

The material here is linked to the January–March issue of *Today's Light*, a quarterly magazine designed to lead God's people as they read through the Bible in two years.

We've tried to include enough discussion starters for about forty-five minutes of study. In addition to the questions, you'll find Leader Notes to guide discussion. Feel free to duplicate the questions and use them with *Today's Light* readers.

Suggestions for Using *Today's Light* Discussion Questions

- You could gather a group of *Today's Light* readers during Sunday morning Bible class time.
- You could invite all *Today's Light* readers in your congregation to a midweek home discussion.
- You could make the questions available to all *Today's Light* readers and encourage them to partner with one or two other people over lunch once a week.

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January Week 1 Discussion Questions

January 1–7; Genesis 1–13

1. Describe which details of the Genesis creation account you find especially remarkable. Why is today's creation-evolution debate so significant?
2. What were the initial consequences of sin according to Genesis 3:7–13? How does sin still affect your life? the lives of others?
3. What makes the history recorded in Genesis 5 both depressing and hopeful? You may also wish to reread the article “Enoch—Life after Life.”
4. Review Genesis 6–9. How do Paul's words “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) apply to Noah? How do they apply to you? What does it mean to walk with God?
5. In Genesis 11, the focus of biblical history shifts from the entire human race to one family. Who is that family and why are they so important?
6. What great covenant promises did God give to Abram in Genesis 12?

January Week 2 Discussion Questions

January 8–14; Genesis 14–22

1. Study Genesis 15:1–18. Note what is promised and Abraham's response to the promises. Does his reaction denote faith or doubt? Explain.
2. How are you—whether Jew or Gentile—a child of Abraham? Reread the devotion for January 9 (Genesis 16–17) to help answer this.
3. What evidence of God's patient love do you find in Genesis 18:26–33?
4. Compare Romans 3:10 with Genesis 19–20. How do these passages apply to the world today?
5. According to the January 12 readings and devotion (Genesis 21), what turned Abraham and Sarah's skeptical laughter into joyful laughter? What reason did Hagar and Ishmael have to be optimistic? What can be the basis of your optimism?
6. Compare Abraham's test of faith (Genesis 22) with Jacob's wrestling with God (Genesis 32). How are these stories similar to each other and how do they apply to your life?

January Week 3 Discussion Questions

January 15–21; Genesis 23–34

1. What transition is described in the January 15 devotion (Genesis 23–24)? How does it move along the story of salvation?
2. Like his father, Abraham, Isaac was wealthy (Genesis 26). Comment on the source of Isaac's wealth and on how other people viewed it.
3. How did Jacob try to aid God's plans? How in weakness of faith do you at times do the same?
4. What roots of idolatry and superstition do you see in Genesis 30:27?
5. Jacob encounters fear (Genesis 32:7). He was afraid for himself and others. He does a number of things about it. His immediate response is to prepare for the worst (32:8). Then, he does what many people do when they are in a difficult situation (32:9–12). He then acts and tries to soften the threat (32:13–21). Jacob seems to overcome his fear as he wrestled with an angel of God and wins (32:22–32). What is your usual reaction when you are afraid? How do you learn to handle your fear?
6. What sins of Jacob's sons does Genesis 34 relate? How is the history of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and their families really the story of God's grace? Apply the lessons from this history to your own life.

January Week 4 Discussion Questions

January 22–28; Genesis 35–45

1. Jacob encounters joy and pain in reunion and separation. Read Genesis 33:3–5; 35:16–21; and 35:27–29. What kinds of feelings must these events have ignited for Jacob?
2. Review Genesis 37, observing both *how* and *why* Joseph went to Egypt. Here, as throughout the Book of Genesis, note how God is at work behind the scenes.
3. Joseph acts with integrity, kindness, and honesty. In chapter 39, his reward is unjust punishment (39:19–20). Is it true that you can expect to suffer when you attempt to do the will of God in your life? when you share the Gospel with others?
4. Review Genesis 40–41. Who was the true Master of dreams in Joseph’s interpretation of dreams? What application does this have for whatever successes you experience in life?
5. In spite of Judah’s flagrant sins, he was the brother from whose descendants the Messiah came. How was Judah a “type” of Christ? Reread Genesis 43.
6. Skim Genesis 44–45. How did God work through all the ups and downs of Joseph’s life to carry out His saving purposes? To help answer this, review the January 27/28 devotion.

January Week 5 Discussion Questions

January 29–31; Genesis 46–50

1. Early in Genesis (chapter 5), we noted how Enoch walked with God—by faith and not by sight. As Genesis draws to a close (Genesis 46–47), we again see this phenomenon. How was this true of Jacob? How is it true of us?
2. Reread the January 30 devotion (Genesis 48). There we see Jacob reviewing God’s role in his life. If you were to make a list like Jacob did, in what three ways would you say God has been especially influential in your life?
3. Note the prophecies and fulfillments referred to in the January 31 devotion (Genesis 49–50). What fulfillments did you find?

February Week 1 Discussion Questions

February 1–4; Exodus 1–6

1. What developments took place among God's chosen people between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus (see the introduction to Exodus in *Today's Light* and the devotion for February 1 (Exodus 1–2)? What was the historical setting at the beginning of Exodus?
2. What was the significance of the signs God gave Moses? Review the devotion for February 2 (Exodus 3–4). Relate these signs to the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
3. Review Exodus 5–6. What is so terrifying about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? What is the final result of that process? Compare that with Jesus' words about the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28–29).

February Week 2 Discussion Questions

February 5–11; Exodus 7–15

1. Review the ten plagues (Exodus 7–12). What were their effects on Egypt?
2. God clearly had a purpose with the sending of the plagues. Review Exodus 9:13–16 and summarize the purpose God had in mind.
3. Why do you think the Egyptians would be willing to give gold and silver to the Israelites (Exodus 11:2–3)?
4. Compare and contrast the Passover (Exodus 12) with Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26–29).
5. Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea. Who parted the waters (Exodus 14:16, 21)? Give examples of human agents God uses today to accomplish His miracles.
6. Review Exodus 15. Compare Israel's journey through the wilderness with the Christian's journey through life. What similarities do you see?

