

# The Twelve Spies

## Overview

### Materials You'll Need

- small paper plates
- markers and crayons
- scissors
- glue
- cellophane
- craft sticks



### Scriptures

Num 13:1-14:38

### Bible Truth Objective(s)

God keeps His promises

### Behavioral Objective(s)

To believe God and trust in His ways; to show our obedience to God with actions

### Memory Verse

"The Lord is with us. Do not fear them."  
(Num 14:9)



## Bible Knowledge

### Canaan

God told the Israelites that the Promised Land was rich and fertile. As the twelve spies discovered, the land of Canaan was indeed magnificent. The Bible often calls it "the land flowing with milk and honey." Although the land was only 150 miles long and 60 miles wide, its lush hillsides were covered with fig, date, and nut trees. It was the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### The Israelites' Lack of Trust in God

When the spies returned to Kadesh from scouting the new land, the people had to decide whether to enter the land or to retreat. They chose to retreat because they were afraid of the fortified cities and the fierce giants that lived there. They once again failed to trust in God's guidance and strength. As a result, the Israelites were condemned to wander for forty years in the wilderness. Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, would end up dying there as well. God was not exaggerating when He

said in Numbers 14:22 that the Israelites had already failed ten times to trust and obey Him. Here is a list of their ten failures:

- 1) Lacking trust at the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14:11, 12);
- 2) Complaining over bitter water at Marah (Ex 15:24);
- 3) Complaining in the wilderness of Sin (Ex 16:3);
- 4) Collecting more than the daily quota of manna (Ex 16:20);
- 5) Collecting manna on the Sabbath (Ex 16:27-29);
- 6) Complaining over the lack of water at Rephidim (Ex 17:2, 3);
- 7) Committing idolatry by constructing the golden calf (Ex 32:7-10);
- 8) Complaining at Taberah (Num 11:1);
- 9) Complaining over the lack of delicious food (Num 11:4);
- 10) Failing to trust God and enter the Promised Land (Num 14:1-4).



## Understanding Your Students

In this lesson, it is important to stress that the ten spies did not have faith to trust that God would give them what He promised. But it is also important to let the students understand that many of the people lacked this faith because they were scared. They were scared because they didn't have any experience engaging in battles. They were scared because the people of the land seemed to be bigger than they were. We need to let the children know that it is perfectly okay to feel scared. Everyone feels afraid some of the time. (You may wish to share a phobia you have or talk about other common phobias.) Some people are scared of the dark and have to sleep with a light

on. Others are afraid of heights and are scared to climb up a ladder. So when the Israelites were scared of the things they saw, they decided that it was better to go back to the land that they had come from.

It is hard to face our fears. We don't know what to expect and usually our minds tell us to just give up or stay away. Sometimes, we need to listen to our minds and do just that because some things are really too scary to try. But there are also times when we know we can trust in God and He will help us. For example, when we are trying to ride our bike without training wheels or when we are joining a new class and have to meet new people. These can be scary situations, but God has promised to help us. In our heart, we can say a prayer and ask God to guide us. He will be there to show us the way.



## Vocabulary

### Israelites

God's chosen people

### Canaanites

the people who lived in the land of Canaan

### Spies

people sent to another place to find out more about it

### Courageous

to be brave

### Unfaithful

having little faith in God

### Comfort

to make someone feel better

### Fear

a feeling of being afraid/scared

### Wilderness

a place that very few people live in, such as a forest or desert



## Before You Teach

The Bible records that Joshua and Caleb (and those who were under the age of 20 at the time of the Exodus) were allowed to enter into the land of Canaan. This was because of their faith in God and His promise. They were able to stand out from the crowd and make up their own minds about what they believed in. It was not an easy thing for them to do. It was ten against two. It would have been much easier for them to go with the tide and agree that it was just too difficult to conquer Canaan. After all, what the ten spies reported was true, even if the facts were slightly stretched. But Joshua and Caleb chose to speak up and say what their hearts

compelled them to.

As Christians, we often know what we should do. But to do it is another matter. We know we should pray before every meal, but we skip it sometimes for the sake of convenience or fear of embarrassment. We know we should spread the gospel, but we excuse ourselves because we lack eloquence. We know we should stay away from ungodly movies, parties, or even certain friends, but we convince ourselves they are not big deals. We still have God in our hearts and that is what matters. It is easy to go with the flow of the world and just give in. But our faith depends on every decision we make. God has told us that the path to heaven is a narrow one. God did not say that the road to eternity would be easy, but He did promise us eternal and everlasting life when we choose to stay true to His teachings.



