

# NUMBERS: Introduction

*Preparing a child to go out in winter takes for ever. You bundle him into coat, mittens, hat. He says he needs the toilet. You take everything off. You put it all on again.*

Then he plays for ten minutes and wants to come inside. Preparation can be painful.

The book of Numbers is about a painful preparation—getting God’s sinful, stubborn people ready to conquer Canaan, the promised land. Let’s begin our study of Numbers by getting the big picture of the book.

## Read Numbers 1 v 1 and 36 v 13

❓ *What geographical locations are mentioned in these two verses?*

Numbers begins in the wilderness of Sinai, on the Sinai peninsula. It ends with Israel poised just across the Jordan River from the city of Jericho. Numbers is about getting Israel ready for Canaan. Here’s a simple outline:

- Chapters 1–10: In Sinai, preparing for travel
- Chapters 11–12: Travel
- Chapters 13–19: In Kadesh; then forty years of wandering
- Chapters 20–21: Travel
- Chapters 22–36: In Moab, preparing for conquest

❓ *What do 1 v 1 and 36 v 13 have in common?*

In both, God instructs his people through Moses. Throughout Numbers, we’ll see that Israel’s frequent rebellions against God turn a short trip to victory into a forty-year wilderness sojourn. Israel’s sin is the reason

that this book is thirty-six chapters long! But God is faithful and gracious; at the end of Numbers, he’s still instructing and preparing his people. He hasn’t given up on them.

## TIME OUT

What does ancient Israel’s dusty wilderness trip have to do with us?

## Read 1 Corinthians 10 v 1-14 and Hebrews 3 – 4

❓ *What do Paul and the author of Hebrews say about the relevance of Israel’s history to us today?*

## Read Numbers 21 v 4-9 and John 3 v 9-15

When Jesus read Numbers, he saw... himself! And as we read through this book together, we will frequently see Jesus, too.

## Pray

Ask God to teach and encourage you through your study of Numbers in the coming days. And ask him to show you Jesus in ways that thrill and encourage you, and move you to worship and live for him.