



# Thru the Bible in 2012

*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever. Isaiah 40:8*

## Ladies for Jesus Thursday Bible Study Reflects

**Readings for April 27, 2012 – May 3, 2012**

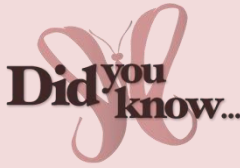
**Emailed: Wednesday, May 2, 2012**

For our ponderings, consider the questions listed below in regards to what we have read during the days of Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> – Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- **(Numbers 2:34)** Can you imagine the size of this campsite!?! It must have been one of the biggest campsites the world has ever seen! It would have taken about 12 square miles to set up tents for just the 600,000 fighting men – not to mention the women and children. No wonder Moses had such a difficult time managing such a group. In the early stages of the journey and at Mt. Sinai, the people were *generally* (term used loosely) obedient to both God and Moses. But when the people left Mt. Sinai and traveled across the rugged desert, they began to complain, grumble, and disobey. Soon problems erupted, and Moses could no longer effectively manage the Israelites. The book of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers present a striking contrast between how much we can accomplish when we obey God and how little we can accomplish when we don't. Have you recognized this truth in your own life? In what ways has God shown His faithfulness when you have been obedient to Him?
- **(Number 4:27-28)** The Gershonites could receive directions from any of Aaron's sons, but they were directly responsible to Ithamar only. The lines of authority and accountability were clearly communicated to all. In what way have you participated in making you're the lines of authority in your service to God are followed? As you function with others in service to God, make sure the lines of authority between you and those you work with are clearly understood. Good communication builds good relationships.
- **(Number 5:5-8)** God included restitution, a unique concept for that day, as part of His law for Israel. When someone was robbed, the guilty person was required to restore the loss to the victim and pay an additional interest penalty. When we have wronged others, we ought to do more than apologize. We should look for ways to set matters right and, if possible, leave the victim even better off than when we harmed him or her. When we have been wronged, we should still seek restoration rather than striking out in revenge. In what ways do you seek to restore the relationships in your life – close or casual?
- **(Numbers 6:24-25)** A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favor to rest upon others. The ancient blessing in these verses helps us understand what a blessing was supposed to do. Its five parts conveyed hope that God would (1) bless and protect them; (2) smile on them (be pleased); (3) be gracious (merciful and compassionate); (4) show His favor toward them (give His approval); (5) give peace. When you ask God to bless others or yourself, you are asking Him to do these five things. The blessing you offer will not only help the one receiving it, it will also demonstrate love, encourage others, and provide a model of caring for others. In what ways do you ask God to bless others or yourself? Are you in the habit of asking for God's blessing on your life and the life of others? If so, how have you seen that He has blessed you (or them) in one of the five ways listed above?
- **(Numbers 10:1-10)** The two silver trumpets were used to coordinate the tribes as they moved through the desert. To keep so many people in tight formations required clear communication and control. Trumpet blasts also reminded Israel of God's protection over them. In what ways do you regularly remind yourself of God's protection over you?
- **(Number 10:21)** Those who travel, move, or face new challenges know what it is to be uprooted. Life is full of changes, and few things remain stable. The Israelites were constantly moving through the desert. They were able to handle change only because God's presence in the tabernacle was always with them. The portable Tabernacle signified God and His people moving together. For us, stability does not mean lack of change, but moving with God in every circumstance. Do you lack stability in your life? In what ways have you recognized God's presence in your life? Do you find stability when you recognize Him?

