

The Twelve Spies

Numbers 13:1-14:9

“If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A hardback book (old one that you don't mind dropping) and a piece of paper that is a little smaller than the book.

Pepper, toothpicks, liquid dish detergent and a few small mixing bowls or glasses.

As many 8" x 8" square pieces of coated freezer paper as the number of children in your class, paper cup instructions (included in curriculum) and water.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Same Time

Bring a hardback book and a piece of paper that is a little smaller than the book. Give this challenge to your class: “I can make this piece of paper fall to the floor at the same speed as this book and make them hit the ground at the same time. Can you?” Let them try as many times as they want.

When they all give up you place the sheet of paper on top of the book with no edges sticking out and drop. Down they both go (practice this at home a few times to make sure it works OK). For scoffers who say that the book still hit the ground first, it should work if you put the paper on the bottom of the book. But to be safe you may want to rub it first to create a little bit of static electricity.

LESSON TIME!

Whenever you think of the word “spy” what do you think of? Maybe you think of someone who sneaks around in another country to get national security secrets. You may imagine it to be very dangerous work.

In our lesson today, we are going to learn about twelve spies who secretly went into the land of Canaan to see what it was like. We will find out what happens as they go into the land and spot big, frightening giants; and we will see how the people of Israel react to the spies’ news upon their return.

NUMBERS 13:1-3

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

"Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them."

So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel.

The Israelites had been traveling through the desert as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. They now arrived at the border of the land God had promised them—the land of Canaan. Now, as God directed, each of the twelve tribes of Israel sent a leader to spy out the land and return with a report.

NUMBERS 13:17-20

Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains,

"and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many;

"whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds;

"whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

Moses sent the spies to survey the land and bring a report back to the people. The information they gathered about the inhabitants of the land would enable the Israelites to seek the Lord for His plan in overtaking the land. A positive report concerning the wealth of the land—forests and fruitfulness—could encourage the Israelites as they moved into the new territory.

Notice, Moses told the spies to be of good courage. He knew that they might come across vast armies and strong cities and the sight of them could cause them to become discouraged. Yet, He knew that God had everything worked out. God would go before them and be with them. **There is nothing too hard for God.**

NUMBERS 13:21-27

So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath.

And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there.

And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

The spies went through the land for forty days. They saw abundant fruits and crops. They brought back a cluster of grapes so big it took two men to carry it! The land was exactly as God described it, a land flowing with milk and honey. God was going to give them a wonderful place to live. Yet, the spies continued their report....

NUMBERS 13:28-33

"Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.

"The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.

"There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Ten of the twelve spies reported that the people of Canaan were large; in fact, some of them were giants. They were great in number and lived in strong cities. These spies reported, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

However, one of the spies was confident in God and wanted to go in and claim the land immediately. His name was Caleb. He encouraged the people, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

Yet, the people listened to the report of the ten spies and became fearful and unbelieving.

God had already promised to give Canaan to the Israelites. Spying out the land was an opportunity for the people to see the blessings—the forests, the fruitfulness--as well as prepare them to conquer the inhabitants. Now the people, filled with unbelief and fear, saw only the obstacles, “the giants in the land,” and not the promise and power of God.

Pepper Chase

Just before class, coat a few toothpicks 1/2 of their length with liquid dish detergent and set them aside. Fill a container (small mixing bowl or large glass) most of the way with water, then sprinkle the top with ground pepper. Ask the children if they can get all of the pepper to go to the edges of the container with a toothpick and without sinking the pepper. Let those who want to give it a try. Make sure to give them a toothpick that is not coated with liquid dish detergent.

At this point, you may want to add some pepper just to make it more challenging for yourself (of course try not to show off too much!). Say that you can do it easily. Then dip one of your “soapy” toothpicks right in the center. The pepper will run to the edge of the container. You cannot repeat this unless you thoroughly wash and rinse the container, so bring extra containers so you can do it more than once.

Explain to the children that some things grownups are able to do may seem impossible to kids, but remind them that God is able to do the really impossible and wants us to trust Him when He says He will. **There is nothing too hard for God.**

NUMBERS 14:1-3

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!

"Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

How sad! Again, filled with fear, the children of Israel complain. Again, they forgot the many miracles God had done as He delivered them from Egypt and led them through the wilderness. The Israelites feared they would die and blamed Moses, Aaron, and even God. They wanted, once more, to return to Egypt, the land of their bondage. They forgot that **There is nothing too hard for God.**

NUMBERS 14:4-9

So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

"If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.

"Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."

The Israelites, blinded by their fears, attempted to choose a new leader to lead them back to Egypt. Caleb and Joshua, two of the spies, were dismayed at the people's decision and again gave report of an "exceedingly good land." They reminded the Israelites of God's power: "If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us,..." and they gave them the correct perspective of their enemies: "...they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."

Yet, again, the angry, disbelieving crowd did not listen to their pleas. They allowed their fears to keep them from experiencing God's blessings.

May we not, as the children of Israel, look at our circumstances and be overcome with fear and unbelief. May we, instead, see God and His unlimited ability and power to help. Any difficulty we assign to a task must be measured in light of the ability of the one performing the task. In Romans 8:31 we read, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” May our attitude toward the “giants” we face be that of Joshua and Caleb’s: “they are our bread;....the LORD is with us....” **There is nothing too hard for God.**

Trust Cup

Pass out an 8” x 8” piece of paper (coated freezer or wax paper preferably) to each child. Tell them this is their drinking cup so get ready for a drink of water. Act like you are ready to pour the liquid onto the piece of paper. Ask them if they really thought that you would pour it onto their paper.

Next, instruct them on how to fold the paper to form a drinking cup. See the enclosed instruction sheet for direction on folding the paper cup. After the cup is folded pour the drinks into their cups (you will want to make sure to check the “foldmanship” of each cup before pouring).

Explain that before they folded the cup it was hard for them to believe that they would be able to drink out of the piece of paper. But, the teacher had a way to change the paper to make it hold the water. God works on behalf of His children. There is nothing too difficult for Him. In Jeremiah 32:27 we read, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” **There is nothing too hard for God.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord no matter what the circumstances. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.