isolated incident. However, you cannot ignore that it occurred. You need to deal with any known sin, deliberate or accidental. Accidental sin that is just written off can turn into deliberate sin if you get too comfortable with it.**

Read Numbers 16

When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. Num 16:4-5 It hurts when you don't meet expectations. Being a sports fan, I see coaches constantly threatened with firing because their teams aren't winning, or aren't winning big. People will say awful things about these men and regarding how dumb and stupid they are. You know what gets lost in the conversation? Their wives and children. The constant barrage against these men causes great stress for the families and friends who have to watch a loved one be attacked.

It's just as disturbing when this happens in the church. As a pastor and minister, I realize how much I was blind to as a regular church member. You think everything is great, and everyone loves the pastor, and everyone loves Jesus. But, when you get that office for yourself, you see a church you've never seen before, one driven by politics and power. That's what Moses had to deal with. He was doing the Lord's will, and some people weren't happy with the results. They failed to understand that their wandering in the wilderness was not the fault of Moses, but of the people who failed to trust the Lord. I can imagine the hurt Moses felt when Korah and his lackeys came to him. **How do you treat your ministers and leaders? With respect or contempt? Do you pray for them, or talk against them? Do you seek to trust them in their positions, or to second-guess them publicly and privately. Be careful how you deal with the Lord's anointed. Even David, after being anointed king, would not do anything against the current king Saul while he was alive. That's because David respected God-given authority.**

Read Numbers 17

"It will come about that the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout. Thus I will lessen from upon Myself the grumblings of the sons of Israel, who are grumbling against you." Num 17:5 I'm amazed at how people can make a profession out of guessing. In the various sports drafts, especially football and basketball, the experts try to tell you where all the players will end up. They hold mock drafts, pretending to be the professional teams picking the amateur players. However, the experts are often wrong. In 2007, Brady Quinn was a projected top 10 football player. Some experts even picked him to be taken in the top 5. Where did Quinn get drafted? Number 22. Not all players come to the draft, with many staying at home to receive phone calls. But, so many had told Quinn that he was a star, that he sat embarrassed in the waiting room until his name was finally called. The "experts" didn't have the final say on who teams took. The teams have that say, as they attempt to get players to make them successful.

In this passage, God didn't choose Aaron anew. He had already chosen Aaron as a leader, and father of the priesthood. God was confirming it to the people. They thought enough time had passed, that perhaps Aaron was benefiting from an old, outdated system. But, God chooses whom He chooses, for His purposes. No one is too good for His team (Rom. 3:23), and no one is too bad (Rom. 5:8). **Do you feel like you belong on God's team?**

Do you feel like you're in the huddle, but you have no idea what the plays are supposed to be? Do you find the Christian life confusing and difficult. Just remember, that when you were saved, it was for a purpose. God desires to use you, not to watch you sit in the waiting room. Seek out your role in His Kingdom plan.

Read Numbers 18

"This also is yours, the offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the sons of Israel; I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual allotment. Everyone of your household who is clean may eat it. Num 18:11

There are few things that feel as bad as going to church, and being strongly convicted about something. Not because you're immune to sin, but sometimes you just become calloused and miss something in your daily routines. I cannot remember the preacher, but people during the Welsh revival would often leave during his message because the conviction was so strong. Others would stand up in the middle and ask "How can we be saved from our sin?!" That kind of conviction and spiritual care is rare and hard to find in American Christianity.

God has an expectation that we would come with our offerings in a state of spiritual cleanliness. Your attendance in a worship service is an offering of your time and your concentration. To come into a worship service while knowingly harboring sin, puts a block between you and the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean only cleaned up people should come to church, but people should put as much effort into their spiritual grooming as they do their physical grooming on Sundays. **Do you focus on the Lord on Sunday mornings? Or do you find yourself so distracted in getting ready that you sometimes forget to bring your Bible, let alone read it? Sunday is no less important to come before God, on your own, with clean hands and a pure heart. Allow your life to be a pleasing offering before Him. Hold nothing back, and bend under His conviction, and seek His will.**

Read Numbers 19

'But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself from uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD; the water for impurity has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean. Num 19:20

When I was in college, the university had a free writing lab. The purpose of the lab was for you to take your papers in and allow someone who worked there to evaluate your work, give you suggestions, and help you improve your writing and your grade. I never went, because I generally received good grades on my papers. But many students who knew their papers weren't good enough, still wouldn't take advantage of the resource. Maybe it's because they didn't want to have to do the work over, or they wanted to hang out with friends and didn't think they could spare a couple of hours to get a better grade. As a result I constantly heard professors tell students "I'm not giving you any leniency, because you had the chance to go to the writing lab, and you ignored it."