## Bible Story

Children, do you remember who God asked to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? Yes, it was Moses. After Moses brought the people out of Egypt, God asked him to go to Mount Sinai, a very high mountain, where He wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets for Moses to bring back. Do you remember what God's Ten Commandments are? (Let students raise hands to share.) The Ten Commandments are the very important laws God wants His people to obey. But while Moses was on the mountain, the Israelites started to get really worried. They thought that maybe something happened to Moses on the mountain and that he would never come back. So they asked Moses' brother, Aaron, to make a golden idol that looked like a cow for them to worship. God was very angry and sad about this. He didn't want to take the Israelites to the land of Canaan. However, Moses loved the Israelites so much that he begged and begged God to change His mind. Finally, God was touched by Moses' great love and agreed to continue to lead the way.

### **The Twelve Spies Are Sent Out**

Children, do you know anything about the land of Canaan? What was so wonderful about the place that God wanted to bring His people to? (Let children share.) Well, it was a beautiful land where many fruits and vegetables grew. God wanted to bless His people with the land so that they could rest and enjoy their lives there.

As the Israelites got closer to the land of Canaan, God asked Moses to send twelve men to spy on the land. Do you know what spies had to do back then? (Let students share.) These twelve men had to see if the people in Canaan, the Canaanites, were weak or strong, few or many, whether the land was good or bad, whether the people lived in cities or in camps, and whether there were trees and fruit. They were also asked to bring back some of the ripened fruits they found there.

These twelve spies were very brave! They climbed over hills to reach the land of Canaan. There they saw lots of big grapes hanging on the grapevines. (Show picture of grapes or real grapes, if in season!) Have you eaten grapes before? Do you like them? Which kind is your favorite, green or red?

Can you show with your hands the biggest grape you have ever eaten before? Well, the grapes in the land of Canaan were sweeter and bigger than any the spies had ever eaten. The grapes were so big that it took two people to carry them! They brought back some of the delicious grapes, and other fruits like pomegranates and figs. (Also show pictures of pomegranates and figs for students to see.)

After forty days, the spies came back to report to Moses. The Israelites were waiting excitedly to hear the good news. The spies said to Moses, "The land of Canaan is a really good place. Look! These are some fruits that we brought back." The people were so happy when they heard the reports and saw with their own eyes the huge, delicious fruits.

### **The Unfaithful Spies Report Bad News**

But not all of the spies said good things about the land. Ten of them were unfaithful. Children, do you know what "unfaithful" means? When we say that these ten spies were unfaithful, this means that they had very little faith in God. They didn't believe that God was going to help them. They said that although the fruits were big and good, the people who lived there were strong and very, very tall—like giants. They also said that the Israelites were as small as grasshoppers compared to the Canaanites. (You may wish to draw to scale so that the students can see the size difference.) How many of you think that the Canaanites were really that strong and huge? (ask students to raise hands) The Bible says that Canaanites were about seven to nine feet tall (the height of the classroom), and the Israelites were about five feet tall. It is true that the Israelites were shorter, but they were definitely not as small as grasshoppers. These spies were not telling the truth! They only said these things because they were very afraid, and did not want to fight against the Canaanites.

The unfaithful spies also said that the cities had very tall walls all around, and they were guarded by soldiers day and night. The Israelites would never be able to take over the land of Canaan. When the people heard these reports, they became so sad that they cried all night. The Israelites complained to Moses and Aaron saying, "We enjoyed staying in Egypt, but you led us to this place, and now we are going to die fighting the Canaanites. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" The Israelites had forgotten about the power of God.

### **The Faithful Spies Comfort the Israelites**

How many spies did Moses send out in the beginning? Yes, twelve spies. Among the twelve, two were faithful—they were Joshua and Caleb. When Joshua and Caleb saw that the Israelites were so angry and sad, they tried to comfort them and said, “The land that we went to see is a very good land. Our God is the Almighty God and He will lead us to the land of Canaan peacefully. He will give us the land. If God is with us, there is nothing to be afraid of.”

Children, can you imagine how courageous and brave Joshua and Caleb must have been, to stand in front of the people and tell them to do what was right in the eyes of God? When everyone else wanted to just quit and forget about God’s promise, Joshua and Caleb reminded them that they should not be afraid because God would give them the power they needed to take over the land. Do you think the people listened to Joshua and Caleb? (Thumbs up if you think the people listened, thumbs down if they didn’t.) No! The people did not listen to them. They didn’t have faith, and they even wanted to throw stones at Joshua and Caleb.

