Preschool–Grade 6

Joshua, Caleb and the Twelve Spies

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: All twelve men saw the same land. Ten looked at the giants; Joshua and Caleb looked at God. Be strong and of a good courage, because the LORD is with us.
Bible passage: Numbers 13–14. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." *Joshua 1:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Draw two columns beside it: "The evil report" and "The good report."

1. Opening game: Two Reports (5–10 minutes)

Split the class into two teams. Read a situation: "There is a big spelling test on Friday." "A new kid sits alone at lunch." "Your team is playing the best team in the league." Team 1 gives a scared report ("We'll fail!"). Team 2 gives a brave report ("We can study and do it!"). Swap jobs each time. Ask: *Same facts. Why were the reports so different?* Say: "Today twelve men saw the same land and came back with two very different reports."

2. Bible story: The Twelve Spies (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Numbers 13. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words. Fill in the two columns on the board as you go.

Twelve men sent. God had brought Israel out of Egypt, and they camped in the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 13:3). **Look up Numbers 13:2.** The LORD told Moses to send a man from every tribe, every one a ruler, to search the land of Canaan, which God would give them. Twelve men are named (13:4–15). Caleb was from the tribe of Judah (13:6), and Moses called Oshea the son of Nun **Jehoshua**, that is, Joshua (13:8, 16).

What to look for. Moses told them to see whether the people were strong or weak, few or many, and whether the land was good or bad, **fat or lean** (rich or poor) (13:17–20). **Look up Numbers 13:20.** "Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land." It was the time of the first ripe grapes.

The cluster of grapes. They searched the land all the way to Rehob, and came to Hebron, where the children of Anak lived (13:21–22). **Look up Numbers 13:23.** At the brook of Eshcol they cut a branch with one cluster of grapes and "bare it between two upon a staff," with pomegranates and figs. The brook was named Eshcol because of the cluster (13:24). After forty days they returned (13:25).

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Two reports. Look up Numbers 13:27. "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." But they said the people were strong and the cities were walled and very great (13:28). **Look up Numbers 13:30.** Caleb stilled (quieted) the people and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." The other men said, "We be not able… they are stronger than we" (13:31). They brought up an **evil report**: a land that "eateth up the inhabitants," with men of great **stature** (great size) (13:32). **Look up Numbers 13:33.** "There we saw the giants… and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers."

The people turn back. The whole congregation cried and wept that night (14:1). They murmured against Moses and Aaron and said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (14:2–4). Joshua and Caleb **rent their clothes** (tore them, to show great sorrow) (14:6). **Look up Numbers 14:8–9.** "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land… the LORD is with us: fear them not." But the people bade stone them with stones, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle (14:10).

What God did. The LORD said, "How long will it be ere they believe me?" (14:11). Moses prayed, and the LORD said, "I have pardoned according to thy word" (14:19–20). But those who did not believe Him would not see the land (14:22–23). **Look up Numbers 14:24.** Caleb "hath followed me fully." The people would wander in the wilderness forty years, a year for each of the forty days (14:33–34), and their children would go in (14:31). The men who brought the evil report died by the plague before the LORD (14:37). **Look up Numbers 14:38.** Joshua and Caleb "lived still."

Write on the board: **Evil report:** "We be not able" (13:31), grasshoppers (13:33). **Good report:** "We are well able" (13:30), "the LORD is with us" (14:9).

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3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. All twelve men saw the same grapes and the same giants. Why do you think ten were afraid and two were not?
2. The ten said, "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (13:33). What makes you feel small like that?
3. Caleb said, "we are well able" (13:30). Was he trusting in himself or in God? How do you know (14:8–9)?
4. God said Caleb "followed me fully" (14:24). What does following God fully look like for a kid?
5. Moses prayed for the people, and God pardoned them (14:19–20). What does that show us about God?

Recall questions

1. What did the men carry between two upon a staff? *(One cluster of grapes, Numbers 13:23)*
2. How long did they search the land? *(Forty days, 13:25)*
3. How long would Israel wander in the wilderness? *(Forty years, 14:33–34)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **thee** and **thou** mean you; **of a good courage** means brave; **dismayed** means scared and ready to give up; **whithersoever thou goest** means wherever you go. Say: "After the forty years, when Moses had died, God said these words to Joshua, one of the two brave men (Joshua 1:1–2, 9)." Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Joshua and Caleb trusted God, because the LORD was with them. God loves you too. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. The LORD who was with Israel came to earth as a man: Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: when something looks too big, give a good report: "The LORD is with me."

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Numbers 13:2: How many men from each tribe did Moses send? *(A man from every tribe, every one a ruler)*
2. Numbers 13:6: What tribe was Caleb from? *(Judah)*
3. Numbers 13:16: What did Moses call Oshea the son of Nun? *(Jehoshua, Joshua)*
4. Numbers 13:23: What two other fruits did they bring? *(Pomegranates and figs)*
5. Numbers 13:27: What does the land flow with? *(Milk and honey)*
6. Numbers 13:33: What did the ten men say they were like? *(Grasshoppers)*
7. Numbers 14:9: Why should they not fear? *(The LORD is with us)*
8. Numbers 14:38: Which two men lived still? *(Joshua and Caleb)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are with us wherever we go. When something looks like a giant, help us give a good report and follow You fully, like Joshua and Caleb. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Told gently on purpose: the plague in Numbers 14:37 is one short line. Numbers 14:40–45 (the people going up without the LORD) is in the preteen lesson; tell it only if kids ask.

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