

Twelve Spies

(Numbers 13:17-33; 14)

Introduction

Ask: Have you ever faced a “giant” in your life? This would be a big problem that seems challenging or even overwhelming or even scary. Maybe you’re having trouble learning how to do something, like play a musical instrument or learn a sport. Maybe you have a bully in your life that is teasing and harassing you. Maybe you have had a health issue that has kept you back from doing what you want.

In today’s lesson, the children of Israel faced real giants, as big as Goliath. Only two people knew what to do. Let’s find out what happened to the rest of the people.

Opening Prayer

Father, we all face “giants” in our lives—those big things that loom up and overwhelm us. Help us to not lose heart, but to trust You in all circumstances. Teach us this morning to put our hope and trust in you so that we can be strong and courageous. In Jesus’ name. 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.

At this point, 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 there 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. ¹⁸See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? ²⁰Is 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 [The spies report]

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.

However, the spies also 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, like Goliath who was 9 feet tall! They had heard that these people were expert warriors. This news disturbed the people! It scared them. And they began to murmur and complain.

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!"***

Only Caleb and Joshua took a stand for what they knew was right. They had faith and trust in God. They knew that with God's help, the children of Israel could go into the land in spite of the giants. 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!" ³²So 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. ³³**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. ²Their 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. ³"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?" ⁴Then 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 do was to remember their blessings.

Sometimes we have things that come up in our lives that seem like "giants" that we may have to face. [Teacher, refer to Introduction.]

When you have a "giant" in your life, it can be scary. But whenever 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 14:5-7

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. ⁶Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. ⁷They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land!"

They tried to remind the people that God would give them victory over the giants.

Numbers 14:8-10

*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. ⁹Do 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!" ¹⁰But **the whole community***

began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle.

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 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 14:11-12

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? ¹²I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!"

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. Let's see how God punished the people that did not trust Him!

Numbers 14:20-23

Then the LORD said, "I will pardon them as you have requested. ²¹But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the LORD's glory, ²²not 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. ²³They 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.

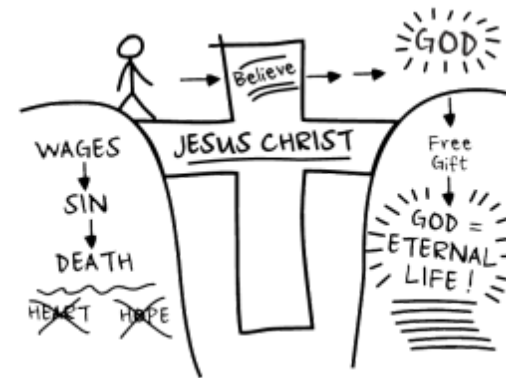
God proclaimed that anyone who was over the age of 20, who had doubted God, would not enter the Promised Land. The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should have taken only a few months, but the children of Israel were forced to wonder in the desert for another 40 years until all of the people who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

[Teacher, draw a picture similar to this on the white board, as you explain the idea that **Jesus is our bridge to God**.]



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.

Ask: 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

Game Center

Blow up 12 purple balloons and tape them to the white board like a cluster of grapes. Divide the kids into two teams. For a correct answer to a review question, the child may use a push bin to pop an inflated balloon to reveal the point value for their team. [make the point values big so that it is more exciting!]

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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