

The Book of Numbers, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: Offerings of the Leaders; the Lamps Lit

Numbers 7:1-8:26

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is doctrinally at stake in these chapters is the right understanding of Old Covenant worship, giving, and the Levitical system. The leaders' offerings, the tabernacle furnishings, the lampstand, and the consecration of the Levites were all given by God to Israel under the Law of Moses. None of it is binding on Christians, for the entire Levitical order has been fulfilled and taken up into Christ, our High Priest and once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 8 through 10; Colossians 2:14-17). The teacher must help the class avoid two errors: treating these chapters as irrelevant relics, and binding their ceremonial details, including the tithe, on the church. Instead we receive them as God's Word written for our learning (Romans 15:4), drawing timeless truths and pointing forward to Christ.

On giving in particular, the teacher should be careful not to bind Old Testament tithing as law. The New Testament calls Christians to give purposefully, regularly, and cheerfully, as each has prospered and purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). The leaders' glad, generous giving illustrates the heart God still desires, even though the specific forms belonged to that covenant.

Beyond doctrine, the lesson aims at the spiritual formation of the student. God's careful, individual notice of each identical offering teaches that He sees and honors even our smallest and most ordinary gifts. The voice from the mercy seat ties wholehearted devotion to communion with God. The lamps lit before the Lord call us to shine as lights in a dark world (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15). And the consecration of the Levites lifts up the call of every Christian to be wholly given to God as a holy priesthood (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5, 9). The aim is students who give gladly, draw near to God, and let their lives burn bright for Him.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Numbers 7:1-9 the leaders bring wagons and oxen for the work of the tabernacle, and they are distributed to the Levites according to their service. What does this teach us about supporting and equipping the work of God's people in an orderly, purposeful way?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Numbers 7 opens on the day Moses finished setting up the tabernacle and anointed and consecrated it. The leaders of Israel, the heads of the tribes, came forward with six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a gift for the work of the Lord's house. God told Moses to receive

them and give them to the Levites, each clan according to its service. The Gershonites, who carried the curtains and coverings, received two wagons and four oxen. The Merarites, who carried the heavy frames, boards, and bases, received four wagons and eight oxen. The Kohathites received none, because their charge was the most holy things, which had to be carried on their shoulders (7:9).

There is real wisdom here. The gifts were not handed out equally but appropriately, matched to the actual burden each group bore. Those who carried the heaviest loads received the most help; those who carried the holy things by hand received what their sacred task required. God's work was supported in an orderly, purposeful way, not haphazardly.

This belonged to the Old Covenant order and is not a pattern of ceremonial law binding on us. Yet the abiding principle is rich: God's work deserves to be equipped thoughtfully, and His people do well to give in ways that genuinely meet the needs of the work. Generosity and good sense are not enemies.

The teacher should draw out both the gladness and the wisdom of this giving. The leaders did not merely make a gesture; they provided what the work actually needed. That marriage of willing hearts and practical provision is a model for how God's people can support His work today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's work should be supported in an orderly, purposeful way that meets real needs.
- Gifts were distributed according to each group's actual burden, not identically.
- The Kohathites carried the holy things on their shoulders, fitting their sacred charge (7:9).
- This Old Covenant arrangement is not binding ceremonial law, but its principle of wise, willing support endures.
- Generosity and practical wisdom belong together in serving God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it teach us that the gifts were matched to each group's burden?
- How can we support the work of the church both generously and wisely?
- Where might thoughtful giving meet a real need in the Lord's work today?

Question 2

Student Question:

The leaders gave practical gifts that met real needs in God's work. What practical need in the Lord's church do you have the means to help meet, and what is keeping you from doing it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves from the leaders' practical gifts to our own opportunities. The leaders saw a real need, the heavy work of moving the tabernacle, and they met it with wagons and oxen, exactly what the task required. Their giving was not abstract; it was useful. It put tools in the hands of those doing the work.

God's church still has practical needs, and many of us have practical means to help meet them. It might be a skill, a tool, a vehicle, time, money, or simple willing hands. The question gently presses past the warm feeling of wanting to help toward the concrete step of actually helping with what we have.

Often what stands in the way is not lack of resources but hesitation, distraction, or the assumption that someone else will do it. Naming the obstacle honestly is half the battle. The leaders did not wait to be begged; they came forward on dedication day, eager to give.

The teacher should keep this practical and personal. Encourage each student to identify one real need in the congregation they could help meet and one thing currently holding them back. The goal is not guilt but glad, useful generosity.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The leaders met real needs with practical gifts, not abstract good wishes.
- Most believers have some practical means, skill, time, or resource to offer God's work.
- Hesitation and the assumption that someone else will help often block our giving.
- Glad, useful generosity is a fruit of a heart devoted to God.

