

IN THE WILDERNESS

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Week 1: Arrangement of the Camp

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

There are four crucial components for a group to maintain its health: Word, prayer, relationships, and reaching out. In this guide, you will study the biblical passage in three steps: observation, interpretation, and application. As the group leader, you are free to use any part of this guide that can assist you in achieving this goal.

CONNECT

- What's one high and one low from the past week?
- What's something that's been a consistent part of your life for the past decade?
- If you're following the Numbers reading plan, what interesting takeaways have you had so far?

INTRODUCTION

As Numbers begins, Israel has been camped at Mt. Sinai for a year, and they're about to embark on a journey through the wilderness to the promised land. Future biblical authors make a big deal about this chapter in Israel's history. One of the reasons is that the wilderness (and the later theme of exile) becomes a metaphor for life in this age. Christ has freed people from sin (likened to the Exodus), God promises a glorious inheritance (likened to the promised land), and we are in the wilderness, on our way to it. That means that wilderness experiences in Numbers inform what we face here and now. God starts preparing Israel for the journey by arranging their camp in a very specific way.

OBSERVATIONS & INTERPRETATION

Read: Numbers 1:45-54

Discuss: Each tribe is given a specific location in which to camp, arranged around the tabernacle, the place of God's presence. What do you think God is communicating to Israel with this arrangement? What would you say it means for God's presence to be central for God's people?

Read: Numbers 3:5-13, 38-39

Discuss: We're told three times in three chapters that any non-Levite who approached the tabernacle was to die. The Levites are mediators, and without mediators, God's presence would annihilate Israel. How does it strike you that God's presence is fatal for people?

Highlight: The reason the Levites could be near God's presence is because wrath had already been spent for them through the substitute of an animal. Whereas the Levites received substitution, the firstborn of all creation, Jesus Christ, was the Substitute. As our Mediator, he alone brings us into God's presence.

APPLICATION

- Would you say that God is camped out at the center of your life right now? Why or why not?
- What practices and habits will help you keep God's presence central in your life?
- How does the fact that Jesus' is our Mediator impact the way you think and feel about living in God's presence?

PRAYER

- Spend time praising God for his holiness, his centrality over and above all creation.
- Spend time thanking Jesus for mediating God's presence to us.