



# Joshua, Caleb, and the Spies

# 12

## Key Themes

- God is faithful to His promises.
- God's Word must be the absolute authority.

## Key Passages

- Genesis 12:7, 26:3, 35:12; Exodus 3:8, 23:20–23; Numbers 14:1–10

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the promise of a land for the Israelites given by God.
- Compare the faith of Joshua and Caleb to that of the other spies.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

page 5

Students will put together the Memory Verse puzzle for Exodus 20:1–5a.



### Studying God's Word

page 5

When the time came for the Israelites to enter the land God promised to Abraham, they had a crisis of faith. Ten of the spies who spied out the land were afraid of the giants in the land and of all their enemies. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, trusted God and revealed a true faith different from all the others.



### Activity 1: Pass On the Promise

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Students will run a relay race in which they will pass on the "Promised Land Deed."



### Activity 2: Spy Out the Land

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Students will search for "fruit" in the Promised Land.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### COME ON IN

- If you did not already do this, print and cut one Exodus 20 memory verse puzzle from the Resource DVD-ROM onto cardstock for each student

- Put sets into a bag or envelope. Exodus 20 memory verse puzzle in a bag or envelope for each student



### STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Joshua, Caleb, and the Spies script from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Joshua, Caleb, and the Spies script for each student
- Lesson Board Work outline



### PASS ON THE PROMISE

- Print the Promised Land Deed from the Resource DVD-ROM—one per team.

- The Promised Land Deed—one copy for each team
- Stickers



### SPY OUT THE LAND

- Hide small individually wrapped packages of fruit candies (like Skittles®) around the classroom before class starts. Make sure there are enough for each student.

- Fruit candy or other fruit-type item



## Memory Verse

**Exodus 20:1–5a** God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this lesson, read Exodus 23:20–33 and Numbers 13–14.

“To your descendants I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7). God had promised an inheritance to Abraham—and as the years went by it was passed to Isaac (Genesis 26:3), Jacob (Genesis 35:11–12), and Moses (Exodus 3:7–10). The Lord’s promise to Moses as He commissioned him to enter the Promised Land was to send an angel before them to keep them in the way. God would drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land and bless the Israelites as they walked in obedience to God’s commands (Exodus 23:20–23).

The Israelites witnessed the protection and omnipotence of God as he wiped out an entire army and delivered His children from harm (Exodus 14:28) and as He provided water from a rock (Exodus 17:6), bread from heaven (Exodus 16:14–15), and meat from the wind (Numbers 11:31). They had seen His presence in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). Yet they continued to doubt God, disobey Him, and complain of their hardships.

With the land of Canaan in their sights, the Israelites revealed their complete lack of faith and trust in God. The 12 spies were sent—each a representative of the tribe of their fathers—including Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 13:1–16). The land was indeed abundant in milk and honey and fruit just as God had promised (Numbers 13:27). Yet most of the spies, upon seeing the strong people, the fortified cities, and the giant descendants of Anak in the land, were overcome by fear (Numbers 13:28–39). Only Joshua and Caleb spoke favorably of the land, pleading with the Israelites to have courage and faith in God’s promises—and to trust that the Lord was with them—there was nothing to fear (Numbers 14:6–9).

Their cries to the people went unheeded—the Israelites refused to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:2) and threatened to kill both Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 14:10). God’s judgment was both merciful and righteous as He pardoned their rebellion (Numbers 14:20) yet decreed that they would not enter into Canaan to see the land sworn to their fathers—none who had rejected God would ever see it (Numbers 14:23). All but Caleb, Joshua, and those under 20 years old would die in the wilderness and never see the fulfillment of the promise (Numbers 14:29–31).

God is the same God today as He was then—He is immutable—He does not change. We can stand on

the promises as revealed in His Word just as surely as Caleb and Joshua believed Him in the wilderness. He will not let us down; He will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

When the Israelites left Egypt, we are told that there were “about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock” (Exodus 12:37–38). In the second year after the Exodus, a census revealed that there were 603,550 men from 20 years old and above (Numbers 1:46). And later, about 38 years after the first census, just before Israel was to enter the Promised Land, the total number of men 20 and older came to 601,730 (Numbers 26:51). Many have estimated that when women and children are added, the total number of Israelites would have been between 2 and 3 million. That is quite a throng of people to oversee, feed, care for, and move around the desert for forty years.

Because of this seemingly impossible task, some have inferred that the number of Israelites was likely tens of thousands rather than millions. It is true that from a purely natural perspective it doesn’t seem possible that several million people could survive in the desert all those years. Critics have mentioned the amount of food needed, the waste that would be produced, the logistics of moving such a large group of people, the space required for camping, etc.

What many people fail to understand is that the Lord supernaturally cared for His people for 40 years:

He . . . fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years (Deuteronomy 8:3–4).

