

CHANGING WANDERERS INTO WORSHIPERS

From the Exodus to the Promised Land

Same Song, Eleventh Verse . . . Hope Beyond Snakebite

Numbers 21:4–9; John 3:14–16

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The Israelites neared the end of their fortieth year of wandering the same way they began their journey: complaining. They made it a habit. As Chuck Swindoll said in his message,

If you keep a careful record of the whining and complaining and the grumbling of these Hebrews, you will find yourself shocked, as I was. . . . I numbered them. . . . Eleven times they complained and God dealt with them.

They grumbled against God, and they grumbled against Moses. Even though God's judgment came much swifter than previously, His gracious remedy exceeded the petitioning of the Israelites.

Today, we'll study with Chuck the eleventh episode of rebellion, found in Numbers 21, using his *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method. As if we're looking at yet another side of the same diamond, we'll examine the disobedience of the Israelites, but we'll also get to see the multifaceted grace of our glorious God.

Quotable

*The Israelites
allowed
overexposure to the
things of God to
harden their hearts
rather than soften
them. Let's stay
alert that we might
not do the same.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Let's begin our study with an overview of the Israelite journey from Egypt to Canaan. We've adopted the chart below from Michael A. Grisanti. It documents the forty-year period from the first celebration of the Passover in Egypt to the first celebration of the Passover in Canaan.¹

Chronology of Israel's Journey from Egypt to Canaan					
Year	Month	Day	Reference	Event	Elapsed Time Since Previous Event
1	1	14	Exodus 12:1–6	Passover and death angel; beginning of Exodus	
1	2	15	Exodus 16:1	Arrival at Wilderness of Sin	1 month, 1 day
1	3	14	Exodus 19:1	Arrival at the Wilderness of Sinai, at base of Mount Sinai	29 days
2	1	1	Exodus 40:17	Tabernacle erected; events of Leviticus begin	9 months, 16 days
2	2	1	Numbers 1:1–2	Events of Leviticus conclude; instruction to the number of people	1 month
2	2	20	Numbers 10:11–12	Numbering finished; departure from Wilderness of Sinai	20 days
40	1	?	Numbers 20:1	The death of Miriam	
40	5	1	Numbers 20:23–29; 33:38	The death of Aaron	
40	11	1	Deuteronomy 1:3	Moses' last words 39 years, 11 months, 26 days since the Passover	38 years, 8 months, 11 days
41	1	10	Joshua 4:19	Crossing of the Jordan 39 years, 11 months, 26 days since the Passover	1 month, 9 days
41	1	14	Joshua 5:10	Celebration of the Passover	4 days



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Numbers 21:4–9; John 3:14–16

The events we'll study in Numbers 21 today take place between Aaron's death and Moses' last words to the second generation recorded in Deuteronomy. Sometimes, performing observation and interpretation together on smaller passages makes for a smoother Bible study experience.

But first, take a moment to still your mind and set your heart toward Christ. Read Psalm 119:33–35, and write a prayer below asking His blessing on your Bible study.

*Teach me your decrees, O LORD;
I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions;
I will put them into practice with all my heart.
Make me walk along the path of your commands,
for that is where my happiness is found.*



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The Israelites' Foretaste of Their Promised Victory Numbers 21:1–3	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. List your top five observations of <i>Numbers 21:1–3</i>.</p>	<p>2a. Based on what we've learned in previous studies, how does Numbers 21:1 signify God's judgment, and what might have been the cause of this judgment?</p>
<p>1b. What did the Israelites ask of God, and what did they promise they would do if He granted their request?</p>	<p>2b. In Numbers 21:2, what actions signified Israel's return to obedience to God and to God's grace?</p>

Stop. That's the first step of turning around and growing up. . . . This is the first sign or glimpse or hint of maturity emerging. —Chuck Swindoll



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That Bunch of Complainers Numbers 21:4–6	
 Observation	 Interpretation
<p>1a. List your top five observations of <i>Numbers 21:4–6</i>.</p>	<p>2a. The Israelites complained about their “long” journey and “boring” food. But how were these two things actually gifts from God?</p>
<p>1b. Against whom did the Israelites speak and why?</p>	<p>2b. Using your Bible dictionary, commentary, or the <i>NET Bible</i> website, record the species of snake you believe the Lord sent and why He sent these snakes.</p>
<p>1c. How quickly and in what way did God respond to the Israelites’ complaints?</p>	

