

SPYING OUT THE LAND

CONCEPT

God is ALWAYS trustworthy.

GOAL

Christian students will learn that when we choose to rebel against God we miss out on spiritual blessings God longs to give

Non-Christian students will learn that God is trustworthy, and He has promised that He can give us everything we need.

PASSAGE: NUMBERS 13 AND 14

Key Verse: "And why couldn't they go in? Because they didn't trust Him." Hebrews 3:19

PLANNING AHEAD*

Lesson Supplies

Learning Activity #2:

- "To Trust or Not to Trust" activity sheet, 1/small group

Craft Supplies

Activity Stations:

- 10 "I SPY" laminated question cards
- "I SPY" activity sheet, 1/student
- Pencils, 1/student
- Pomegranate (fresh ones are in season from August-December), 1/class
- Figs, 5/class
- Knife
- Bowls for figs & pomegranate seeds
- Exodus & Route of Spies 8½" x 11" laminated map

* **Teachers please note:** For clarity, the shaded areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag. **Items followed by an asterisk* are to be supplied by the teaching team.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION / TEACHER HELPS

"Fatal Disbelief of the Promises (Numbers 13, 14).

What happened at KADESH constituted one of the greatest crises in the whole history of Israel...

The tragic story is quickly told: the mission of the spies (13:1-25); the report of the spies (13: 26-33); and the apostasy of Israel (chapter 14). The importance of chapter 14 is very great."¹

"Throughout this forty years God is revealed as ruling over and over-ruling the chequered course of His people, and as advancing His redeeming purpose in spite of their sin. While His love for them is illustrated in their history, it is not actually named till Moses speaks of it in his second oration (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, 'The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, {8} but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.'). a passage which is the key to the whole history of Israel."²

"The first part of the spies' report was truthful, but the goodness of the land was offset in their fearful eyes by the powerful peoples who lived there. Only Caleb and Hoshea (Joshua) gave a report prompted by faith in God. The promised land was a good land, a gracious gift from God. By speaking bad things about it, the faithless spies were speaking evil of the Lord (cf. 10:29). Their words became exaggerations and distortions. The Anakites were now said to be Nephilim. The reference to the Nephilim seems deliberately intended to evoke fear. The exaggeration of the faithless led to their final folly: 'We seemed like grasshoppers.' The frightening words of the faithless spies led to mourning by the entire community and to their great rebellion against the Lord. They forgot all the miracles the Lord had done for them, they despised his mercies, and they spurned his might. In their ingratitude they preferred death (14:2)."³

"The Israelites chose to shift their focus from God's perspective to the human perspective. From Who God is, the God of the Universe who said, 'I will give you the land.' to 'We are grasshoppers, we are not able. They are too strong for us.' They chose not to believe God's word. They didn't believe in His power or trust in His love and faithfulness to be true to His word. Paul says, 'If God is for us who can be against us.' (Romans 8:31)

"Whenever a person elects not to believe God and His word, that person cannot remain static. We either change our viewpoint, repent and admit we were wrong or we become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We rationalize our sin, our position as the Israelites did when they twisted the facts in Numbers 14:1-4."⁴

"The people of Israel brought upon themselves their punishment. ...Significantly, Israel's refusal to carry out the Lord's commission to conquer his land is the climactic act of rebellion for which God condemns Israel to die in the desert. The judgment on the ten evil spies was immediate; the generation that they influenced would live out their lives in the desert."⁵

Before we self-righteously condemn the Israelites for their rebellion, we must ask ourselves if we really trust God more than they did. It's easy to look at the Israelites and say that they were crazy for not trusting God and taking the land He had given them. But how many are the times we rebel in the face of fear, loss of control, doubt or plain selfishness? We all come to points in our Christian walk where God is calling on us to believe, by faith not by sight, who He is. At this point we can choose to take control ourselves, be immobilized by fear, move back into our comfort zone, ignore the situation and hope it goes away, minimize the significance of the decision God has placed before us, etc. OR we can choose to step out in faith and believe that God will give us all we need to walk through the situation and, most importantly, teach us more deeply about Himself. He IS sovereign, He is ALL powerful, He knows the future and all our needs before we do, and He is perfect love. However, because our flesh is very strong we all rebel. There is only one way to enter into the spiritual

¹ W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, 1994, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pp. 186, 187.