He provided quail and manna for them to eat (Exodus 16:13–15), water when they thirsted (Exodus 17:1–7), and even clothing that did not wear out. This sojourn in the wilderness was far from a natural phenomenon, beginning with God appearing in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–5) to the display of His omnipotence during the plagues that seized Egypt (Exodus 7–11) to the crossing of the Red Sea—the

preservation of the Israelites and the destruction of the entire Egyptian army (Exodus 14). God Himself had brought His people out of Egypt, and He had decreed that they would wander for 40 years. As the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe, caring for them was a simple task—for nothing is impossible for our all-powerful God (Luke 1:37).

The Bible is full of the evidence of God's ability to rule over natural laws. From creation, to the Flood, to the virgin birth of Christ, to His myriad of supernatural miracles while on earth, to His resurrection and ascension—He has established that He controls all things. As Christians, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). That faith should lead us to allow God to be God—and not insist that he “prove” Himself according to our desires.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There were giants in the Promised Land—the descendants of Anak (Numbers 13:33). As the Israelites were about to take possession of this land, the fear of facing these giants in battle kept them from moving forward, trusting God for protection, and finally seeing the land of Canaan.

Although the people were convinced not to attempt to fight the giants this time and ran in fear, we are told that Joshua, in God's strength, later led a force against the Anakim (Joshua 11:21).

But the giants remained. And it was from Gath that the Philistine warrior Goliath would later threaten. Here again a giant stood before the army of God's chosen people and intimidated them (1 Samuel 17:4–11). This one man terrorized the entire Israelite army to the point that they would doubt God's ability to fight for them (1 Samuel 17:24).

There will always be the courageous few whose trust in God will bear witness to His faithfulness. In the account of the 12 spies, God's strength accompanied Joshua and Caleb. In the account of Goliath,

God's strength is revealed through David as he takes down the giant that an entire army covered from.

Throughout the history of mankind, circumstances have threatened to sway our trust in the faithfulness of God. In spite of the abundant promises He makes to us in His Word, we are often tempted to believe the world and deny our Creator. But we can learn from Joshua who said, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

And we can learn from David, the shepherd boy, who courageously spoke to the giant Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45). Our God is a mighty God. He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, as I prepare this lesson, please prepare my heart as well. Help me to know your faithfulness. Help me to rely on the promises you have made in your word. Lord, I am often afraid like the Israelites. When I get afraid, please bring back to my remembrance the faith of Joshua and Caleb—how they believed you, stood up for you, and did not fear! As I teach this week, Lord, please open the hearts of the children to your truths and give them more confidence in you as the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God you are. As they learn who you are, grant to them a trust in you that will not be shaken.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will put together the Memory Verse puzzle for Exodus 20:1–5a and then recite the verse several times.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



## REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



# Studying God's Word

## READ THE WORD

Let's get started. We have a lot to do. This is a lesson about trust in God, His promises to His people, courageous men, giants, fruit, and God's judgment on disobedience. I would like to begin with four volunteers to read four verses. Assign four readers for Genesis 12:7, Genesis 26:3, Genesis 35:12, and Exodus 3:8. Have them read their verses to the class.

► Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

## EXAMINE THE WORD

Great! Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This is one way we begin to understand better what God is telling us through His Word.

First we will look at Genesis 12:7. Everyone turn there in your Bibles.

Genesis 12:7

### Observe the Text

- ? Who are the characters in Genesis 12:7? *The Lord and Abram (later called Abraham).*
- ? Who was speaking? *The Lord to Abram.*
- ? What was the Lord promising to give to Abram's descendants? *This land.*

God promised Abram that one day his people would inherit a special land—the Promised Land. Write a heading on the board, “God’s Promise of a Promised Land Made To:” Under this write, “Genesis 12:7—Abram’s descendants.”

### Genesis 26:3

OK. Now turn to Genesis 26:3.

- ? Who are the characters in this verse? This is kind of tricky. You have to look at the verses before this. Who can figure it out? Look at verses 1 and 2. *The Lord (verse 2) and Isaac (verse 1).*
- ? What was God promising to Isaac? Read it very carefully. *Land for Isaac and his descendants. Write on the board, “Genesis 26:3—Isaac.”*

Here we see that God promised the land now to Abraham’s son, Isaac. God’s promise is for Abraham’s descendants, just like He said in Genesis 12:7. *Refer to the board work.*

### Genesis 35:12

Great. Now turn to Genesis 35:12.

- ? Who are the characters here? Again you need to look around a bit. You can get the answer from Genesis 35:9. *The Lord and Jacob.*
- ? What was the Lord saying to Jacob in verse 12? What was the Lord promising to Jacob? *The land that the Lord gave to Abraham and Isaac. Write on the board, “Genesis 35:12—Jacob.”*

God was now passing the promise to Jacob, who was Isaac’s son.