February Week 3 Discussion Questions

February 12–18; Exodus 16–24

1. Israel “tested the Lord” (Exodus 17:2, 7). Explain what this means.
2. Who was Jethro, and how did he prefigure Christ? Review the February 13 devotion (Exodus 18) to help answer the question.
3. Since the Law cannot save people, why did God give it? Read the February 14 devotion (Exodus 19–20) and the article “The Ten Commandments.”
4. Review Exodus 21–22. Compare and contrast God’s conditional promises at Mount Sinai and His unconditional promises at Mount Calvary.
5. How does Exodus 23:33 contradict these common sayings: “It doesn’t matter what you believe”; “Live and let live”; and “All roads lead to Rome”? (See also John 14:6.)
6. “Chosen by God” might well be the theme of Psalm 65, Exodus 24, and the devotion for February 17/18. What does being chosen by God mean to you?

February Week 4 Discussion Questions

February 19–25; Exodus 25–34

1. Find two features of the tabernacle (Exodus 25–27) and explain how they prefigure Christ.
2. Find two features of the priests' garments (Exodus 28) and explain how they prefigure Christ.
3. Review Exodus 29. How did the Old Testament sacrificial system point to the Messiah, the Christ? In Psalm 51, what does David say about the attitude of believers toward the sacrifices?
4. Read Exodus 30:1–10. The altar of incense was an important element in Israel's worship, since incense was burned on it twice a day. What did the incense represent (Psalm 141:2)? Who brings our prayers into the presence of God (Romans 8:26–27, 34)?
5. Discuss the contrasting roles of Aaron and Moses in the incident of the golden calf. Review Exodus 32.
6. In the second giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:1–7), the Lord proclaimed His name to Moses and in doing so proclaimed both the Law and Gospel. Which of the two—Law and Gospel—predominated in this proclamation? See also Romans 5:20–21.

February Week 5 Discussion Questions

February 26–28; Exodus 35–40

1. Moses describes both Bezalel and Oholiab as Spirit-filled craftsmen whom God “inspired . . . to teach” (Exodus 35:34). Look at 1 Corinthians 12:7. What does that passage tell us about the use of our abilities?
2. What were some of the characteristics of the ark of the covenant? How do they compare with popular notions about the “lost ark”? Review Exodus 37 and the February 27 devotion.
3. Compare Exodus 40 and Psalm 68 for their descriptions of God’s greatness. How did God guide the Israelites?

March Week 1 Discussion Questions

March 1–4; Leviticus 1–10

1. What are the key themes of Leviticus? What is the main message of the book? Review the introduction to Leviticus. What do the burnt offerings and other offerings of Leviticus 1–4 represent? In what way did they point forward to Jesus Christ? See also the devotion for March 1.
2. Jewish tradition holds that the sacrificed animal's breast was waved horizontally while its thigh was presented vertically when being offered to God (Leviticus 7:28–35). Some scholars see this symbolism as a vivid foreshadowing of Christ's redemptive work. What might these two presentations symbolize for Christians?
3. How did Nadab and Abihu insult the Lord and His majesty? See Leviticus 10. Why might the Holy Spirit have chosen to record this incident in the Bible? What might we learn from it?

March Week 2 Discussion Questions

March 5–11; Leviticus 11–24

1. How might the requirements found in Leviticus 11:41–45 serve as a reminder of original sin and God’s promised Savior? Before answering, take time to read Genesis 3:1–15.
2. God’s call for purity among His people extended to their very homes. Read Leviticus 14:33–57. How was the purification rite for a home similar to that of an individual?
3. Why did the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) play such an important part in Old Testament history? What did you learn from your study of the system of sacrifices? What of all this does God want us to know and believe today?
4. Read Leviticus 19. Then, identify the commands that are restatements of the Ten Commandments.
5. Molech was a detestable god fed by human sacrifices, most often involving children. Why would God find these sacrifices profane and unholy? Read Leviticus 20:1–5. How are such sacrifices comparable to abortions?
6. After reading Leviticus 23:33–44, describe the Feast of Tabernacles and God’s reason for it.

March Week 3 Discussion Questions

March 12–18; Leviticus 25–27 and Numbers 1–12

1. Put together as many details of the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) as you can. Go back over your list. How does each detail point forward to the Savior? How is Jesus *our* “Jubilee”?
2. What are the central themes of the Book of Numbers? In what ways is the book an account of the people’s sin and God’s grace? What significance does it have for us today? Review the introduction to Numbers. Read Numbers 1:1–46; 2 Samuel 24:1–17; and 1 Chronicles 21:1–17. How does David’s numbering of the people differ from that of Moses in Numbers?
3. Look over the Aaronic Benediction in Numbers 6:22–27. Which words in this blessing do you find especially meaningful? How is this blessing more than a pious wish? What evidences of God’s care for His people—body and soul—have you seen in this week’s readings? What evidences have you seen in your own life? How do you thank the Lord for His blessings?
4. Numbers chapter 7, the longest chapter in all the Pentateuch, concerns offerings brought by the heads or “chiefs” of each tribe. What sacrifices do Christians, as royal priests, offer in view of Christ? (See Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15–16; 1 Peter 2:5.)
5. Moses invoked God’s name in special ways whenever the ark of the covenant “set out” or when “it rested” (Numbers 10:35–36). Why did Moses do so? What is the significance of Moses’ words?
6. Numbers 12–14 relates a series of events that were typical of the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness. What were those events and what was typical? What event—and what people—stood out in contrast to the rest? What can we learn from these chapters?

March Week 4 Discussion Questions

March 19–25; Numbers 13–24

1. How do Joshua and Caleb manifest a different spirit (see 13:30 and 14:6)? Why is their faith in the Gospel despised and even a threat to others (14:10)? Describe how this happens in Christian congregations today.
2. Of what did the offerings for unintentional sins (Numbers 15:22–31) remind the people? See Psalm 19:12. What can we learn from this?
3. Read chapter 17. God has twelve staffs, one for each of the twelve tribes (Moses wrote the tribal name on each rod), collected and placed overnight in the tabernacle. The rod that blossomed by morning would indicate the one God had chosen as His servant (v. 5). Is it ever right to “try” or “test” God? Why or why not? (See Malachi 3:10.)
4. To what did the sacrifice of the red heifer point? (See Numbers 19:1–9.) Compare with Hebrews 9:11–14.
5. Where in Numbers 21 do you see a continuation of Israel’s earlier faithlessness? What great type of Christ does Numbers 21 contain? (See John 3:13–16.)
6. Review the story of Balaam’s donkey (Numbers 22:21–41). What does this bit of history have to say about human pride and the power of God?

