**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

1. Ask for each student’s high and low from the week.
2. Today’s RBQ: What are the top three things you have to have to make a road trip great?

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever watched one of those competition baking shows or maybe even dabbled in the kitchen yourself? If you have, you know the kitchen can sometimes become a place of complete chaos! Especially on TV. There’s always a moment in the beginning where contestants make a mad dash for the pantry of food items and return with an armload of ingredients that don’t seem like they’re really going to fit together. And yet, somehow in the end, they manage to create a beautiful (and hopefully edible) dish. They make mastering the chaos seem easy!

In today’s passage we’re going to get a glimpse of how God does the same for his people as he intervenes with instructions that help create something beautiful and purposeful out of chaos. The book of Numbers picks up after Moses has delivered God’s people (Israel) out of slavery in Egypt and just before he begins to lead them into the promised land God has for them. While the verses we’ll read are full of details that might seem unimportant at first glance, they serve to teach a significant truth: that it is always better to trust in God’s ways and voice, rather than our own understanding!

**What’s something that as a little kid you thought you understood, but then realized as you got older that you actually didn’t?**

***READ NUMBERS 1:1-4***

1. **God asks Moses to number all the military age men in preparation for conquering and taking over the promised land he would give them. What circumstance in your own life might God be using right now to shape and grow you for his glory and your good?**
2. **Why is it important that these instructions for the people came from the Lord and not Moses? What difference does WHO says things — God or your peers — make in your life?**

***THEN READ NUMBERS 2:1-34***

1. **Here God gives instructions for organizing the people when the set up camp.** **What are some other examples you can think of where God created order out of chaos in Scripture? How has He done this in your life?**
2. **What are some areas people tend to base decisions on worldly wisdom instead of on the Lord’s plans? Where are you tempted to do this?**
3. **Where do you need to center your life on the Lord instead of other people or your circumstances?**

**WRAP UP**

**Put today's lesson into action:**

* + **What’s one thing you can do this week that will help you center your life on God?**
  + **What can you share with someone this week about what you’ve learned?**

*Ask for any prayer requests and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

**Context for Number:** The book of Numbers begins where Leviticus ended, at the base of Mount Sinai. The Israelites had been delivered from bondage in Egypt and crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. The first few chapters are God’s instructions to the people in preparation for leading them into the promised land. In chapter one, God commands Moses to take a census of all the males who could go to war, which is important because this nation of people was not in the habit of fighting wars. They had been engaged as slave laborers in Egypt and God delivered them without any kind of physical battle taking place. In addition, God provides instructions for how the people are to travel and setup camp. Again, this is something that would have been new to them as a freed people and important for organizing between two to three million people! The twelve tribes, excluding the Levites, camped in four groups of three tribes each, a different group on each of the tabernacle’s four sides. The priests and the three clans of Levites camped on the four sides of the tabernacle but closer to the sanctuary than the other tribes. This arrangement placed God at the center of the nation geographically and reminded the Israelites that His rightful place was at the center of their life both personally and as a nation.

1. **God asks Moses to number all the military age men, in preparation for what he knew they were about to face in taking over the promised land. What circumstance in your own life might God be using right now to shape and grow you for his glory and your good?** The first ten chapters of Numbers cover the time Moses organized the people for the march toward Canaan. Many things occurred along their journey that God used to develop and grow the Israelites into people suited for the promised land. In the same way God uses the circumstances of our lives to do the same for us today. Maybe there’s a characteristic he’s been highlighting or calling out in order to develop that for an upcoming season in your life. Maybe there’s a particular challenge you’re facing, that he’s using to help you define what you believe. We may not see it until later on, but we can often look back and see how he was preparing us in advance for something down the road. Knowing this, we can be encouraged to trust God in the midst of any current circumstance and believe that there is purpose to what he is doing, even when we might not see it yet.
2. **Why is it important that these instructions for the people came from the Lord not Moses? What difference does WHO says things — God or your peers — make in your own life?** Numbers begins by telling us God spoke to Moses. The plan for the Israelites was directed by God and was not the orchestration of any person. Moses led the people and spoke the words from the Lord, reminding us that no matter what we think should happen in life, doing things God’s way and trusting Him is always the best plan. As we learn to follow God in our own life, it’s important we learn to identify the voices that we are listening to — that could include certain people, music, things we watch, listen to, etc.! The voices that we allow to speak into our lives are the ones that will shape and influence the way that we think. And the way that we think is what ultimately shapes our actions! In John 10:27, Jesus tells us that a key characteristic of his followers is that they, “hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” His is the voice we are invited to know and follow. His is the voice that we must continually listen to and place our trust in.
3. **What are some other examples you can think of where God created order out of chaos in Scripture? How has He done this in your life?** Over and over in scripture, we see evidence of how God is a God of order and not chaos. From Genesis (creating order out of the chaos of waters) to Noah (ordering the ark and animals in twos), tothe temple (organizing an intentional structure for worship). God gives so many detailed instructions to his people and it provides us with a better understanding of his overall character! He is a God who cares about details and provides instructions for his people with great intentionality and purpose. He is not careless or thoughtless in the way that he acts. Rather, he is always at work and never asks us to do something without good reason. That doesn’t mean we always get to know the purpose, but we can and should trust that he is always orchestrating things in the way that is best!
4. **What are some areas people tend to base decisions on worldly wisdom instead of on the Lord’s plans? Where are you tempted to do this?** It can be easy for us to allow worldly wisdom to influence our decisions. For example, the world encourages us to live for the moment with instant gratification. We’re taught to prioritize whatever feels good and will make us happy now over doing the right thing which may not bring a reward until later on (Gal 6:9). We’re also taught to put a lot of emphasis in our appearance and social status because the world says that it’s a reflection of our value, but God says what’s in our heart is more important (1 Sam 16:7) and that there is no value to storing up earthly treasure (Matt 6:19-21). What’s interesting in this passage about the way God arranges his people is that it reminds us how differently God’s wisdom sometimes looks compared to ours. We might think it would have made way more sense to arrange by the size of the family or the popularity of the individual leaders. But God’s wisdom says differently. That’s why it’s important that we follow the words of Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Following our own understanding will always lead us away from the Lord, and to things that won’t fully satisfy. But trusting in the Lord and his wisdom, leads to an abundant life with him.
5. **Where do you need to center your life on the Lord instead of other people or your circumstances?** In the passage in Numbers, the tabernacle represented God’s presence with the people, and it was at the center of everything. Everything was ordered in relation to the tabernacle as a reminder to the people of who should be at the center of their lives. The same is true for us. Often we get off track with the Lord because we start comparing our lives to others. Social media makes this even easier to do, as we constantly scroll through and are bombarded with influencers telling us what we really need! Before we know it, we’re making decisions in relation to how other people act instead of centering everything on the Lord. The result is never good. When we measure our spiritual walk by other people or things of the world, we can be sure that we’ll find ourselves dealing with the consequences, much like the Israelites did, having to wander the desert for 40 years. But when we choose to trust and obey God, even without knowing all the details, we will find He is always faithful and keeps His promises!