Motivation: The basic truth of this lesson involves commitment. Modern culture prizes convenience and comfort over sacrifice and commitment. What does God expect from His children?

I. Starting A Holy Conquest (31:1 – 32:19)

A. Punishment (31:1-54)

1. Purpose “Execute vengeance for the Israelites against the Midianites...” (31:2) In 25:17-18 God had decreed punishment on the Midianites for their role in Balak’s plot to corrupt the Israelites (31:16). Evidently the scheme was widespread, had official sanction of the kings of Midian, and was led among the Midianite women by the King’s daughter, Cozbi (25:18; 31:8; Rom. 12:17-21).

HCSB, p. 272.
31:2
“The
Midianites
are an enigmatic people in biblical, historical and archaeological research. According to Gn. 25:1-4, Midian was one of the sons of Abraham through his concubine Keturah. Midianites were allied at times with the Moabites (Gn 36:35; Nm 22:7; 25:6, 14-18), the Amalekites (Jdg 6:3; 7:12), and the Ishmaelites (Gn 37:28). The Midianites seem to have been a loosely connected confederation of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes with origins in northern Saudi Arabia who traveled the regions of the western Sinai Peninsula, southern Jordan, and the Arabah.”
2. □ Plan "Send 1,000 men to war from each Israelite tribe.” (31:4) A twelve-thousand-man army is relatively small compared to the potential fighting strength of Israel (601,730 – Num. 26). The Midianites were desert dwellers whose preferred mode of transport was the camel. The fact that Judges 7-8 records a large-scale Midianite invasion (defeated by Gideon) leads us to believe that this action was against a relatively small band of nomadic tribes that had to be ruthlessly punished for attempting to subvert God’s people.

3. □ Penalty “Have you let every female live’?” (31:15) The widespread seduction and blasphemy of chapter 25 called for widespread punishment by God. Destruction of even the infant males (17) was to cut off these tribes; destruction of the women who had “sexual relations with a man” (17) was punishment for the sexual sin and attempt to lure Israel away into idolatry. Such a severe punishment reflects God’s hatred for sin.

4. □ Plunder “…the plunder the army had taken...” (31:32) When God’s people fight God’s wars, rich rewards await. The warriors received the lion’s share per capita. However, the entire congregation, especially the priests and Levites, benefited from the heroic actions of the few. (I Sam. 30:24)

5. □ Provision “Moses and Eleazar the priest received from them all the articles made out of gold” (31:51) The miracle of the battle was that not one Israelite was killed! (49) Therefore, the soldiers took up a spontaneous offering (52) to substitute for the lives of those soldiers God had spared. In much the same way, the Levites “made atonement” or substituted for the first born of the nation of Israel (31:45-47).

B. □ Pioneers (32:1-19)

1. □ Pause “Don’t make us cross the Jordan” (32:5) Why do God’s people choose not to fully possess all the blessings He has promised? We’re to position our possessions, possess our positions and partake of the promises. (Gal. 2:20; 3:26-29; Rom. 5:10)

   a. □ Convenience “they saw that the region was a good one for livestock” (32:1) Some of God’s children have a very shortsighted approach to life. They don’t think in terms of global missions or even local ministry but rather only in terms of the path of least resistance. (Matt.
6:33; Eph. 6:13; I Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10)

HCSB

, p. 274, 32:1-5 “Having journeyed through the arid regions south of the Arnon River such as Edom and Moab, the

Reubenites

and

Gadites

observed that the region around

Gilead

was more fertile. The several rivers in the region such as the Yarmuk, Jabesh, and Jabbok, along with the numerous springs, would provide an ample water supply for their needs. The cities named were located in the highland plains of Transjordan on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. The request for territorial allocation east of the Jordan River was made in proper protocol: they presented themselves as servants seeking favor before

Moses, Eleazar… and the leaders of the community

(cp. 31:13). Their claim was that since the Lord had provided victory over the Amorites and others, and the land could provide ample pasturage for their livestock, they should be allowed to settle there. They added the stipulation that they not be required to

cross the Jordan River
– they did not want to go to war.”

b. (Lack of) Commitment “Should your brothers go to war while you stay here?” (6) By stressing “your brothers” Moses emphasized the close bond that unites God’s people. The early Christians recognized this same kinship (Acts 6:3, 10:23, 11:1) Moses compared their discouragement (7) to the discouragement caused by the ten spies (8-9) and reminded them of the consequences (10-11).

