

Twelve Spies

(Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33; 14)

Introduction

Has anyone ever asked you to do something wrong or go along with something that you knew was wrong? In today's lesson, two people know what is right to do. We'll find out if they stand up for what is right or go along with what is wrong.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want our lives to be pleasing to You. Help us to be strong. Give us a heart to follow You with all of our hearts. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the LORD!
(Psalms 31:24)*

Lesson

We have been following God's people as Moses led them through the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land. Remember that God had promised them that He would take them to a wonderful land that was very beautiful and full of delicious fruits and vegetables.

It was only a few months since they had escaped from the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Now the children of Israel were standing on the edge of the Promised Land. They must have been excited! They had heard all their lives about this land that was promised to them by God Himself, and now here they were, standing on the edge of the land, ready to enter in to all that waited for them.

They must have been dying of curiosity, wondering what this Promised Land was like. Were there a lot of people or just a few like in the desert? Were they strong or weak? What kind of towns did they live in? What was the soil like? What kind of crops could they grow?

God told Moses to choose one leader from each family group of the children of Israel to go exploring so they could see what the land was like.

Numbers 13:17-20

Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: "Go north through the Negev into the hill country. See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see." (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)

The 12 spies went up and explored the land. After 40 days the men returned. They brought back with them some of the delicious fruits and vegetables they found up there. In fact, one cluster of grapes was so large, it took two of the spies to carry it back on a pole between them!

Numbers 13:27

This was their report to Moses: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces.

But ten of the spies had some bad news:

Numbers 13:28

But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!

The descendants of Anak were giants! They had heard that these people were expert warriors. This news disturbed the people! It scared them. Only two spies had faith in God. Caleb and Joshua trusted that God wouldn't allow anything to happen to them.

Numbers 13:30

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

Caleb and Joshua knew that with God's help, they could do anything. But, the other spies did not have faith in God. They were afraid.

Numbers 13:31-33

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"

They told God's people that there was no way that they could take over the land. They saw the warrior's strength and their own weaknesses. And all the people were discouraged and scared. They began to argue and complain. They even thought about getting another leader and going back to Egypt and back into slavery!

Numbers 14:1-4

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"

Can you imagine that! They wanted to trade their freedom for slavery again! They had forgotten all the ways that God had helped them. He freed them from slavery, made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea, gave them food in the desert, and protected them and guided them. All they could think about was their problems; they only looked at their own weaknesses and inadequacies. What they needed to was to remember their blessings.

When you are afraid, if you think about the many blessings you have from God, it will help you remember that we have an awesome God who loves us and will protect us from evil.

Caleb and Joshua spoke to the people and tried to encourage them to trust God. They knew that with God all things are possible.

Numbers 14:7-8

They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey."

They tried to remind the people to have courage. God had promised to never leave them or forsake them; they had nothing to fear. God would protect them and give them all the strength and wisdom they needed to take the land from the people that were living there.

When you get afraid, you can have trust in God, too. He is always with you and God has all power and all wisdom.

But the people wouldn't listen to Caleb and Joshua. They became angry and even tried to kill them. This made God mad.

Numbers 14:11

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?"

God threatened to wipe out the people like He did with the Great Flood in Noah's time. He said He wanted to start all over again with the human race. But Moses begged God to forgive the people.

Numbers 14:19

In keeping with your magnificent, unfailing love, please pardon the sins of this people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt.

God loved His people and He forgave them for the sin of unbelief. But He also knew that they would have to be punished for their sin. Because they did not trust God, they had to stay in the hot desert for 40 more years!

Numbers 14:21-23

But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the LORD's glory, not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice. They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it.

God proclaimed that anyone who was over the age of 20, who had doubted God, would not enter the Promised Land. The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should have taken only a few months, but the children of Israel were forced to wander in the desert for another 40 years until all of the people who had not trusted God died.

The people were sorry for their sin of unbelief. They told God they were sorry for the things that they had done. But they had to suffer the consequences of their sin.

When we do wrong, we must suffer the consequences, too. God knew that we are born with a “*want to*” to do things our own way instead of the way that pleases God.

When we sin it separates us from God. And, He doesn't like that anymore than we do. So, He thought of a plan. He made a bridge so that we could get to Him. He sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus died and rose again to take the punishment for all our sin. To cross the bridge to God, we must trust in Jesus, believe that He died for our wrongs, and ask Him to forgive us of our sins.

Have you crossed that bridge? Have you told God that you know you are a sinner? Have you asked Him to forgive you of your sins? Have you made a decision to follow Jesus? This morning, let's bow our hearts together and do that right now.

Closing Prayer

Father, we were born with a *want to* to do things our own way. No one had to teach us to lie or cheat or steal. We know that we are sinners. But, Lord, we want our lives to please You. Thank You that you have made a bridge for us so that we can come to You. Thank You, Jesus, for taking the punishment for our sins so that we can come and live with You in Heaven someday. Forgive us of our sins. We want to follow Your ways for the rest of our lives until that wonderful day when we can see you face-to-face. We love You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Play a game like *Pin the Tail on the Donkey*. Blow up 12 purple balloons and attach them to heavy white poster board like a cluster of grapes. Allow a blindfolded child to use a push bin to pop an inflated balloon. Put one of the following review questions inside each of the balloons:

1. Why were the people crossing the desert? (They were heading from Egypt to the Promised Land.)
2. What were the people doing down in Egypt? (They were slaves to the Pharaoh)
3. When they got to the edge of the Promised Land, who did Moses send in to look the land over? (12 spies)
4. When the spies came back, what did they bring with them? (Fruits and vegetables, including some huge grapes.)

5. Why were the 10 spies fearful about going into the land? (They saw the giants and the fortified cities and their faith in God was weak.)
6. Who were the two spies that had great faith in God? (Caleb and Joshua.)
7. What crazy thing did the people want to do because of their fear? (They wanted to get another leader and go back to Egypt!)
8. What did God want to do with the people for lacking faith in Him? (He wanted to wipe them out and start over!)
9. What did Moses do when God said he wanted to wipe out the people? (He begged God to forgive them.)
10. What punishment did the people receive from God for their sin of unbelief? (They had to stay in the hot desert for 40 more years!)
11. When we sin it separates us from God. What is the “bridge” that God made for us to come to Him? (Jesus!)
12. How do you cross the “Jesus Bridge?” (By confessing your sins and asking Him to be your Lord and Savior.)

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