



Numbers 28 Biblical Rhythms

Summary: By following the prescription of God's biblical rhythms for His people we can learn how to better draw near to God and establish a pattern of healthy living for ourselves.

Good Morning! Let's open our Bibles to the book of Numbers, chapter 28. And while you are turning there, let me take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Matthew Pottenger and I'm one of the Assistant Pastors here at The City Gates. As Pastor Jeff is away this week I have the opportunity of sharing from the Word this morning. Normally we would be going through our study on 1st Peter, and Jeff will continue that when he is back. But today we're going to pause that to look at a subject that may be new to you, or perhaps something that you've not given much thought to... Today we'll be exploring something that I call "Biblical Rhythms". Now, as the worship pastor here, you may think I've somehow devised a way to preach an entire message on drums and percussion, but that's not what I mean by biblical rhythms. What I do mean is the rhythm and pattern that God gave to His people in the Old Testament, their daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms. My hope and desire for us as a church, and for each of you as individuals or families is that by better understanding why God commanded His people to follow a particular pattern in life, that you will be able to apply these same truths to your own life, and through that, will find a better, healthier, and more meaningful way of living.

Now, before we get in to the Scriptures, you should know that the concepts for these life rhythms are scattered all over the Old Testament, and most of them come from books like Exodus, Leviticus & Numbers. Many of the passages are ones that you may not have read often, or given much time or attention to before, and therefore the ideas that I'll be sharing with you may seem new to you. But I ask you not to believe me just because I'm a pastor, or because I'm standing in a pulpit, but, search the Word of God, let it be your authority. Most of the passages were given as commandments to the nation of Israel, and thus we often don't find them too interesting or easily applicable to us. However, there is much that we can learn from, glean, and apply to us as Christians today, if we have ears to hear. For remember that *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Even in these more obscure passages and concepts of Scripture there is a goldmine of truth to be worked out.

So, Let's dig into His Word and begin to explore these Biblical Rhythms. We'll begin in Numbers 28:1-8.

Numbers 28:1-8 "Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.'

3 “And you shall say to them, ‘This *is* the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering. 4 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, 5 and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil. 6 *It is* a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. 7 And its drink offering *shall be* one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy *place* you shall pour out the drink to the LORD as an offering. 8 The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering, you shall offer *it* as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

Here we have the first, and arguably the most important rhythm: Our Daily Rhythm. First let’s look at the historical pattern and understand all that is going on, then we’ll draw out our application for our lives.

Here, the priests were to offer a morning and evening sacrifice. A lamb was to be offered as a burnt offering along with its corresponding grain, oil, and wine offerings. You may have heard some strange words like ‘ephah’ or ‘hin’ which are just biblical units of measurement. You can find more on those in the notes for this sermon on the App. The key thing on this passage is that this offering was to be done daily, in fact twice daily, at the beginning of the day, and again at the end of the day (sunrise/sunset).

Now, in the Old Testament there are different kinds of sacrifices for different purposes, in fact you can read all about the five main different sacrifice types in Leviticus 1-5. And as a fascinating side note, each one of those sacrifices points to the progression of Jesus’ life and ministry. But the first of those sacrifices, found in Leviticus 1, is the burnt offering, which is what we see being offered here as the morning and evening sacrifices. The burnt offering was different than the peace or fellowship offering, different than the sin & trespass offering and different than the grain offering. It was an offering that was to be wholly consumed in the fire, none of it was to remain. It was an offering of total submission and surrender. It was used as a symbol of consecration and dedication. Hence, by offering it up at the start of the day, it signified a deliberate message of dedicating yourself to the Lord and the day ahead to the Lord. Then again by closing your day in the same way signified that all that you’ve passed through and accomplished are once again given to God in worshipful surrender.

One might wonder why God wanted the Israelites to offer a burnt offering each morning and evening. The answer to that is more clearly stated in a passage dealing with the same practice that is found in Exodus 29. Let’s look specifically at verses 42-46. “**38 Now this *is* what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually.**” ...

Ex. 29:42-46 “⁴² *This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. ⁴³ And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by My glory. ⁴⁴ So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister

to Me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

From this passage we see three specific reasons that God wanted them to continually offer these daily burnt offerings. First, the Lord says that this is where He will meet with His people to speak with them. Second, He says that His purpose in these meetings is to Sanctify and Consecrate the tabernacle and His ministers by His glory. Third, God does all this so that He may dwell with His people and that His people would know that He is their God, the one who delivered them.

Now, many of you may already be drawing natural parallels to how this could apply to us as Christians today! But, let me start by saying that though the Israelites were commanded to offer these daily sacrifices, we who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the true and perfect Lamb, no longer need to offer animal sacrifices, Jesus brought a finality and perfect fulfillment of these laws and commands in the Old Testament. However, as we look at God's heart for "why" He wanted them to offer these sacrifices, "day by day, continually," "as a regular burnt offering" we can ask ourselves if God would want the same for us and how we relate and meet with Him today.