The lack of commitment of these two tribes seems to reflect an attitude of “I’ve got mine, now leave me alone.” In no uncertain terms, Moses reminds them that what God’s people do, they do together (20-22). (Luke 12:15-23; Eph.4:11-16; Cain & Balaam are scriptural examples. I Tim. 6:6-19)

c. Compromise “And here you, a brood of sinners, standing in your fathers’ place adding even more to the Lord’s burning anger against Israel.” (14)

God had commanded Israel to possess the land, the entire land. If each tribe stopped fighting when they possessed only their part, the fighting strength of Israel would be greatly reduced. Many of God’s blessings are never fully claimed because God’s children are content with second best.
2. **Proposal** “But we will arm ourselves and be ready to go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them into their place.” (32:17a) HCSB, p. 275, 32:16-19

“The Reubenites and Gadites pledged their full support for the conquest of the land west of the Jordan River - even to the point of leading the way for the remainder of the tribes (we will arm ourselves and be ready to go) – if Moses would allow them to take their inheritance in Transjordan and permit them to leave their families in safekeeping of the local towns”

II. **Warning Issued**

“Moses replied to them, “If you do this—if you arm yourselves for battle before the Lord, and every one of your armed men crosses the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven His enemies from His presence, and the land is subdued before the Lord—afterward you may return and be free from obligation to the Lord and to Israel. And this land will belong to you as a possession before the Lord. But if you don’t do this, you will certainly sin against the Lord; be sure your sin will catch up with you.

Build cities for your dependents and folds for your flocks but do what you have promised.”

(32:20-24) Moses accepted the revised plan (16-19) with a warning. In the heat of battles to come, they could not renege on their promise. Notice that he did not say “your sin will be found out.” The sin carries its own punishment (Gal. 6:7; Hos. 8:7; Romans 14:10, 12).

HCSB, p. 275, 32:20-24

“Moses consented to the request of these tribes under both positive (if you do this) and negative (if you don’t do this) stipulations. The covenant between the Gad-Reuben alliance and the other ten tribes had Moses as the mediator, and Yahweh as the witness and guarantor of the commitment made by the two groups.”

III. **Agreement Given**
“The Gadites and Reubenites answered Moses, “Your servants will do just as my lord commands. Our little children, wives, livestock, and all our animals will remain here in the cities of Gilead, but your servants are equipped for war before the Lord and will go across to the battle as my lord orders.” (32:25-27) The two tribes submitted to the agreement as servants of Moses and of the Lord. They recognized authority and obedience.

IV. Accountability Established

“So Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the family leaders of the Israelite tribes. Moses told them, “If the Gadites and Reubenites cross the Jordan with you, every man in battle formation before the Lord, and the land is subdued before you, you are to give them the land of Gilead as a possession. But if they don’t go across with you in battle formation, they must accept land in Canaan with you.”

The Gadites and Reubenites replied, “What the Lord has spoken to your servants is what we will do. We will cross over in battle formation before the Lord into the land of Canaan, but we will keep our hereditary possession across the Jordan.” (32:28-32, cf. 33-42)

Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh (33) were given this land. Is there a lesson for us in not crossing over the Jordan, in not fully intending to claim all God has for us? J. Vernon McGee, (Thru the Bible, vol. 1, p. 527) “The two- and one-half tribes did not cross the Jordan. Did this work out to their disadvantage? Yes. Our Lord said that by their fruits ye shall know them. When He was here on earth, one time He was trying to get away from the crowd, ‘And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes’ (Mark 5:1). Now who are the Gadarenes? They are the tribe of Gad, living on the wrong side of the Jordan River. And when Jesus came to them, He found them in the pig business, you remember. And when He healed the demon-possessed man, the Gadarenes asked the Lord Jesus to leave their country! They had gotten into a sad condition. This always happens to the child of God.
who fails to cross Jordan and get into the Land of Promise.” Analogous to the Promised Land, the Spirit-filled life is what we seek today. (Gal. 3:3)

