

The Book of Numbers, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 18: Inheritance, a New Leader, and the Offerings

Numbers 27:1–29:40

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, these chapters address three matters that the teacher must handle with care. First, inheritance: the case of Zelophehad's daughters displays God's justice and His care for the vulnerable, and it reminds us that the land was God's gift to Israel under the Old Covenant. The teacher should make clear that the New Testament reveals the land promise fulfilled in Christ and in the better, heavenly inheritance the gospel holds out (Galatians 3:16, 29; Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Peter 1:3–4). Guard the class firmly against premillennial and dispensational readings that expect a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel; the promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ and His church, the kingdom was established at Pentecost, and Christ reigns now.

Second, leadership: the commissioning of Joshua so the congregation would not be as sheep without a shepherd shows God's faithful provision of leaders and the orderly way He establishes them. Joshua the shepherd points forward to Christ, our Good Shepherd and the great Shepherd of the sheep (John 10; Hebrews 13:20). Third, the offerings: the daily, Sabbath, monthly, and festival sacrifices were God-given worship for Israel under the Old Covenant. They must not be bound on Christians, for they were a shadow whose substance is Christ (Colossians 2:16–17). The teacher should point to Christ as the fulfillment of the feasts and to the worship of the New Testament church on the Lord's Day, including the weekly Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

For spiritual formation, these chapters invite each student to three things. They invite the courage and faith to seek what is right, as the daughters did. They invite gratitude for and submission to the shepherds God provides, supremely Christ. And they invite a life and a week ordered around drawing near to God. The aim is to move students from worship as an occasional add-on to worship as the steady center of their time, shaped by the Good Shepherd who gave Himself for them.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read Numbers 27:1–11. The daughters of Zelophehad bring their case, and the LORD declares they speak right, then establishes a lasting statute. What does God's response reveal about His justice and His care for those who might otherwise be left without a portion or a name?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The daughters of Zelophehad, Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, present a genuine difficulty. Their father has died leaving no sons, and the inheritance customs of the day would erase his name and portion from the people. So they come and stand before Moses, Eleazar, the leaders, and the whole congregation, and they ask for a possession among their father's brothers.

Moses does not rule on his own; he brings their cause before the LORD. God's verdict is striking: The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. He grants their request and then turns it into a lasting statute of judgment for Israel, providing an orderly succession of inheritance when there is no son. A particular cry for justice becomes settled law.

This account reveals a God who hears those the world might overlook and who upholds what is right. The daughters were not powerful, yet their just request moved through Moses to the throne of God and into the law of Israel. God's justice reaches down to the seemingly small and forgotten, ensuring a name and a portion are not lost.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's justice and His care for the vulnerable and easily overlooked.
- The land as God's gift to Israel under the Old Covenant, administered with fairness.
- Lawful order in receiving an inheritance, reflecting God's concern that no one be wrongly dispossessed.
- The dignity God grants to a just request brought before Him through proper means.

Discussion Prompts

- What does God's verdict, they speak right, reveal about His heart toward those who seek justice?
- How does this account challenge any assumption that God overlooks the seemingly small or powerless?
- Where might God be calling our congregation to make room for someone easily forgotten?

Question 2

Student Question:

These five sisters had to summon courage to stand before Moses, the priest, and the whole assembly to ask for what was right. Where in your own life might God be calling you to speak up, respectfully and in faith, rather than stay silent?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

It took real courage for five women to step out of the crowd and stand before Moses, the priest, the leaders, and the entire assembly. They could have stayed silent and accepted the loss.

Instead they made a respectful, reasoned appeal for what was right, trusting that God's order would honor a just cause.

Their boldness was not rebellion; it was faith expressed through proper channels. They came to the appointed leaders, they stated their case plainly, and they left the verdict to God through Moses. This is a model of speaking up that is at once courageous and submissive to God's order.

Many of us know the pull to stay quiet when we ought to speak, whether to defend the overlooked, to seek what is right, or to bring a real need before those who can address it. The daughters remind us that faith sometimes means stepping forward and asking, trusting God with the outcome.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Godly courage to seek what is right through proper and respectful means.
- The difference between faithful boldness and self-willed demanding.
- Trusting God with the outcome after we have faithfully spoken.
- Speaking up on behalf of justice and the overlooked.

