

Two Trusting Spies

(Numbers 13 – 14:35)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever known people who were fearful? How do they act? [Teacher, let the children share their ideas.] Do you ever get fearful about things? Why do you think people get fearful? Usually people get scared because they forget that God has promised to be with them. They don't trust His promise to never leave them.

Moses was the leader of a group of very fearful people. Let's find out what happened when God refused to put up with their lack of trust anymore!

Opening Prayer

Father, You when we do not trust You. I pray that you would make each one of us attentive to the lesson You have for us today so that we might learn to love and trust You more. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. (Deuteronomy 13:4)

Lesson

Today we are going to learn about some men who were assigned to go on a spy mission! Listen to discover what they found.

Find Numbers 13 in your Bibles.

After about two years of walking in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, God told Moses to send some men into the Promised Land on a spy mission.

Numbers 13:1-2

The LORD now said to Moses, "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes."

Moses carefully chose 12 men, one from each tribe (group of families), and gave them very clear instructions to go into the Promised Land and see what it is like.

Numbers 13:18-20

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?

These 12 men must have been very excited about this mission! They were going to be the first to see the wonderful country God promised to give them!!

For over a month, the people waited for the 12 spies to return. Mothers and children must have wondered when their husbands and fathers would come back. After all, this was an exploration into unknown territory. They all wanted to know what the Promised Land was like. Were God's promises true? Was the land really as wonderful as He had promised? Would they be able to take over the land?

The men finally returned 40 days after they had left. And they were bursting with news! Everyone gathered to hear their report and to see the great fruit the spies had found in the land.

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."

They brought back a bunch of grapes so big it took two men to carry it back! (See verse 23)

But not all the news the spies brought back was good 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 spies reported that the people who live there are fierce and powerful. The cities are huge, with high walls built around them! And, worst of all was the fact that there were giants in the land!

But, Caleb and Joshua tried to reassure the people by reminding them that God had prepared a wonderful place for them to live, but to claim it for themselves they would have to trust God.

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 had seen the same fierce people and walled cities, but they remembered that God said the Promised Land was theirs! And, they trusted and believed God!

The other 10 spies didn't agree.

Numbers 13:31

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!"

Soon all the children of Israel were scared and they began to murmur and complain.

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!"

The people were really afraid. God's promises didn't seem real to them now. Can you imagine? They wanted to go back to Egypt where they had been slaves under the rule of the Pharaoh!

But, Caleb and Joshua tried to encourage the people.

Numbers 14:7-9

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. Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

Nobody was convinced. In fact, they wanted to kill Caleb and Joshua, see verse 10! Moses was heartbroken at the sinful, fearful way the people had acted. God had done miracles every day for these people. He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt by parting the Red Sea. He had miraculously fed them and given them water! He'd promised over and over that He would give them this land. All they had to do was obey Him. And now they didn't believe anything God had promised!

Moses pleaded to God to forgive the people this awful sin of unbelief,

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."

Moses asked God to be merciful to these people.

Numbers 14:20

Then the LORD said, "I will pardon them as you have requested.

God would forgive them! But because the people didn't believe, God said the people would have to wait to go into the Promised Land for 40 more years until the adults who had complained had all grown old and died out there in the desert.

Numbers 14:23

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.

Only their children would be the ones to go into the Promised Land.

Numbers 14:29

You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die.

The Israelites were so close to enjoying all that God had for them, but now, because of their stubborn unbelief, many more years of suffering and death awaited them. If only they had submitted to God and trusted Him instead of depending on their own understanding.

But what about Caleb and Joshua? God said, “Because Caleb and Joshua have obeyed me without doubting, I will bring them into the new land.”

Numbers 14:30

You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Caleb and Joshua didn't follow the crowd, even when they were threatened with death. They believed God! And 40 years later, Joshua led the Israelites into the land God had given them. He and Caleb knew God keeps His promises!

The unbelief of Israel turned them away from God and from the wonderful place He had prepared for them. There is a far more wonderful place which God has prepared for you to live in someday. It is called heaven. To get there, we must put our trust in God.

It might seem easy to say at church that we trust God and will obey Him. But when our friends think that we are silly to believe in God or want us to do things we know God would not want us to do, it can be very hard to trust God and do what He wants us to do. But, obeying

God even when others don't will help us grow to love and trust God. And our obedience can help our friends see that they can trust and obey God, too.

Let's trust God like Caleb and Joshua did. When we think about all that God has done for us in the past, we will not be afraid of the future.

Closing Prayer

Father, when we are tempted to doubt the promises You have made in Your Word, help us to stop leaning on our own understanding. Help us to remember that You never make mistakes. Help us to remember Your goodness and all the ways You have helped us in the past. Then, help us to have the confidence we need to do the things You want us to do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a time of discussion or review game of your choice:

1. What did Joshua and Caleb do that was different from the other spies? (They trusted in God's promise to give them the Promised Land.) Why do you think they were so different? (They believed God!) When can kids your age follow their example?
2. When are some times it is hard to trust and obey God? (When others make fun of you for obeying God; when you don't know God's promises; when your friends are making fun of someone at school or disrespecting a teacher.) At these times, how can you stand true to the Lord? You will be easily swayed to do whatever

your friends are doing or saying if your belief in God is not strong. If your belief in His promises is strong, you won't even consider dishonoring Him by doing whatever a friend is doing.

3. When have you had to stand up for what God says is true when others have disagreed? What happened?
4. What are some things that you think might happen if you choose to obey God when your friends don't?
5. What can you do when you feel that it is hard to trust and obey God? (Pray to God. Sing Him songs of praise. Talk to parents.)

Sword Drills

Give a prize or candy to the first person to find the verse. Give other rewards for answers to the questions.

1. Read **Deuteronomy 13:4**. What does this verse tell us to do? Why do you think doing these things is important?
2. Read **Psalms 56:3, 4**. When does the writer of these verses say he will trust in God? Why can we trust God to take care of us and not worry about what people do to us?
3. Read **Proverbs 3:5, 6**. What does it mean to trust in the Lord rather than follow your own understanding? How can praying and reading God's Word help you to remember God in all your actions?
4. Read **Galatians 1:10**. What does Paul say would happen if he was trying to please men? When are some times it is harder to please God than men? Ask God for strength to obey Him when the people around you do not obey.