In the same way, a person who was unclean and had the ability to be purified, was expected to do so. Some situations didn't allow immediate purification (i.e. women's menstrual cycles), but if the opportunity was there, it was expected that you would take it. Those who didn't were cut off from the camp, because their attitude of rebellion could spread. That is always a concern of God; not how our sin affects us only, but also how it affects our family, friends, and church. **Is there some sin that God has been clearly convicting your of? Are you choosing to ignore God on it? You have to take appropriate steps to prevent sin. And when you do fall, ask for forgiveness. Not because your salvation is in jeopardy, but as evidence that your relationship with Christ is important enough that you would ask forgiveness and to be lead away from that disobedience.**

Read Numbers 20

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Num 20:12 One night when I was about 13, my parents told me to unload the dishwasher. I wasn't happy about it, but I was doing it. We had gotten new dishes, and I was grabbing plates out in a handful at a time, and they would clank together. My dad told me not to grab them that way, but to do them one at a time. For some reason that I still can't explain (mainly I still had a bad attitude about being made to clean the kitchen), I grabbed out two plates and rubbed them together. My dad proceeded to wear me out with the paddle, which ended up being the last spanking of my life. I finally was broke of big-time disobedience.

Moses was given instruction on how to bring water from the rock. He was told to speak to it, but instead he struck it with his rod. You have to think of Moses mental condition. His sister just died, and instead of being buried in the promised land, she's buried in the wilderness. Moses thought his leadership of the people was coming to a close. They could take up their places of inheritance in the promised land, and govern by tribes. But instead they're just as helpless and in need of leadership as ever as a result of their disobedience. Not exactly Moses' plans for the next 40 years. **Do you understand how your mindset leads you to results? Bad days often lead to bad decisions. We have to make the effort to not allow the excuse of a bad day to cause us to sin and grieve the Lord. Seek Him today, and purpose that you will not allow circumstances to diminish your relationship with your Lord.**

Read Numbers 21

And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. Num 21:9 When I was in high school, we rarely took short car trips. As a result of the long interstate drives, there was a lot to look around at during the trip, and I often noticed graffiti on overpasses. For some reason, Missouri highways have always had a problem with that epidemic. Along the way, I would learn that "Eric loves Cindy 4EVR" or that "Central High Rules". Then as you drove, eventually there would be that God honoring

graffiti "Jesus loves you" or "John 3:16". I remember at the time thinking that I was glad that someone wrote something about Jesus. But, is that really a communication of anything about Jesus? If you wrote something on an overpass, could you step back and say "Well, I've done my work for the kingdom. Thousands of people will see this"?

Some people read in Numbers 21 and think that God instructed Moses to make an idol. It was not, because it was not an item to be worshipped. It was simply the mode by which the people showed faith in God to heal them. It says that anyone who looked at it lived, so that would seem to imply that some still refused afterwards. Maybe they said "I'm not spending my last few moments of life looking at some dumb fake snake" (apparently they were all great rhymers...). For whatever reason, some didn't believe. Do you think Moses made the snake, and silently held it up? No! I'm sure he shouted to the people what they had to do in order to be spared from death. This was a picture of Jesus who said in John 3:14, that His salvation would come by the same way. He would be lifted up (on the cross), and people would look at Him, and based on their decision of faith or foolishness, they would be saved or condemned. But, Jesus gave the message clearly, so that when He was on the cross, people knew what decision they should make. **Do you clearly share the gospel? Or do you find yourself more like a graffiti writer with vague references to the Bible and Jesus, in the hopes that a friend or family member might come to know Christ. Be as Moses and Christ Himself. Make the message clear, and truly seek to lead people to salvation. Not that you can save them, but you can share the life-changing message that only comes through Jesus.**

