



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

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Day 1--- Numbers 22-25

This week you get introduced to one of the most fascinating men in the Old Testament. He is an example of someone who believes in God, but who does not do what God desires. Leviticus 19:26 prohibits the practice of divination. Divination is basically seeking to use the powers of the spirit world that are opposed to God for personal gain.

In this story God appears to change His mind, but then we find in Number 23:19 that God does not change His mind. God knows that Balaam's desires are evil and still God is able to use Balaam to bless Israel. Unfortunately, we learn from other places in the Bible that Balaam knew Israel's weakness. He is not successful in helping Balak to defeat them, but his action against Israel is enough to get his name mentioned as an example of evil leadership all through the Bible. Check out the following verses if you want to learn more about Balaam. (Joshua 13:22; 24:9,10; Nehemiah 13:1,2; Micah 6:4,5; 2 Peter 2:15,16; Revelation 2:14)

- Why does God tell Balaam not to go, then let him go, and then oppose him when he does go?

The following story illustrates the importance of doing the right thing. They say that everyone has his price and it appears that Balaam did. Maybe the young man in this story has his price as well, but it is much higher than most.

Rob Mouw played on the soccer team in his senior year at Wheaton Christian High School. In the final seconds of a big game against favored Waubonsie Valley, with his team behind by one goal, Rob was dribbling the ball in front of him, running at full speed toward the opponent's goal. Just before he shot the ball, though, he caught sight of the scoreboard. The clock read 00.00. But like any good athlete, Rob shot the ball anyway and it went in. The referee signaled that the goal counted, and the game finished in a tie. Rob had a choice to make. He could say nothing and avoid a loss. After all, it was the referee's job to decide the calls, not his. Or Rob could do what was right. Rob asked the referee whether the official time was kept on the scoreboard or the referee's stopwatch. The referee said the scoreboard time was official and then ran off the field.

Rob went to his coaches and explained that just before his kick, he had seen zeros on the scoreboard clock. Since he hadn't heard a whistle, he kept playing. But his goal was late, and he didn't think it should count. His coaches agreed, and so they went over to the opposing coaches, explained what had happened, and conceded victory to Waubonsie Valley. Listen to what this young man of integrity said

after the incident: “Every time in your life you have an opportunity to do right, you should be thankful. For a person to know what right is, and then not to do it — that would be a sin. To have won the game — I mean, really, who cares? Doing the right thing is more important. It lets you have peace.” But that wasn’t the end of the story.

Sometime later Rob received a handwritten letter from a total stranger that said,

“Dear Rob, I read the newspaper story about you. I love sports and true sportsmen. My faith in our future was renewed and lifted by the story. Never lose your principles. Always stand for what’s decent and right. That’s what you told us all when you refused the victory at that game.”

The letter was signed by former President George Bush.

You know, when we do what’s right — it sometimes gets the attention and approval of the newspaper and even U.S. presidents. It always gets the attention and approval of God. Jerry White reminds us that: Ethics to the government is law. Ethics to the philosopher is a concept. Ethics to religion is morality. But ethics to God is OBEDIENCE.

Day 2 --- Numbers 26-27

God reminds the Israelites of their sin and the fact that it led to their wandering around the Sinai wilderness for 40 years. There are two results of the registration. The first result is that the Israelites now know how the land will be divided. As a result of the courage of Zelophehad's daughters they even know how to deal with a situation where a man has no sons. The second result is that the people are reminded that they have just spent 40 years in the wilderness so that everyone who was an adult the last time they were at this place has had a chance to die. Special note is made twice of Korah and his followers. It is clear that God's discipline in that situation had been appropriate and meaningful.

No leader lives forever and Moses already knows that he won't be crossing the Jordan river to enter the Promised Land. The Israelites need a new leader and he must be a very strong one. Transitions in leadership are often difficult and God makes certain that Israel knows who its new leader will be as Joshua is commissioned.

The big lesson for me from today’s reading is that sin has consequences and many remain even after God forgives. God and Moses are certainly as close as ever at this point in time. However, Moses will still die and he will not lead the people into the Promised Land. However, his story is not completed. Moses will have a last word and the readings over the next several days build up to that.

Day 3 --- Numbers 28-30

The instructions about sacrifices are very detailed and I admit very puzzling. I don’t understand all the significance of each of the elements. What I do see as God provides these instructions is that He intends for there to be a rhythm to life. We are to depend on God and the sacrifices helped Israel mark the times and the seasons. This listing of sacrifices is very different from Leviticus. The emphasis is on the calendar.