One more verse. Turn to Exodus 3:8. We have moved from Genesis to Exodus.

### Exodus 3:8

- ? Who are the characters in this verse? Again, you need to look around for the answer. Who can tell me? *Let the students look for the answer. If they are stumped, refer them to verse 11. God and Moses.*
- ? And what was God promising to Moses? *Land.*
- ? And how did God describe the land He is promising to Moses? *A good and large land flowing with milk and honey. Write on the board, “Exodus 3:8—Moses.”*

### Discover the Truth

Wow! God had promised an inheritance of this land to Abraham. As the years went by it was passed to Isaac, then to Jacob, and finally to Moses. It had been over 400 years since God first promised the land to Abraham. And now Moses was almost there! Will they finally enter the land that was promised so long ago? *Refer to the Seven C’s Timeline to show where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses are. Repeat that it had been over 400 years!*





# Pass On the Promise

## MATERIALS

- One Promised Land Deed for each team
- Stickers or stamps to put on the deed

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Divide the class into two relay teams (or more if you have a large class). If you have a small class you don't need to divide them but let the class participate in the relay while you time them. Give a copy of the Promised Land Deed to the first person on each team or in line. Students will take the deed across the room—or even down the hall—add a special deed stamp or sticker to the document, bring it back, and pass it to the next person in line.*

God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. That promise was passed to Isaac, then to Jacob, and on down to Moses. We are going to pretend that each of you is a descendant who receives and passes on the promise.

When I say, "Go," the first person in line should take a copy of the Promised Land Deed, run to the table, put a stamp or sticker on it, and then run back and hand it to the next person in line. Ready? Go!

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God's promises can be relied on. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be given the Promised Land. God kept that promise, and then told Moses to lead the Israelites to that Promised Land 400 years later! As we continue our study today you will see that, just as God promised, it was a good land flowing with milk and honey.



## READ THE WORD

OK. So we see that 400 years later Moses was finally ready to enter the Promised Land with the people of God—the Israelites. And God made another promise to Moses and the people.

Let's read Exodus 23:20–23 together to see what it was. *Divide the passage for members of the class to read aloud.*

Exodus 23:20–23

## EXAMINE THE WORD

Let's dig a little and see if we can understand better what God is saying.

### Observe the Text

- ? God was speaking to Moses in this verse. Who was God going to send? Look in verse 20. *An angel.*
- ? What was the angel's job according to God in this verse? *To keep them in the way and to bring them to the land.*

That's right. God would send an angel to keep them headed in the right direction and to keep them safe as they entered the land.

? In verse 21 God told them what they needed to do. Who can tell me? *Obey His voice; do not provoke Him.*

*Provoke* is just another word for irritate or aggravate. If they obey what He says, they probably won't provoke Him.

? Verse 22 tells us what would happen if they obeyed Him. What would happen? *The angel would be an enemy to their enemies.*

? What do you think that means? *Allow for answers. It means that they wouldn't need to fear their enemies. The angel would go before them and cut off the enemies that lived in the land.*

## Discover the Truth

God was still promising the land to the people. And now He added that He would send an angel to protect them. God had been faithful to them so often in the past. And He was promising to be faithful again. They just needed to be obedient and trust God—and He would show them the way and lead them safely to the land that was promised so many years ago. Let's see what happened next!



## READ THE WORD

We have more to read. We are going to go to Numbers 14. It is the fourth book of the Bible.

Before we begin, let me tell you what happened right before this. Moses sent 12 spies—one from each tribe of Israel, including Caleb from the tribe of Judah and Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim. The spies went in to see the Promised Land, and it was good and rich; the forests were thick. They brought back fruit just as Moses had said. The land truly flowed with milk and honey. It was a wonderful land.

But they also saw the descendants of Anak there. These people were very big—they were giant-like. And the cities were well protected with high walls. The people were afraid. They didn't believe there was any way they could get the land from these giants and defeat all of their enemies.

Let's read the rest of this account from these scripts. It picks up at **Numbers 14:1–10**. We are all going to participate. *Pass out the Joshua, Caleb, and the Spies scripts. Assign parts—all the children can participate. Students without specific parts can be one of the children of Israel. Have all the children stand as you "act" out this passage.*

Numbers 14:1–10

## EXAMINE THE WORD

OK. I'm going to ask some questions. Look at the scripts we just read to find the answers. When we ask questions after reading God's Word it helps us get a better understanding of what God is saying.



