

Counting the army

If Israel is to conquer Canaan, they'll want an army. It's time to count who can fight (hence the name "Numbers" for this book).

Counting

Read Numbers 1 v 1-46

- ❓ According to verse 3, which particular group of Israelites is being counted?
- ❓ Look for the phrase repeated in v 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 45. What is it?

Every man of the right age is expected to fight. It is all hands on deck.

- ❓ Which tribe is omitted from the census?

Read Numbers 1 v 47-54

- ❓ Why aren't the Levites numbered for Israel's army? What is their special area of responsibility?
- ❓ How are they to ensure the proper worship of God and the avoidance of his wrath?

Apply

God's holiness is awesome and terrifying (v 51, 53).

- ❓ How should this reality affect our worship of God when we gather as his people?

Arranging

Read Numbers 2 v 1-34

- ❓ Where are each of Israel's tribes located?
 - East side of the tent of meeting
 - South side

- The middle, next to the tent of meeting
- West side
- North side

- ❓ What stands at the centre of the camp? Why is this important, do you think?

To understand the significance of the tent of meeting/tabernacle, read **Exodus 40** (especially v 34-38), which describes its construction one month before Numbers begins.

- ❓ Who directs the military census and Israel's preparations (Numbers 1 v 1-3, 19, 54; 2 v 33-34)?

The tabernacle's centrality and God's initiative demonstrate that Israel's conquest of Canaan will be a holy war, not a human war. All Israel must do is stay behind God. They're doing well to this point (2 v 34), but many temptations and difficulties lie ahead.

Apply

Israel's camp is literally God-centred; God dwells in the middle and marches in its midst. He rules Israel and fights its battles.

- ❓ Is God at the centre of your life? Or off to the edges? Do you make your life all about him, or expect him to make his life all about you?

Ask God now to keep you centred on him and following him, through every twist and turn of your life; and to show you where you need to change.