² *Ibid*, p. 195.

³ *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985, Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, Study Notes on Numbers 13:26-14:1, p. 210.

⁴ Martha McCallum, Notes from teaching on Numbers 13 & 14.

⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985, Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, Study Notes on Numbers 14:28, 34, 37, pp. 211, 212.

blessings of God—by faith in and acting on God's word. There is NO other way to experience God's spiritual benefits, growth in the spiritual life or effectiveness in spiritual work.

UNBELIEF is the bottom line. This incident is a picture of our dealings with God. God will confront us with situations like Kadesh-Barnea. The decision we make in that situation has everything to do with the experience we will have of God, His blessings and the richness and vitality of our Christian life. In our choice to rebel against God we miss out on all the spiritual blessings God longs to give. God allows us to have our own way and that's the worst judgment of all. Moses, Joshua and Caleb experienced God's faithfulness as they chose to believe His incredible promises.

LESSON PLAN

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| SET UP | Instructions: Hide the "I SPY" laminated question cards, to be used in the Activity Station, around the room. |
| INCORPORATION 15-20 MIN | <p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit Station Instructions: Cut the figs into small pieces and peel the pomegranate to get seeds to sample (pomegranates are full of small berry-like seeds that are slightly juicy and tart). Discuss with the students that Moses sent 12 spies to check out the Promised Land. When the spies returned they brought some grapes, pomegranates and figs to show the Israelites what they found. The grapes were so big it took 2 men to carry one cluster. Remind the students that the Israelites had eaten nothing but manna for 2 years. • Map Instructions: Show the students the map and talk about the Israelites route to the Promised Land. God is ALWAYS trustworthy but we sometimes don't believe Him. Review all the ways God took care of them from the moment they left Egypt. Why did they often grumble and complain? How are we like the Israelites? Why are all people like that? • Game – I SPY Instructions: Give each student an activity sheet and follow the instructions. • Missions Prayer Instructions: Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign and adopted missionary child. |
| INTRODUCTION LG GROUP 2 MIN | The Israelites had been moving toward the Promised Land for almost 2 years. It was time to enter the Land and the Lord told Moses to send 12 spies, a leader from each tribe, to check out the land. When the spies returned after 40 days, 10 of the 12 were convinced that the people in the land were too many and too powerful to overcome. |
| TRANSITION – 2 MIN | Let's gather with the other classes to see the Drama Team skit about this. |
| LEARNING ACTIVITY #1 – LG GROUP 10 MIN | DRAMA -- NEWS NOW" skit performed by Drama Team |
| TRANSITION – 2 MIN | As you heard in the skit, there was some disagreement among the spies who went to check out the land. Let's go back to our classrooms to read what happened. |
| LESSON -- LG GROUP 10-15 MIN | <p>Reader's Theater</p> <p>Instructions: Select 8-10 volunteers to mime the narrative as it is read. The characters are Moses, Aaron, Caleb, Joshua and the Israelites. The rest of the class will be the audience.</p> <p>Everyone grab a Bible and open it to Numbers 13; we'll read what happened when the spies reported back to the people of Israel. Listen while I read Numbers 13:30-14:11 & 14:26-45.</p> <p>The 10 spies chose not to believe God and they influenced the rest of the Israelites not to enter the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb refused to be influenced by the fears of others. They chose to believe that God would give them everything they needed to take the land. Joshua and Caleb believed God, but where did it get them?</p> <p>Read verse 10. They didn't win a popularity contest, did they? No, the people were so angry they wanted to stone them to death. But God was in charge. Verses 20-38 tell us that "When Moses so humbly pleaded with God to forgive the people their great sin, God answered that He would forgive them. But all the people who had seen God's glory and the miracles which He performed in Egypt, then rebelled against Him, would never see the land which God had promised to their fathers."</p> |