## Observe the Text

- ? Why were the people complaining? What were they afraid of? Look in Numbers 14:1–3. *They wondered why the Lord hadn't let them die in Egypt or even in the wilderness. Now they thought that they would be killed by the enemies in the Promised Land.*
- ? What were they planning to do? See verse 4. *Select a leader and go back to Egypt.*
- ? How did Moses and Aaron react to the people in verse 5? *They fell on their faces!*  
Yes. They were very upset at the people's reaction and they fell down—they were sad and knew that God would not be pleased with the people's fear and complaining.
- ? So, in general, the people were afraid and did not want to go into the Promised Land because of their fear. How did Joshua and Caleb feel about the land? Look at verse 7. *They knew it was a good land.*
- ? And what did they tell the people in verse 8? *If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into the land.*
- ? What else did they say to them in verse 9? *Do not rebel against the Lord. Do not fear the people in that land because the Lord is with us.*



## Discover the Truth

Well, the Israelites had traveled such a long way. They finally made it to the Promised Land. God promised to send an angel to protect them and go before them. And yet the people would not listen. Even though the land was as wonderful as they could have imagined, they still did not believe or trust God.

Of the 12 spies, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who had faith in God. Remember, Joshua said, “The Lord is with us. Do not fear the people of the land.” But the Israelites did not listen, and they even threatened to stone them. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who believed God. Their faith was in the one true God who had promised His protection if they obeyed. The others were putting their faith in themselves—and they did not believe they could take the land.

The Bible tells us that the Israelites did not go into the Promised Land at this time. In fact, because they did not believe and trust in God, they did not go into the land at all but were made to wander in the desert for 40 more years. Only Joshua, Caleb, and the young people among them would ever see the land that God had promised. Because the people did not trust God, they did not see the land flowing with milk and honey.





## Spy Out the Land

### MATERIALS

- Small, individually wrapped packages of Skittles® or other fruit-flavored candy

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Have the students search for wrapped packages of candy that you have hidden around the classroom before class.*

When the 12 men were sent to spy out the land, God said they should bring back some of the fruit of the land to show what a good land it was. Let's see if you can spy out the land and find the fruit I've hidden around the room. *Show a package of the candy.*

When I say "Go," let's see how much fruit you can bring back from the land by finding

the packages. Put it all up here on this table and we'll divide up the bounty and enjoy a snack together! *Say "Go!"*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God promised that He would give Abraham's descendants a good land. The spies discovered that, just as He had promised, God was giving them a land filled with good things. Joshua and Caleb believed God's promise that He would drive out the inhabitants. They were ready to show that God's Word was the authority in their lives by going in to take the land. They knew that God is faithful to His promises.



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

We have seen that God is faithful to His promises. God made a promise to Abraham of a land that would bless the people. That promise was passed on to Isaac, then to Jacob, and on to Moses. It was over 400 years before God brought the people to the Promised Land, but He was faithful and He did bring them to it. God made more promises to the people. He promised to protect them. He promised that His angel would go before them and clear the land of their enemies, including the giants.

When the Israelites finally got there, Moses sent in the 12 spies. Ten of the spies came back afraid. Only Joshua and Caleb were courageous and trusted in the promise of the Lord. They knew that if the Lord was with them, as He promised to be, they could take over the land. The others did not believe God's promise, became afraid, and turned from God. And so they did not enter the land of promise but were made to wander in the

desert for 40 more years. When the time came for them to finally enter the land—and they did finally get there—only Joshua, Caleb, and the young people would enter. The people who rebelled against God never made it to the Promised Land—they all died in the desert.

## GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

You know, we often want to rush God, don’t we? We pray for something and we want an answer right away. But we saw today that God sometimes takes His time, doesn’t He? After all, He promised the land to Abraham—and it was over 400 years later that the people finally got there. I think we need to learn to just trust God, wait on Him, and know that He is faithful to His promises and He expects us to be patient.

And sometimes we get afraid, don’t we? Maybe it is something like bad weather, or your dog getting lost, or someone being sick, or having to move away, or change schools, or go to a different church. Maybe mom or dad lost a job. These things can scare us. But God wants us to be like Joshua and Caleb. He wants us to trust Him—even when things are really hard. Joshua and Caleb believed God’s Word—that what He said was true. They had confidence and were not afraid.

When we go through hard times, God wants us to do the same thing. He wants us to trust Him based on what His Word tells us about Him. And His Word tells us that He is faithful, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. When we believe these things about God, we can be just like Joshua and Caleb. We won’t ever need to be afraid.

*Refer to the Attributes of God poster to review the meanings of these attributes and how believing them can keep us from being afraid.*



FAITHFUL  
OMNISCIENT  
OMNIPOTENT  
OMNIPRESENT

*(Refer to Attributes poster)*

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



### MEMORY VERSE

**Exodus 20:1–5a** God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His promises and His faithfulness to those promises.
- Pray that the students will understand better who God is and will realize that they don’t need to be afraid. He is an all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God. We have nothing to fear.