- **(Numbers 10:29-32)** It may seem out of the blue that the Bible starts talking about Hobab and Moses' conversation. However, from this we can learn how to appreciate others. By complimenting Hobab's desert skills, Moses let him know he was needed. People cannot know you appreciate them if you do not tell them they are important to you. Complimenting those who deserve it builds lasting relationships and helps people know they are valued. Think about those who have helped you recently. What can you do to let them know how much you need and appreciate them?
- **(Numbers 12:1-10)** What is this criticism that Miriam and Aaron give Moses about his wife? And why do they bring it up now? People often argue over minor disagreements, leaving the real issue untouched. Such was the case when Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses. They represented the priests and the prophets, the two most powerful groups next to Moses. The real issue was their growing jealousy of Moses' position and influence. Since they could not find fault with the way Moses was leading the people, they chose to criticize his wife. Rather than face the problem squarely by dealing with their envy and pride, they chose to create a diversion from the real issue. When you are in a disagreement, do you have a tendency to create a smoke screen attack on someone's character instead of bringing the real issue to the table? On the other hand, how do you handle unjustly criticism from others? If you are unjustly criticized, remember that your critics may be afraid to face the real problem. Don't take this type of criticism personally. Ask God to help you identify the real issue and deal with it.
- **(Numbers 12:11)** Aaron asked that he and Miriam not be punished for their sin. It is easy to look back at our mistakes and recognize their foolishness. It is much harder to recognize foolish plans while we are carrying them out because somehow then they seem appropriate. To get rid of foolish ideas before they turn into foolish actions requires eliminating our wrong thoughts and motives. Failing to do this caused Miriam and Aaron much grief. When you implement plans, do you consider the fact that they may be foolish or do you go forth just because you think it is a "good idea?" It is best to pray about our plans before implementing them, regardless if we think they are a good idea initially.
- **(Numbers 13:17-20)** Moses decided what information was needed before the people could enter the Promised Land, and he took careful steps to get the information. When you are making decisions or assuming new responsibilities do you ask yourself what you need to know about the opportunity, and then obtain that knowledge? Common sense is a valuable aid in accomplishing God's purposes. See Proverbs 12:15 and 15:22.
- **(Numbers 14:1-4)** When the chorus of despair went up, everyone joined in. Their greatest fears were being realized. Losing their perspective, the people were caught up in the emotion of the moment, forgetting what they knew about God's character. What if the people had spent as much energy moving forward as they did moving back? They could have enjoyed their land – instead they never even entered it. When a cry of despair goes up around you, do you consider the larger perspective before you join in? Think about the amount of energy that you use when you complain – do you think that there are better ways to use your energy.
- **(Numbers 14:6-10)** Two wise men, Joshua and Caleb, encouraged the people to act to God's promise and move ahead into the land. The people rejected their advice and even talked of stoning them. Are you quick to reject advice that you do not like? Evaluate it carefully, comparing it to the teachings in God's Word. The advice may be a message from God.
- **(Numbers 14:20-23)** The people of Israel had a clearer view of God than any people before them, for they had both His laws and His physical presence. Their refusal to follow God after witnessing His miraculous deeds and listening to His words made the judgment against them more severe. Increased opportunity brings increased responsibility. As Jesus said: "When someone has been given much, much will be required in return" (Luke 12:48). How much greater is our responsibility to obey and serve God – we have the whole Bible; AND we know God's Son, Jesus Christ; AND we have His Holy Spirit guiding us!! Do you recognize the responsibility of obeying God in your own life? Do you realize that God *expects* you to obey the things you have learned from Him and His Word?
- **(Numbers 14:34)** God's judgment came in the form the people feared most. The people were afraid of dying in the desert, so God punished them by making them wander in the desert until they died. Now they wished they had the problem of facing the giants and the fortified cities of the Promised Land. Do you fail to trust God and end up running into greater problems? When we run from God, we inevitably run into problems.

