

Lesson 27

Wandering in the wilderness – Moses disobeys God

Numbers 14 :11-35

Numbers 20 :1-13



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

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1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
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5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
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9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. (see point 7)
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children (see point 8)

2. Memory verse

Numbers 14:18 NIV

'The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'

(bold part for younger classes)

3. Theme

"Unbelief will rob us of God's blessings."
Misrepresenting God is a serious thing!

4. Lesson introduction

Have you ever been around someone that has a bad attitude? You may even try to tell them that their attitude is wrong, but they just will not listen to you.

In today's lesson, Moses experiences the frustration of a rebellious people who will not listen. Remember, in our last lesson, God had commanded Moses to send 12 spies into the Promised Land (Canaan)—the land God desired to give His people. When the spies returned, all but two, Joshua and Caleb, gave a discouraging report. Though the land was fruitful and "flowing with milk and honey," they focused on the strong people, some of them "giants" and the large fortified cities. They were filled with fear and unbelief and led the children of Israel into unbelief. Blinded by fear and unbelief, the people

conceived to rebel against God and Moses and, even, to kill the leaders He had appointed and head back into bondage in Egypt.

God had desired to bless His people with the fullness of the Promised Land, but now they would suffer the consequences of their unbelief. [Unbelief robs us of God's blessings.](#)

As a result of their failure to believe and obey God, the children of Israel did not enter into the land God promised them. God said they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. After nearly 40 years of wandering has passed, Moses will once again experience the challenge of leading an unbelieving and complaining people.

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

Numbers 14:11,12

The people, in their unbelief and rebellion, had provoked the Lord to anger. The Lord asks, "How long will these people reject Me? Even after all of the wonderful miracles God had performed, they did not believe Him. Their refusal to believe God was a rejection of God.

God is holy and just and moved to judge the sins of His people. God said He would destroy the nation and make Moses the founder of a "nation greater and mightier."

It would seem such a judgment might now seem like a good idea to Moses. After all, the people had complained and murmured ever since they left Egypt. What would you do if you had been Moses? Would you say, "Yes Lord, wipe them all out and give me a better people"? Or, would your heart break for the people because of the difficulties they would endure? Let's take a look and find out what Moses heart was like.

Numbers 14:13-16

Moses did not think about himself or his own glory. He concerns himself with God's glory. He desired that the nations observing Israel would perceive God as powerful and able bring His people into the Land of Promise.

Numbers 14: 17-19

Moses intercedes (stands on behalf of the people), asking that God pardon the iniquity (sins) of the people, just as God has done since the people left Egypt.

Moses had spent much time in intimate fellowship with God. Remember, God spoke to Moses "as a man speaks to his friend." He knew God was great in longsuffering, in mercy, and in forgiveness.

Longsuffering is, "bearing injuries or provocation for a long time; patient; long endurance." Mercy is, "kindness of heart or disposition which causes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender with greater forbearance and clemency that he deserves." Forgiveness is, "the act of forgiving, the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty."

This is our God! Moses knew God's character and nature—great long suffering, abundant mercy, forgiveness. He and the children of Israel had experienced His long suffering, mercy, and forgiveness continually from the time they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt.

How well do you know God? How much time do you spend with Him, becoming acquainted with His nature and character? The Bible reveals God's loving nature and His plan for our lives.

Are you a Christian? Do you know Him well enough to know that He loves you and sent His Son, Jesus to die for your sins so that you could live with Him forever (John 3:16,17)? Do you know that He “stands at the door and knocks” on your heart, just waiting for you to open the door and ask Him to come into your heart (Rev. 3:20)? If you do not, take some time, today, and get to know the Creator of the universe. He loves you!

Numbers 14:20-25

God’s answer to Moses was immediate: “I have pardoned, according to your word;” Did God change His mind? The Bible says God does not change His mind. Consider this! It was God who appointed Moses and gave Him the heart of a shepherd and a great love for the people. It was God who inspired Moses to intercede. God’s holiness demands justice, yet God does not want to judge and looks for a reason, an opportunity, to show mercy.

In Isaiah 62:6, 7 the Lord says, “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give him no rest, till he establishes, and till he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” God uses intercessory prayer to accomplish the purposes of His heart.

God desires that we pray, intercede, for others—for those who are lost, have turned aside, or are suffering. In fact, in Timothy, we are exhorted to pray for all men. Paul says, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,”

God pardoned the iniquity of His people; yet, sadly, God still had to deal with the people’s unbelief. As a result of their unbelief, they would not be allowed to enter into God’s Promised Land. Caleb and his children would be allowed to enter, for he followed the Lord “fully” (14:24).