March Week 5 Discussion Questions

March 26–31; Numbers 25–36

1. Zelophehad's daughters appear twice in the Book of Numbers (27:1–11; 36). What does this have to say about the importance of women in Old Testament history?
2. Read Numbers 30. Notice the strict binding of the law of vows. Can we make such vows to God? How is this, in fact, a picture of God's own faithfulness to us despite our sinfulness?
3. God issued a stern edict of vengeance to be carried out against the Midianites by Israel (Numbers 31). Why do you suppose God reveals His wrath so terribly against the Midianites? Read Romans 16:17–18; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; and Jude 3–4. What is God's attitude toward the compromise of doctrine and syncretistic worship?
4. Borders of the land are given in Numbers 34:1–15. Four times, this territory is described as Israel's inheritance (vv. 2, 13–15). How does viewing the land as a gift change the way an Israelite would look at it? Read Romans 8:29; Galatians 3:16; and Hebrews 1:2. Who is the true and final heir of this land and of all things?
5. The closing chapters of Numbers (20–36) tell us about the last year of Israel's wilderness wanderings. What applications do you find for your own life?
6. Read Numbers 35. How is Christ portrayed in these places of refuge (see Ephesians 2:12–19)?

Leader Notes

Many of the discussion questions call for group participants to share personal insights, examples, or life experiences and applications. Answers to these questions will vary. If no one answers right away, allow a moment or two of silence so everyone has time to think through the question. Other questions call for specific factual or analytical responses. Suggested answers for these questions appear below.

January Week 1 Leader Notes

January 1–7; Genesis 1–13

1. People will be interested in many different aspects of the Genesis creation account—from the power of God’s creative word to the innocence and perfection of the Garden of Eden. In regards to the creation-evolution debate, this is very important, for if we do not take God’s Word seriously in its opening chapters—which are clearly set forth as real history—then we open the door for explaining away anything in Scripture that is not currently considered intellectually respectable or politically correct. Although our faith does not depend on having all the answers, a review of creationism material is always encouraging. In spite of its claims to open-mindedness and intellectual integrity, evolutionary thought is having more and more difficulty explaining the universe and life in all their complexity as the products of mere chance and not intelligent design.

2. The initial consequences of sin were shame, guilt, blame—internal destruction. First, the two sinners show shame at being naked. Then, they seek to hide from God because they cannot bear to have Him look at them. So, they cover themselves. We still cover ourselves with masks of goodness that we hope will show the world that we are not sin-sick with evil. People cannot expose themselves to one another, much less to God. Adam and Eve knew they had sinned, and they tried to escape. We still run from our guilt and try to hide so that we will not have to face what we are and what we have done. There was also blame. Adam and Eve tried to blame everyone else, even God, as though He were somehow responsible for their sin. Yet, all their efforts do nothing to remove the result of sin—the same internal pain and guilt that wear us down and will eventually destroy us.

3. The history of Genesis 5 is depressing with its litany of “and then he died.” Here, we have an early reminder that the wages of sin were taking their toll. Yet, even amid the ongoing death notices, there are signs of hope and reasons for optimism. We think especially of the wonderful story of Enoch who did not die, “for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). That is a reminder of the promise of eternal life in God’s presence for those who walk with God. The lengthy ages of these early people further underscore that the seventy- or eighty-year life span that has become normal in this fallen world is, by God’s standards, really not normal at all. The name Noah, which sounds like the Hebrew for “comfort” (see Genesis 5:29), helps us to realize that no matter how sin-infested the world may be, God always has His own people, whom He comforts with His promises of salvation.

4. While Noah was building the ark, he had to contend with the ridicule of the unbelieving world. But he did not look at outward circumstances in the 120 years while he was preparing for the flood. Rather, he lived by faith in God's promise of deliverance.

We, too, live in a corrupt age. We need to keep focused not on what we see around us but on God's Word, which leads us through this troubled life to an eternity in heaven. To live by faith in the Word is to walk with God, as was said of Enoch (Genesis 5:22, 24) and Noah (Genesis 6:9).

5. The early part of Genesis 11 contains the story of the dispersion of the people at Babel (vv. 1–9). The second part of the chapter (vv. 10–32) talks about the line from Shem to Abram. The incident at Babel shows that even after the flood, people were as prone to sinful pride and unbelief as ever. The genealogy that follows indicates how the average life span was dropping dramatically after the flood. In other words, sin and its effects were not going away but escalating. That is why the shift in focus to the family of Abram is so significant. Through this family, God would send the Savior, who alone could and would conquer sin and death.

6. God promised to make of Abram a great nation, to make his name great, to bless those who bless him, and to bless all the world through him. All of those promises have been fulfilled. The last one, of course, was fulfilled when Jesus Christ came into the world. Through that descendant of Abraham, all the nations of the world have been blessed with the Gospel of full and free forgiveness.