- **(Numbers 14:40-44)** When the Israelites realized their foolish mistake, they were suddenly ready to return to God. But God didn't confuse their admission of guilt with true repentance because He knew their hearts. Sure enough, they soon went their own way again. Sometimes right actions or good intentions come too late. Do you do what is right at the right time? God wants complete and instant obedience.
- **(Numbers 16:8-10)** Moses saw through their charges to their true motivation – some of them wanted power of the priesthood. Like Korah, we often desire the special qualities God has given others. Korah had significant, worthwhile abilities and responsibilities of his own. In the end, however, his ambition for more caused him to lose everything. Inappropriate ambition is greed in disguise. Do you concentrate on finding the special purpose God has for you instead of wishing you were in someone else's shoes?
- **(Numbers 18:25-26)** Even the Levites, who were ministers, had to tithe to support the Lord's work. No one was exempt from returning to God a portion of what was received. Though the Levites owned no land and operated no great enterprises, they were to treat their income the same as everyone else did by giving a portion to care for the needs of other Levites and of the Tabernacle. The tithing principle is still relevant. God expects all His followers to supply the material needs to those who devote themselves to meeting the spiritual needs of the community of faith. Do you feel that you are contributing your part in this regards? Ask God to direct you about what you should give and to help you give generously.
- **(Numbers 20:3-5)** After 37 years in the desert, it is obvious that the Israelites had forgotten that their wanderings were a result of their parents' and their own sin. They could not accept the fact that they brought their problems upon themselves, so they blamed Moses for their condition. Do you blame God or others for your sins? Often our troubles result from our own disobedience or lack of faith. Until we face this reality, we will have little peace and NO spiritual growth.
- **(Numbers 20:21)** Moses tried to negotiate and reason with the Edomite king. When nothing worked, he was left with two choices – force a conflict or avoid it. Moses knew there would be enough barriers in the days and months ahead. There was no point in adding another one unnecessarily. Sometimes conflict is unavoidable. Sometimes, however, it isn't worth the consequences. Open warfare may seem heroic, courageous, and even righteous, but it is not always the best choice. Do you find another way to solve your problems even if it is harder for you to do?
- **(Number 21:5)** In Psalm 78, we learn the sources of Israel's complaining: (1) Their spirits were not faithful to God (78:8); (2) they refused to obey God's law (78:10); (3) they forgot the miracles God had done for them (78:11). Our complaining often has its roots in one of these thoughtless actions and attitudes. We must be careful that our roots do not Do you deal with the cause of your complaining before it takes hold and grows in your life?



**(Numbers 3:5-13)** At the time of the first Passover, God instructed every Israelite family to dedicate its firstborn son to Him (Exodus 13:2). They were set apart to assist Moses and Aaron in ministering to the people. This was only a temporary measure, however. Here God chose all the men from the tribe of Levi to replace the firstborn sons from every Israelite tribe (3:40-51 & 8:16). The Levites, were set apart to care for the Tabernacle and minister to the people. All the priests had to belong to the tribe of Levi, but not all Levites were priests. The Levites were to be 25 years old before entering service. They probably received five years of “on-the-job training” before being admitted to full service at age 30.

**(Numbers 3:10)** Aaron and his descendants were appointed to the priesthood. There is a tremendous contrast between the priesthood of Aaron in the Old Testament and the priesthood of Christ in the New Testament. Aaron and his descendants were the only ones who could carry out the duties of the priests and approach God’s dwelling place. Now that Christ is our High Priest – our intermediary with God – anyone who follows Him is also called a priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Now all Christians may come into God’s presence without fear because God’s own Son encourages His followers to do so. We can put guilt behind us and experience forgiveness when we have a special relationship with God based on what Christ has done for us.

**(Numbers 6:1-2)** In Moses’ day, a personal vow was as binding as a written contract. It was one thing to say you would do something, but it was considered much more serious when you made a solemn vow to do it. God instituted the Nazirite vow for people who wanted to devote some time exclusively to serving Him. This vow could be taken for as little as 30 days or as long as a lifetime. It was voluntary, with one exception – parents could take the vow for their young children, making them Nazirites for life. The vow included three distinct restrictions, (1) He must abstain from wine and fermented drink; (2) the hair could not be cut, and the beard could not be shaved; (3) touching a dead body was prohibited. The purpose of the Nazirite vow was to raise up a group of leaders devoted completely to God. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were probably Nazirites for life.

**(Numbers 16:1-3)** Korah and his associates had seen the advantages of the priesthood in Egypt. Egyptian priests had great wealth and political influence, something Korah wanted for himself. Korah may have assumed that Moses, Aaron, and his sons were trying to make the Israelite priesthood the same as the Egyptians, and, he wanted to be part of it. He did not understand that Moses’ main ambition was to serve God rather than control others.