Discussion Prompts

- Where might God be calling you to speak up respectfully rather than stay silent?
- How do we tell the difference between godly boldness and merely demanding our own way?
- What helps you trust God with the outcome after you have done your part to seek what is right?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read Numbers 27:12–17. Moses, knowing he will not enter the land, asks God to appoint a leader so the congregation will not be as sheep without a shepherd. What does this concern reveal about God's care for His people and about the necessity of God-given leadership among them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God tells Moses to go up the mountain and view the land, for he will not enter it; he must answer for the rebellion at the waters of Meribah, where he failed to honor God before the people. Yet Moses' first thought is not for himself but for the flock. He asks the LORD to set a man over the congregation so that they will not be as sheep without a shepherd.

The image is tender and revealing. A flock without a shepherd scatters, wanders, and falls prey to danger. Moses knows the people need someone to go out before them and come in before

them, to lead them out and bring them in. He cares about what becomes of them after he is gone.

This concern reflects the heart of God Himself, who does not leave His people without leadership. The very fact that Moses asks, and that God answers, shows that God-given shepherding is not optional for His people but a gracious necessity. God provides leaders so the flock will be guided and kept.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's care that His people not be left without a shepherd.
- The necessity and gift of God-appointed leadership among His people.
- Moses' selflessness in thinking of the flock as he faces his own exclusion from the land.
- The vulnerability of a people without faithful guidance.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God consider it so important that His people not be as sheep without a shepherd?
- What does Moses' concern for the flock teach us about the heart of a true leader?
- How have you experienced the difference that faithful, God-given leadership makes?

Question 4

Student Question:

Moses thinks of the people's need for a shepherd even as he faces his own death outside the land. How does his selflessness challenge the way you handle disappointment and the way you think about those who will come after you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

There is something deeply moving in the timing of Moses' request. He has just been told he will die outside the land he has labored forty years to reach. The disappointment must have been crushing. Yet in that very moment his concern turns outward, to the people and the shepherd they will need.

Moses does not sink into bitterness or grasp at his own legacy. He accepts God's verdict and immediately works for the good of those who will go on without him. His disappointment becomes the occasion for selfless service rather than self-pity.

Few tests reveal the heart like disappointment. When our hopes are denied, do we curl inward, or do we keep loving and serving those around us? Moses challenges us to hold our losses with open hands and to keep thinking of those who will come after us, the next generation, the flock that remains.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Handling personal disappointment without bitterness or self-pity.
- Selfless concern for others, especially the next generation, in the midst of loss.
- Accepting God's discipline humbly while continuing to serve.
- Leaving a faithful legacy by caring for those who come after us.

Discussion Prompts

- How do you tend to respond when a long-held hope is denied?
- What would it look like to turn a current disappointment outward into service rather than inward into self-pity?
- Who are the people coming after you that God may be calling you to care for now?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read Numbers 27:18–23. God chooses Joshua, a man in whom is the Spirit, and Moses commissions him publicly by laying on hands before Eleazar and the congregation. How does this orderly, God-directed transfer of leadership instruct us about how God provides for and orders His people, and how does Joshua the shepherd point us forward to Christ our Good Shepherd (John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God chooses Joshua, a man in whom is the Spirit, and directs Moses to commission him publicly. Moses sets Joshua before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, lays his hands on him, and gives him a charge. Some of Moses' authority is put upon Joshua so the people will obey. The transfer is orderly, public, and God-directed.

Notice how God provides. He does not leave the choice to human politics or to Joshua's self-appointment. He names the man, He notes the Spirit in him, and He establishes him through proper means before the priest and the people. This is how God orders His people, with deliberate care rather than chaos.

Joshua, whose name means the LORD saves, shepherds the congregation into the inheritance, and in this he points beyond himself. He is a shadow of a greater Shepherd to come. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11) and the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead (Hebrews 13:20). Where Joshua led Israel into an earthly land, Christ leads His people into the true and lasting inheritance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's faithful, orderly provision of leadership for His people.
- The Spirit-given qualification of those God appoints to lead.
- Public, accountable commissioning rather than self-appointment.