In the gospels of Matthew and Luke we read of Jesus' disciples asking Him how to pray, and a part of that prayer included "give us this day our daily bread". God still desires a daily, consistent, regular meeting time with us. So I propose to you that even though we don't have to offer a daily sacrifice, every morning and every evening, that we would do well to begin and end our day with a time of communing with the Lord. This should include but perhaps not be limited to Prayer, the study of God's Word, and worship. This should be a time to surrender yourself and the day before you (or behind you) to the Lord. This should be done with rhythmic regularity, not missing a beat, it should become as essential as eating, drinking and even breathing. In establishing this type of rhythm in your life you will never miss the opportunity to hear from God. For His desire, like with the Israelites, is to meet with you, to sanctify you, and that you would know that He is your God who is dwelling in you. (How Firm A Foundation – "Fear not, I am with thee, oh be not dismayed. For I am thy God and will still give thee aid. I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand. Upheld by My righteous omnipotent hand" "When through the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of grief shall not thee overflow. For I will be with you in troubles to bless, and sanctify to you thy deepest distress.")

Now, one other detail that we've not looked into with this sacrifice is the items that accompany it. The priests were told to offer their sacrifice with three other items, flour, oil and wine. In Psalm 104:15 we have a similar combination of items with further descriptions of what they are for.

Psa. 104:15 And wine *that* makes glad the heart of man,
Oil to make *his* face shine,
And bread *which* strengthens man's heart.

Here we see that wine is used as a symbol of joy and gladness... and so too our times of meeting with the Lord should not exclude a sense of joy and delight. We can sometimes become too somber or serious in our approach, lacking the sense of joy and delight that comes with responding to our Father's open invitation to His throne of mercy. Now, this joy shouldn't be confused with irreverence or a sense of casual nonchalance. Rather it should be an honest rendering of praise that pours forth from a heart of gratitude.

Secondly, we see that Oil is referred to as something that would make the face shine. In the Bible the practice of applying oil to a person's face was done to refresh them. In like manner, our times of communion with the Lord should be found to refresh us, to refresh us physically, spiritually, and mentally. In the same way that Moses face "shone" when he had been on the mountain with God, or Jesus' face shone when he had been with His Father. Or how the disciples were described as "having just been with Jesus". So too, our times of fellowship with Him should leave us with a marked difference.

Lastly, this verse describes "bread which strengthens man's heart." Likewise Jesus tells us that He is the "Bread of Life" and that His words are life to us. So, as we "take in" God's Word into our lives, through reading, memorizing and meditating on it, we will truly find strength for our hearts. Now, like the manna in the wilderness, God wants us to partake of this nourishment "daily" and not try to store up today something for tomorrow. He wants us to come to Him for fresh manna every day. In other words you can't pre-buy and stock up on your quiet times. The prescribed rhythm that God says He desires for us is "morning & evening."

Now, let me offer a few suggestions on how to form this daily habit.

First: come up with a long-range plan: I have found it fatiguing to jump from one reading plan to another. If you are using something like a "YouVersion" reading plan it may give you a 7 day or 14 day devotional. I have found some really good devotional reading plans on YouVersion, so I'm not trying to downplay those at all, but rather to say that a short reading plan doesn't help you to establish a longer-term habit. Often you'll be spending time looking for or wondering what you should do next. Having something that can last for a year or longer can provide you with a sense of "settling into a better rhythm".

Second: figure out the rhythm of your day and what you can do to set yourself up for success. Modify it if you need in order to keep from missing or skipping these times frequently.

Third: Seek some accountability. This doesn't have to be a legalistic thing, but if you let your family know, or a close friend, what you are trying to do, they can be praying for you, offering encouragement, or in the case of a spouse, you can help each other by discussing how to modify your life rhythms to make this a priority.

Fourth: Start with something doable and then seek to grow it. In the same way that you wouldn't go to the gym for the first time and try to see if you can bench press 300lbs, rather you start with something manageable but begin to work up to more over time.

The Next biblical rhythm we see in Numbers 28:9-10 has to do with the Sabbath, our Weekly Rhythm. However, I would like us to read from the passage in Exodus 20:8-11 as it gives more insight into this day.

Ex. 20:8-11- "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. ¹¹ For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it

As we look at this passage on the Sabbath we find that there are four aspects of the Sabbath to keep in mind. It has spiritual aspects as well as practical ones, and it also has both personal and communal components to it. When God speaks of "keeping it holy" He is speaking of keeping it set apart as something different than the other days in the week. For the Jews this would have been from sundown on Friday night till sundown on Saturday night. Leviticus 30:32 says, "from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath." I too have found this practice to be helpful, to consider my "Sabbath" as something that starts the evening before. By that I mean that I realize that what I do and how I spend my time on a Saturday evening will have a direct effect on how my Sunday morning begins. If you find yourself tired or groggy and having a hard time getting up on Sunday morning, debating whether or not to "come to church" or just catch the 11am livestream, could you be experiencing that in part due to what you planned as your activity on Saturday night?

