

Wandering In The Wilderness

Numbers 14:11-38

MEMORY VERSE

NUMBERS 14:18

“The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Several 5” x 8” index cards and a marker.

Artwork (included) for puppet, brads, string, red, orange, yellow and blue construction paper, dog or “monster” puppet and a large toy truck.

Twelve balloons, marker, string and clothespins.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

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.

LESSON TIME!

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.**

NUMBERS 14:11,12

Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?"

"I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

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

And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them,

"and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

"Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying,

'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.'

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

"And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying,

'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'

"Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

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 than 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

Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;

"but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD;

"because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,

"they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

"But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

"Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."

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.

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.

There is always a cost for disobedience. God loves us and wants what is best for us; it is only wise to listen and obey God.

NUMBERS 14:26-35

And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

"How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

"Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:

'The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.

'Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.

'But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.

'But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.

'And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

'According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.

'I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.'

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 everyone 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.

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 longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.” Numbers 14:8. 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.)

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord and to obey Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