The people of Israel were forgiven, but they still suffered the consequences of their sin of unbelief. God will forgive our sins when we come to Him in repentance, but we may still suffer the consequences of the bad choices that we make. For example, a person robs a bank, gets caught, and finds himself in jail; while in jail, he hears the Gospel message and turns to the Lord, receiving forgiveness and new life. Though forgiven, he is still bound to suffer the consequences of his sin. He must remain in jail until his sentence has been served.

Suggested Activity: Being a parent

Numbers 14: 26-35

The people, blinded by their unbelief, had turned away from God and provoked Him with their murmuring and hardness of heart. In Hebrews 3:7-19, God speaks of this incident. Verse 19 tells us “they could not enter in because of unbelief.” They would suffer the consequences of their failure to believe God’s promises--they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. How sad! Unbelief robs us of God’s blessings.

God told Moses that every one of the original census (twenty years old and older) who murmured against Him would die in the wilderness in the course of forty years (each year representing a day the spies were spying out the land). Caleb and Joshua, as well as the children of the people, would enter Canaan at the end of the forty years.

How different things could have been for the children of Israel. If only they had believed the One who had done so many miracles since the day they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. In Hebrews 3:12, again looking back at the failure of children of Israel to enter the “Promised Land,” Paul exhorts: “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;...”

May we not, as the children of Israel, allow unbelief to reign in our hearts and begin to murmur and complain against God. Unbelief is a thief! It can rob us of the full and abundant life God has in store for each one of us. May we be as Caleb and wholly follow the Lord—knowing He is all powerful, loves us supremely, and wants what is best for us. Those who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

Suggested Activity- Balloon surprise

Numbers 20:1-6

The children of Israel entered into the wilderness of Zin. Miriam (Moses’ sister) died. Not long after, the congregation ran out of water. They and their animals were thirsty and began to complain against Moses, Aaron, and the Lord.

God most certainly did not bring His chosen people out into a wilderness to make them die of thirst. God loved these people! He wanted them to trust Him completely.

Numbers 20: 7-8

Again, when faced with the difficult task of leading God’s people, Moses and Aaron come before the Lord. Perhaps the temptation to answer rashly was there. How hard it must have been to deal with this complaining and disbelieving people. But Moses and Aaron did the wise thing! Proverbs 17:28 says, “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.”

God answers Moses and gives Moses specific instructions. He says, “Take your rod and speak to the rock and it will yield its water.” God told Moses to speak to the rock. Note, this was different from the previous time when a different rock yielded water to the congregation of Israel. At that time, Moses was told to strike the rock one time and water would flow out; now he is commanded only to speak to the rock.

Suggested activity: Listen Carefully

Numbers 20: 9-13

God told Moses he was to speak to the rock, not to strike it. From the rocks that flowed with water in the wilderness, God was creating a beautiful picture. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 we read, “They drank from that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ.” Jesus promised the woman at the well “living water”: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” In Exodus 17:20, Moses struck the rock and it brought forth its water. Jesus was struck to provide the forgiveness of our sins and bring us back into rich fellowship with God. The rock needed to be struck only once, just as Jesus died for our sins “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Read, also, Romans 6:9-10; Hebrews 9:26, 28; and 1 Peter 3:18.

In not following God's instructions, Moses ruined a beautiful example of Jesus Christ and His complete work for us. As a result of Jesus, our rock, being struck, we may come boldly before the throne of God's grace. Jesus took the judgment that was due to us. We need only speak to the rock to experience God's forgiveness and rich fellowship.

Yet Moses' sin went beyond misrepresenting a picture or type of Jesus who would come later. He misrepresented God and God's heart towards the people. God gave Moses instructions to speak to the rock; God was not angry with the people. Though, once again, they were unbelieving and complaining, God knew the people were thirsty; and He was compassionate. Moses made the people think God was angry as he cried out, "Rebels, must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Misrepresenting God is a serious thing!

God desires that people know His great love for them. He wants them to understand His nature and character—His long suffering, abundant mercy, and readiness to forgive. God deals seriously with those servants who would misrepresent Him and cause people to feel condemned and be afraid or hesitant to approach Him.

As we communicate God's Word to others, it is vital that we seek to do so with His voice, His grace, His love, and His temperament. Let us never be guilty of misrepresenting God. Misrepresenting God is a serious thing!