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| | <p>Only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land because they believed God. All the rest, who had murmured against God, had to spend the rest of their lives in the wilderness. They wandered there for forty years until every one of them had died. Then God would bring their children into the land promised He to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.</p> <p>Our key verse today is, “And why couldn’t they go in? Because they didn’t trust Him” (Hebrews 3:19). When you choose NOT to believe God’s promises and act on that unbelief, you rebel. Rebellion is not always something as obvious as breaking the law or disobeying your parents. Rebellion for a Christian is choosing not to trust God. God takes rebellion very seriously—so seriously that He disciplined the Israelites by giving them their way. They forfeited the blessing of entering the Promised Land. In the same way, when we choose to rebel against God we miss out on spiritual blessings God longs to give. God allows us to have our own way and that’s the worst judgment of all.</p> <p>So, in the long run, which was the best decision, to go along with the rebellious people and ignore God’s command or to stand with God against the rebellious people? Each time we choose rebellion over trust in God, our belief in His promises and trust in Him diminishes and our hearts get more and more hardened like the Israelites. The really cool thing is that when we trust God we experience His blessings.</p> <p>God’s greatest blessing was His son Jesus Christ. God sent His Son to die on the cross for ALL our sins. We need to trust God enough to admit that we are sinners and to accept Christ’s death on the cross as payment for our sins. The amazing blessing we receive is acceptance in God’s family. Without doing anything to deserve that blessing we receive God’s perfect love. As God’s children, we see Him working in other’s lives and in this world. As we grow to understand His love for us, we also learn how much more sinful and rebellious we are. And then we see how much greater His love is for us.</p> |
| TRANSITION – 2 MIN | <p>So, let’s get into small groups to take a situation that might happen to us and decide what God would say about it and what He would promise. Then we will discuss our conclusions with the rest of the class.</p> |
| LEARNING ACTIVITY #2 -- LG GROUP 10 MIN | <p>"To Trust or Not to Trust"</p> <p>Instructions: Give each group a situation. In preparation, the students will need to consider the decision, the corresponding promise and the likely consequence for their action. Discuss with them the situation, the response they believe is most biblical and the likely consequences of that response. After they are finished, each group will give their conclusions to the class. Recognize that it is possible to biblically resolve situations in a variety of ways. Let the students read the passages and come to their own conclusions.</p> <p>Debrief after all groups have presented their conclusions</p> <p>Consider Joshua and Caleb. They refused to be influenced by the fears or attitudes of others. They chose to believe that God would give them everything they needed to take the land. Then they chose to take a stand with the people. They didn’t win a popularity contest. No, the people were so angry they wanted to stone them to death. But God was in charge. Because Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who trusted God’s promise, they were blessed. They lived in the Promised Land.</p> <p>Who remembers the key verse? “And why couldn’t they go in? Because they didn’t trust Him” (Hebrews 3:19). The Israelite’s unbelief kept them from God’s blessing of the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb trusted God and were blessed. The next time we’re in a difficult situation, let’s try to remember the choice these two guys made to trust God.</p> |

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| Let's pray that God will give us the courage to believe Him and to stand for Him. If you aren't His child, you can tell Him that you want Him to forgive your sins so you can follow Him. |
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To Trust or Not to Trust

When you choose NOT to believe God's promises and act on that unbelief, you rebel. Rebellion is not always something as obvious as breaking the law or disobeying your parents. Rebellion for a Christian is choosing not to trust God. We choose not to trust God when we don't believe He loves us and wants the very best for us.

Instructions: As you consider the situation, read the suggested Bible verse and determine:

1. God's instruction
2. God's promise
3. Why you would be tempted to disbelieve God's promise
4. The likely consequence of obedience & likely consequence of rebellion

Situation #1: A new girl shows up in your classroom one Monday morning. No one has ever seen her before and you can tell she is really nervous. You heard your friends talking about her. They just don't think she'll fit in. They think her hair's ugly and the clothes she wears just won't cut it. It would obviously be easy to join in with your friends, especially if you agree with them. See **Romans 15:7; John 13:12-17**.

Situation #2: Joe and Sam are on the same basketball team and are playing the arch rival team. In the last minute their team is down only one point. There are 15 seconds remaining and Sam has the ball. Joe rarely misses the basket and Sam rarely makes it. So Joe yells to Sam to pass the ball, but instead Sam shoots and misses. The other team gets the rebound and holds the ball until the final buzzer. As the team goes to the locker room, Sam is next to Joe. What does Joe do or say to Sam? See **Galatians 3:13-17; Matthew 5:7**.

Situation #3: You are on the couch watching television with your younger brother, Greg. Greg starts kicking you with his bare foot for no reason. You keep asking him to stop, but he won't. What do you do? See **James 1:19-20, John 14:15-18, 21**.