Read Numbers 22

But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you." So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak. Num 22:35 My wife has devised a plan to encourage our children to be willing to go above and beyond. If they do something without being asked, we might give them 50 cents or even a dollar. This has been working out, and they don't get paid often, but we look to reward them. The other day, my 4 year old daughter began sweeping the kitchen, and Nikki was pleased to see her do it. Then while in the middle of the job, my daughter said "Mommy, remember that you said you'd give us some money if we did something without being told?" We quickly realized that she wasn't doing this out of obedience, or the kindness of her heart. Her motivation had changed.

Some people find this situation with Balaam very confusing. God says to go and then He tries to kill Balaam for going. Every account of Balaam talking to Balak's men, shows Balaam giving the correct words and actions the Lord wanted. Apparently the second time, the king's men were more insistent and likely offering more compensation. It seems that while Balaam was on the way to the king, his motivation changed. Maybe he thought he could give the people of Moab a small blessing, or curse Israel just a little bit and then get paid. It's telling that the angel of the Lord (who appears to be Christ), gives exactly the same words that God gave before about going, but saying only the words God gives him. **Has your motivation changed? Is there someone you felt that you wanted to confront regarding their sin? You don't hate them, and don't desire to start a fight,**

but you see sin in his or her life and you want to help them overcome it. Now you hesitate and decide not to get involved. Perhaps God is leading you to make some changes, and you get very excited about being obedient to God. But, as time passes, your motivation changes. You decide you're not willing to give up the enjoyment of your sin. Check your motivation today. Is God the one who leads you to and fro, or are you led by your own decisions, apart from Christ?

Read Numbers 23

But Balaam replied to Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD speaks, that I must do'?" Num 23:26 I can't get summer league ball out of my mind I guess. I've made it clear that I was certainly not being scouted by any big league teams during my playing days. But, I remember a game towards the end of our season when I was in 7th grade. I did what made me the most valuable at the plate...I got a walk. Coach would tell me not to be afraid of a pitch coming at me, and to let it hit me. I'm dumb, but I'm not stupid, so I ignored my coach and got out of the way of those (especially after that shot to the face). So perhaps I looked menacing coming off the bench, but for whatever reason, the pitcher walked me. There were two outs, last inning and we were down a run. I was on first base, and I looked over at the third base coach. He gave the steal sign. We never practiced stealing bases in practice and I knew I wasn't fast. I had no idea how to try to get a jump on the pitcher. So I saw "steal", and I freaked out! The pitcher started to go, but I didn't take off as quick as I could, and then I bolted (or scurried) to second. I saw the second baseman prepare for the throw, and I slid feet first. "You're out!" The umpire called. I looked up to see I hadn't even touched second. It was my first attempt at a steal, and I had slid too early. I was about a foot and a half short of even reaching the bag.

Sometimes God asks us to do things that we just don't think we're ready for. Maybe we're asked to teach a Sunday School class. Perhaps God convicts us about sharing Jesus with a friend or relative. In the times that we think we can't do it, are the times we have to remember Paul's words in 2 Cor. 12:10 "...for when I am weak, then I am strong." When we admit our weakness, we admit that we need God's power to accomplish God's purposes. **Are you listening to God? Are you asking for his power, or trying to operate in your own? Admit your weakness, because that's when we have the potential for the greatest work in the kingdom of God. Relying on ourselves gets only our best. God's best is infinitely superior to anything we can do on our own.**

Read Numbers 24

"Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor." Num 24:11 I had some friends in high school that I hung out with a lot. There were many students in my school who took almost all agriculture classes for their electives, and I was one of them. As a result of having so many classes together, we just all become close. Many of them went out to a dance hall on the weekends called "Good Time Country". There was no alcohol served, but they allowed you to bring it in. Unfortunately there was no accountability and many teenagers came there to drink. My friends kept inviting me to come, and said that I didn't have to

drink. I came one night, but I could tell they wanted me to drink. I refused, but tried to have a good time. Eventually I decided it was time to go, and that some of my friends were too drunk to drive. I drove a couple of them home, stopping to let them out of my dad's car when they had to hurl. I thought as I drove home, "This was so stupid." I went that night, hoping that my friends might get off my back about my stand with alcohol. In a sense, I was looking for some honor from them. However, you cannot receive honor from the world and the Lord on a consistent basis. Every once in a while they may line up, but generally our actions are honored by the world or the Lord, but not both.

