

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: Have you ever felt God stop you from doing something?

Pray: For God to help us understand the book of Numbers for our lives.

Read: Numbers 22-24 by yourself considering the following questions:

By yourself:

- Who are the main characters in this “episode”? Give them a short description.
- What do you make of Balaam, how would you describe his ‘relationship with God’? See also 2 Peter 2:15-16.
- Why can’t Balaam curse Israel? Consider Genesis 12:2-3.
 - Is Israel aware of what’s happening?
- What is the result of Balak’s attempts to curse Israel?
- Now read Numbers 25, how do you think it fits with 22-24?

Together:

- What do we need to be reminded of from this episode in Numbers?
Consider Ephesians 6:10-18 & Romans 8:31-39.
 - Why can Christians trust in the blessings of God?
 - Do we need to fear the ‘curses’ of God’s enemies?
 - Does God’s blessings mean we don’t need to be vigilant against temptations? What do you need to resist this week?

Pray: that we would stand firm against the temptations of this world, trusting in the blessings of God in Jesus.

Homework: Read Romans 8.

Remind: Celebration Dinner for Church Planting 30/8

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Numbers is the fourth book in what is called the “Pentateuch”, the five books of the Torah. These serves as the foundational books of the people of Israel, giving context to their relationship with Yahweh, the God who is and who created all things.

Numbers takes place in the Wilderness. Between the Exodus, where God rescues Israel out of slavery to Egypt, and the Promised Land, where Israel will experience the fullness of God’s blessings. After rescuing Israel, Yahweh covenanted with Israel. He promised them blessing but in response requires obedience to his good law. The question of Numbers is, will Israel trust God and obey? Or will they rebel as they have already done in Exodus and Leviticus. And, how will God respond if they do?

For Christians today. We too live in the wilderness. In the time between our salvation by faith in Christ, and our enjoying the fullness of eternity in the promised land of the new creation. We too are called to obey Christ by faith.

By yourself:

- **Who are the main characters in this “episode”? Give them a short description.**

Balak - Moabite threatened by Israel and resorts to spiritual warfare.

Balaam - A ‘diviner’ who is known for his ability to bless/curse.

God - Yahweh, the God of Israel

Israel - the threat to Moab.

- **What do you make of Balaam, how would you describe his ‘relationship with God’?**
See also 2 Peter 2:15-16.

We can be confused into thinking that Balaam is a ‘believer’ or ‘God-fearing’ when in fact, it’s more complicated. Balaam does ‘believe’ in the God of Israel, but not as the one and only God. He accepts him as one of many gods. 2 Peter reveals though that Balaam’s true god is money/power.

- **Why can’t Balaam curse Israel? Consider Genesis 12:2-3.**
 - **Is Israel aware of what’s happening?**

Balaam can’t curse Israel because they stand under God’s blessing due to his promises to Abraham. Israel knows nothing of this spiritual warfare.

- **What is the result of Balak’s attempts to curse Israel?**

It all backfires. Moab is instead cursed and Israel’s blessings are restated.

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- **Now read Numbers 25, how do you think it fits with 22-24?**

God's blessing does not extend to keeping Israel from all temptation. Israel must faithfully obey God in all things. Unfortunately, they choose to disobey God by committing sexual immorality with the Moabite women.

Together:

- **What do we need to be reminded of from this episode in Numbers? Consider Ephesians 6:10-18 & Romans 8:31-39.**

- **Why can Christians trust in the blessings of God?**

Jesus has guaranteed us the blessings of God. If we continue to trust in him, we are assured of salvation from the penalty for sin and any scheme of Satan.

- **Do we need to fear the 'curses' of God's enemies?**

Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

- **Does God's blessings mean we don't need to be vigilant against temptations? What do you need to resist this week?**

God's promised blessing does not mean we don't need to be vigilant. By faith we stand firm against every temptation that would seek to take us away from trusting in Jesus. Encourage the group to reflect on temptations that might be a danger to their trust in Jesus.