

## SPYING OUT THE LAND

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: NUMBERS 13-14



*Faith is required to follow God's plan.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Moses commissioned the spies** – The time came for Israel to take the land of promise. God gave instructions to Moses to send spies into “the land I am giving to the people of Israel” (Numbers 13:2). Moses obeyed the Lord and sent twelve spies, one from each of the tribes. Their job was to go in and observe the men, the crops, and the strength of the cities. The men did this for forty days and then brought back their report.

**The spies brought a bad report** – While spying out the land, the men saw that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey just as God had promised to them (see Exodus 3:8, 3:17, 13:5). But the spies also observed that the cities were fortified and the people were giants compared to them. Though the spies brought back the fruit of the land to show to the people, their bad reports were full of unbelief. Caleb quieted the people and said that God would give them the land (Numbers 13:30). The other men however stirred the fear of the people by talking about the giants.

**The people fell further into unbelief** – The effect of the ten unbelieving spies swept through Israel and filled them with fear and then anger. They wept all night, grumbled against Moses, and once again wished they could return to Egypt. In the end, after Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and made one last appeal, the crowd talked of stoning the two faithful spies (Numbers 14:10).

**God responded in anger but Moses mediated on behalf of Israel** – God would not allow the crowd to stone Joshua and Caleb. The glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting for all of Israel to see. God again threatened to destroy all of Israel and start over with Moses alone (Numbers 14:12). Moses stood in the middle between God and the people, and reminded God of His forgiveness. Like Christ, interceding on our behalf, Moses pled for God to forgive and spare Israel. The Lord forgave but He refused to let any but Joshua and Caleb into the promised land. The Israelites were sentenced to wander in the desert. But in an act of mercy their children would be allowed to inherit the land of promise.

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### WHERE IS JESUS?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

When the fearful reports of ten of the twelve spies incited the people to fear and not trust the Lord, God became angry at the people's lack of faith. He said, "I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them." Once again Israel fell into sin, and once again their mediator, Moses, stepped in for them and appealed to God.

In Numbers 14:20 God says, "I have forgiven them as you asked." Again, looking forward toward Christ, God is able to forgive His sinful people. We, today, are just like the Israelites. Though God provides wonderfully for us, we are quick to complain and quick to fear in adversity. We must trust in our redeemer just as they needed to trust in the God who revealed Himself to Moses. Moses mediated between the sinful people and God. Jesus would one day mediate our case before the Father. Moses however could not provide atonement for our sin. His appeal to God, apart from the work of Christ, would have been unacceptable. God did not hear the appeals of Moses because of Moses, but because of the future mediation of Christ. by dying on the cross for our sin, Christ became the big "M" Mediator, a divine mediator. Moses was only a man who pointed to Christ.



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**ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS**

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

**Bible Passage: Zechariah 2:10-11****Connecting the passage to Christ:**

In this wonderful passage, God made a promise through the prophecy of Zechariah to dwell (live) in the midst of His people. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Through Jesus, God came and made His dwelling place among us (John 1:14). Through Christ, people of every nation are being gathered to become the people of God. This passage is a prophetic look ahead to the effect the Gospel will have in drawing people of all nations (Rev. 5:9). In the end, God will live among people of every tribe and nation in heaven.

**Questions for reflection:**

- Compare Zechariah 2:10 with John 1:14. What are the similarities? (In Zechariah, God made a promise to dwell with His people, and in John we see the fulfillment of that word.)
- Take a look at Revelation 21:3. How is this description of heaven the final fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy? (Jesus left to go and prepare a place for us. When the Lord returns He will be God with us forever!)



