

LESSON 40

Israel Spies Out the Land

NUMBERS 13–14



BIBLE TRUTH

FAITH IS REQUIRED TO FOLLOW GOD'S PLAN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

- 1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
- 2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN**
Read Numbers 13:17—14:4 from the Scriptures or read story 40, “Israel Spies Out the Land,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN**
Arm Wrestling Match
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ large chocolate candy bar
 - ✓ a coin
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2 20 MIN**
Skit Wars
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ skit options 1 through 3 written on cards (see below)
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN**
Coloring Activity
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ coloring page 40—one copy for each child
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN**
Giants in the Land

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Moses sends the spies—God tells Moses to send spies into “the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel” (Numbers 13:2). Moses obeys the Lord and sends twelve spies, one from each of the tribes. Their job is to go in and observe the people, the crops, and the strength of the cities. Forty days later they return with their report.

While in Canaan, the spies see that the land “flows with milk and honey” just as God had promised (see Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5). But they also see cities with strong defenses and soldiers as tall as giants. Their bad reports are filled with unbelief. Caleb tries to quiet the people and says that God will give them the land. But Caleb is outnumbered. The other men make the people afraid by talking about the giants.

The people fall further into unbelief—After hearing about the giants, the Israelites seem to lose all faith that God will protect them. They forget what God has done for them. Their fear becomes anger. They talk of choosing a new leader and returning to Egypt. When Caleb and Joshua try to encourage them about the Promised Land, they even want to kill *them*.

God responds in anger, but Moses mediates on Israel’s behalf—When the frightened Israelites threaten to stone Joshua and Caleb, God stops them by having his glory appear. God then threatens to destroy the Israelites, but Moses intercedes for them. God decides not to kill them but disciplines them by sending them back out into the desert to wander until all the people who had complained have died. God does not want people entering his Promised Land who do not trust him. When the people hear this, they decide to try to enter the Promised Land without God’s help. They are badly defeated by the Canaanites.

Up until now, the people have spent a little more than two years wandering in the desert. Because of their lack of faith in God, they will now wander in the desert more than thirty-five years longer. Here God disciplines the older generation but has mercy on the younger.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Numbers 14:11–24.

Once again Moses stood in the middle for his people and prayed to God saying, "Please forgive the sins of your people, according to your great steadfast love." God granted Moses' prayer because Moses prayed for the one thing that could save Israel: God's steadfast love and forgiveness.

Although God didn't allow Israel into the Promised Land, he forgave Israel because he knew that one day his Son, Jesus, would stand in the middle as their true mediator and die on the cross for their sins. Centuries later, in a letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul called Jesus the one true mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) who stood in the middle between sinful man and a holy God. Even as Moses prayed, God saw ahead to the day when he would send his Son.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Numbers 13:17—14:4 from the Scriptures or read story 40, "Israel Spies Out the Land," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Arm Wrestling Match

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ large chocolate candy bar
- ✓ a coin

This lesson is to help the children identify with Israel and their unbelief. Many of the children may want to identify with the heroes, Joshua and Caleb, but it is sinful Israel to which we should compare ourselves.

Invite one of the biggest men in the church to assist you in this class.

Ask the children who would like to arm wrestle for a candy bar prize. Hold the candy bar high. Ask for two volunteers, explaining that the winner will get the prize. Some children will likely raise their hands. There is a bit of deception going on in that they think they will be wrestling each other but will in fact be arm wrestling your guest.

Once you get two volunteers, flip a coin to see who will go first. Have them sit down to get ready and then call your large guest in to arm wrestle. Watch and listen closely for the reaction of the volunteers. Remember you are looking to point out similarities to Israel's response of unbelief.

Have the guest arm wrestler gently but quickly win the matches and perhaps a few more who would like to give it a try. Then, when it is the last child's turn, remind him that you are the teacher, and he could ask you for help. This hint should be given in such a way as to draw a request for help from the child. Upon hearing the request for help, declare to your guest that he is not allowed to use his strength against the child. Declare the last child as the winner and award the candy bar prize.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How were the volunteer arm wrestlers' responses to seeing their opponent like the response of the spies to seeing the giants in the Promised Land?
(Neither thought they could win.)

- How were Joshua and Caleb's responses different from the others?
(Joshua and Caleb trusted that the same God that controlled the Red Sea and delivered Israel from Egypt could deliver them now as well.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 **20 MIN**

Skit Wars

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ skit options 1 through 3 written on cards (see below)

Select three casts of actors and match each actor with a teacher or helper. As you work with each cast, see if they can perform by themselves. If not, perform with them and have them mirror your acting. The goal of the skit is to illustrate how Moses stood in the gap for the people just as Jesus does for us.

Skit 1—You are playing catch with your brother when he overthrows the ball and it breaks a window. The neighbor immediately comes out and threatens to call the police. You quickly remind the neighbor that he is a forgiving man. Ask him to rethink calling the police and give you a chance to fix his window. (Three actors needed.)

Skit 2—You are leaving a library with two of your friends and you set off the alarm. A guard checks your bag and notices that you have a reference library book that you are not permitted to check out. He pulls you aside and threatens to take your library card away. Your friends ask him to give you another chance saying that the library was closing and you needed the book to write a report. (Four actors needed.)

Skit 3—Your mom tells you that you will not get dessert because you didn't eat your spinach for dinner. Your brother respectfully reminds your mom that she often didn't make him eat all his spinach but just made him taste it. Your sister asks your mom to give you dessert if you just eat one more bite. (Four actors needed.)

Give the groups five minutes to rehearse their skit and then take turns performing. After the skits are over, have the class indicate which team did the best job through applause or a show of hands. Congratulate the winners.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **What do all these skits have in common?**

(All the skits have someone acting as a mediator. Help the children understand that a mediator is someone who speaks on behalf of one person to another to resolve a dispute or disagreement.)

- How are these skits like our Bible story?

(Moses mediated on behalf of the people before God.)

- Who in the New Testament is a mediator?

(Jesus intercedes on our behalf. Jesus represents us to God and God to us. He is the one in the middle between us and God.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page 40—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- Why did Joshua and Caleb believe Israel could take the land?

(They trusted in the Lord for their strength.)

- What did the other spies say?

(They said the people of the land were big and strong but the Israelites seemed like grasshoppers.)

- What did the faithless spies forget?

(They forgot how God had already delivered them from the Egyptians and parted the Red Sea.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Giants in the Land

After telling the story, have the children act out the part of the people of Israel. First share with them the spies' bad report: "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are" (Numbers 13:31). Have them all act afraid.

Then share with them Caleb's appeal: "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey" (Numbers 14:7–8). Have them act angry, pretending to pick up stones, ready to throw them at Moses and the good spies.

Use this simple dramatization to get them into the story. Talk about how Joshua and Caleb had faith in God, but the people did not. In spite of all God had done for them, they didn't believe that God could deliver them.