Because of Moses' failure to represent God correctly, He would not be able to enter the Promised Land with His people. His serious mistake would mean he would spend the remainder of his days in the wilderness. Although God's discipline to Moses meant he would never enter the Promised Land, God's grace would later take him to a high hill to behold it.

Suggested activity: Water from the Rock

6. Prayer

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord and to obey Him in all of the details of their lives, being careful not to take the things of the Lord for granted. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

What you will need:

- 1) Several 5" x 8" index cards and a marker.
- 2) A two-quart pitcher, unsweetened Kool-Aid, sugar, and two quarts of water.

Carrying out the attention grabber:

1) Pick out the truth:

Make two sets of cards with 5" x 8" index cards. Write each word of the main theme of our lesson "Unbelief will rob us of God's blessings." Add some extra word cards and mix with the other cards. You could use words such as "not," "never," "sometimes" or "hardly ever." You should write these words in large print.

Divide the class into two groups, mix up the words and let each group put together a sentence that is true about God. Help them at the end to come up with the main point.
Use this game to introduce the main theme of the lesson at the beginning of your class session.

2) Drink demo:

Bring a pitcher, a package or two of unsweetened Kool-Aid, and some sugar.

Tell the children to watch closely and have one of the children (if they read) read the instructions step by step as you make the Kool-aid. When it comes to the sugar, just say you don't think it needs sugar, so you will just leave it out. If the kids don't break into an uproar of laughter right then, ask them if they think that's alright. Measuring carefully, try talking them into just settling for less than the recipe calls for.

Ask them why it is important to follow directions. Set the Kool-Aid aside for a later activity.

8. Activities:

What you will need:

- 1) Artwork (included) for puppet, brads, string, red, orange, yellow and blue construction paper, dog or "monster" puppet and a large toy truck.
- 2) Twelve balloons, marker, string and clothespins.
- 3) As many small prizes as the number of children in your class and a list of tasks that requires instruction.
- 4) Playdoh, a small medicine bottle, baking soda, blue food coloring and vinegar.

How to carry out the activities:

1) Be a Parent

Cut out the puppet (artwork included) and assemble with brads so he will be jointed. Do this before the class session. Connect strings to his arms and legs to "walk" him through the different "dangers." For the dangers, you will have fire, water, a dog, or lion, and a big truck. You can make fire by cutting out and using red, yellow, and orange construction paper. For the water, you can use 2 sheets of blue construction paper cut in scallops along one side. You should make these before class. Give each of them to a child. Give another child a dog or lion type puppet. Give another child a big toy truck. The remainder of the children will be the "parents."

Line up the "dangerous" kids along the front of the room and "walk" the little man through the dangers. As you approach each danger ask the "parents" to speak up if the puppet gets too near the dangers. As the children "warn" the man about getting too close to the danger have the puppet continue to get closer to the danger. Ask the children what will happen if he continues to disobey? Are parents loving or unloving who discipline their children? Sometimes, they see dangers ahead that their children cannot see. Just as God sees dangers in our lives and will discipline those whom He loves.

2) Balloon Surprise

Before class obtain 12 balloons and blow each of them up and write one word from the memory verse on each balloon.

‘The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion “Numbers 14:18. Quote the verse to the children before you begin the activity.

Blow up one balloon at a time and see if the class can quote the verse after each time. As you blow up each verse, attach them to an 8” piece of string or yarn attached to the bulletin board. You can attach them with clothespins.

After they are all up, let the children take turns popping the balloons and see if they can still quote the verse after each balloon is popped. (Be sure to pick up all of the pieces of the popped balloons.)

3) Listen carefully

Have small prizes ready and set aside.

Quiet the class and give them some specific instructions for different tasks. You may want to explain to them how to play a game or a relay or just give them a list of things to do. The important part will be in your instructions. You can explain to them to do things such as: Touch the dry erase board, shake hands with a friend, pat your head three times, say, “Jesus loves me,” then sit down in your place in the circle. For those who did exactly as you said, give them a small prize.

Explain how Moses did not obey exactly and missed out on an enormously important blessing—something he had been looking forward to his entire life.

4) Water from the rock

Let the kids make Playdoh rocks while you make one rock surrounding the neck of a small medicine bottle into which you have put a few drops of blue food coloring and some baking soda before class time. A couple of teaspoons or so of baking soda depending on how big your bottle is.

Your “rock” should be sitting in a tray of some kind to catch the “water” as it comes out. After your rock is made, let the kids watch as you pour in enough vinegar to finish filling your bottle. Blue “water” should come out.

