



SPYING OUT THE LAND

God's Incredible Plan • U5# 2 1st-3rd Grade • Nov. 2, 2025

Concept

God is ALWAYS trustworthy.

Goal

Students will learn that God is trustworthy, and He has promised that He can give us everything we need. When we choose to rebel against God we can miss out on spiritual blessings God longs to give us.

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	Craft Supplies
Learning Activity #2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">"To Trust or Not to Trust" activity sheet, 1/small group	Activity Stations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">10 "I SPY" laminated question cards"I SPY" activity sheet, 1/studentPencils, 1/student<i>Exodus & Route of Spies 8½" x 11" laminated map</i>

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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"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)

[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.

Set Up

Incorporation Lg. Group

Instructions: Hide the "I SPY" laminated question cards, to be used in the Activity Station, around the room.

Activity Stations:

- **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 the Oasis Giving campaign.

Introduction Lg. Group

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

Let's gather with the other classes to see the Drama Team skit about this.

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Drama -- "News Now" skit performed by Drama Team

Transition

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

Reader's Theater

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.

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.

Lesson Continued

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?

Read verse 10. 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."

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.

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 gave up 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.

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?

The really cool thing is that when we trust God we experience His blessings. 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.

Transition

Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

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.

"To Trust or Not to Trust"

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.

Debrief after all groups have presented their conclusions

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. 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.

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.

Let's pray that God will give us the courage to believe Him and to stand for Him.

NEWS NOW

Cast:

- Caleb
- Hank: Anchor Person
- Jake: News Reporter
- Igal: Spy

Props:

- Table
- Microphone
- Sign "NEWS NOW"
- Stick with big PURPLE balloons (grapes) – For a fun "surprise" factor, put a little water in one of the balloons and pop it as you walk past the children.

Background Noise: Typewriter and telephones ringing

Hank: Hello, I'm Hank Halsey and thank you for tuning in to News Now. We give you the news not later, not in a while, not soon . . . BUT NOW! That's why we're called NEWS NOW!

Our Top story tonight—THE SPIES HAVE RETURNED! That's right—THE SPIES HAVE RETURNED. As most of you already know, twelve spies were sent out to investigate and report on this Land that God promised to the Israelites. They have been in the wilderness for almost 2 years and it seems that God is now ready to lead them into their Promised Land. We're going to go LIVE to Jake Janon. Jake is standing by with some of the spies. Jake . . . Jake . . . Are you there?

Jake: Yes, Hank, it's true—THE SPIES HAVE RETURNED. I'm standing with two of the spies, Caleb and Igal. So, tell me, Caleb, exactly what happened?

Caleb: A while back, as most of you already know, the Lord spoke to Moses. He told Moses to send 12 spies into the land of Canaan. So Joshua, Igal, 9 other leaders and I were sent out.

Jake: Igal, what were you to do while you were there?

Igal: We were to bring back some samples of the crops. We were also told to check out the land to see if it was fertile and if the people who live there were strong or weak, few or many.

Jake: What did you think about this AWESOME responsibility?

Igal: I was a little nervous at first but it was AMAZING what we saw. The land over there is wonderful! It is a land full of all kinds of wonderful fruit. It is obviously very fertile—a huge change from the emptiness of this desert! We brought back some fruit to show you. Caleb, will you help me with these grapes?

Both men pick up huge grapes (balloons) on a large pole)

Jake: Wow! THAT'S INCREDIBLE! I've never seen anything like it. They are the largest grapes I've ever seen.

Igal: You think these GRAPES are BIG—you should see the people who grew them. The people living in this land are powerful warriors. They are GIANTS!

Jake: Giants! You have got to be kidding. What did you think when you saw them?

Igal: We felt like grasshoppers next to these JUMBO, TALL creatures. You might as well call me PEE WEE Igal next to these guys.

Jake: Well, Caleb, what's next?

Caleb: Joshua and I are ready to go back to the land and take it at ONCE, just as God said we would.

Jake and Igal (together): YOU'RE READY TO WHAT??!!

Caleb: The Lord promised us the land. Are we going to get this close and give up? The Lord said He will bring us into the land and give it to us. Don't rebel against the Lord, and do not fear the people of the land. They are but bread for us to eat! The Lord is with us! Don't be afraid of them!

Igal: You're CRAZY! We're not going back to that land to face those MONSTERS, those GIANTS.

Caleb: Those people may be large, but they are not giants. Anyway, the Lord has promised He will be with us. He is much bigger and much more powerful than a million of those people, even if they are giants. Have you forgotten what He has done for us already? Didn't He get us out of Egypt and stop the Egyptian Army when they were chasing us? Who has been feeding us and giving us water these past 2 years? Who has kept our clothes and sandals from wearing out? Who has kept us from getting sick? Wake up, you fool! Are you going to refuse the promise of the God of our Fathers and rebel against Him? If you think we are in danger if we enter the land, you better think about the danger we're in if you refuse God's promise.

[Caleb and Igal step aside to discuss/argue the situation]

Jake: (facing the audience) Well, ladies and gentlemen, this has been quite an event. We'll be sure to keep you posted on what happens next. Back to you, Hank.

Hank: Thank you for this latest newsbreak, Jake. This has been an amazing story. You students may now return to your previously scheduled classrooms to find out what the Israelites decide to do about returning to the Promised Land. I also would like to thank our viewing audience for tuning into NEWS NOW—where we here are committed to giving YOU the news not later, not in a while, not soon... but NOW!