January Week 2 Leader Notes

January 8–14; Genesis 14–22

1. God promises Abraham a great reward, many descendants, and that he will possess the land. Specific borders of the land are even identified. Abraham's response? He believed the Lord but asked for a sign, thus demonstrating both faith and doubt.
2. Abraham is not only the father of many nations (the Jews, Arabs, and others) but also "the father of all who believe" (Romans 4:11). That is why Paul could write that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). As Abraham believed in the coming Savior, we believe in the Savior who has come. We share the same faith and are members of the same family—that is, the family of God.
3. God is showing pity and mercy to His creatures.
4. Romans 3:10 declares, "None is righteous, no, not one." The events of Genesis 19–20 bear that out. In those chapters, we see the sinfulness not only of Sodom and Gomorrah, but also of "righteous" Lot (2 Peter 2:7) and his family, and of Abraham himself. The Bible is not so much the story of outstanding people, but of the wonderful God who loves and forgives fallen humanity.
5. The name Isaac means "laughter." After all the difficulties and heartaches Abraham and Sarah had been through, God kept His promise and gave them a son. And they laughed with joy. Even the sad departure of Hagar and Ishmael had a happy ending. God heard their crying, and He brought relief. Genesis 21 closes with the note that Abraham "called there on the name of the LORD" (21:33). Like the saints of old, we have reason to call upon God's name, confident that He will meet our needs and keep all His promises, just as in the Lord Jesus He kept His greatest promise: to send the world a Savior.
6. At first glance, the accounts of Abraham's test of faith and Jacob's wrestling with God seem to be quite different. Yet, both involve the common ingredient of faith. In his test of faith, Abraham clung to God's promises, including the promise that from Abraham's son a great nation would come forth. As the writer to the Hebrews says, "[Abraham] considered that God was able to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him [Isaac] back [from death]" (11:19). Likewise, in faith Jacob would not let the stranger go until He had blessed him. Both are examples for us—to cling confidently to God's Word in the hour of testing and to wrestle boldly with God in prayer.

January Week 3 Leader Notes

January 15–21; Genesis 23–34

1. Genesis 23 records the funeral of Sarah, while Genesis 24 takes up the subject of Isaac's marriage. The transition from one generation of patriarchs to the next is evident. If we look ahead one more chapter to Genesis 25, we read of Abraham's death, making the transition even more complete. With each passing generation, the story of salvation moves forward, as the promise of the Savior moves ever closer to fulfillment. Through all the transitions and changes of history, God was at work carrying out His plans. He is still doing that today.

2. The source of Isaac's wealth, like Abraham's, was God. Outsiders saw Isaac's wealth, dropped their hostility toward him, and wanted to make an agreement with him. They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you" (Genesis 26:28). On the other hand, unbelievers can also be impressed by how Christians hold up under hardships. Whatever our circumstances, then, we will want to use them as opportunities to share the Gospel.

3. Together with his mother, Rebekah, Jacob had deceived Isaac to receive his blessing (Genesis 27). Although God had promised that Jacob would receive the blessing (25:23), He did not need Jacob's conniving. At times, we think we need to help God's plans along. Rather than doing something wrong to bring about a good end, we need to learn to do God's will and wait for Him to accomplish His purposes. In other words, the ends do not justify the means. Group members will probably have examples to offer.

4. The consulting of divination is condemned in Leviticus 19:26.

5. Fear is universal. Most fears we try to ignore. Many we create for ourselves. But fear is real. It can only be overcome by recognizing it, admitting it, and asking the Holy Spirit to help us overcome it. We can gain comfort and strength when we remember Christ's promise never to leave or forsake us. Christians, sharing the promises of Christ, can strengthen and help one another through times of fear.

6. Genesis 34 records how Jacob's sons took matters into their own hands to avenge the rape of their sister, Dinah. They invited the Shechemites to be circumcised, and "when they were [still] sore" (34:25), Simeon and Levi attacked and killed them. Jacob himself seemed less disturbed by this wretched behavior than by the personal problems it might bring him: "You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land. . . . My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household" (34:30).

Genesis contains numerous such examples of the failings of God's people, a somber reminder to Christians that only by God's grace is anyone saved.

January Week 4 Leader Notes

January 22–28; Genesis 35–45

1. The joy we can have even in the sadness of the death of a loved one is knowing that death is not final separation. Talk about the message of the love of Christ that speaks to our times of weeping.
2. Joseph went to Egypt as a slave, sold into slavery by his brothers. That's the *how* of his going to Egypt. As for the *why*, that was God's doing. As Joseph later said to his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Genesis 50:20). Sometimes we get so absorbed in *how* our lives are going that we forget about the *why*. God is using all things for His eternal purposes.
3. It seems that people of the world often respond to honesty and integrity with hostility. The corruption of our nature makes us see goodness in others as an accusation of ourselves. Yet, we are to try, with God's help, to lead the lives He would have us lead. We are assured that we have a home with Him in heaven and that nothing can take that away from us, no matter how difficult the people around us become.
4. Joseph's ability to interpret dreams came from God. As Joseph told Pharaoh, "God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do" (Genesis 41:25). Whatever success we enjoy and whatever abilities we have are gifts from God. Like Joseph, we will want to give credit to the Lord. James put it this way, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (1:17).
5. Judah offered his life as security for his brother Benjamin (Genesis 43:8–10). In that respect, he was a "type" of Christ, who was the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Although Judah was neither the oldest nor the most outstanding of the sons of Israel, he showed during his life that he had grown and become a man of faith. From his name, which means "praise," comes the name *Jew*. From his line came the royal household of David and the long-awaited Messiah.
6. Joseph went through many experiences that groomed him for an awesome role in the history of God's chosen people. When he was sold into slavery and taken to a foreign country, it may have seemed that all was lost. The same was true when he ended up in jail in Egypt and seemed to have been forgotten. God was using those low points in Joseph's life to humble him and make him ready for saving God's people. Often in our lives we cannot see how God can use an apparently hopeless situation for good. Having examples like that of Joseph will help us patiently await God's time of deliverance.

January Week 5 Leader Notes

January 29–31; Genesis 46–50

1. Moses records this interesting fact about Jacob when he came to Egypt: “Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see” (Genesis 48:10). Jacob’s physical inability to see calls to mind that in another sense the aged Jacob walked by faith and not by sight. He was to spend the last days of his life in Egypt, yet he trusted that God would still deliver the Promised Land to his descendants. When he died, he was buried alongside the other patriarchs in Canaan. In life and in death, we, too, leave everything in God’s hands. We trust His promises that His Word will be carried to the next generation, that the Gospel will continue its worldwide spread, and that we will enjoy many reunions in heaven. Have group members share ways in which they walk by faith.

2. This answer, of course, is subjective. It is important to note that Jacob always directed the glory to God and that instead of complaining about the troubles he had been through, Jacob thanked God for guiding and delivering him.