Balak tried to make Balaam think he had really missed out on something by not cursing Israel. However, if you're being obedient, you will never miss out on receiving honor from the Lord. **Are there places you are willing to compromise to be honored by the world? Sometimes you wish that you could bend a bit, but if we're with Christ we truly can't. Friendship with God means that you choose to be an enemy of the world. Not that we're mean to lost people, but we recognize that their motivation is not a godly one. Some of those kids I was with that night, claimed to be Christians. However, they had chosen to receive honor from the world. Perhaps their claims of Christ were nothing more than claims.**

Read Numbers 25

So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

Num 25:3 I read in our local paper recently, about how girls in high school don't care much about boys. But if you base girls intentions on the way they dress, they certainly seem to be showing off for someone. My high school saw several fights between girls that had to do with one girl moving in on another girl's boyfriend. For the girls, they seemed to be looking for relationships, so the loss of one was important to them. Boys were looking for encounters, so the loss of a girl was just a difficult setback.

God's anger was stirred against Israel in this chapter, because they were choosing to "join" themselves to the false god Baal. I'm not saying God acts as a jealous girlfriend, but He told Israel in Exodus 20 that He is a jealous God. He demands that He be worshipped and served, and that no one serve created things. The phrase "to join" in the Hebrew means to "bind". It would be a similar thought to being married. So these Israelites were essentially divorcing God to marry Baal. They were attracted by the people and the loose living of the Baal worshippers. These people were looking for encounters, not relationship. Their Baal encounter seemed exciting compared to the constant relationship with God. Fewer rules seemed like a good idea. **Do you sometimes wish you could lose some rules? If you constantly see your Christian life as a situation of do's and don'ts, you've missed the bigger picture of the rules. The rules of the Bible are there to help you identify right and wrong and understand God's standards. Dr. Adrian Rogers said that when God says "Thou Shalt Not", He is saying "I'm protecting you from this". When God says "Thou Shalt", He is saying "This is your blessing". Let's realize that God has things He wants us to do and not to do. Let's trust Him for the results.**

Read Numbers 26

For the LORD had said of them, "They shall surely die in the wilderness." And not a man was left of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. Num 26:65

In college athletics, the window of opportunity can be pretty small. Fans and boosters want to win and win now. One of the difficulties for a new college coach in any sport, is that they have someone else's team. If the old basketball coach liked to run a slow offense, and a new one likes a running offense, the new coach is going to have to get the right players for his system. The first couple of years will be rough as the coach uses players he might not recruit himself. But then as kids graduate, and the new coach gets his recruits in, the team starts to play like he wants. You can have a great game plan, but you have to make sure your players are equipped to pull it off.

God had a great plan for Israel. He rescued them from Egypt, put Egypt in a huge hurt so they couldn't rise up against Israel, and then He led Israel to the promised land. But, along the way, the people instead of remembering how God saved them, grumbled for the "better lives" they had in Egypt. As a result, Israel became unusable because they rejected going into the promised land (except Caleb and Joshua). So God decreed that the people of Israel would not enter until those who were 20 and older died. The new generation of Israel would know nothing of Egypt, but they'd remember the wilderness. And when the time comes for them to go into the promised land, God will have a group of people who are ready to follow that plan out of the wilderness. **How willing are you to be used by God? Have you gone through difficult circumstances and find yourself unwilling to trust God? Or do the difficult issues of your past cause you to trust Him more than anyone else? He has designed your life. His desire is that everything, good or bad, be used for good and to bring you into a closer relationship with Him. Be a willing instrument for the Lord. Remember where you've been, but allow Him to do a work through you regardless of your past.**

Read Numbers 27

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; Num 27:18 Do you know what "it" is? (I know I've been using lots of sports illustrations, but it's that time of year). A football coach was recently asked why his quarterback was so good. The coach said that his quarterback had "it". Then I started to hear other coaches say that about their players. "It" is just something that tremendous players have. It's unexplainable, but it is the reason they are so good. When it's crunch time, or a big play is needed, your "it" player is the guy you turn to. It's a special quality that is possessed by that player.

