

The Twelve Spies

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 13–14

MEMORY VERSE

Numbers 14:9

OPTIONAL VIDEO

Joshua and Caleb

<https://southside.cc/309-924>

God is bigger than what we're afraid of.

For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. The last few weeks the kids have followed God's people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and to Mount Sinai. Today we jump forward. They've been at Sinai, they've gotten the Law, and now they've finally arrived at the edge of the Promised Land. God tells Moses to send twelve men to scout it out. What happens next is one of the saddest moments in the Old Testament — and it's all about whether God's people believe him.

KEY TRUTH

God is bigger than what we're afraid of.

The land is real, and God already promised it. This is the framing the kids need. God didn't tell the spies to find out *if* they could take the land. He already promised it to Abraham four hundred years ago, and again to Moses at the burning bush. The spies were scouting, not deciding. Their job was to come back and report how good the land was. Ten of them forgot what their job was.

Two reports, one land. All twelve spies saw the same country — the same fruit, the same cities, the same tall people. Ten said, "They're too big. We can't." Two — Caleb and Joshua — said, "The land is good and the LORD is with us. Let's go." The difference isn't the facts. The difference is what they're measuring the giants against. The ten measured the giants against themselves ("we seemed like grasshoppers"). Joshua and Caleb measured the giants against God.

Fear spread fast. Numbers 14 opens with the whole community weeping all night and talking about going back to Egypt. They believed the bad report instantly. This is worth naming for the kids: fear is contagious. So is faith. Tonight you're trying to plant the second one.

What we're skipping and why. God's response to the unbelief in Numbers 14:20–35 — the forty years of wilderness wandering, an entire generation barred from the land — is the consequence side of the story. Mention it briefly so the kids know unbelief had real weight, but don't camp there. Today is about the choice in front of the spies, and the choice in front of the kids: measure the giants against ourselves, or against God?

The text rewards Caleb by name. Numbers 14:24: "But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land." That phrase — *a different spirit* — is worth pointing at. Caleb wasn't a different person. He just believed God when nobody else did.

Repeat the bottom line all morning. Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- A small object (toy figure, marble, or coin)
- A large object (basketball, big book, or large box)
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them today picks up the story long after the Ten Commandments. God's people have been traveling through the wilderness, and now they're standing at the edge of the Promised Land — the place God promised to Abraham four hundred years ago. They're finally here. And what happens next will surprise them.

ASK

What’s something that looks really big or scary, but isn’t actually that scary once you know more about it?

Let two or three kids answer. Steer toward: a thunderstorm, the dark, a big test, a new school. Then tell them: today the kids will hear about twelve men who got sent to look at something big. Ten of them saw a problem. Two of them saw God. The difference between them is the whole lesson.

Write the bottom line on the board:

SAY

God is bigger than what we’re afraid of.

2. The Story

Setting the Stage

Tell them, in your own words: God’s people are camped in the wilderness, just south of the land God promised them. God tells Moses to pick twelve leaders — one from each tribe — and send them into the land for forty days. Their job: walk through it, see what it’s like, see the people who live there, and bring back a report. This is not a scouting mission to decide *whether* to enter. God already promised them the land. They’re going in. The spies are just going to look first.

The Spies Are Sent

Have everyone open to Numbers 13:1. Pick a confident reader.

Numbers 13:1–2

Then have a different student read about what kind of land they’re walking into:

Numbers 13:23–27

The cluster of grapes was so big it had to be carried on a pole between two men. Hold up your hand and try to picture grapes the size of softballs. The land was *good*. Everyone agreed about that part.

DISCUSSION

1. Who was the one who chose the spies?

→ *God did. Look at verse 1. Make them find it. The spies didn’t come up with this — God told Moses to send them.*

2. What did the spies bring back from the land?

→ *Grapes, pomegranates, figs — and a report that the land really does flow with milk and honey, just like God said.*

The Two Reports

Now have a different student read what the ten spies said next:

Numbers 13:31–33

Pause on verse 33. The ten spies said, “We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers.” Picture that — they didn’t just say the people in the land were big. They said we are tiny. The ten spies stopped looking at God and started looking at themselves.