Discussion Prompts

- What practical need in the church could you help meet right now?
- What is honestly holding you back from giving or serving?
- How might you move this week from wanting to help to actually helping?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Numbers 7:10–88 each of the twelve leaders brings an identical offering, yet God has Moses record every one separately and in full. What does this careful, individual record teach us about how God notices and honors each person's gift?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Numbers 7:10–88 is famous for its repetition. Over twelve days, one leader per day brought his offering, and each offering was identical: one silver platter and one silver bowl filled with fine flour and oil, one gold pan full of incense, and a set list of animals for burnt, sin, and peace offerings. Moses could have written it once and said the other eleven were the same. Instead, by God's direction, he recorded all twelve in full, each leader named, each gift listed.

This is not wasted ink. It is a window into the heart of God. He would not let any leader's gift be folded into an anonymous total. Each man's offering mattered to God in its own right and was honored by name. The repetition we are tempted to skim is, in fact, God carefully treasuring each individual act of devotion.

There is great comfort here. We live in a world that notices only the largest, the newest, the most impressive. God is not like that. He sees and records each gift, even when it looks exactly like everyone else's. The widow's two coins were noticed by Jesus and recorded forever (Mark 12:41-44). The same God watches our giving.

The teacher should help the class feel the tenderness of this chapter rather than its tedium. Twelve days, twelve identical gifts, and God savored every one. That is the kind of God we serve, attentive to each person and each offering.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God noticed and honored each leader's gift individually, refusing to lump them together.
- The full repetition shows God treasuring each act of devotion by name.
- God's attention is unlike the world's; He values the ordinary and the unseen gift.
- Jesus likewise noticed and honored the widow's small gift (Mark 12:41-44).

Discussion Prompts

- Why might God have insisted on recording each identical gift in full?
- What does this chapter reveal about how God receives what we give?
- How does it change your giving to know God notices each gift by name?

Question 4

Student Question:

Have you ever felt that your gift or service was too small or too ordinary to matter to God? How does God's individual notice of each identical offering speak to that feeling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the comfort of chapter 7 into a place many of us secretly live, the feeling that our gift or service is too small or too plain to matter. We compare ourselves to those who give more, serve more visibly, or seem more gifted, and we conclude that our quiet offering hardly counts.

Numbers 7 answers that lie directly. Twelve leaders gave the very same gift, and not one of them was overlooked. God did not value the first more than the twelfth or rank them against each other. Each was received and recorded with equal care. Sameness did not make any gift invisible to God.

Jesus taught the same truth when He singled out a poor widow whose two small coins were worth more in His eyes than the large sums of the rich, because she gave from the heart (Mark 12:41–44). God does not measure as we measure. He sees the heart behind the gift.

The teacher should let this minister to the discouraged. The aim is to free students from the paralysis of comparison and the lie that ordinary offerings do not matter. They do. God notices, God honors, and God remembers, even the smallest gift given in love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The feeling that our gift is too small or ordinary is a common discouragement.
- God received each identical offering with equal care; sameness did not make any gift invisible.
- God measures the heart behind the gift, not its size (Mark 12:41–44).
- Comparison can paralyze our giving; God's notice should free it.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you felt your gift or service was too small to matter?
- How does God's equal care for each offering speak to that feeling?
- What gift, however ordinary, could you offer God this week without comparing it to others?

Question 5

Student Question:

Numbers 7:89 tells us that when Moses went into the tent to speak with God, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat. After all the giving, the chapter ends with God speaking. What does this teach us about the relationship between wholehearted devotion and communion with God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 7 ends with a quiet, glorious verse. After twelve days of giving, Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with God, and he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark, from between the two cherubim (7:89). All that giving did not end in an empty tent. It ended with God speaking from the place of atonement.

There is a beautiful order here. The people gave themselves and their gifts wholeheartedly, the tabernacle was dedicated, and then God met with Moses and spoke. Wholehearted devotion and communion with God belong together. Giving was never meant to be a transaction that bought God's favor; it was the overflow of hearts drawing near, and God drew near in return.

The voice came from above the mercy seat, the place where atonement was made, foreshadowing the deeper truth that our access to God rests on atonement. For us that

atonement is in Christ, through whom we now draw near to God and hear His voice in His Word (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19–22).