God was very sad when He saw that the Israelites didn’t trust Him. So God said, “You cannot

have this land yet. You will have to travel many more years in the wilderness.” Instead of going to the beautiful land of Canaan, where the Israelites could rest and enjoy God’s blessing, they lived in the wilderness for a total of 40 years.

### **Have Faith in God**

Have you ever felt lonely and scared at night? Let me tell you a story. Johnny was one of many children who was afraid of the dark. He didn’t like to go to sleep by himself, and would often cry himself to sleep. One Sabbath, Johnny was in his RE class listening to Joshua and Caleb’s story just like all of you are doing. He learned how brave Joshua and Caleb were, and how much faith they had in God. He decided to ask God to give him faith to overcome his fear, so that he wouldn’t be afraid of the dark anymore. That night before Johnny went to bed, he prayed really hard and he remembered how his RE teacher once said that even when we feel like we are alone, we are never really alone, because God is always beside us protecting us! So after Johnny prayed, he closed his eyes and thought about all the blessings God had given him. All of a sudden, he felt very safe and peaceful, and he fell asleep that night without feeling afraid anymore. Children, how can we be more faithful like Joshua and Caleb?



### **Check For Understanding**

- 1. How many spies did Moses send to look at the land of Canaan?** (Twelve spies.)
- 2. What kind of fruits did they bring back?** (They brought back many grapes, pomegranates and figs.)
- 3. How many spies gave bad reports and were afraid of the Canaanites? (Ten) What were the ten spies afraid of?** (That the Canaanites, who were strong and tall, might kill them.)
- 4. How did the Israelites feel when they heard the unfaithful spies’ report?** (The Israelites were so sad that they cried all night.)
- 5. How many spies said that God would give**

**them the land of Canaan?** (Two: Caleb and Joshua)

- 6. How did the Israelites feel after Caleb and Joshua comforted them?** (They didn’t have faith, and didn’t want to listen to Caleb and Joshua to rely on God. They were mad and even wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua.)
- 7. How do you think God felt when the Israelites did not want to trust Him?** (God was very sad that His people didn’t want His guidance.)
- 8. What did God tell the Israelites because they didn’t trust Him?** (God said that the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for many more years. Since they didn’t trust Him, they would not be able to go into the land right now.)



## Life Application Story

### Ask God For Courage

One morning, before school started, Tommy Lewis met up with his best friends in first grade, Ben and Andy. He loved hanging out with them whenever there was a break. When the first bell rang, Tommy and his friends went in to their usual classroom and greeted their teacher, Mrs. Lee. Tommy sat down in his seat and began coloring quietly at his desk. Not long after, Ben whispered to Tommy.

"Tommy, look!" Ben was pointing to Mrs. Lee's desk.

"Shhh ... it's coloring time now. Don't talk or you might get us in trouble," Tommy whispered back to Ben.

"But Tommy, I see some really brightly-colored erasers on Mrs. Lee's desk. They look so cool. I wish I could have one," said Ben.

Ben couldn't concentrate on his coloring work for the rest of the morning. All he could think of was how wonderful it might be if he could have one of Mrs. Lee's brightly colored erasers. When it was time for morning recess, Tommy, Ben, and Andy got together to share their snacks. Once again, Ben asked his two friends if they had seen those brightly colored erasers on Mrs. Lee's desk.

Ben kept asking, "I wonder why Mrs. Lee brought those erasers to school today?"

"Remember, she said that she was going to bring some special prizes for the students who have been good all week," Andy answered. "They really look pretty cool! If I get to pick, I want the neon green one," Andy added.

Ben was quiet for a few seconds, and then he suggested, "Hey, guys, let's sneak in the classroom now and pick out our favorite colored erasers. Mrs. Lee will never know. Plus, she's not in the classroom now—I saw her talking with another teacher in the office a few minutes ago. She would never notice that a few were missing from that whole box of erasers. Let's go, guys, before it's too late!"

"Are you sure you want to do that, Ben?" Andy asked.

"Yes, come with me so you get to pick one for yourself too," said Ben excitedly.

Ben turned to Tommy and said, "Come on,

Tommy, don't be a scaredy-cat! Mrs. Lee won't know. Let's go!"

Poor Tommy had to make a decision about whether to follow his friends or not. He knew that if he went with Ben, he would be stealing. He quickly remembered the Ten Commandments that he learned at church. One of them is "Do Not Steal." Tommy knew that God would be very sad if he stole from Mrs. Lee. But Ben and Andy were his best friends. He wanted to do what they did, and didn't want to be called a "scaredy-cat." What should he do?

