Preschool–Grade 6

Joshua, Caleb and the Twelve Spies

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Ten men measured the giants against themselves; Joshua and Caleb measured them against God. God calls us to be strong and of a good courage, because He is with us.
Bible passage: Numbers 13–14. Students read Numbers 13:17–33 and Numbers 14:1–10 out loud themselves.
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)* and "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." *Numbers 14:24 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Numbers 13–14, Hebrews 3:19 and Joshua 14:6–11. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Same Facts (5–10 minutes)

Draw three columns on the board: *What they saw · What ten said · What two said.* Ask what twelve men might find when they scout a new land (good food, strong cities, big people). Say: "Every one of those facts turned out to be true. The facts did not decide what the men did. Let's find out what did."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the beginning in your own words: God brought Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, and they camped in the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 13:3). The LORD told Moses to send a man from every tribe, every one a ruler, to search the land of Canaan, "which I give unto the children of Israel" (13:2). Twelve men are named (13:4–15), among them Caleb of Judah (13:6) and Oshea the son of Nun, whom Moses called Jehoshua, Joshua (13:8, 16).

Read out loud: Numbers 13:17–33. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **fat or lean** (13:20): rich soil or poor soil; **firstripe grapes**: the first grapes of the season
- **a cluster** (13:23): a bunch; **bare it between two upon a staff**: two men carried it on a pole
- **floweth with milk and honey** (13:27): a rich land with plenty of food
- **the children of Anak** (13:28): a family of very tall, strong people
- **stilled** (13:30): quieted; **possess**: take it as your own
- **an evil report** (13:32): a bad report that spread fear; **eateth up the inhabitants**: destroys the people who live there; **stature**: height

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Read out loud: Numbers 14:1–10. Old words in this passage:

- **murmured** (14:2): grumbled and complained
- **a prey** (14:3): something caught and carried off; **a captain** (14:4): a leader
- **rent their clothes** (14:6): tore their clothes to show great sorrow
- **delight in us** (14:8): is pleased with us
- **they are bread for us** (14:9): we can overcome them as easily as eating bread; **their defence is departed from them**: their protection is gone
- **bade stone them with stones** (14:10): told the people to throw stones at them

Tell the rest in your own words: The glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle (14:10). The LORD said, "How long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" (14:11). Moses prayed for the people, remembering that the LORD is longsuffering and of great mercy (14:17–19), and the LORD said, "I have pardoned according to thy word" (14:20). Yet those who had seen His miracles and had not hearkened to His voice would not see the land (14:22–23). Only Caleb, who "followed me fully" (14:24), and Joshua would go in (14:30). The little ones they said would be a prey would go in (14:31). Israel would wander forty years, a year for each of the forty days (14:33–34). The men who brought up the evil report died by the plague before the LORD, but Joshua and Caleb lived still (14:37–38). The next morning the people said, "we have sinned," and went up anyway. Moses warned them, "the LORD is not among you," and they were beaten back (14:40–45).

The end of the story. Read **Hebrews 3:19:** "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Then read **Joshua 14:10–11:** forty-five years later, Caleb was eighty-five ("fourscore and five") and said he was as strong as the day Moses sent him. After Moses died, God gave Joshua the memory verse as he led Israel into the land (Joshua 1:1–2, 9).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The ten said, "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (13:33). How does the way we see ourselves change the way we think others see us?
2. Caleb said, "we are well able" (13:30), and then added, "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us" (14:8). Where did his confidence come from?
3. God called it unbelief (14:11; Hebrews 3:19), not just fear. What is the connection between fear and not believing God?
4. The evil report spread until the whole congregation wept (14:1). How do fear and complaining spread in a group today? How can one person stand like Caleb?
5. The people went up the next day without the LORD (14:40–45). Why is "obeying late, my own way" not the same as obeying?
6. Caleb "had another spirit" (14:24). What would it look like to follow God fully at your age?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Joshua 1:9: **thee** and **thou** mean you; **of a good courage** means brave; **dismayed** means discouraged, ready to give up; **whithersoever thou goest** means wherever you go. In Numbers 14:24, **another spirit** means a different attitude from the others; **followed me fully** means followed God all the way; **his seed** means his children and grandchildren. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Joshua 1:9 this week; keep working on Numbers 14:24 next week.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Joshua and Caleb were not braver than the others because they were stronger. They believed God was with them. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is a "giant" in my life right now that makes me feel like a grasshopper?
2. What would a good report about it sound like, the way Caleb and Joshua spoke (13:30; 14:8–9)?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you follow Him fully (14:24).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Numbers 13–14 again at home. When fear starts talking, say Joshua 1:9 out loud.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are bigger than every giant. Forgive us when we look at our problems more than at You. Give us another spirit like Caleb's, help us follow You fully, and keep us from spreading fear. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Told gently on purpose: the plague (14:37) and the defeat (14:45) get one plain sentence each.

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