



Authorised Mess — NUMBERS

Your details

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Church: North Road Methodist Church, Durham

Bible book	Numbers
Theme of session	Journeying on and on and on... / Ignoring the map or SatNav
Notes	Title is an either or

Session details

Categories of activities to get a mix	Activity name	Instructions	Resources needed	Reason for doing this activity
Younger participants	Making a map	Make a map of the desert using crayons, putting in things like sand dunes, water oasis, camel stop, cactus creek, rocky hollow, stormy peaks and so on. Add footprint shapes for routes across the desert. Carefully tear around the edge to make the map look well used and old. With a cooled used teabag, dab the map gently to brown it and leave it to dry.	Paper, crayons, teabags, an example map.	The Israelites spent most of this 'book' wandering and living in the desert with Moses as a 'guide'. They sometimes did not listen to Moses (follow the 'map') and got lost—both with God and in the 40 years wandering they had to do.



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Older participants	Numbers mobile	Ask some questions that have numbers as the answers—such as number of brothers and sisters, age, door number, day of birth, favourite number and so. Cut out each of these numbers from funky foam and string them together to make a hanging number line.	Funky foam, string or coloured thread, sewing needles, scissors, number templates.	A census of the Israelite people was taken twice in the book of Numbers. We in Britain have just completed a census. The activity links numbers and the census idea.
Girls	Lamb pom pom magnet	To make the pom pom, wrap white wool round pre-cut rings of cardboard (approx 3 in/7 cm diameter) with a circle (1.5 in/3 cm diameter) cut out of the middle. Make a black face from funky foam sticking on two wobbly eyes. Stick a fridge magnet on the back of the pompom.	Two rings of cardboard per person, white wool, scissors, black funky foam, template of sheep's face, wobbly eyes, self-adhesive fridge magnets. More detailed instructions can be found on the Internet—for example, http://www.bbc.co.uk/shaunthesheep/make/pom-pom-sheep/ .	The Passover meal celebrated by the Israelites included the unbroken bone of a lamb. This is also seen to be a reference to Jesus who called himself the Lamb of God—hence making a sheep/lamb.



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Boys	A bronzed snake	Make a snake from air drying clay and put markings and patterns on it with a stick. Lay it on a piece of plastic and leave to dry.	Air drying clay, sticks—coffee stirrers are great for this, plastic—poly pockets are ideal.	Some of the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes. They complained again. Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. It rescued the people who were bitten.
Word-based	Special blessing framed picture	Glue the words on to a piece of card. Then stick pre-cut strips of card on the four sides to make the frame. Decorate with coloured pens, sequins and jewels.	Pre-printed words of the blessing from Numbers 6: 24–26, card for backing, pre-cut strips of card (about 2 in/5 cm long), glue, sequins, coloured pens, jewels.	The words of the blessing were given to Moses to bless the people. These words are used in many baptism services. They are a blessing for all of us today.
Food-based	Promised Land decorated biscuits	Spread icing on to a digestive or rich tea biscuit. Then decorate it with an assortment of sugar strands and other sugar decorations.	Digestive or rich tea biscuits, icing sugar, cups, knife, water, sugar strands, cake decorations, paper plates.	Moses was leading the people to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. This was a special place, a lovely place, a 'sweet' place—hence the biscuits.



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Opens up great art	Tent making	Make available an assortment of pieces of cloth, string, scissors, sticks and pieces of dowelling. Set the task to make a tent. This could be done either as a small/individual model or a large/group construction.	Cloth, sticks, string, scissors, pieces of dowelling.	The Israelites travelling through the land and the desert would sleep in tents.
Quiet	People bingo	Get everyone to complete a grid, writing phrases such as 6 years old, 5 people living in the house, 1 pet, size 2 shoe and so on in each box. Most phrases could involve numbers but could be something else. They could then swap grids and try to work out the person at Messy Church who fulfils the criteria in the grid they have.	Pre-prepared grid 3 x 4 boxes, pens.	Links with the census of the Israelites taken twice in the book of Numbers. The grid uses numbers based on facts about one another.



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Really messy	Footprints in the sand	Get everyone to draw round their feet on paper—preferably with shoes and socks off. Spread glue on the paper around the footprint, then sprinkle sand on to the glue, being very careful not to get any on the footprint. (Coloured salt could be used instead of sand.) Put the footprints in a row showing the journey of the Israelites through the desert.	Paper big enough for a footprint with space all around it. Glue, sand or salt mixed with powder paint, paper to cover work area.	The Israelites wandered for 40 years through the desert.

Celebration suggestion

Show a SatNav—either a shop-bought one or a home-made version (cardboard box with paper screen)—and talk about how this is used by people to find their way about either in a car or on foot.

Now try it out. Ask for a volunteer to hide and call out directions using a microphone. The directions could be to find something in the worship area. Ask for another volunteer to follow the spoken directions—get them to keep looking at the SatNav as if the directions are coming from it. If you do not have a microphone, it works looking at the SatNav and reading the instructions.



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Have one of the helpers take the challenge. Give them the instructions to a different place but arrange with them beforehand to follow one or two instructions but then question further instructions and go off on their own way—eventually, they could get to the place but make it a little bit of a struggle.

Compare this to the Israelites, highlighting the main points. Moses was leading the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt. At first, they were happy to follow but they soon started grumbling—they had no food, they had no water, they were sick of the same food, they wanted a different leader and so on. The people were promised a special land where they could live—a place flowing with milk and honey. They had been blessed by God—the words framed in one of the activities. It was almost like God had given them a SatNav to get them to their special land.

But, they took wrong decisions—they took the wrong route. However, God did not abandon them but kept helping them. It would have been easier and probably quicker if they had just listened to God and Moses.

This part of the story ends when the Israelites are just about ready to go into the Promised Land. Sing 'Our God is a great big God'.

Meal suggestion

✿ Spaghetti bolognese—the spaghetti is like a road and the bolognese bits a little like the problems.

Faith in Homes suggestion

Go for a walk in the countryside using a map or a drive using a SatNav. Note how often you need to look at the map or listen to the instructions, and what happens if you take the wrong turn. Think about Moses leading the people and the wrong turns they took, but also remember the blessing God gave. Bless one another with the blessing sometime during the week.

Primary School RE idea

KS1: Think about journeys (a whole curriculum unit!)—maybe your journey to school. Map a journey around the school grounds and ask others to follow it either with you as leader or using a map.

KS2: Research journeys through the desert today and in past times. Note the problems and how they were overcome. Make a camp for desert conditions.