Tommy knew that he should not steal no matter what. So he prayed quietly in his heart to ask God to give him courage, so that he wouldn't be afraid to tell his friends that stealing was not a right thing to do.

After Tommy said a short silent prayer, he went up to his friends and said, "Guys, you know that taking the erasers is not right. We shouldn't take Mrs. Lee's stuff, plus we might get into trouble if we are caught stealing. Let's just be super good every day this week, so that we can be the ones to get the eraser as a prize from Mrs. Lee."

Tommy felt good when he told his friends that stealing was wrong. It was hard, but he had done it! Before anything further could happen, the bell rang again. It was time to go back to class.

Ben and Andy decided to listen to Tommy and be good all week. Mrs. Lee was very happy with their class behavior throughout the week. On Friday, when the names of the students were called, Ben, Andy and Tommy all got to pick their favorite colored eraser.

### Questions to Think About

1. **Who did Tommy like to hang out with at school?** (Ben and Andy.)
2. **What was Ben's reaction when he saw Mrs. Lee's brightly-colored erasers?** (Ben really liked them. He first wished that he could have one, then he wanted to steal one from Mrs. Lee.)
3. **How did Tommy feel when his friends wanted him to take the erasers without asking?** (It was hard for Tommy. At first, Tommy wanted to please his friends and do what they did. But he knew that God would not be happy with this.)
4. **What would you do if Ben asked you to sneak into Mrs. Lee's room to steal erasers with him?** (Let students answer.)

5. **What did Tommy do to ask God for courage to do what is right?** (He prayed in his heart to ask God for courage, so he could be brave enough

to tell his friends that stealing is wrong.)



### Activity 1

#### **The Twelve Spies**

How many spies were sent out? Write a number on each of them to count how many.

What kinds of things did the spies see in the promised land? Can you name them and color them in?



### Activity 2

#### **Who is Listening to God?**

Look at each set of pictures. Who is listening to God? Circle the right picture. Tell what they are doing that shows they are listening to God and His teachings.



### Activity 3

#### **Magnifying Glass**

##### Materials:

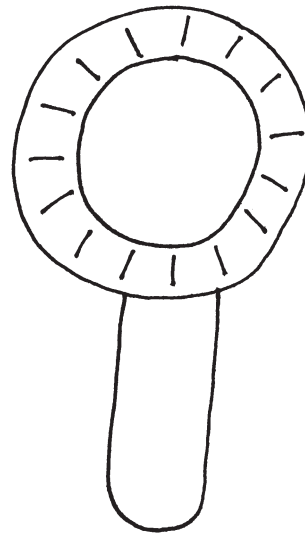
1. small paper plates (two per student)
2. markers and crayons
3. cellophane
4. scissors
5. glue
6. craft sticks

##### Directions:

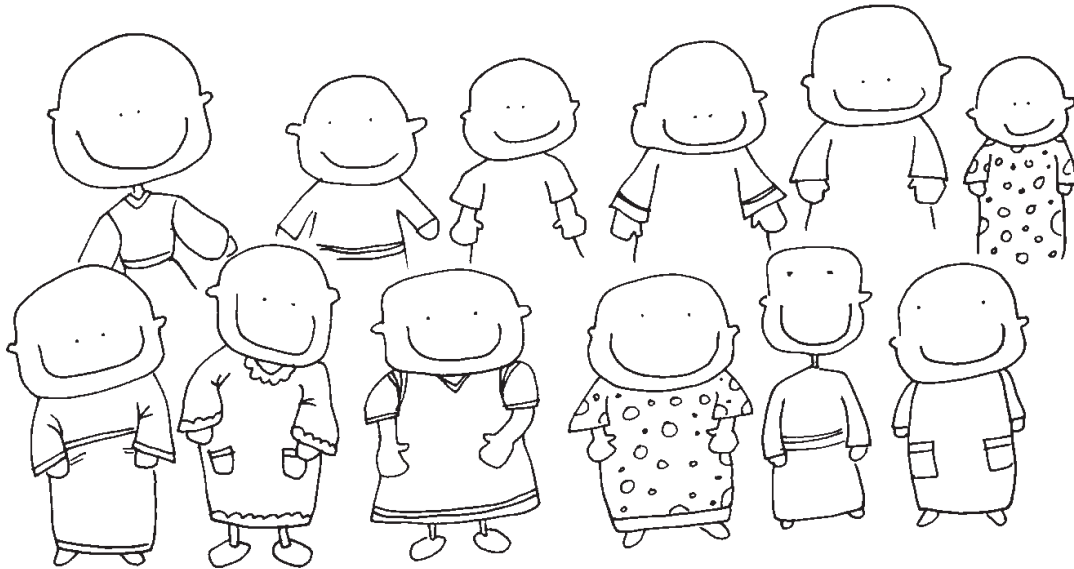
1. Give each student two paper plates and have them stack the plates on top of each other. Help them cut the middle of the plates out, so the plates look like a donut.
2. Pull the two plates apart and glue a piece of cellophane (large enough to fit in the circle) around the rim of one plate.
3. Glue a craft stick to the edge of the same plate.
4. Now glue the other plate to the first plate to cover up the stick and cellophane. Once the plates are aligned, the students should have a

magnifying glass.