The teacher should help the class see that devotion and communion are linked. When we give ourselves fully to God, we are positioned to hear from Him. The chapter does not end with the gifts; it ends with God's voice.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Wholehearted devotion and communion with God belong together.
- After the giving and dedication, God spoke from above the mercy seat (7:89).
- Giving is the overflow of a heart drawing near, not a transaction to buy God's favor.
- The mercy seat points forward to atonement in Christ, through whom we now draw near (Hebrews 10:19–22).

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of the chapter ending with God speaking?
- How are wholehearted devotion and hearing from God connected?
- What does it mean that God's voice came from above the place of atonement?

Question 6

Student Question:

When have you found that drawing near to give yourself to God led to a deeper sense of hearing from Him? How might your communion with God grow if you gave yourself to Him more fully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the truth of 7:89 into the student's own walk. Many believers can testify that seasons of fuller surrender to God were also seasons of deeper communion with Him. When we hold back, our sense of His nearness fades. When we give ourselves more completely, His voice seems clearer, His Word more alive, His presence more real.

This is not a formula that obligates God or a way to earn His attention. It is simply the relational pattern Scripture describes: draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (James 4:8). Devotion opens the heart to receive what God is always ready to give.

The mercy seat reminds us that our nearness rests not on our worthiness but on atonement, now fully accomplished in Christ. We do not earn God's voice by our giving; we are invited to draw near through Jesus, and a surrendered heart is a heart ready to listen.

The teacher should make this warm and personal. Invite students to recall times when surrender and communion went hand in hand, and to consider what fuller devotion might open up in their walk with God now. The goal is hunger for His presence, not anxious performance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fuller surrender to God often deepens our communion with Him.
- Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8).
- Communion rests on atonement in Christ, not on our worthiness.
- A surrendered heart is a heart ready to hear from God.

Discussion Prompts

- When has drawing near to give yourself to God deepened your sense of His presence?
- Where might holding back be dulling your communion with Him?
- How could fuller devotion open your ears to God's voice this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

In Numbers 8:1–4 Aaron sets up the lamps to give light in front of the lampstand in the holy place. As believers are called to shine as lights in the world (Matthew 5:14–16; Philippians 2:15), what does it mean for God's people to burn as lights before the Lord and before the world?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Numbers 8:1–4 turns to the golden lampstand in the holy place. God commands Aaron to set up the seven lamps so they give light in front of the lampstand. In a windowless tent, in the darkness of the wilderness, this lamp burned continually before the Lord, the only light in that holy space, beautifully crafted of hammered gold according to the pattern God had shown Moses.

The lamp burned before the Lord, in His presence, giving light in the place where He dwelt. It was a constant, tended flame, a picture of light shining in darkness in the very presence of God. Like the rest of the tabernacle, it belonged to the Old Covenant order, fulfilled in Christ, who is Himself the light of the world (John 8:12).

Yet Scripture draws the picture forward to us. Jesus tells His people, you are the light of the world, and calls us to let our light shine before men so they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14–16). Paul says we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life (Philippians 2:15–16). The light God's people give is borrowed light, kindled from Him, shining first before Him and then before the world.

The teacher should hold these two together. We shine before the Lord, our lives lived in His presence and for His glory, and we shine before the world, drawing others toward Him. The lamp was no decoration; it had a purpose, to give light. So do we.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lampstand burned continually before the Lord, giving light in His presence.
- It belonged to the Old Covenant, fulfilled in Christ, the light of the world (John 8:12).
- God's people are called to shine as lights before God and before the world (Matthew 5:14–16; Philippians 2:15–16).
- Our light is borrowed light, kindled from God Himself.
- The lamp had a purpose, to give light; so does the believer's life.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to burn as a light before the Lord and not only before people?
- How is the lampstand fulfilled in Christ, the light of the world?
- Where is God calling you to let your light shine in a dark place?

Question 8

Student Question:

A lamp must be tended and fueled to keep burning. What is one practical way you can tend the light of your own walk with God so it does not grow dim?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the image of the burning lamp and makes it practical. A lamp does not stay lit by accident. It must be tended, trimmed, and supplied with oil. In the tabernacle the priests tended the lamps daily so they would never go dark. A neglected lamp dims and dies.

The same is true of our walk with God. The light of a Christian's life is not self-sustaining. It must be fed by time in God's Word, by prayer, by worship with God's people, by repentance and obedience. Neglect these, and the flame grows dim without our even noticing, until one day the light that once shone clearly has guttered low.

The question asks for one practical, doable way to tend the flame. Perhaps it is a daily time in Scripture, a renewed habit of prayer, faithful gathering with the church, or removing something that has been smothering the light. The aim is concrete, not vague resolve.