- Joshua the shepherd as a type pointing forward to Christ our Good Shepherd (John 10; Hebrews 13:20).
- Christ leading His people into the true inheritance, fulfilling what Joshua foreshadowed.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the orderly commissioning of Joshua teach about how God provides leaders for His people?
- How does Joshua, the shepherd who leads Israel toward the inheritance, point us to Christ?
- What does it mean for your daily life that Jesus is your Good Shepherd?

Question 6

Student Question:

A faithful shepherd makes all the difference to a flock. Who are the shepherds God has used in your life, and how are you supporting and praying for those who lead you in the Lord now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

A flock thrives or suffers largely according to its shepherd. Joshua's commissioning reminds us how much God's people depend on faithful, God-given leadership. We are not meant to wander alone; God gives shepherds to guide, feed, and protect His people.

Most of us can name particular people God used to lead us toward Him, a parent, a teacher, a faithful elder or preacher, a friend who would not let us drift. Their care shaped our faith in ways we may only now appreciate. Such shepherds are a gift from God, not to be taken for granted.

Scripture also calls us to support and pray for those who lead us in the Lord, to make their work a joy rather than a burden (Hebrews 13:17). Honoring and upholding faithful leaders is part of how a healthy flock walks together behind the Good Shepherd.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Gratitude for the shepherds God has used in our lives.
- The believer's responsibility to support and pray for godly leaders.
- The dependence of a healthy flock on faithful, God-given leadership.
- Honoring leaders as a way of following the Good Shepherd together.

Discussion Prompts

- Who are the shepherds God has used to lead you toward Him, and how did they shape your faith?
- How are you actively supporting and praying for those who lead you in the Lord now?
- What can we do as a congregation to make the work of our leaders a joy rather than a burden?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read Numbers 28:1–8. The daily morning and evening burnt offerings frame Israel's entire day in worship, every day without fail. What does this unceasing daily offering teach about God's desire for steady, ongoing communion with His people rather than only occasional attention?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 28 begins the calendar of offerings with the daily sacrifice: a lamb in the morning and a lamb at twilight, with its grain and drink offering, a continual burnt offering every day. This was the heartbeat of Israel's worship, the offering that framed every single day from start to finish.

The word continual is key. This was not occasional or seasonal; it was unceasing, day after day, generation after generation. God desired steady, ongoing communion with His people, not merely a flurry of attention at the great feasts. Every dawn and every dusk, Israel was to draw near.

There is a profound truth here about the kind of relationship God wants. He is not satisfied with sporadic, high-intensity religion punctuated by long stretches of neglect. He desires a steady, daily nearness, a worship woven into the ordinary fabric of life, morning and evening, every day.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's desire for steady, ongoing communion rather than only occasional attention.
- The daily offering as a picture of worship woven into ordinary life.
- The danger of sporadic, high-intensity religion that neglects daily nearness.
- Consistency and faithfulness as marks of a life devoted to God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the continual daily offering teach about the kind of relationship God desires?
- How is steady daily nearness different from sporadic bursts of religious intensity?
- What in your life tends to crowd out daily communion with God?

Question 8

Student Question:

Israel began and ended each day at the altar. What would it look like for you to bookend your own days with God, and what tends to crowd that out?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Israel began each day at the altar and ended each day at the altar. The morning lamb and the evening lamb bracketed all the work, meals, and rest in between. The whole day was set within an offering, opened and closed in worship.

This pattern offers a beautiful picture for our own walk with God. To bookend the day with God, to begin in His word and prayer and to close the day returning to Him, is to set everything in between within the frame of worship. The ordinary hours are lived consciously before His face.

Yet how easily this gets crowded out. The phone, the rush, the noise, the exhaustion, all conspire to push the morning and evening time with God to the margins. The daily offering gently challenges us to guard those bookends and to let the whole day rest within communion with God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Bookending the day with God in worship, prayer, and the word.
- Living the ordinary hours consciously before God's face.
- Identifying and resisting what crowds out daily time with God.
- The fruit of a steady daily rhythm of drawing near.