When it comes to Christians, some just seem to have "it". They are the kind of Christians that you want to know (there are plenty out there that you don't). What is ultimately different between Christians? Their fellowship with the Holy Spirit of God. All Christians are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, but not all Christians live in His power and leading each day. The ones who do, you notice them: they witness to people, they are kind and caring to brothers and sisters in Christ, they are willing to do whatever will

benefit the church. Joshua was this kind of guy. If you have the Spirit, it's not some "it" quality, but simply means you invited the Spirit in, and live in His power. This is what Joshua's life showed. **What does your life show? A Christian who still looks a lot like the average person walking around on the street? Or is there something different about your life that draws believers and non-believers to you? You need to be in the Spirit, and allow people to clearly see the Spirit in you. Only when you intentionally yield yourself to the Spirit of God, will you see dramatic and godly changes in your life.**

Read Numbers 28

It is a continual burnt offering which was ordained in Mount Sinai as a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. Num 28:6 Army Basic Training lasts about 8 weeks, and at the end of that time, you take a physical fitness test to make sure that you are up to Army physical standards. I arrived at basic on Halloween (fitting), and so we were there when Christmas came. The Army required that we be sent home for two weeks for the holiday, even though we were just two weeks from graduation. So they moved our Physical Fitness test up to be done in six weeks. The Drill Sergeant warned, "You're going to go home and get all fat and happy off momma's cookin', and then you'll come back here and flunk your test." So we all took it, with a couple who didn't pass. They told us to do some running and physical training while home, but I just couldn't get motivated. When we got back, the first two days were a nightmare. Hardly anyone had done PT while they were home, and we were hurting bad when we got back. We were all back up to speed in a day or two, but it showed us that we couldn't just quit on our workouts.

Some things in our physical and spiritual lives have to remain constant. God told Israel that these offerings were to be continual. It was a continual reminder for the people to offer up sacrifices for their sin. The reminder served to keep them aware of how serious their sin was. Thankfully, Jesus doesn't take breaks in our salvation. The blood of Jesus Christ continually saves us once we have accepted Him as Savior and Lord. **But, are you taking breaks with God? Are you taking a break from church? From praying and reading the Bible? Are you willing to miss God's blessings in order that you are able to do whatever you want? Sin never contains more value than God's blessings. God doesn't take breaks with you, so don't take them with Him either. He has something for you each and every day...plans and purposes for your life.**

Read Numbers 29

'On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work. Num 29:35 A new missionary to Zimbabwe, Africa had a chance to meet some local Christians. Their church was outside under a tree, and they were singing a song when he arrived. It was very upbeat, joyful, and fast. He was still learning the language, and so he asked his interpreter what they were singing. The interpreter identified it as, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." That is actually a very slow song, usually sung with no feeling and just barely on the conscious side of sleeping. These Christians had

hymnals in their language, but couldn't read the music. So they read the words and put what they thought was an appropriate pace and tune. They saw the message of the cross as one of great joy, so they sang it that way! I think I wouldn't mind being a part of that little church under the tree.

For the Jews, the seventh month was a time normally of rest. It was the waiting time between planting and harvest. God wanted the people to use that time to lift up offerings for their sins and transgressions. God called for them to have a solemn assembly, and come together for this purpose. It seems like many churches today have solemn assemblies, but not as a result of being broken over their sin. They're solemn with no emotion, no life, and no excitement for the things of God. What has happened to our churches? When people look at their watches more than their Bibles, I'm pretty sure something has gotten lost in the translation. People don't come into church solemn, but sleepy and ready to go somewhere else. Church has become as routine as going to the workplace, except church doesn't pay you. **What is your attitude towards worship? Do you view your church as a solemn assembly where you come together in seriousness AND in praise? Many churches don't seem very solemn at all, but perhaps in their enthusiasm to worship the Lord and hear from Him, they are solemnly seeking Him out. As a Baptist I believe our denomination is on track biblically. But, I think some of our people have jumped the track spiritually. It's not your church...it's you. Every church issue starts with the individuals.**