V. Battle Plans (33:1-35:8)

A. Progress (33:1-49) Explore the Bible Commentary, (Fall, 1999) p. 132: “This section provides a list of Israel’s encampments as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The list included an introduction (vv. 1-4) and then the encampments from Rameses to Sinai (vv. 5-15), from Sinai to Kadesh that embraced the wilderness wanderings (vv. 16-36), and from Kadesh to Israel’s present encampment in the plains of Moab (vv. 37-49).

B. Process (33:50-35:8)

1. Price “you must drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you” (33:52) Israel would be the instrument of God’s judgment on the Canaanites (just as later Assyria and Babylon would bring judgment on Israel (56).

   a. Drive out inhabitants.

   b. Destroy the stone images (idols).

   c. Destroy cast images (metal idols).

   d. Demolish high places (places of idol worship, usually on a hill).

2. Prediction “But if you don’t…those you allow to remain will become thorns in your eyes and in your sides…” (33:55) Unfortunately the history of Israel is a
Numbers Lesson 7: “God Expects”

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roller coaster ride of falling into idol worship and falling under the attack of the Philistines and other tribes left behind. When we compromise God’s clear instructions, there’s always a price to pay. (Ps. 106:15)

VI. Instructing About Settlement (34:1 – 36:13)

A. Planning (34:1-29)

1. Plots “When you enter the land of Canaan...” (34:2) This is in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:18. Notice that it is expected. Vss. 1-15 describes the boundaries of this promised land.

2. People “These are the names of the men who are to distribute the land as an inheritance for you” (16) Vss. 16-29 list the people who would administratively divide the land among the tribes.

3. Priests “Command the Israelites to give cities out of their hereditary property for the Levites to live in...” (35:2) The Levites (which included all Priests) did not have an area of land. Instead, they were given forty-eight cities of which six were called “cities of refuge” (Josh. 20:2, 3). As a “Kingdom of priests” (Rev. 1:6; I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10), Christians are not to live their lives in isolation exclusively with other Christians. Rather, we are to be spread-out over-all society as “salt and light.” (Matt. 5:16; Ezek. 48:10-20)

B. Protection (35:9-34)

Since the law prescribed “life for life” (Ex. 21:23), a near kinsmen would be the avenger to claim a life. This section provides protection and “due process” for one responsible for an accidental death.
C. Property (36:1-13)

Believer’s Study Bible, p. 245: 36:6, 7 “To ensure that property transferred by female inheritance did not go outside the tribe, a woman who had inherited was only allowed to marry within the tribe of her father (cf. 27:3). 36:10 “For a member of the unbelieving generation of Israel, Zelophehad is greatly honored in Scripture through his faithful daughters (Num. 26:33; 27:3) This striking record of obedience is a promising note on which to end such a book that contrasts Israel's unfaithfulness with the Lord's faithfulness. The implicit conclusion is, ‘Be like the faithful daughters of Zelophehad, not like the unbelieving first generation.’"

Application:

1. God reserves severe punishment for those who would corrupt His people.

2. God expects persistence, performance, and participation from all His people.

3. God provides a plan that He expects to be obeyed by all His people.

Adult Leader Pack: Item 11: Handout: Covenant Pattern

No Illustrator article

Notes: **You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format at: www.hfcbiblestudy.org
Dates: 1/6-9 – Daniel Fast; 1/15 – Midlink preview; 1/17-19 – LIFT Weekend; 1/22 – Midlink 1 thru 2/26;
1/26
– Fitness EXPO;
1/31
– Midnight Madness;
2/7
– Night to Shine;
2/9
– First Camp;
2/14-15
– Superstart Preteen Conf.;
2/16
– MIYCO;
2/21
– Marriage Matters;
2/23
– Parent Commitment;
2/29
– Senior Adult Rodeo Hoedown;
3/7
– Men’s Conf. Iron Sharpens Iron;
3/7-19
– RUSHMORE.