3. It would be well to read the Revelation and Hebrews passages and invite comments on them. Here is the listing:

Revelation 5:9–14: Although Judah’s descendants (David, Solomon, and their progeny) received praise as earthly kings, Jesus receives eternal praise: “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (v.13).

Revelation 1:18: Judah’s royal descendant David defeated earthly enemies; only Jesus has defeated death and hell: “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

Revelation 5:5–6: Here Revelation makes direct reference to the prophecy of Israel, calling Jesus “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

Hebrews 1:8: This passage speaks of the righteous scepter of Jesus the King and of His everlasting rule. The passage is a direct statement of the divinity of Christ; referring to “the Son,” it says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

Revelation 19:11–16: Whereas Jacob refers to washing the garments in wine, John speaks of Jesus as “clothed in a robe dipped in blood” and treading “the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”

All of these prophecies and their fulfillments show both the trustworthiness of God’s Word and the intimate connection between Jesus and Old Testament prophecies. He is the fulfillment. He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

February Week 1 Leader Notes

February 1–4; Exodus 1–6

1. During the intermittent period of some 350 years, the Israelites had grown from a family of seventy people to a nation of two or three million people. They had also gone from welcome guests in the land of Egypt to slaves. God had kept His promise to Abraham that from him would come a great nation (Genesis 12:2). The scene now was set for God to give to that people the land He had promised Abraham (Genesis 15:7).

2. Call attention to the “Sharpen the Focus” portion of the February 2 devotion. A review of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Small Catechism would also be useful. The signs validated God’s call of Moses, and they set forth spiritual lessons for God’s people, as well as for the Egyptians. The two Sacraments are also outward signs. Long before audiovisual aids came into use in congregations, Baptism and Communion were referred to as the visible Word. The water signifies the drowning of the old Adam, the old, sinful self. The bread and wine signify Christ’s body and blood. But the Sacraments are much more than symbols. They are Means of Grace. In Baptism, we actually receive forgiveness and salvation (Titus 3:5). In the Lord’s Supper, we receive Christ’s body and blood for the forgiveness of sins (1 Corinthians 11:17–34).

3. What makes Pharaoh’s hardening of his heart so terrifying is that eventually God Himself took over the process. As we will see in the answer to question one of next week, up through the fifth plague Pharaoh hardened his heart; after that, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 9:12). There is, then, a point of no return. When people continually reject God’s grace, there comes a time when they are beyond coming to faith. That is the one unforgivable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit of which Jesus speaks in Mark 3:28–29. Those who are concerned about having committed this sin haven’t. Those who have committed it are beyond being concerned. Spiritual deadness has set in, and there is no stirring of faith.

February Week 2 Leader Notes

February 5–11; Exodus 7–15

1. The ten plagues are as follows:

1. Waters of the Nile turned to blood (Exodus 7:14–25)
2. Frogs infested the land (8:1–15)
3. Gnats (mosquitoes) infested the land (8:16–19)
4. Flies infested the land (8:20–32)
5. Egyptian livestock became infected and died (9:1–7)
6. Egyptians infected with boils (skin disease) (9:8–12)
7. Hail destroyed grain fields of Egypt (9:13–35)
8. Locusts destroyed any remaining plant life (10:1–20)
9. Darkness covered the land for three days (10:21–29)
10. Death of the firstborn of the Egyptians (11:1–12:30)

In each case, the people and the land of Egypt were devastated, while the Israelites were spared. Up through the fifth plague, Pharaoh hardened his heart. After that, God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart (9:12). Although after the last plague Pharaoh let the people go, "the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people" and they pursued the people of Israel (14:5). That pursuit led to the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

2. God wanted the Egyptians and the Israelites to know that He is the almighty God, ruler of all. The plagues showed His power and His glory and would cause His name to be proclaimed in all the earth.

3. The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed. They no doubt feared the God of the Hebrews—what He had done and would do. Perhaps these gifts were meant to appease God. The Hebrew slaves owned livestock but not much else. The Lord told Moses He would see to it that the Egyptians would give the people of Israel gifts of gold, silver, and clothing when they left Egypt (Exodus 3:21).

4. There are a number of similarities between the two celebrations, as well as some differences. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He and His disciples were celebrating the Passover. For Christians, then, the Lord's Supper is a replacement for the Passover. A review of Luther's Small Catechism on the Lord's Supper will help refresh the meaning of the Sacrament.

The following table shows some comparisons between the two:

Passover	Lord's Supper
Divinely instituted	Divinely instituted
Involves a meal of remembrance	Involves a meal of remembrance

Involved sacrificial lamb	Involved Jesus, the Lamb of God
Reminded people of the deliverance from the angel of death and bondage in Egypt	Reminds us of our deliverance from spiritual death and from the bondage to sin
An annual feast	Celebrated often
A memorial meal celebrated at home by families	A memorial meal celebrated at church by the family of believers
The meal atoned for sins and signified and foreshadowed the Savior	The meal conveys the forgiveness won by Christ on the cross

5. God parted the waters, using Moses and a strong east wind as His instruments. Today, God continues to perform spiritual and physical miracles through people such as teachers, doctors, scientists, and Christian witnesses.

6. There are a number of similarities between the Israelites' journey through the wilderness and the Christian's journey through life. Both begin with deliverance (from Egypt, from unbelief). Both call for trust in God's Word, as the journeys involve hardships and challenges to faith. On both journeys, God sustains His people. For example, He sustained the Israelites physically with water in the desert, and He sustains Christians spiritually through the Word and Sacraments. Both journeys are directed toward the Promised Land (Canaan, heaven). Indeed, crossing the Jordan River has become a common way of expressing the passage from this world to heaven. No doubt a discussion will bring out other similarities.

Remind the group that in spite of the comparisons, we must be careful not to allegorize the Israelites' wilderness journey. That is, we must not treat it as if it is merely a story with certain moral truths. It is real history. That makes its applications all the more striking and meaningful in real-life situations we encounter.

February Week 3 Leader Notes

February 12–18; Exodus 16–24

1. The people of Israel doubted God's presence, power, and love. Instead of praying to the Lord, they quarreled with His representative. God did test Israel, but they failed the test by testing Him instead.