As a leader, you will be criticized by those who will later need your help. . . . Step up and give it to them. —Chuck Swindoll



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Searching the Scriptures Review Tip: Correlation

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck says, “When we carefully compare one Scripture with others, we are accurately handling the Word of God.”² The Bible’s most important subjects surface throughout the biblical narrative, from Genesis through Revelation. We learn more about that subject by discovering how its importance and meaning unfold as the biblical revelation progressively develops—like a rose that slowly blooms.



Correlation

One night, a Jewish scholar named Nicodemus let his curiosity compel him to talk with Jesus. Jesus challenged some of the doctrines and practices that many of the Jews held sacred. We read of their conversation in the gospel written by John in chapter 3:1–21.

Carefully read [John 3:1–21](#), and note where Jesus spoke of the events we just studied in Numbers 21:4–9.

Who is the Son of Man according to John 3:14–15, and why must He be “lifted up”?

How does one express belief in God according to John 3:14–15?

How does John 3:16 relate to John 3:14–15? (Note the logical conjunction.)



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Numbers 21:4–9—merely six verses—fits like a tiny, insignificant puzzle piece among 20,000 when compared to the library of Old Testament writings. But Jesus recalled the short story to Nicodemus to teach the most profound truth anyone can learn:

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16–17)

Some of you are still outside of Christ because you have made it difficult. You've had the key analyzed. You've had the car inspected. You've checked out fourteen different versions. . . . And the gift awaits. Take it. . . . Anybody can have it. —Chuck Swindoll



Application

The Israelites' complaining demonstrated their hardened hearts toward the blessings of God. Do you ever let yourself grow numb to God's blessings—church, clothes, a nice home, or friends—that you start focusing on the negatives rather than positives? Take a moment to reflect and write a prayer of gratitude for the good things God does for you.

Let's go a step further. Do you sometimes let yourself grumble about the negatives? If so, write down what areas of your life you tend to complain about, and then make a resolution not to do so. Instead, give thanks for the good things in that area of life.



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Even though the Israelites complained against Moses, he responded with grace and mercy. Do you find yourself in a similar situation where those whom you lead have recently complained against you? If so, take a moment to write how you can demonstrate to them the grace and mercy God has demonstrated to you.

Never forget: look beyond the many gifts we receive in this life, and give thanks to the gracious Giver, our Father.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, from the sun which gives light to our eyes which give us sight, You are the Creator of all good things, the Creator of life. That life is good and beautiful because You are good and beautiful even when we turn light to darkness and make repulsive that which you've made beautiful. Create in me a gracious heart, O Lord, that I may embody Your ways before a world unfamiliar to grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Eugene Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2011), Kindle location 8450–8600.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 143.



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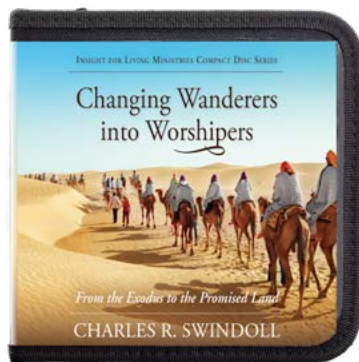
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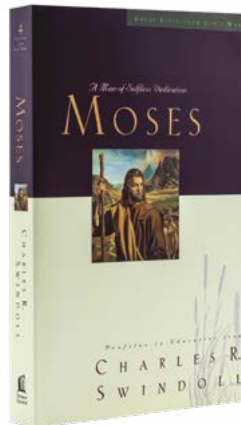
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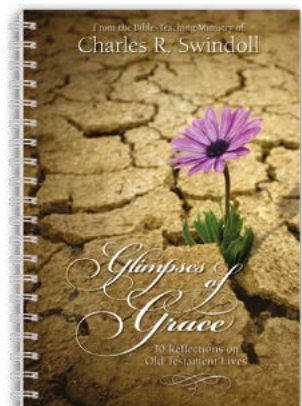
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2018–2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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