Preschool–Grade 6

Joshua, Caleb and the Twelve Spies

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Be strong and brave, 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, 6 purple paper circles ("grapes"), a marker, tape, 12 paper grapes to hide, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 6 purple circles (see part 4). Hide the 12 paper grapes around the room (see part 6). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Numbers 13.

1. Opening game: Giant or Grasshopper? (5 minutes)

Call out one word at a time. **"Giant!"** Everyone stands on tiptoe and stretches up tall. **"Grasshopper!"** Everyone crouches down small. **"Caleb!"** Everyone stands up straight and says, "We are well able!" Mix them up and go faster. Ask: *How did it feel to be very small?* Say: "Today we will hear about men who felt as small as grasshoppers, and two men who trusted God."

2. Bible story: The Twelve Spies (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Numbers 13, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

God had brought His people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Now they were in the wilderness, close to the land of **Canaan**, the land God said He would give them (Numbers 13:2). The LORD told Moses to send one man from every tribe to **search** the land, to go and look it over (13:2). So Moses sent twelve men (13:4–15). Two of them were **Caleb** and **Joshua** (13:6, 16).

Moses said, "see the land, what it is" (13:18). He told them to find out if the people were strong or weak, and if the land was good or bad (13:18–19). He said, "Be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land" (13:20). **Courage** means being brave.

The men walked through the land (13:21). At a brook called **Eshcol**, they cut down a branch with one bunch of grapes. It was so big that two men carried it on a pole! **Read Numbers 13:23 from your Bible:** "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs." Say: "A **cluster** is a bunch. **Bare it** means carried it. A **staff** is a long pole."

After forty days, the men came back (13:25). They showed everyone the fruit and said, "It floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (13:27). That means the land was very good, with plenty of food.

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The story continues: But then the men said, "the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great" (13:28). That means the people were strong, and the cities had big walls. Caleb **stilled** the people, which means he quieted them. Caleb said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (13:30). **Possess** means take it as our own. **Well able** means we can do it with God!

The other men said, "We be not able" (13:31). They brought an **evil report**, a bad and scary report (13:32). They said, "There we saw the giants... and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (13:33). They felt as small as bugs!

All the people cried that night (14:1). They **murmured**, which means grumbled, against Moses. They said, "let us return into Egypt" (14:4).

But Joshua and Caleb said, "The land is an exceeding good land" (14:7). **Read Numbers 14:9 from your Bible:** "the LORD is with us: fear them not." Say: "Joshua and Caleb saw the same giants, but they knew God is bigger!"

But the people said to throw stones at Joshua and Caleb. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tabernacle, God's tent (14:10). Moses prayed for the people, and God forgave them (14:19–20). But because they did not believe God, they would not go into the land. They would stay in the wilderness forty years, one year for each day the men searched the land (14:33–34). Their children would go in (14:31). And God said Caleb "hath followed me fully" (14:24). Joshua and Caleb would go into the land (14:30).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. How many men did Moses send to search the land? *(Twelve, one from each tribe, Numbers 13:2, 4–15)*
2. What did two men carry on a staff? *(One cluster of grapes, 13:23)*
3. What did ten of the men say they were like? *(Grasshoppers, 13:33)*
4. What did Caleb say? *("We are well able to overcome it," 13:30)*
5. Why did Joshua and Caleb say not to be afraid? *("The LORD is with us," 14:9)*

4. Memory verse: Grape Verse game (5 minutes)

Tape the 6 purple circles up in a bunch, like a cluster of grapes, in order: *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.* Explain the old words: **thee** and **thou** mean you; **commanded** means told you to do it; **of a good courage** means brave; **dismayed** means scared and ready to give up; **whithersoever thou goest** means wherever you go. Say: "Many years later, after Moses died, God said these words to Joshua himself (Joshua 1:1–2, 9)." Read the verse together. Take one grape away and read it again. Keep taking grapes away until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Joshua and Caleb knew the LORD was with them, and God loves you too. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. The LORD who was with Joshua and Caleb came to earth as a man, Jesus (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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 big and scary, say, "The LORD is with me!"

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Joshua and Caleb word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/twelve-spies-word-search), the Joshua and Caleb crossword, maze, coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/twelve-spies), or **Search the Land:** the kids search the room for the 12 hidden paper grapes, one for each man Moses sent. When a child finds one, they bring it back and say, "It floweth with milk and honey!" When all 12 are found, everyone says Caleb's words together: "We are well able to overcome it!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are with us wherever we go. When something looks big and scary, help us trust You like Joshua and Caleb did. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Left out on purpose: the men who brought the evil report died by the plague before the LORD (Numbers 14:37), and the people who went up without the LORD were beaten (14:40–45). Keep those parts for older kids. If a child asks what happened to the ten men, say: "They did not go into the land, but Joshua and Caleb lived (14:38)."

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