2. Jethro, whose name means "excellence," was a priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses. He was also called Reuel, which means "friend of God." He is referred to in a number of places in Exodus (2:18; 3:1; 4:18; 18:1–12). Like Jesus, Jethro was a priest of God but not through the Aaronic priesthood.

3. A review of what the explanation of Luther's Small Catechism says about the Law is helpful. The Law serves as a mirror to show us our sins, as a curb to hinder gross outbreaks of sin, and as a guide for Christian living. It is also useful to distinguish the three types of Old Testament laws: (1) The ceremonial laws, which included the sacrifices, pointed to Christ. (2) The civil law, which included property laws and other regulations for the nation of Israel. (3) The moral law, which set forth those unchanging rules that apply to people everywhere and of all time. The moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments and reiterated in New Testament injunctions for Christians. Both the civil and ceremonial laws ensured that the nation of Israel would be distinct from the nations around it. While other people had the moral law, it had become blurred by sin and was no longer clear; so, God gave it in written form.

While the civil and ceremonial laws do not apply to Christians, the moral law does. Even in the Ten Commandments, we will distinguish between what is morally binding (for example, that we set aside time for worship) and what applied to Old Testament Israelites (that they worship on the seventh day, Saturday). A look at Colossians 2:16–17 is helpful.

4. God's covenant at Sinai was conditional or bilateral. That is, it involved a two-way agreement. God said to the people of Israel: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5). What Christ did on Calvary was unilateral. In spite of our failings, He died for the sins of the entire world. Salvation does not depend on our doing anything; it is a gift of God (2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:8–9).

5. It is false tolerance to think of an idea—no matter the area of interest—on equal footing with the truth, as these common expressions imply. The Scriptures are an absolute point of reference for truth. God commanded Israel not to live side by side with peoples who worshiped other gods, lest they mislead the Israelites into worshiping their false gods. Such a development would be disastrous for God's plan to save the world through the Messiah, who would come from Israel.

6. Answers here may be somewhat subjective. For example, some might say that God has chosen them to follow this or that profession. Yet, at the heart of being chosen by God is the biblical truth that we enjoy forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through what Christ has done for us. God did not choose the Israelites because they were somehow more deserving than others to be His people. Likewise, we have been chosen to be His own not

because of special merits on our part. The mystery of God's grace enters in. While we cannot fathom His undeserved love, we can share it with others.

February Week 4 Leader Notes

February 19–25; Exodus 25–34

1. Various features of the tabernacle and the priestly garments foreshadow Christ and the New Testament era. For example, the Mercy Seat represents God's grace through Christ; the Greek word used for this covering (Hebrews 9:5) is the same word used of Jesus being a "propitiation by His blood" (Romans 3:25). The candlestick is a reminder of Jesus, who is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). The bronze altar prefigured the cross on which Jesus would make the supreme sacrifice.

2. The priesthood prefigured Jesus, who is the great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–5:10). A Bible dictionary or book dealing specifically with these subjects such as Concordia Publishing House's *Concordia's Complete Bible Handbook* and *Lutheran Bible Companion* can help in making more comparisons.

3. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to the Messiah, who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world. John the Baptist referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In Psalm 51, David declared that the most important sacrifices were not the animals offered on altars, but "a broken spirit" and "a broken and contrite heart" (v. 17). When we, like David, recognize our sinful condition and need for forgiveness, we then have the proper attitude of faith, trusting in God's mercy and grace.

4. The burning of incense represented the prayers and devotion of God's people. Our prayers are taken into the presence of God by the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself. The Holy Spirit expresses our imperfect and stumbling prayers in just the way they ought to be put before God and in accordance with His holy will. Jesus, through His sacrifice on the cross, sanctifies our prayers and makes them acceptable to God.

5. Aaron's behavior at Mount Sinai is a classic case of compromising to please others. He gave in to the pressure to build an idol and then said that the people would be worshipping the Lord. After he was confronted by Moses with what he had done, Aaron tried to push the blame elsewhere, saying, "Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. . . . So they gave it [gold] to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf" (Exodus 32:22–24). Moses, on the other hand, gave a model of intercessory prayer. Instead of wishing evil on the nation, he asked God to forgive and spare the people. His thoughts were fixed not on self-enhancement but on the glory of God and the welfare of others.

6. In His proclamation to Moses on Mount Sinai, God first proclaimed the Gospel: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands" (Exodus 34:6–7). Then, He proclaimed the Law: "Who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (v. 7). Often, we see the tragic reality of these words as parents pass on to their children wicked lifestyles and their consequences. Yet, God is much more ready to forgive. He speaks of His love to thousands (of generations), which stands in direct contrast to

judgment upon the third and fourth generation. Romans 5:20–21 reinforces that where sin abounds God’s grace abounds much more.

February Week 5 Leader Notes

February 26–28; Exodus 35–40

1. Paul tells us that the gifts of the Spirit are to be used for the common good and not only for our own profit or advantage. In effect, spiritual gifts belong to the whole Church—not only to those to whom they are entrusted.
2. The movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is a good example of worldly attempts to treat spiritual matters. The world can take biblical stories and make powerful movies from them, but usually by ignoring the spiritual truths behind the story. The true ark of the covenant was an indication of God’s presence among His people. Moreover, the ark was symbolic of the divine-human Messiah, whose blood would be shed for the sins of the world.
3. The closing verses of Exodus are a fitting climax to the book. Like Psalm 68, they extol the glory of God. Consider the last verse of the psalm: “Awesome is God from His sanctuary; the God of Israel—He is the one who gives power and strength to His people. Blessed be God!” (68:35). God’s glorious presence in the wilderness was a visible guide in the cloud over the tabernacle by day and in the fire by night, “in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys” (Exodus 40:38).