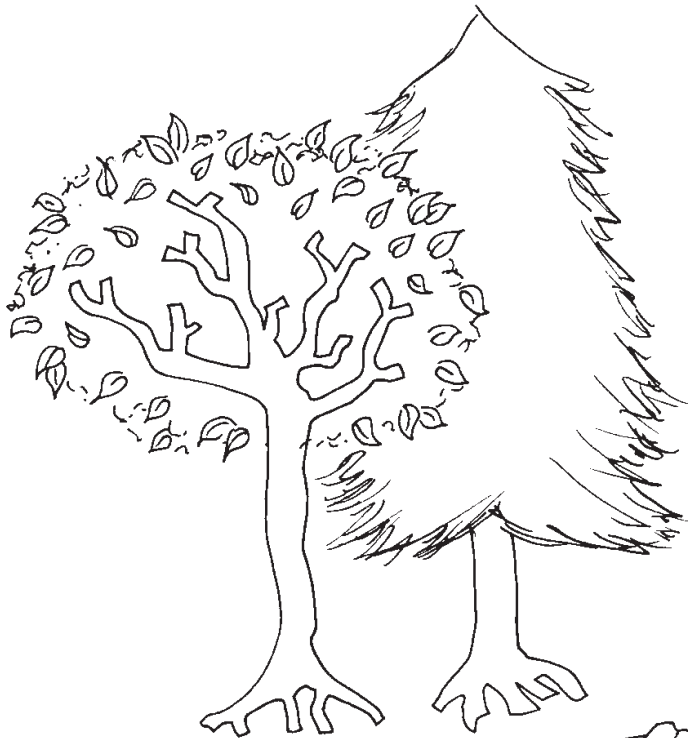
5. The students can decorate the plates with the markers to personalize the magnifying glass. As the students create their craft, review the story of the spies by pretending they are the spies. They can use a magnifying glass to “to see things better.”



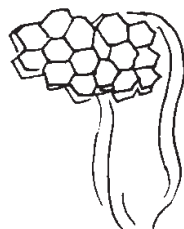
# The Twelve Spies



How many spies were sent out?  
Write a number on each of them to  
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What kinds of things did the  
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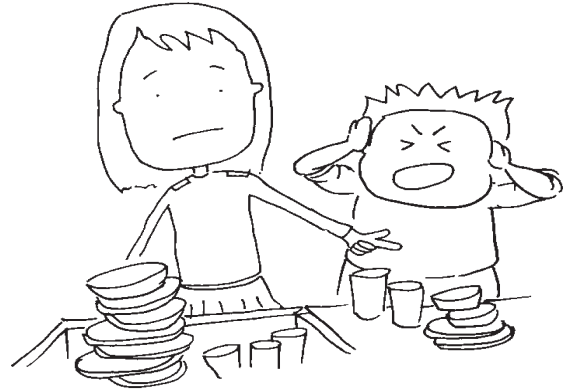


Activity 2:2

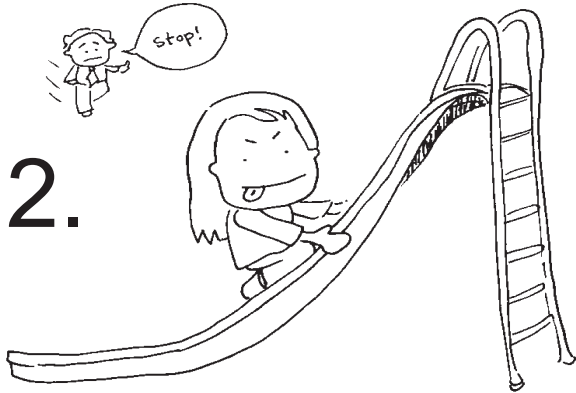
### Who is Listening to God?

Look at each set of pictures. Who is listening to God? Circle the right picture. Tell what they are doing that shows they are listening to God and His teachings.

1.



2.



3.

