



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 14:8–10

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

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Students will assemble the Memory Verse puzzle for Exodus 20:1–5a without using their Bibles or the Memory Verse poster.



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



COME ON IN

- ☐ If you have not already done this, print and cut out one copy of the Exodus 20 Memory Verse puzzle from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- ☐ Bring in plastic bags or envelopes to keep the Memory Verse puzzles in.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.
- ☐ Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM.



PASS ON THE PROMISE

- ☐ Print the Promised Land Deed from the Resource DVD-ROM. You will need as many copies as you have teams to participate in the relay.

- ☐ Exodus 20 Memory Verse puzzles
- ☐ Bags or envelopes to keep the Memory Verse puzzles in



SPY OUT THE LAND

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

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Lesson Board Work outline
- ☐ The Promised Land Deed—one copy for each team
- ☐ Stickers

- ☐ Fruit candy or other fruit-type item



Memory Verse

Exodus 20:1–5a And 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 brought by 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 his 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 of age 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 years of age 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 two and three million. That is quite a throng of people to oversee, feed, care for, and move around the desert for 40 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 omnipo-

otence 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 Egyptian pursuers (Exodus 14). God Himself had brought His people out of Egypt, and He had decreed that they would wander for 40 years because of their disobedience. 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, we are told that Joshua, in God’s strength, later led a force against the Anakim (Joshua 11:21).

But some 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 cowered 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, to whom God 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 . . .

- Have them assemble the Memory Verse puzzles without using their Bibles or the Memory Verse poster as a guide.
- Have the children recite the verse together and/or individually.



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. Let's begin by finding Genesis chapter 12 in our Bibles. *Help the students find Genesis 12.* Listen while I read from Genesis 12:7 to see what God promised.

Genesis 12:7

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

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who are the characters in Genesis 12:7? *The Lord and Abram (later called Abraham).*
- ? Who is speaking? *The Lord.*
- ? What is 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 on the board, "Genesis 12:7—God's promise of the Promised Land to Abram's descendants."*

Descendants means one's children, grandchildren, and those that come after them. You have learned that Abraham had a son. Who remembers his name? *Isaac.*

Listen to what God promised Isaac, Abraham's descendant, in Genesis 26:3. *Read the verse to the students.*

Genesis 26:3

➤ Encourage the children to find the verses listed here in their own Bibles before you read them. Read all or part of the verses, emphasizing that the promise included the land.

Genesis 35:12

? What was God promising to Isaac? *Land for Isaac and his descendants.*

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. Write on the board, "Genesis 26:3—God's promise to Isaac."

Isaac had a son named Jacob. Listen to the promise God gave to Jacob as I read Genesis 35:12. Read the verse to the students.

? What was the Lord promising to Jacob? *The land that the Lord gave to Abraham and Isaac. Write on the board, "Genesis 35:12—God's promise to Jacob."*

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

Exodus 3:8

Now I am going to read a verse from the book of Exodus. Listen to see what God promised Moses. Read Exodus 3:8.

? And what was God promising to Moses? *Land.*

? And what did God say the land was like that He was promising to Moses? *A good and large land flowing with milk and honey. Write on the board, "Exodus 3:8— God's promise to 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 more than 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 more than 400 years!





Pass On the Promise

MATERIALS

- ☐ One copy of the 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 to the table, 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. Each person will add a sticker to the Deed. 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. That promise was passed on to Abraham's descendants. God 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 now 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.

Turn to Exodus 23. God spoke to Moses and said He would send an angel to keep them headed in the right direction and to keep them safe as they entered the land. But there was something that God said the Israelites had to do. They had to obey Him. God said that if the Israelites obeyed Him, the angel would be an enemy to their enemies.

Exodus 23:20-23

? **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 fight the enemies that lived in the land.*

I think the Israelites forgot God's promise and forgot that the angel was going to protect them. I say this because the Bible says that they were almost there—they were almost to the Promised Land. And Moses wanted to send out spies to the land to see how it was. And he 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, and they

Numbers 14:8–10

saw a wonderful land; it was good and rich and the forests were thick. They went up to the land and found that it was just like God had said.

But they also saw something else. Giants! These were very big people—descendants of Anak. All the cities in the land were well protected with high walls. The Israelites were afraid. They didn't believe there was any way they could get the land from these giants and defeat all of their enemies.

They started crying and complaining to Moses and Aaron that their enemies would kill them all with their swords. They said they wished that they had died in Egypt. Then they decided to pick a new leader to take them back to Egypt.

But not all of the spies were afraid. There were two spies that were not afraid. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. Turn in your Bibles to Numbers 14. Numbers is near the beginning of the Bible. It is the fourth book. I am going to read verses 8–10. Listen very carefully to what Joshua and Caleb told the people. *Help the children find the place. Then read Numbers 14:8–10 to the students.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

➤ Reread the verses as you ask these questions so the children can see that the answers can be found in God's Word. Allow them to answer.

Observe the Text

- ? Joshua and Caleb were sure that if someone delighted in them they would not need to be afraid. Who was that? *Reread Numbers 14:8 if necessary. The Lord.*
- ? If the Lord delighted in them, what would the Lord do? *Numbers 14:8. Bring them into the land.*
- ? They told the people not to do something. What was it? *Numbers 14:9. Do not rebel against God.*
- ? What does that mean? Rebel? *Allow for answers. Turn against God. Stop trusting Him. Disobey what He says.*
- ? Joshua said they didn't need to fear. Who were the people afraid of? *Numbers 14:9. The people of the land.*

Remember, those people were giants. Very big. The Israelites did not believe they could fight them and win.

? Who remembers what God placed with them for protection? We read it earlier. *An angel.*

That's right. God sent an angel, but the people forgot about that and were afraid.

? Joshua knew that someone was with them. Who was it? *Numbers 14:9. The Lord.*

? But I don't think the people were listening to Joshua and Caleb. How did the people feel? *Numbers 14:10. They were upset.*

? What did the people want to do to Joshua and Caleb? *Stone them.*

Yes. And when someone back then was stoned, they threw stones at him until he died. They wanted Joshua and Caleb dead!

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 Joshua and Caleb, who were the only ones who believed God. Their faith was in the one true God who had promised His protection if they obeyed. The other 10 spies and the people were putting their faith in themselves—and they did not believe they could take the land. *Show the Lesson Theme poster.*

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. Around the room I've hidden packages of fruit candy like this.

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! Ready? Go!

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God promised that He would give Abraham's descendants a good land. The spies discovered that, just as He 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 had faith in God. 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. The other 10 spies did not trust God.



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 more than 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 finally came for them to 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 more than 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 your 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 because of who He is. 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 And 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.

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