March Week 1 Leader Notes

March 1–4; Leviticus 1–10

1. The sacrifices are at the center of the Book of Leviticus. The sacrificial system pointed to Christ and the ultimate sacrifice He would make on the cross. Review the devotional material for March 1, and notice how the sacrifices and the details connected with them pointed in various ways to Christ. Without Him, the Old Testament sacrificial system lacked the full meaning that only He, the perfect sacrifice, could supply.
2. Picturing a sacrificed animal's breast waved horizontally followed by the thigh presented vertically, we see the tool of God's salvation: the cross. Christians make this sign on themselves, albeit reversed (head-breast-left shoulder-right shoulder), to remind them of Christ's final sacrifice and their own incorporation into His death and resurrection through Baptism.
3. Leviticus 10 recounts the actions and attitudes of Nadab and Abihu as they arrogantly entered the tabernacle to offer sacrifices at a time that God had not prescribed. Verses 8–11 hint that drunkenness may have been at the root of their insolent behavior. Let group members talk about why the Holy Spirit may have chosen to record this incident. Among other things, this chapter points to the awe and honor with which we sinners need to regard the Holy God. It also reinforces the danger of spiritual arrogance. We need the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to keep us from the pride that undermined the priesthood of Nadab and Abihu.

March Week 2 Leader Notes

March 5–11; Leviticus 11–24

1. The wording in Leviticus 11:41–45 served as a reminder of original sin and God’s promised Savior because it governed the eating of creatures that move about on their bellies. In Genesis 3:1–15, we visit Adam and Eve as they encounter the serpent. This creature originally walked about on legs, but later was condemned by God to slither on the ground as punishment for leading Adam and Eve into sin. God responded to sin with the first Messianic prophecy (v. 15). Israelites seeing a snake slither by could not help but recall the fall into sin and the promise of a Savior.

2. The rite of home purification was similar to that of the rite of clothing purification in that it was the priest who determined uncleanness. Like that for mildew on clothing (Leviticus 13:47–49), an isolation period of seven days occurred. If the mildew reoccurred after seven days, the home was destroyed. If the mildew no longer appeared, the home was atoned for in the same manner as that of an individual reinstated into the Lord’s presence (the sacrifice of a bird, the sprinkling of blood via hyssop, and the release of a second bird into an open field [Leviticus 14:5–7]).

3. The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur* in Hebrew) marked the climax of access to God in the Old Testament. Once a year, on that special day, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place. The entrance prefigured Christ’s entrance into heaven itself to present the merits of His shed blood before the throne of God. Hebrews 9:11–28 offers a wonderful New Testament commentary on the Day of Atonement and its relationship to Christ. Individual comments and impressions will vary among participants. Have participants share their thoughts and read verses they found especially meaningful. The most important aspect of all the sacrifices was that they pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God.

4. These are the commands repeated from the Ten Commandments in Leviticus 19: verses 3, 4, 11–13, 16, 17, 26, 30–32. Make a correlation between God’s Word in Leviticus and the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1–17.

5. God causes marriage to bring forth children according to His good will. He commanded humans to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). Exodus 20:1–6 features God’s command to have no other gods before Him. These gods include the detestable god Molech and any other. Regarding abortion, remember that God desires husbands and wives to have children when possible and that God values all life. He says, “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man” (Genesis 9:5).

6. The Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, starting with one sacred assembly and ending with another eight days later. Burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifices, and drink offerings were required daily to mark the end of the fall harvest. The first day of this festival began with pilgrims carrying branches from three different trees as they walked around the altar (Psalm 118:27). The Israelites built makeshift shelters in which they stayed throughout the remaining days of the festival to remind them that God brought His people out of Egyptian bondage. The Feast

of Booths was the second of two pilgrim festivals celebrated during the Hebrew Church Year, the first being the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

March Week 3 Leader Notes

March 12–18; Leviticus 25–27 and Numbers 1–12

1. Every seventh year was a Sabbath Year for the land, when the land would be allowed to rest. After seven Sabbath Years (that is, forty-nine years), the next year (the fiftieth) would be a Year of Jubilee. Slaves were to be released, and property was to be restored to the family of its original owners. All of this pointed ahead to Christ, who will usher in our eternal freedom and inheritance, the jubilee of heaven.

2. Numbers relates the two censuses of Israel in the desert. It also recounts the people's journey on their way from Sinai to the Promised Land. As in the other books of Moses, we again see God's faithfulness in contrast to the people's sinfulness. The vital and basic difference between David's numbering of the people and that recorded in the Book of Numbers is that David's was initiated by human pride and will, and thus was an act of unbelief; but Moses' was initiated by the gracious will of God, and thus was an act of faith.

3. These questions call for personal sharing on the part of participants. Have group members open their Bibles to Numbers chapter 6 as you discuss the Aaronic Benediction. Point out that in the Benediction an actual spiritual blessing takes place. These are not simply pious words. They are God's own words, and they affect the lives of His people in real ways. Note especially the promise in Numbers 6:27. Remind participants that God not only guided the Israelites (note the large numbers of people through the wilderness in Numbers 26), but also protected them from their enemies. Despite the troubled time in which we live, we can be certain of God's guiding and protecting care. We think especially of God's spiritual gifts through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our lives of humble service to the Lord are the truest thanks we can give.

4. Although all of our lives as royal priests are reckoned as a service to God that is pleasing to Him (meaning the life lived by faith and through the Spirit), the New Testament mentions certain things in particular as "sacrifices." These are not atoning gifts that pay for sin, though—Christ has accomplished that for us fully, finally, and forever. Rather, these offerings are what directly result from our lives, as we have been given and have received God's grace. Knowing we are redeemed and that God in Christ vindicates us in spite of our weakness, sinfulness, and disadvantage, we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. We confess and call upon His name in faith.

5. Moses' invocation of God was similar to other occasions in which God was called upon. It was an acknowledgement of His gracious presence, which came about for them by God's initiative and work. Moses did not invoke God's name in an attempt to bring God to the people. This is the practice of pagans. Their gods are far away and must be called upon with pleas for them to come to their fearful worshipers. Instead, Moses speaks God's name because He has promised His gracious benedictory presence.

6. Numbers 12–14 records a sad series of opposition (Miriam and Aaron against Moses), failures (the spies' lack of faith), and rebellion (the people against God's appointed leader, Moses). These events were typical of the attitude of the people during the forty

years in the desert. In contrast to such behavior, Caleb and Joshua were confident that God would keep His promises and that the land could be taken. In difficult times, it is easy to lose faith, to grumble, and to go along with the unbelieving crowd. We need to remain in the Word so that when trials come we will be strong.