The "Spiritual" nature of this day is that God desires to commune with us. Now, as we just discussed, we can commune with the Lord "daily," so, what makes the "weekly Sabbath" different or unique? Well, a big part of that is that we now get to share in this fellowship together! As Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." You see, you can 'watch' from home, but your experience of being here, with the saints, has a dramatic effect on you and your engagement with the Body of Christ. We worship together, we receive the Word, and His instruction, together, we fellowship and break bread together. The effect of these things is greatly diminished when you are not sharing in these things in person. Hence the Sabbath is both personal, because it deals with you and your relationship to God but it also deals with your relationship to others, and others relationship to you, and so it is very much a corporate practice. The practice of Sabbath, and setting it apart is not just applied to us via our Sunday gatherings, this of course is perhaps the main expression of our corporate gathering, but if the day itself becomes "common" to you after church, then you have missed out on the opportunity to properly redeem the time. God's desire for us is to 'break our daily rhythm' of work and common activity to have a day to rest and fellowship with Him and others. Now, let me say again that I do not say these things to employ a strict standard of legalism but rather to seek to understand God's heart in why He commanded the Israelites to practice this and

then to apply the wisdom of these practices to our lives today. In Exodus 31:13 God says, [“Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.”](#) God’s heart for the Sabbath, in addition to helping His people to rest, even as He rested on the seventh day, was to give them a practical sign, a symbol of something that set them apart, for them to remember and recall that it was their covenantal God, who delivered them from their slavery and captivity, that dwelt with them and wanted them to commune with Him. By maintaining their weekly Sabbath, they would ensure that they, and future generations, would not stray from God.

Now, as we look at our last two markers of Biblical Rhythms, the monthly and annual rhythms, I’m going to summarize and combine a few of their aspects together. In Numbers 28:11 it says, [“At the beginnings of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD:”](#) And again in verse 16 it says, [“On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the LORD. ¹⁷ And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.”](#)

As a child, I grew up in California, in the bay area, where the idea of seasons were not all that distinct. Then in 2009, when I moved to Kenya, Africa with my wife and our 1 year old daughter for 6 years, the markers of seasons became even less distinct. It really wasn’t until moving to Virginia that I began to experience a taste of what the four seasons are. The reason that I bring this up is that we all live such fast paced lives that we need the aid and help of marking the passing of time to help us appreciate each day for what it is. When my biannual trip to the dentist comes up, I usually think, “has 6 months really gone by already?” In fact, in just a couple weeks my family will be coming up on the completion of 6 years of living here!

In the same way that we set the pattern of daily and weekly rhythms for our own health and wellbeing, so too, we benefit from stopping at the beginning of the month and simply offering up our lives, our schedules, our plans, our desires, our finances, our concerns to the Lord. My wife and I will usually try to sit down once a month and look ahead at what plans are coming up for the month ahead, we may touch on budgetary issues about our finances or how to best allocate our time. These times provide a great opportunity to [“Commit your way to the LORD”](#) (Ps 37:5). This shouldn’t just a time of asking the Lord to bless your plans, but for asking Him to lead you and show you His plans for you. (Prov 3:5-6).

In the same way that we would greatly benefit from starting each month with a sense of dedicating our month to the Lord, seeking His wisdom and direction for our upcoming month’s plans, so too we can apply the same idea on a larger scale to the annual picture. However, just as the monthly picture has more to it than the weekly or the daily, so too the annual rhythm once again raises the bar, making it extra special. (Num 28:15b, [“besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.”](#) Lev 23:23 [You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a regular burnt offering.](#))

The Israelites had a total of 7 feasts commanded by the Lord in the Torah: 3 in the spring, 1 in early summer and the other 3 in the fall. And similar to how we have our year that begins

in January, but also on a more practical level we have a “school year” that begins in late August/early September. So too the Israelites had a religious year that started in Spring with Passover, and they had a civic year that began in the fall with Rosh Hashana (or the feast of Trumpets). Now with each of these feasts, they commemorate something significant in the history of Israel as a nation as well as point to a future fulfillment in the Messiah. For example, Passover began as a remembrance of the Lord’s deliverance from Egypt when the death angel passed over those houses marked by the blood of the lamb, sparing them from death and leading them to their freedom from being slaves. But we see how these events were merely foreshadowing’s of how God would free all peoples by the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, setting us free from our slavery to Sin and freeing us from the penalty of death. Likewise, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in remembrance of how God preserved His people while they were living in tents in the wilderness wandering years. His daily provision for them and His protection of them as they camped in the wilderness was celebrated by the Israelites by their custom to build booths (makeshift dwellings) and live for a week in a temporary dwelling. But the Scriptures also portray that this feast is a foreshadowing of the “last great harvest” a time when God will call all the nations to His throne as He begins His reign on earth.

