

Lack of Trust

Session 5 • Numbers 20:2-13



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness*).

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph on page 45.

ASK: Do you find yourself in category one or two? Why do you think that is your tendency? On what kinds of tasks is it most important to follow instructions all the way to the end? (p. 45)

SUGGEST: Mention that sometimes even people who normally follow directions skip them because they think they know what they should do. Point out that sometimes this could lead to serious difficulties or unintended problems.

TRANSITION: *Today's study passage comes from Numbers 20. It's an account of a time when Moses, usually a person who followed God's directions, made a choice to act according to his own plan. As a result, Moses experienced a painful consequence.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab*), explain the location of the people of Israel. Summarize the activities of Moses and the Israelites in Numbers 15:1–20:1.

SAY: *In Numbers 16, a Levite named Korah stirred up a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Again, God was ready to destroy the nation, but Moses interceded on behalf of the people. Hearing Moses's pleas, God opened the earth, and it swallowed Korah and his family. The Lord also rained fire from heaven, killing 250 others. When Israel complained about God's judgment, He sent a plague that killed more than 14,000 Israelites. Again, Moses went to God for the people, and He ended the plague.*

READ: **Call on a volunteer to read aloud Numbers 20:2-5** and guide the group to follow along in their Bibles. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Complaints in the Wilderness*). Guide adults to underline and call out the complaints listed by the Israelites against Moses.

RECAP: Explain why the people quarreled with Moses by summarizing the following. Emphasize that their quarrel with Moses

and Aaron was really a quarrel against God and His ways.

- **(20:2-3)** The primary issue was a lack of water. This was not the first time that water had been in short supply (Ex. 17:1-7). Yet, God's previous provision did not move the needle for the Israelites in this setting. Instead of trusting God to do what He had done already, they grumbled and "assembled against" Moses and Aaron. They presented a unified (and dangerous) front. The verb "quarreled" denotes a contentious dispute, as the people verbally assaulted Moses and Aaron over their hardship. In reality, they were quarreling with God! They let their current challenging circumstances override their confidence in His promises.

ASK: Why do we tend to romanticize "the good old days," even though they weren't always so good? (p. 47)

TRANSITION: *In addition to the bondage of Egypt, the people also forgot that they weren't enjoying prosperity because of the nation's sin. They still struggled to take responsibility for their own actions.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read Numbers 20:6-8. Direct half of the group to listen for actions that Moses and Aaron took and half of the group to listen for what the Lord told them to do. Allow volunteers to report what they discovered.

EXPLAIN: Describe how Moses and Aaron positioned themselves in prayer before God by summarizing this information:

- **(20:6)** When Moses and Aaron went from the complaining assembly to the tent's "doorway," they symbolically were bringing their concerns before the Lord. They demonstrated proper reverence and honor by falling "facedown." This was (and continues to be) an appropriate act of worship and humility when seeking God. Moses and Aaron did this when the Israelites refused to enter Canaan. They also fell facedown when God threatened to destroy His people after Korah's rebellion (Num. 14:5; 16:22). Jesus assumed this same position when He pleaded, "Let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39). Each instance was of a desperate prayer. The position communicates an anguished and humble attitude.

ASK: What kinds of difficulties get you facedown—either literally or figuratively—before the Lord? (p. 47)

RESTATE: Briefly share how Moses used his staff in Exodus 17 to bring water from a rock. Note that in Numbers 17 God also had used Aaron's staff to quiet Israel's complaints. Point out that in verse 8, God instructed Moses to use a staff to assemble the people and to speak to the rock to bring out water.

READ: Guide the group to read Numbers 20:9-13 silently and to consider what Moses and Aaron's attitudes were like as they assembled the Israelites.

EXAMINE: Group adults into four teams and direct each team to scan verses 9-13 and the related content on pages 50-51. Encourage one group to identify the people's demands, one group to reflect on Moses and Aaron's

attitude, one group to examine Moses striking the rock, and one group to focus on God's response. After a few minutes, allow teams to report on what they discovered.

SAY: *Failing to follow God's instructions, Moses struck the rock. Because of this disobedience, he and Aaron would not enter the promised land.*

ASK: What does it say about God's character that He provided such an abundance of water? (p. 47)

EXPLAIN: Explain the meaning of "Meribah":

- **(20:13)** The word *Meribah* means "contention" or "strife" and is related to the word translated "quarreled" in this verse. The name reflected the people's quarreling with God rather than trusting Him fully and obediently.

ASK: What do we communicate to God when we follow His instructions? What do we communicate to Him when we don't follow His instructions? (p. 47)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review the following from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers can trust God even when current circumstances appear bleak.
- We can turn to God with our needs and concerns.
- Believers should recognize that ignoring God's instructions leads to consequences.

REFLECT: Guide adults to consider times in their lives when they haven't followed God's instructions completely. Lead them to turn to God and ask Him for forgiveness. In addition, encourage them to seek His continued guidance in their lives, even when the circumstances are difficult.

DISCUSS: Call attention to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 47 and lead adults to share advice about how to pray for "facedown" issues.

PRAY: Guide adults through a few moments of silent, directed prayer, praying for known requests, needs of your church, and their own personal needs. Conclude the prayer by asking the Lord to grant wisdom and strength in following His instructions obediently each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

In a group text or email, encourage the group to pray for their "facedown" issues during the week. Remind them also to use the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15) for prayer prompts based on this week's Scripture passage.