The teacher should encourage honesty about where the flame may be flickering and specificity about how to tend it. A bright, steady light requires daily care, and that care is a privilege, not a burden, for those who love the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A lamp must be tended and fueled to keep burning; so must our walk with God.
- The light of a Christian's life is fed by the Word, prayer, worship, and obedience.
- Neglect dims the flame gradually and often unnoticed.
- Tending the light is a glad privilege, not a grim duty.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one practical way you can tend the light of your walk with God?
- Where has your flame grown dim through neglect?
- What habit would most help keep your light burning bright?

Question 9

Student Question:

In Numbers 8:5–26 the Levites are cleansed, presented before the Lord, and given wholly to Him to do the service of His house in the place of the firstborn. How is this consecration of the Levites a shadow fulfilled in Christ and in the call of every Christian to be wholly given to God (see Hebrews 8 through 10; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5, 9)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Numbers 8:5–26 describes the cleansing and consecration of the Levites. They were sprinkled with the water of purification, shaved, washed, and brought before the tent of meeting. There the whole congregation laid their hands on them, and they were presented before the Lord as a wave offering, given wholly to God to do the service of His house. God claimed them in place of the firstborn of Israel, who belonged to Him because He had spared Israel's firstborn in Egypt (8:16–18). The Levites were a tribe set apart, wholly given to the Lord for the work of His tabernacle.

This whole arrangement, the Levitical service, the priesthood, the tabernacle work, belonged to the Law of Moses and has been fulfilled and set aside in Christ. Hebrews shows us that Christ is our great High Priest and His sacrifice the once-for-all reality toward which all that service pointed (Hebrews 8 through 10). We do not have a separate Levitical class today, and that system is not bound on the church.

Yet the heart of the Levites' consecration, being cleansed and wholly given to God for His service, is fulfilled in a wonderful way. The New Testament calls every Christian to be cleansed in Christ and presented to God. Paul urges us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). Peter calls the whole church a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5, 9). What was true of one tribe is now true of all God's people in Christ.

The teacher should help the class see both the discontinuity and the fulfillment. We do not keep the Levitical system, but its deepest meaning, a people cleansed and wholly consecrated to God, is gloriously ours in Christ. This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson and deserves careful, joyful handling.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Levites were cleansed, presented, and given wholly to God for the service of His house.
- They were claimed in place of Israel's firstborn, whom God had spared in Egypt (8:16–18).
- The Levitical and priestly system is fulfilled and set aside in Christ, our High Priest (Hebrews 8 through 10).
- The system is not bound on the church; there is no separate priestly class today.
- Every Christian is now called to be cleansed and wholly consecrated, a holy priesthood (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5, 9).
- What was true of one tribe is now true of all God's people in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What did it mean for the Levites to be cleansed and given wholly to God?
- How is this consecration fulfilled and set aside in Christ our High Priest?
- What does it mean that every Christian is now part of a holy priesthood?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over the whole passage, the leaders' glad giving, God's careful notice of each gift, the voice from the mercy seat, the lamps lit before the Lord, and the Levites wholly consecrated, name one specific way Jesus is forming you to give cheerfully and to shine as His own.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage. We have watched leaders give gladly and generously, seen God notice and honor each individual gift, heard the voice of God from above the mercy seat, beheld the lamps lit before the Lord, and witnessed a whole tribe cleansed and wholly given to God. Running through all of it is a single current: a people set apart for God, giving themselves and their gifts to Him, and shining in His presence.

Every part of it leads to Jesus. He is the once-for-all offering toward which every sacrifice pointed, the High Priest who fulfills the Levites' service, the light of the world from whom our light is kindled, and the atonement that makes our drawing near possible. What Israel had in shadow, we have in Him, and in Him we ourselves are made a holy priesthood, cleansed and consecrated to God.

So the question turns personal. Not merely what did I learn, but how is Jesus forming me? Perhaps toward more cheerful, purposeful giving (2 Corinthians 9:7). Perhaps toward confidence that He notices my smallest offering. Perhaps toward deeper communion, a brighter light, or a fuller consecration of my whole life to Him. The teacher should make room for specific, honest reflection.

End by lifting the class toward Christ. The God who received each gift, spoke from the mercy seat, kindled the lamp, and consecrated the Levites has, in Jesus, made us His own, cleansed us,

and set us shining in the world. To be formed by this passage is to walk out giving more gladly and burning more brightly for Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- One current runs through the passage: a people set apart, giving themselves to God and shining in His presence.
- Every element finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- Christian giving is cheerful, purposeful, and from the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Spiritual formation means giving more gladly and shining more brightly for Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Which part of this passage spoke most personally to you?
- Name one specific way Jesus is forming you to give cheerfully and shine as His own.
- How will you let your light burn brighter for Him this week?