In the same way that the people of Israel would set aside an annual time to pull away from their scheduled lives, look back at what God had done, worship Him, and look forward to what He was still yet to do, so too we would do well to have a time set apart once a year to commit the year to Him, to spend time seeking Him and His will for the upcoming year, worshipping Him and giving thanks for all that He has brought us through in the past year.

On a very practical level, this is something that our family began to implement a few years ago. Each summer we try to get away for a few days prior to the new school year beginning, and set it aside as more of a family spiritual retreat. We’ll make special meals, spend time playing games and enjoying nature, and just as the Israelites would have a fast from leaven as a part of their Passover feast, we usually have tried to limit the use of screens and technology on these trips. The purpose is to be together as a family and to have conversations together, not to all be on devices. We have also used this time to take inventory on how each of us are doing personally. Looking at our health physically, spiritually, and relationally. We’ll also begin to discuss goals and plans for the upcoming school year and ways that we can help one another. Now, I realize that I’m in a season of life with two girls, 14 and almost 11, and that all that I’ve described may seem unthinkable, especially if you have younger kids. I remember the first year that we did one of these trips when my youngest was 8, the attention span was much smaller. Even last year when we took our “annual feast of tabernacles” trip, as we like to call it, our group discussions all started with drawing pictures and talking about what we drew. I share that to say that you may have to be inventive and you definitely need to think through age appropriate activities. But, this is not just an idea for families, this can be just as easily applied to a person who is single. Take a personal retreat time. If you enjoy the outdoors then head out to a cabin or grab your camping equipment. Or if you’re more of a city person, then go to a city that you’d enjoy exploring. But in the midst of the exploration set aside specific times to reflect and give thanks, and to plan and commit your upcoming year to the Lord.

In all of these Biblical Rhythms, one of the key things is to be diligent and disciplined in making the pattern of setting aside the time. There is freedom to how you fill and structure the use of that time, as long as it is moving you towards the Lord, and producing health and growth in your life. As we are headed into the summer months soon, my exhortation to you is to look for time for you to pull away for a couple of nights, seek the Lord for what this coming year should look like and what are some of the areas that He may be seeking to get your attention about. I pray that you will benefit from applying these Biblical Rhythms to your life, and if you'd like to dig deeper, please grab one of the Application and Discussion sheets from the Welcome Table on your way out. Or look it up on the App as it is on the bottom of the sermon notes from Today's sermon

Let's pray.



Application and Discussion Questions

Numbers 28 Biblical Rhythms

- Describe what your daily rhythm looks like right now as it pertains to your time spent with the Lord. Is it what you want it to be? If not, how would you like it to change? Or what would make it more of what you think it should be?
- Read Leviticus 6:8-13 – When thinking of the morning and evening sacrifice as a parallel to our daily time spent with God, how does this passage add greater depth to this imagery?
- Consider how manna is a parallel to ‘our daily bread’, and then consider the meaning of the word manna, “what is it?” – How could you benefit from approaching your daily quiet time by simply opening up God’s Word and asking, “Lord, “what is it” today that you want to tell me”?
- Read Jeremiah 31:12. What connects this verse to the daily sacrifices in Number 28:3-8? How does this verse speak to you about God’s promises and desire for you?
- What does your Sabbath look like? Is it what you want it to be? If not, how would you like it to change? Or what would make it more of what you think it should be?
- Do you have a “monthly rhythm”? Or any pattern of how you approach or plan the month ahead? How could adding a spiritual component to that time enhance and/or change the way you think of that time?
- Have you ever taken a personal or family ‘Spiritual Retreat’? Do you ever take time to plan (even if roughly so) the year ahead? How could taking some time to do a personal check up on your spiritual, physical, emotional and relational state be of benefit to you (and your family)?
- If you were to plan your “perfect getaway” trip (i.e. something fun, but something that has time and space for resting, planning, praying, reflection, etc.) where would you go? What are some of the things you would do? What’s stopping you from making that happen this summer?

List of “Daily Devotional” suggestions:

- One Year Bible
- Daily Light on the Daily Path – Samuel Bagster
- My Utmost for His Highest – Oswald Chambers
- Mornings & Evenings – C.H. Spurgeon
- Read a chapter or two each morning, pick one verse to mediate on or pray over and write it down.

Biblical weights and measurements

- ephah – a dry measurement – $\frac{1}{10}$ ephah (flour) = 9.3 cups (almost 2 quarts dry)
- hin – a liquid measurement – $\frac{1}{4}$ hin (oil, wine) = 3.87 cups (almost a quart liquid)