Then have a confident reader read what Caleb and Joshua said:

Numbers 14:6–9

Write on the board, in two columns:

TEN SPIES: “They’re too big. We can’t.”

JOSHUA & CALEB: “The LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”

SAY

All twelve spies saw the same land. The same fruit. The same tall people. The difference isn’t what they saw. The difference is what they measured the giants against. The ten measured the giants against themselves and felt like grasshoppers. Joshua and Caleb measured the giants against God — and the giants suddenly looked small.

DISCUSSION

- Joshua and Caleb saw the same big people the other ten saw. Why weren’t they scared?
 - *Because they remembered God was with them. God had already promised them this land. They trusted the promise more than they trusted what their eyes were measuring.*
- The ten spies said they felt like “grasshoppers.” Why is that a sad way to look at yourself?
 - *Because God’s people are not on their own. They have God with them. When you forget about God, you start to feel tiny — but you’re not. God is with you.*
- Did the people believe the ten spies or the two spies?
 - *They believed the ten. Numbers 14:1 says the whole community wept all night. Fear spread fast. That’s a real warning — fear is contagious, and so is faith.*

What God Does About It

Have a student read one short verse about Caleb:

Numbers 14:24

God says Caleb has a *different spirit*. He believed God when nobody else did. And God promises that Caleb — and Joshua, a few verses later — will be the only two from that whole generation who actually walk into the Promised Land. The ten spies who said “we can’t” got exactly what they said. They didn’t go in. But the two who said “God is with us” did.

3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

God is bigger than what we’re afraid of.

The Object Lesson

Hold up the small object (the toy figure or the coin). Tell the kids: this is you. Now hold up the large object (the basketball or the big book). Tell them: this is the problem. The problem looks huge next to you. The ten spies stopped right here — they looked at themselves, looked at the giants, and gave up.

Now hold up your Bible above both objects. Tell them: but God is *bigger* than the problem. Joshua and Caleb didn’t pretend the giants were small. They knew the giants were big. They just knew God was bigger. Have the kids say it together: **God is bigger.**

The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to Numbers 14:9. Read the second half of the verse together:

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 14:9

The LORD is with us. Do not be afraid.

Read it together three ways: all together normally, all together in a whisper, then once with each kid pointing up on the word “LORD.”

The first sentence is the reason. The second sentence is the response. *Because* the LORD is with us, we don’t have to be afraid. That’s the whole shape of faith.

What This Means For Us

DISCUSSION

1. What’s a “giant” in your life right now — something that feels too big for you?

→ *Listen for: a hard subject at school, a friendship problem, a sickness in the family, being scared at night, a big move, a bully. Don’t fix it — let them name it.*

2. What does it look like to remember God is bigger than that giant?

→ *Listen for specifics. Praying about it. Telling a parent. Reading the verse. Reminding yourself the LORD is with you. Not running away. Push them past “just don’t be scared” — that’s not what the verse says.*

Closing Prayer

PRAY

God, ten of the spies looked at the giants and forgot about you. Two of them looked at you and remembered the giants weren’t bigger. Help us be like Joshua and Caleb. When we see something scary this week, help us remember that you are with us, and that you are bigger than what we’re afraid of. Thank you for being a God who keeps his promises and walks with his people. Amen.

4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week’s menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don’t have to do all of them — pick what fits the group’s energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **Grapes from the Promised Land** — coloring page of the spies carrying the giant cluster of grapes back from Canaan.
- **Faith Over Fear** — word search with names and key words from the spies’ story (includes a sneak peek of next week).
- **My Giant** — drawing prompt where the kids draw something that feels too big for them, and write the verse over it.
- **Remember the Spies** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids’ Bibles.

The full production specs for each activity are in this week’s activities file.

NOTE

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they’re working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends.

What Comes Next Week

What happens to the people who said “we can’t” — and what God does with the next generation, the kids who *will* go into the land. Faith in this story isn’t the end. It’s the start of a new chapter for God’s people.