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### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the *SWORD* Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

#### MOSES' APPEAL

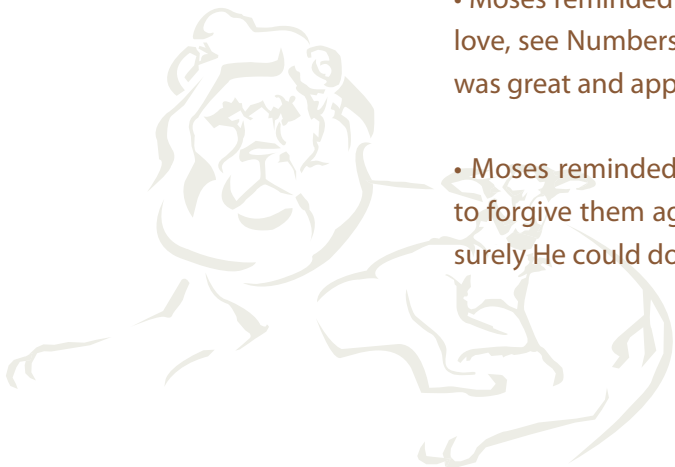
##### Supplies

paper and pencils

Moses made an appeal on behalf of Israel to God when God threatened to destroy them. This exercise is designed to take a closer look at the components of that appeal.

Read Numbers 14:10-20, then ask the class to tell you what three appeals were that Moses made to God. Tell them these are important and that you will be testing them later on. At the end of class, give a piece of paper to each of the children to see if they can get the three answers correct.

- Moses reminded God of His Word and His promise to bring the people into the land of promise. In Numbers 14:15-16 Moses said if Egypt or the other people heard that God had destroyed Israel they might think God was not able to do what He said.
- Moses reminded God of His character that He is slow to anger and abounding in love, see Numbers 14:18. Moses had come to know that God's love for His people was great and appealed to the love of God for them.
- Moses reminded God that He had forgiven Israel before and appealed for God to forgive them again, see Numbers 14:19. If God had forgiven them before then surely He could do it again.



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### SKIT WARS

#### Supplies

three cards with the following skit options listed on them

The purpose of this activity is to give three teams five minutes to come up with the best skit as voted on by the class. The goal of the skit is to illustrate how Moses stood in the gap for the people just as Jesus does for us.

Skit #1 – You are playing catch with your brother when he overthrows the ball and it breaks a window. The neighbor immediately comes out and threatens to call the police. You quickly remind the neighbor that he is a forgiving man. Ask him to rethink calling the police and give you a chance to fix his window. (Three actors needed.)

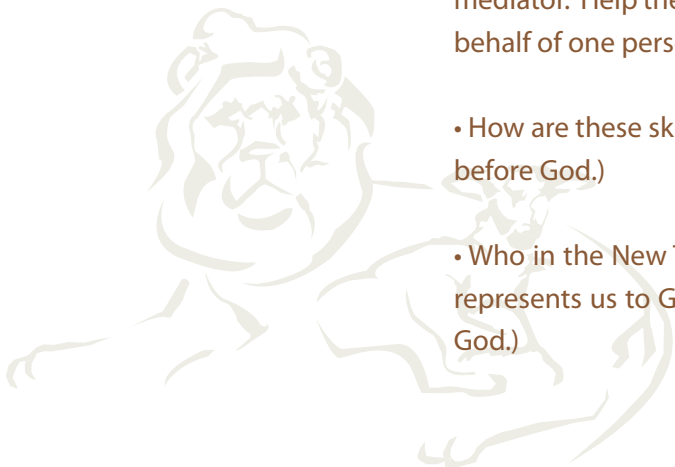
Skit #2 – You are leaving a library with two of your friends and you set off the alarm. A guard checks your bag and notices that you have a reference library book that you are not permitted to check out. He pulls you aside and threatens to take your library card away. Your friends ask him to give you another chance saying that the library was closing and you needed the book to write a report. (Four actors needed.)

Skit #3 – Your mom tells you that you will not get dessert because you didn't eat your spinach for dinner. Your brother respectfully reminds your mom that she often didn't make him eat all his spinach, but just made him taste it. Your sister asks your mom to give you dessert if you just eat one more bite. (Four actors needed.)