Discussion Prompts

- What would it look like for you to bookend your days with God, morning and evening?
- What most often crowds out your daily time with God, and how might you guard against it?
- How might framing the whole day within worship change the ordinary hours in between?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read Numbers 28:16–29:40, the calendar of Sabbath, new moon, and festival offerings. The New Testament teaches that these were a shadow of things to come, the substance belonging to Christ (Colossians 2:16–17), so they are not bound on Christians, and the land promise itself is fulfilled in Christ and in the heavenly inheritance (Galatians 3:16, 29; Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Peter 1:3–4) rather than in a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel. How do the feasts find their fulfillment in Christ, and how does the New Testament church now worship under the new covenant on the Lord's Day with the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapters 28 and 29 lay out the Sabbath, new moon, and festival offerings, Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, each with appointed sacrifices. These were God-given worship for Israel under the Old Covenant, ordering their whole year around drawing near to Him.

The New Testament teaches us how to read these now. Colossians 2:16–17 says of festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths that they were a shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. They are therefore not bound on Christians. They pointed forward, and in Christ they find their fulfillment. Christ is our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7); the firstfruits feast is fulfilled in His resurrection and the harvest of His people (1 Corinthians 15:20–23); the Day of Atonement is fulfilled in His once-for-all entry into heaven with His own blood (Hebrews 9–10).

We must also guard against a serious error. The land and these ordinances were given to Israel under the Old Covenant, but the New Testament does not point us to a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel. The promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ and in His church (Galatians 3:16, 29), the inheritance held out to us is the better, heavenly one (Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Peter 1:3–4), the kingdom was established at Pentecost, and Christ reigns now at God's right hand. Premillennial and dispensational schemes that expect a rebuilt temple and a renewed sacrificial system misread the very fulfillment these shadows announce.

So how does the New Testament church worship? Not by keeping the feasts and offerings, which Christ has fulfilled and set aside, but under the new covenant on the first day of the week. The disciples gathered on the Lord's Day to break bread (Acts 20:7), and the Lord's Supper proclaims the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). The shadow has given way to the substance, and our worship is shaped by Christ Himself.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The feasts and offerings as a shadow whose substance is Christ (Colossians 2:16–17), not bound on Christians.
- Christ as fulfillment of the feasts: our Passover, our firstfruits, our atonement (1 Corinthians 5:7; 15:20–23; Hebrews 9–10).
- The land promise fulfilled in Christ and the heavenly inheritance (Galatians 3:16, 29; Hebrews 11:13–16; 1 Peter 1:3–4).
- A firm guard against premillennial and dispensational readings of a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel.
- The kingdom established at Pentecost and Christ reigning now, not a deferred earthly reign.
- New Testament worship on the Lord's Day with the weekly Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Discussion Prompts

- How do the Old Testament feasts find their fulfillment in Christ, and why are they not binding on Christians?
- Why must we read the land promise as fulfilled in Christ and the heavenly inheritance rather than in a future political restoration of national Israel?
- How does the New Testament church now worship under the new covenant, and what shapes that worship?

Question 10

Student Question:

These chapters show a people whose calendar was built around worship. Name one concrete way Jesus is reshaping your weekly and daily rhythms so that drawing near to God, with His people on the Lord's Day and with Him each day, is becoming the true center of your time.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Step back from the details and one impression remains: this was a people whose whole calendar was built around worship. Their days, weeks, months, and years were ordered by drawing near to God. Time itself was shaped by communion with Him, not the other way around.

We no longer keep these offerings, for Christ has fulfilled them, but the underlying call abides. Our time, too, should be ordered around drawing near to God, supremely in gathering with His people on the Lord's Day for worship and the Lord's Supper, and daily in the ongoing communion of prayer and the word.

If someone charted your week by what you actually build your time around, what would they find at the center? Jesus, the Good Shepherd who gave Himself for us, is at work reshaping our rhythms so that worship is no longer a leftover slot but the steady center around which the rest of life is arranged.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A life and a week ordered around drawing near to God.
- The centrality of Lord's Day worship and the weekly Lord's Supper for the New Testament church.
- Daily communion with God as the ongoing rhythm of the believer.
- Christ the Good Shepherd reshaping our use of time around worship.

Discussion Prompts

- If your week were charted by what you build your time around, what would sit at the center?
- What is one concrete way Jesus is reshaping your weekly rhythm around gathered worship?
- What is one daily rhythm of drawing near to God you want to recover or begin?