Do read chapter 29. What do you notice in the middle of the repetition? Remember that writing materials were very scarce. The writer could not use **BOLD** or underline to draw attention to something important. The common method for emphasizing the importance of something was to repeat it. The sacrifices for the feast of tabernacles must have been very important because they are repeated for each day of the festival.

There is also very important instruction in this section on vows. They are to be taken very seriously. What is also important is the instruction on relationship. We live in community with one another. Even today, if my wife commits to something she is committing me to it as well. Everything she does has an impact on me. People often make vows or promises to impress someone. In this case a vow is intended to impress God. God is not impressed with the vow. God values obedience. He would much rather have us do the right thing without having made a promise to do it than to promise to do something that we don't do.

- Have you ever made a promise you had no intention of keeping?
- Why did you make the promise?
- How were your relationships impacted by not keeping your promise?
- How do you feel when someone makes a promise to you and doesn't keep it?

#### Day 4 --- Numbers 31-32

This story begins a pattern that will repeat itself all through the history of Israel. God will give a command for complete destruction and the Israelites will decide that some people or things are too more precious to them than obedience to God. The fact that they do not obey God is sin and what they keep inevitably leads to more sin.

It is hard to understand how a God of love could command the complete destruction of an entire nation, including women and children. It is important to understand that these people were incredibly evil. They were constantly killing one another. Their greatest evil was probably the routine practice of offering their own children as burnt offerings. I think there are two reasons that God commanded their complete destruction. The first reason was to prevent future generations from having to suffer through the evil of their culture. The second reason was to remove the temptation for the Israelites to bring portions of this evil culture into their own. God's love could not allow His children to be exposed to such evil and God's holiness demanded that the land be purified.

The lesson for us is that we are to completely obey God. Instead of trying to find the least we can do to be saved, we should seek to do all that God commands. Our lives will be better and our relationship with God richer as a result.

#### Day 5 --- Numbers 33-34

God told Moses to write a journal. Moses kept track of where the Israelites went and what happened along the way. I think the primary reason was so that they would always have a record of what God had done. The Bible is history. It is stories about real people and real places. More importantly it is the story of a real God interacting with those people. Myths don't go into the kind of detail that the Bible does when telling their stories. You could map the journey of the Israelites if you could identify all the places today.

Numbers 34 is like a deed. It maps out the boundaries of the land of Israel. The people of Israel today are still defending those borders. Notice that God did not give them all of what we today call the Middle East. Their inheritance had borders. Remember this as you are reading about the conquest. All the people of the land had to do to survive was to move outside the borders that God had defined. All the Israelites had to do to have peace was to destroy all the evil that was inside the borders.

Day 6 --- Numbers 35-36

The first five books of the Bible provide the foundation for our legal system today. Notice in these chapters the various definitions of murder and the right to trial by peers. There is even a distinction between murder and what we identify today as manslaughter.

There appears to be a conflict between the value that God places on life and the death penalty and war. The only way I can explain this is that human life is so precious to God that taking a life demands the highest penalty possible. The people that God is asking Israel to conquer in war had no respect for either God or human life and that is why God decided that they must be destroyed.

Day 7 --- Deuteronomy 1-2

Today the review of the past 3 books begins. The first 2 chapters you'll read today describe the time from the Exodus until the battles begin in Canaan. The people of the land are very evil and God will use the Israelites to purify it. As you read take note of the lands that the Israelites were not to conquer. God had made promises to others and He kept them. God is a keeper of promises.

God knows His people. The first time the Israelites came to this point they decided that it would be a good idea to scout out the land. Even Moses thought it was a good idea. It turned out to be a very bad idea. Instead of seeing God's goodness and faithfulness in what He was giving them, they instead saw a task that was bigger than they were. They looked at the task and not at God and were afraid. They turned back and spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. This time they do not scout the land. Instead, God leads them into battle and gives them a victory. He exercises their faith and it grows stronger. Now they are ready to take the land.

God uses history to communicate His faithfulness to us. That is why this book is so important. Most of the things in it are repeated in other places. This is a good reason to take special note of what God thinks is worth repeating.

- When have you know the right thing to do and not done it because it seemed to hard?
- What would you have done if you were totally confident that God was with you?