Read Numbers 30

But if her father should forbid her on the day he hears of it, none of her vows or her obligations by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will forgive her because her father had forbidden her. Num 30:5 When I was in college, I decided to buy a new car. My old one was dying and it was a definite need. So I went to a car dealership and found a car that I liked. The payments were a bit much, but I was young and didn't understand that sticker price is sucker price. I hadn't really told my parents about it, because I had my own credit built up from my previous car payoff. So I bought the car and went home, but later that day I told my parents that I thought I had made a mistake. The car was too much money, but I had already signed everything. My parents could have made me keep the car and decided that I should learn my lesson. But instead, they decided to protect me from my own bad decision. My mom told me that Missouri had a three day buyers remorse law, and I could turn the car back in. I took it back, explained the situation to the dealership, and they took the car back.

Parents have to be ready to protect their kids. I read recently several quotes from teenagers in the paper. The majority of them said that they should be allowed to make their own decisions, so they can learn from their mistakes. I'd rather learn from my parents than from mistakes. God set up a provision here in Numbers 30, that if a father heard his daughter make a foolish vow, that he would stop it. Perhaps she hadn't thought it through, or felt pressure. The father was to take responsibility for his daughter, and stand up for her. Today it seems that parents are too hands off and ignorant of many of their children's choices. **Do your kids know you care? It's not by the things you buy**

them, but care is shown when you are there to help them in a difficult situation. Can your kids really talk to you, or do they know that you don't want to hear about the tough stuff in their life? You need to be hands on with your kids. Talk to them a lot. Get them to open up with you. Even if your kids aren't teenagers yet, this is your opportunity to build a lasting relationship with them. Then when your child begins to enter into the years of tough choices, he will be more likely to come ask you for help. And if you don't have kids, help someone who does! Encourage them to be an involved parent

Read Numbers 31

Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately . Num 31:17 I feel I would be remiss to skip this difficult passage of scripture here in Numbers 31. Recently I heard a the testimony of a man who was unsaved and driving drunk when he struck another vehicle and killed a person. Everyone in the audience seemed saddened, but then it was mentioned that the person who was killed was a child. Now there were gasps from people who were listening. The driver later became a Christian and had to deal with the consequences of his actions. But why is the life of a child more valuable than an adult? Is an adult tragically losing his life not also worth a gasp? It comes down to how we view children: precious...innocent...their whole lives ahead of them.

The Midianites had brought destruction on Israel, and God was now bringing judgement on them. It seems difficult to see that God would allow the destruction of an entire people. The problem was that Israel was not influencing the Midianites for godliness, but being influenced to worship false gods and idols. The warriors of Israel spared the had spared the women and children of Midian, maybe out of compassion, but probably just to claim them for themselves. God instructs them to finish the job. A difficult request, but the Midianites were not just some peaceful, God-fearing people. They were receiving judgment as a result of their sin and rebellion. **What difficult thing are you refusing to do? Do you know that you need to tell a co-worker about Christ, but you haven't? Have you not really shared with your children, fearing you may be a brain-washer? Maybe you have conviction that you should be giving financially to the Lord, and you fear that you cannot trust Him. The difficult passages of the Bible confront us with the difficulties of our faith. These always arise when our will collides with God's.**

Read Numbers 32

For we will not have an inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side of the Jordan toward the east." Num 32:19 When I was in third grade, we had to learn our times tables. We were supposed to memorize all the tables up through 9x9 and if you did all your memorization, you got to have a pizza party at the end of the semester. I didn't really put any work into it outside of school, and had always had trouble understanding math. So I got up to around 7x8, and things got hazy and I never progressed past that for the rest of

the year. The time came for our pizza party, and apparently, our teacher thought that everyone would have the tables memorized. She was shocked to find that me and another boy hadn't finished. So we were put into a room in the library for over an hour, while the kids ate pizza and watched a movie. They put some little tunnel thing for me and the other boy to climb through, but it wasn't any fun. It was a pretty disappointing day, but my own actions caused me to miss out on the pizza promise.