Give the groups five minutes to come up with a skit and then take turns performing. While they are practicing, have the children read the scripture passage for today. After the skits are over, have the class indicate which team did the best job through applause or a show of hands. Congratulate the winners.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What do all these skits have in common? (All the skits have someone acting as a mediator. Help the children understand that a mediator is someone who speaks on behalf of one person to another to resolve a dispute or disagreement.)
- How are these skits like our Bible story? (Moses mediated on behalf of the people before God.)
- Who in the New Testament is a mediator? (Jesus intercedes on our behalf. Jesus represents us to God and God to us. He is the one in the middle between us and God.)



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### ARM WRESTLING MATCH

#### Supplies

large chocolate candy bar

This lesson is to help the children identify with Israel and their unbelief. Many of the children may want to identify with the heroes, Joshua and Caleb, but it is sinful Israel that we should compare ourselves to.

Invite one of the biggest men in the church to assist you in this class.

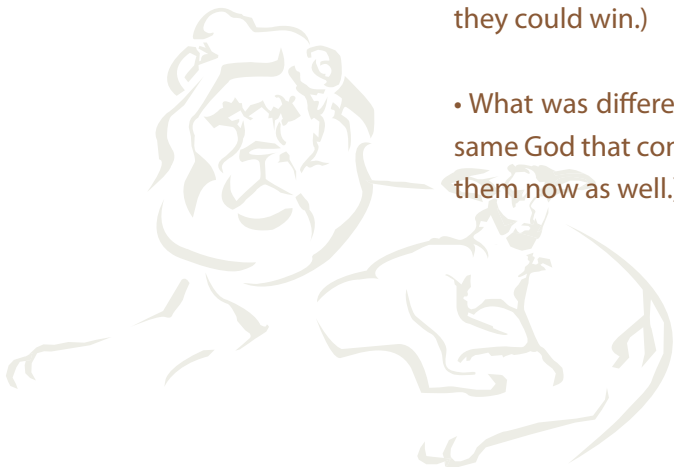
Ask the boys who would like to arm wrestle for a candy bar prize. Hold the candy bar high. Ask for two volunteers, explaining that the winner will get the prize. All the boys will likely raise their hands. There is a bit of deception going on, in that they think they will be wrestling each other, but will in fact be arm wrestling your guest.

Once you get two volunteers, flip a coin to see who will go first. Have them sit down to get ready and then call your large guest in to arm wrestle. Watch closely for the reaction of the boy volunteers and what they say. Remember you are looking to point out similarities in his response of unbelief to that of Israel's.

Have the guest arm wrestler gently but quickly win over the two volunteers and perhaps a few more who would like to give it a try. Then, when the last boy is up, remind the boy that you are the teacher and he could ask you for help. This hint should be given in such a way as to draw a request for help from the boy. Upon hearing his request for help, tell your guest he is not allowed to use his strength against the boy. When the last boy wins, give him the candy bar.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How were the volunteer arm wrestlers' responses to seeing their opponent like the response of the spies seeing the giants in the Promised Land? (Neither thought they could win.)
- What was different about Joshua and Caleb? (Joshua and Caleb trusted that the same God that controlled the Red Sea and delivered Israel from Egypt could deliver them now as well.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of two of the spies carrying a giant cluster of grapes on a pole.

### FOR OLDER GRADES

#### Supplies

pencils and provided  
assignment sheets

Pass out paper and pencils to the children. Use the provided sheets for the assignment. Have the children complete the assignment and then have some of them read what they wrote. (In order to provide a measure of accountability tell the children prior to the exercise that you will be collecting the paragraphs when the exercise is done and redistributing them to their parents at the end of the class so that they can see what was covered in class.)

In one paragraph, compare Jesus' prayer to God in Luke 23:34 with the appeal of Moses on behalf of the people in Numbers 14:19.

The idea is to compare Moses' role foreshadowing Jesus as mediator between God and the people.



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### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Pardon** - The word pardon is often used interchangeably with forgiveness. To pardon is to forgive or take away the punishment due for a wrong that has been committed. We are all pardoned by God through the sacrifice of Jesus who paid the penalty for our sin on the cross. The word pardon is a legal term which takes away our sins as though we were never guilty. Such complete removal of our sin speaks of God's amazing grace.