This is a visual reminder of the miracle that God did in the wilderness.

9. Bible text (NIV):

Numbers 14:11-35

11 The Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.”

13 Moses said to the Lord, “Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. 14 And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, Lord, are with these people and that you, Lord, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. 15 If you put all these people to death, leaving none alive, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, 16 ‘The Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath, so he slaughtered them in the wilderness.’

17 “Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: 18 ‘The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.’ 19 In accordance

with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”

20 The Lord replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. 21 Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, 22 not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— 23 not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. 24 But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. 25 Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea. [a]”

26 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: 27 “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. 28 So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: 29 In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. 30 Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. 32 But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness. 33 Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. 34 For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.’ 35 I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this wilderness; here they will die.”

Numbers 20:1-13

1 In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

2 Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. 3 They quarreled with Moses and said, “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! 4 Why did you bring the Lord’s community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? 5 Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!”

6 Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them. 7 The Lord said to Moses, 8 “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

9 So Moses took the staff from the Lord’s presence, just as he commanded him. 10 He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” 11 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.

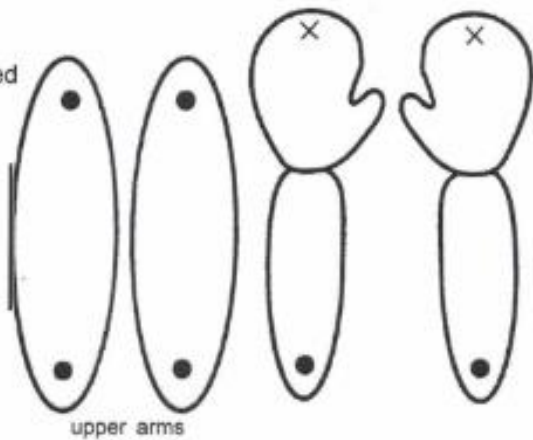
12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”

13 These were the waters of Meribah,[a] where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord and where he was proved holy among them.

Template - Be A Parent

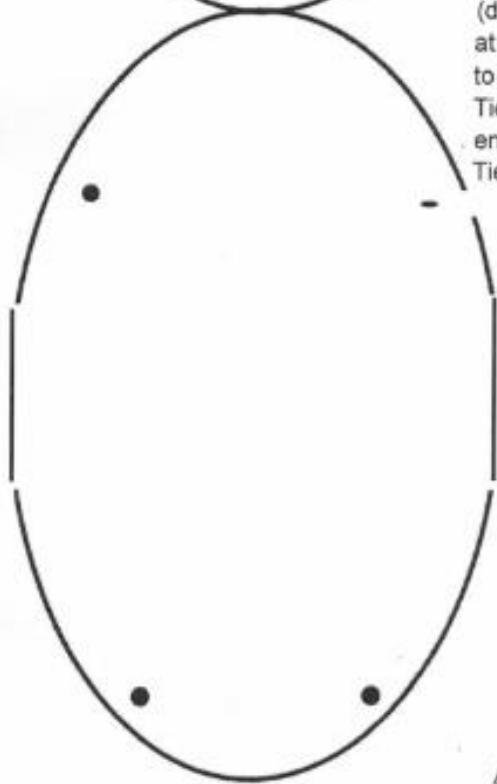


You will need eight brads and 2 1/2 yards of yarn to assemble the puppet.

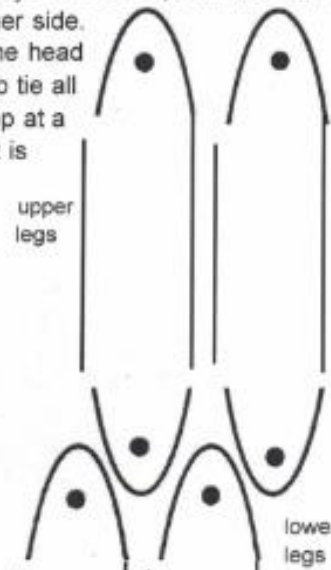


upper arms

Cut out all pieces, you should have a total of nine pieces (do not cut the head and body apart). Punch holes at all the black dots and connect leg and arm joints, attach to body with brads. Punch small holes at the "x"s. Tie one end of a 36" piece of yarn to a foot, and the other end to a hand, repeat for other side.



Tie an 18" piece of yarn to the head and use the extra length to tie all the yarn together at the top at a place where the puppet is balanced.



upper legs

lower legs