March Week 4 Leader Notes

March 19–25; Numbers 13–24

1. Upon hearing the unbelief of the people (spread to them from the ten other spies) and their pathetic bemoaning of their plight, Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in an open act of repentance (Numbers 14:6). By doing this, they declared the action of the people to be sin and publicly marked themselves as standing in opposition to them. This was a consequence of their faith. They stood fast by God's promise and urged the people to believe that conquest was possible despite the humanly insurmountable forces that stood in their way. They believed God's promises and power to be greater than the threats and strength of the enemy against them. This is the true fear of God: to believe that God's gracious power in Christ to save us is greater than sin's power to damn us. In the Christian Church, this true fear of God is in many ways undermined by teaching and preaching that do not declare Christ alone as the full and exclusive means of salvation. This undermining also happens as churches direct their ministries not by God's promises but by human plans that prescribe the nature and shape of ministry based upon secular models. Too often, people become more confident in themselves than in God, thinking that without human will and resources the church cannot and will not grow. Such thinking is the embodiment of unbelief.

2. The fact that the people offered sacrifices even for unintentional sins is a reminder to all of us that sin has a way of permeating everything we do, even when we are not aware those deeds are being contaminated. That is why we pray with the psalmist that God deliver us from hidden or secret faults as well as obvious sins. We are also well aware that it is futile to try to save ourselves and that salvation comes only as a gift from God in Jesus Christ.

3. Tempting God is strictly forbidden (Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12). Tempting God means putting Him to the test, seeing what He will do. Doing so is an act of distrust and unbelief and an implicit charge that God's Word and character are suspect. What of Malachi 3:10, then? Here, we must keep two things in mind. First, it is Christ alone who ultimately fulfills this promise. This is the Law of the tithe. We can never—strictly speaking—satisfy the demands of the Law. Second, this passage concerns what is given for the support of the Levitical service (see Numbers 18). Here, God promises that as they bring their tithes (in full) and all the commanded offerings, the grace of God the Levites are called to minister to them will be available in abundance. What God is calling for is faith to believe His promise of grace, not a childish exercise of “give and let's see what God will do.” Faith already knows what God has done in Christ, and plans to do during our lives and at Christ's return. This is why plans to increase offerings by daring people to “test” God are unfit for Christian use. They are little more than an appeal to human pride.

4. Hebrews 9:11–14 explains the sacrifice of the red heifer as recorded in Numbers 19. The sacrifice provided ceremonial cleansing from the defilement of death. Under the new covenant of Calvary, our relationship with Christ provides the cleansing we need from the defilement of sin and death. In Him, we enjoy everlasting life, which begins already in this life.

5. In Numbers 21, we see the Israelites complaining against God. The Lord sent venomous snakes among them, but when they repented and Moses prayed for them, God supplied relief. The bronze snake (which to this day is still the medical symbol of healing) had no power to save in and of itself. Rather, when the people looked to the snake lifted up on a pole, they were showing their trust in God's word. Jesus referred to that snake as a type of Himself. He saves us from the poison of sin and eternal death. When we look with the eyes of faith to Him lifted up on the cross, we live—not just for now, but forever. It is worth noting that the bronze snake serves as an introduction to the Gospel in a nutshell, the most famous passage in the entire Bible, John 3:16.

6. The story of Balaam's donkey shows the persistence of human pride, but it also shows how God will carry out His will and bless His people in spite of those who seek to destroy us. The fact that God chose a humble donkey to be His spokesman should keep us mindful that He does not need our services. Rather, it is an undeserved privilege to witness for the Savior. In a similar vein, when Jesus was told to have His disciples stop their praises of Him, He replied, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40).

March Week 5 Leader Notes

March 26–31; Numbers 25–36

1. Contrary to what many Bible critics today might say, the incidents with Zelophehad's daughters show that God did not ignore women and that they were not second-rate citizens. Although God established male leadership, He did not rule out rights for women to inherit land, and He also saw to it that their emotional and physical needs were met.

2. The law of vows is a reflection of God's own faithfulness and immutability (His unchangeableness). Hebrews 6:18 notes that God vowed salvation to Abraham (and for the whole world) by swearing in His own name to do so. Thus, by His oath and in accordance with His own nature, He guaranteed salvation. We, on the other hand, are promise breakers. We cannot keep God's Law by our will or power. God alone brings to pass these promises (2 Corinthians 1:10).

3. The infamy of Israel's sin at Peor (Numbers 25) was especially offensive to God. We are reminded that, contrary to popular belief, not all sins are equally bad and heinous. Certainly, all sins damn, but they do not all involve the same degree of moral or spiritual turpitude. The Scriptures distinguish between sins of weakness and ignorance and those of a deliberate and willful nature (Numbers 15:30–31; 1 Timothy 1:13).

4. By seeing the land as God's gift, the people learn to treasure it as sacred. Their lives are sanctified because God has marked the boundaries of their lives as holy. They need not imagine that God has forgotten or neglected them. This land is where He has chosen to place them. His care and grace to them are thereby made evident. Christ is the true "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). The entire world has been made holy by His redemption. Seeing our lives in light of this aids us in appreciating the sacredness of every moment and place we find ourselves. God has filled each experience of life with His sanctifying and benedictory grace. Knowing and believing this fills us with peace and confidence.

5. Numbers 20–36 tells us about the last year of Israel's journey through the desert. These chapters contain many applications for our lives. We see, for example, how Balaam, against his will, blessed the Israelites—an illustration of how God simply cannot be thwarted. Lest we become spiritually complacent, we also see how the people fell into sin, a reminder of the ever-present danger we face in this world. The offerings and vows the people made remind us that while we New Testament believers are not under the old laws, in Christian freedom we gladly devote our lives to the Lord.

6. Christ is our place of refuge. In Him, we are safe from the accusing voice of the Law. Even better, though, we have found a permanent home in Him. By adopting us into His family, Christ makes God and His kingdom our native land. In Him, we are united with God and made citizens of His realm. In fact, we are made heirs with the promise that we will rule with Him in glory forever (Revelation 22:5).