



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of September 10, 2017

WEPC small groups meet in homes across Richmond every week to participate in Jesus Christ's mission to Richmond, enjoy fellowship, study God's Word, pray together, and explore the fruit of the Gospel on our lives. Simply put, these groups are small enough to be the church to one another, and they serve as bridges between WEPC and the community where God has planted us. It is a place where the church can go deeper in the worship of God and further in Christ's mission.

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a "worship discussion" guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Numbers 3:1-13 *"They Shall Be Mine"*

¹ These are the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. ² These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priests. ⁴ But Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of Aaron their father.

⁵ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶ "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. ⁷ They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁸ They shall guard all the furnishings of the

tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁹ And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the people of Israel. ¹⁰ And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death."

¹¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, ¹³ for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD."

- Read Numbers 3:1-4. Who was Aaron (cf. [Exodus 4:14](#))?
 - What was to role of Aaron's sons among God's people?
 - What contrast is set up between Nadab & Abihu and Eleazar & Ithamar in v.4?
 - Why did Nadab & Abihu die? Read [Leviticus 10:1-3](#) for further insight.
 - How is this account a challenge and warning to the church as we worship today? What does God require for us to truly worship Him?
- Read Numbers 3:5-10. What were the duties of the Levites?
- Read Numbers 3:11-14. The very existence of the Levites served as a witness to God's people. What did God want to show Israel through the Levites and their ministry?

- In the plagues of the Exodus, God's people were spared His judgment and the firstborn sons of Israel were dedicated to the Lord ([Exodus 22:29](#)). However, after the idolatrous worship of the golden calf, the Levite priests took the place of the firstborn boys ([Exodus 32:25-29](#)).
- The Levites are a picture of the submission required to faithfully worship God: *"They shall be mine: I am the LORD" (13)*. Ultimately we see that God Himself met that requirement for us in the submission of Jesus Christ. What difference does it make to you that Jesus submitted to the righteous requirements of God's law for us?
- The Levites are a picture of the substitution required to faithfully worship God: *"Instead of every firstborn who opens the womb" (12)*. Ultimately we see that God Himself met that requirement for us in the substitution of Jesus Christ. What difference does it make to you that Jesus is our substitute?
- Read [Hebrews 2:17-18](#), one New Testament passage that brings together the faithful submission and substitution of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Take time to pray together, thanking Jesus for His faithful priestly ministry.

*Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons*

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Numbers 3:1-13](#).

- A word about interpretation: How we interpret stories and information matters. What is the big theme? How is this theme developed?
- In Numbers 3 & 4, there are primarily two themes at work: (1) The census, selection and duties of the Levites and (2) The redemption of the firstborn (we will talk more about this next week)
- So much of the Book of Numbers has to do with the priests and Levites. In fact, the Levites are mentioned more in Numbers than they are in Leviticus.
- Since they are given the roles of protecting and moving and doing the work of the Tabernacle, we would assume that there is something uniquely religious or moral about them which would cause God to choose them.
- On his death bed, Jacob had this to say about Levi,

*"Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.
Let my soul come not into their council;
my glory, be not joined to their company.
For in their anger they killed men,
and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
and scatter them in Israel." ([Genesis 49:5-7](#); This is based on a terrible story from [Genesis 34](#))*

- So there is nothing particularly spiritual or religious about the Levites.
- God chooses whom He will for whatever purpose He deems fit.
- Secondly, we see that even after given this great honor, the Levites, even Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, fail in their roles.
- It looks like God would pick better. Look at the 12 disciples. Look at the church.
- *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..." ([1 Peter 2:9](#))*
- So, while there are many moral lessons in the Bible, the big story is the work of God, the love of God, the example of God.