In Numbers 32, the tribes of Reuben and Gad decide they like the land outside of the promised land. They tell Moses they're going to stay there, and Israel can have a nice time fighting across the river. Moses tells them that this is not their inheritance, and they can't leave their brothers to fight alone. So, these tribes agree to fight, but that they are going to come back when it is over. The land across the Jordan was much better, but they were willing to take the first acceptable piece of land they could find. Often times we are willing to settle for less than God's best. He has a promise of rewards in Heaven, and a life of purpose on this earth. However, many of us miss these blessings because they require too much work. It's amazing how someone will work overtime to build their dream home, but won't give up a couple hours to build the Kingdom. **What are you settling for? Are you happy with a marginal prayer life? Are you happy with just going to church? Are you satisfied to accomplish the bare minimum for God, even though it means you miss out on blessings for being obedient? Then you have a weak relationship with the Lord. He desires so much of you and for you. Stop settling. Settling causes your marriage to be rocky, your children to be wayward, and your bank account to be your driving influence. God has more for you than this.**

Read Numbers 33

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live. Num 33:55 I've always been fascinated by the sinking of the Titanic. It's certainly a story of man trusting his creation a little too much. The Titanic did have a sister ship that was later built called Britannic. It was larger and had an improved feature to prevent sinking. The Titanic had bulkheads, like tall walls, from the bottom of the ship that went about halfway up each deck. It slowed the Titanic from sinking quickly, but eventually the water ran over these walls. So the Britannic was built with bulkheads that went all the way to the B deck, just below the top deck. The Britannic was an ocean liner, but had to be used during WWI as a hospital ship. It struck a mine and was sunk. The Titanic was sunk in 2 hours and 40 minutes. The new improved design of Britannic saw the ship sink in 55 minutes! Why so much faster despite the improvements? Because the bulkheads only worked if the portholes had been closed. Due to the wounded who were on the ship, and the stench, the nurses and doctors opened most all of the portholes for ventilation. The water ran into each compartment through hundreds of openings, and caused a quick demise for the ship. They had certainly fixed one problem, but overlooked some others.

This chapter of Numbers 33 would really benefit you to look at a map in your Bible of the journey Israel took in the wilderness. When the people of Israel are finally getting back to the promised land, they've had 40 years to convince themselves that they should go in this time. God tells them to drive everyone out of the land. They are not to leave anyone living within the boundaries of their new land. God says that if they do, those people will become a constant source of trouble in the land (like the Midianites). God was bringing judgment on these people living in the promised land. God didn't just randomly choose to kick these people out. Their worship of Baal and other false gods, was an abomination that God could not overlook. So Israel had to take care of all the problems in their new land, not just one or two. **Think of the sin problems in your own life. Do you think you'll be ok just eliminating one or two? If you do, the ones that remain will just grow larger and likely lead you to more rebellion. Jesus taught us to pray "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The reason so many face temptation, is they've not sought the power or protection of God to avoid it. He wants to help us, but we are still responsible for the requests. We have to show we care for our lives, just like Israel was to care for their new land, enough to eliminate the problems and be effective for the Lord.**

Read Numbers 34

And the border shall go down to the Jordan and its termination shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land according to its borders all around. Num 34:12 By 1840, America had a good understanding of the shape of the North American continent. Politicians began to use the term "manifest destiny", the idea that the United States should stretch westward to the Pacific Ocean. Over time, settlers continued away from civilization and into the wild, until eventually the entire country was settled to present day California. There were some who felt that America should extend into Canada and Mexico under the cheers "All Canada" and "All Mexico". Eventually, the American people decided to simply support the rebellion of people in Canada against the British. The decision was also made that the people of Mexico were too ethnically diverse to easily include into the country. America was very much consumed with the idea of domination...not in terms of military domination but territorial.