**(Numbers 19:9-10)** What is the significance of the red heifer’s ashes? When a person touched a dead body, he was considered unclean (i.e. unable to approach God in worship). This ritual purified the unclean person so that once again he could offer sacrifices and worship God. Death was the strongest of defilements because it was the final result of sin. Thus, a special sacrifice – a red heifer – was required. It had to be offered by someone who was not unclean. When it had been burned on the altar, its ashes were used to purify water for ceremonial cleansing – not so much physically as symbolically. The unclean person then washed himself, and often his clothes and belongings, with this purified water as an act of becoming clean again.

**(Numbers 20)** When we begin this chapter, it had been 37 years since Israel’s first scouting mission into the Promised Land (Numbers 13-14) and 40 years since the Exodus from Egypt. The Bible is virtually silent about those 37 years of aimless wandering. The generation of those who had lived in Egypt had almost died off, and the new generation would soon be ready to enter the land. Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb were among the few who remained from those who had left Egypt. Once again they camped at Kadesh, the site of the first scouting mission that had ended in disaster. Moses hoped the people were ready for a fresh start.

**(Numbers 21:6)** God used poisonous snakes to punish the people for their unbelief and complaining. The desert where they traveled has a variety of snakes. Some hide in the sand and attack without warning. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians had a great fear of snakes. A bite by a poisonous snake often meant a slow death with intense suffering.



**(Numbers 4)** The Kohathites (4:2), Gershonites (4:21) and Merarites (4:29) were families of Levites who were assigned special tasks in Israel's worship. For the jobs described in this chapter a Levite had to be between 30 and 50 years old. He was expected to carry out his duties as described here in every detail. In fact, failure to do so would mean death (4:20). This contrasted greatly from the religious practices of the Egyptians who could purchase amulets and potions. Their idols could be handled. The God of the Hebrews was not to be handled or reduced to common elements. He is greater than anything in His creation. Worshiping our holy God must not be taken lightly.

**(Numbers 12:14)** Spitting in someone's face was considered the ultimate insult and a sign of shame imposed on wrongdoers. The religious leaders spat in Jesus' face to insult Him (Matthew 26:67). God punished Miriam for her smug attitude not only toward Moses' authority but also God's. He struck her with leprosy, then ordered her out of the camp for a week. This punishment was actually quite lenient. A week was the length of time she would have been excluded if her father had spit in her face. How much more she deserved for wronging God! Once again, God was merciful while retaining effective discipline.

**(Numbers 14:6)** Tearing clothing was a customary way of showing deep sorrow, mourning, or despair, Joshua and Caleb were greatly distressed by the people's refusal to enter the land.

**(Numbers 14:24)** The fulfillment of this verse is recorded in Joshua 14:6-15 when Caleb received his inheritance in the Promised Land. Caleb followed God with all his heart and was rewarded for his obedience.

**(Numbers 15:32-36)** Stoning a man for gathering wood on the Sabbath seems like a severe punishment! This act was a deliberate sin, defying God's law against working on the Sabbath. Perhaps the man was taking advantage of everyone else while they were at home resting, in addition to breaking the Sabbath.

**(Numbers 15:39)** The tassels were to remind people not to seek after their own lustful desires, but to seek the Lord. Idol worship is self-centered, focusing on what a person can get from serving an idol. Good luck, prosperity, long life, and success in battle were expected from the gods. So were power and prestige. The worship of God is the opposite. Believers are to be selfless rather than self-centered. Instead of expecting God to serve us, we are to serve Him, expecting nothing in return. We serve God for who He is, not for what we get from Him.

**(Number 16:27-35)** Although the families of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up, the sons of Korah were not wiped out (see 26:11).

**(Number 21:8-9)** When the bronze snake was hung on the pole, the Israelites didn't know the fuller meaning Jesus Christ would bring to this event (see John 3:14-15). Jesus explained that just as the Israelites were healed of their sickness by looking at the snake on the pole, all believers today can be saved from the sickness of sin by looking to Jesus' death on the cross. It was not the snake that healed the people but their belief that God could heal them. This belief was demonstrated by their obedience to God's instructions. In the same way, we should continue to look to Christ (see Hebrews 12:2).