God was not interested in a Jewish domination of the entire Middle East. God gave them the promised land, and then the tribes were to divide the land into an inheritance to stay within the tribes (except for the tribes that settled in Gilead). Since that initial inheritance, Israel has been satisfied with their allotment. They have been attacked many times in the hope of eliminating Israel, and Israel has attacked other nations in order to protect themselves. Today Israel is asked to give up more of their land in order to bring about peace with the Palestinians. However, Israel can never give enough land away to satisfy its enemies in the region. Israel is not looking to gain or lose land, but to keep their inheritance from the Lord. **How content are you? Are you willing to sacrifice time with your family in order to provide them with extra things they don't need? Do you live in constant jealousy that drives you to your purposes instead of the Lord's? God has provided you with everything you need, and often with things that are simply wants. You must be careful not to prioritize your wants above your needs, or you**

may find yourself hurting your family relationships and certainly your spiritual ones.

Read Numbers 35

These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there. Num 35:15 When I was a teenager I heard someone say, "There's two sides to every story." It may sound weird, but that's a statement I've thought about a lot. As I got into college, I felt that this statement is wrong. To me it seems that there is only one side to a story, namely the true one. Two people may be involved, but certainly both of them can't be right. When my parents asked me about a situation, I knew there was only one story they were looking for: the true one. Ministry has changed my mind a bit. I've been in ministry since 2000, and I have heard many stories, and many different points of view. Early on, I would listen to both sides, and then determine who was telling the truth. However, over time I began to realize that there was a little truth in both sides. What was different was the point of view. Each person honestly believed the events to have happened as they were saying, because of their personal point of view.

Moses was concerned about multiple sides to a story. He had accidentally murdered a man in Egypt, when he killed the Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Jewish man. Moses struck the Egyptian only once, and was probably surprised to see the Egyptian slump down dead. So God established cities of refuge, for people who had accidentally committed a murder. The family often wanted instant revenge, and these cities allowed the guilty party protection until the truth could be determined. Probably some people were killed before these cities were created, and were condemned by the words of just one other person. God says one witness is not enough. **How are you at listening to a story? Do you find yourself siding with someone out of friendship? If you are being asked to evaluate a situation, you must be an honest and open listener. Seek God for help to determine what really happened. Do not go to condemn the second person after hearing the first person's story. I once went to someone after hearing the other person's story, and I was mad. But, after listening to the other side, I realized the events had been blown out of proportion. Remember that different people see events from different sides. To show the love of Christ means you at least listen to their story, and then make a determination. Do this with your friends, your children or any situation.**

Read Numbers 36

Then Moses commanded the sons of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph are right in their statements. Num 36:5 The iPhone was one of the most anticipated gadgets in a long time. It's a phone, but then does everything else you need except regulating your heart beat. People waited in lines to be the first one to purchase an iPhone and from all accounts, no one was disappointed with the purchase. That is, until the price dropped by \$200 six months later. People who had already purchased the phone were outraged. Usually people in our country like knowing

that they paid the most for their new toys. They had paid what they thought was a fair price, until other people were able to enjoy the iPhone at a cheaper price. Lawsuits were attempted against Apple, even after they promised a \$200 rebate to customers who purchased at the original price. We often are not happy for someone else's good situation, but often seem jealous of them.

The tribes with the issue here in Numbers 36 were of the same sick heart. God had promised that inheritance could go to daughters if no sons were present. Some became concerned these daughters would marry outside the tribe, and the inheritance would be lost. More than likely, this would have happened across all tribes and balanced out. But, people were only concerned about what they could keep. The Lord says these men are right in their statements, but I don't believe they were right in their hearts. Legally they had a point, but you're talking about your fellow Israelites. They had a bond that no other nation could claim! **Do you find yourself jealous of other people's good situations? Are you unwilling to be happy for someone who's received a blessing? You have to remember that all good things come from the Father, so we should rejoice when someone has received blessing. If you'll focus on your own situation you'll have less time to be distracted by others. Seek out God's plan in your finances and family and how He seeks to bless you through your obedience. Just remember, because you may have a point of fact, doesn't mean that you are right. God is concerned with our heart attitudes.**