

WANDERING

Bible Basis: Numbers 13:1–3, 17–33; 14:1–11, 22, 34–38

Key Verse: [Joshua and Caleb] said, “If the Lord is pleased with us, he’ll lead us into that land. ... He’ll give it to us.” —Numbers 14:8 NIV

Bible Point: Joshua and Caleb were confident in God’s promise. I can be confident no matter what.

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 6: “Wandering”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: two plastic containers with lids, treat, trash

Fill one container with an appealing treat. Fill the other with some trash or something equally unappealing. As you begin class, invite a couple of children up to inspect the two containers. Show the contents of one container to one child and the other to a second child. Then ask each child to give a report to the large group on what he or she saw. Make a rule that they can’t say the name of what they saw; they must only describe the contents for the others. Have the large group vote which container they think is better without seeing the contents for themselves. Then reveal the contents.

- I asked our volunteers to give a report. Tell me about a time when you gave a report.
- As you listened to the two reports, did you start to think you liked the report about the treat better than the report about the trash? Why?

Say, **What we say to other people can influence what they think. In our Bible story today, we’ll find out how a report actually made people want to disobey God.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 6*

Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 6. You can also have children find Numbers 13 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

SPYING OUT THE LAND

Say, **During the story, we’re going to be spies in the Promised Land. Good spies learn their code words.** Assign children to four separate groups and explain that each group will have a code word. Group 1: Crouching. Group 2: Slouching. Group 3: Creeping. Group 4: Peeking. Have each group practice saying its word when you point. **When you hear me say, “The spies went ...” I’ll point to you and you say your code words.** Practice this sequence, then begin the story.

Hundreds of years before, God promised to make Abraham into a father of nations and give him the land of Canaan. By now, Abraham had too many relatives to count, and they were about to move into a new land—the land God promised. God spoke to Moses, the leader of the Israelites. He said, “Send some men to check out the land of Canaan. I am giving it to the people of Israel.” So Moses sent 12 spies to check out the land of Canaan. And **the spies went** ... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking.

Moses had a lot of questions: *Read Numbers 13:18–20b*. In order to find out the answers to these questions, **the spies went** ... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking.

They came to a valley with grapes growing so big that a single bunch took up a whole branch. Two men carried it on a pole. They also found pomegranates and figs. But they still had a lot of questions to answer, so **the spies went** ... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking.

They went into the hill country to see what the land was like and found milk and honey. And **the spies went** ... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking. But they also found the cities, and they saw that the cities had high walls around them, and the people who lived there were powerful. They also found big people living along the Jordan River. For 40 days **the spies went** ... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking. Finally, it was time to go home and give a report.

Ten spies gave one report. They said it was very good land, but the people who lived there were big and scary. But two spies gave a different report. Caleb stood up and said, “We should go up and take the land. We can do it!” And the ten spies said, “We can’t attack those people! They are stronger than we are.”

The Israelites didn’t know what to think! *Read Numbers 14:1*. But Caleb and his friend Joshua were not going to give up. They said, “If the Lord is pleased with us, he’ll lead us into that land. It’s a land that has plenty of milk and honey. He’ll give it to us. Don’t be afraid. The Lord is with us!”

But the people believed the ten spies. All the Israelites did was complain! God decided to punish them for doubting he could defeat the large people of Canaan. *Read Numbers 14:30*. So for 40 years, the Israelites complained and wandered in the desert, until all the grown-ups had died. Their children grew up and were ready to go into the new land God had promised with Caleb and Joshua. We can always be confident in God’s promise **as we go**... (point to groups in sequence) crouching and slouching and creeping and peeking through the adventures of our lives.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 6*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you about why we remember Joshua and Caleb in this story. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- What kind of report did the ten men give?
- Why did Caleb and Joshua give a different report?

Say, **Caleb and Joshua were confident in God’s promise, even when the others were not. We can be confident in God no matter what.**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

Option 1: I Spy

Stuff You Need: *The Story for Children* and a supply of other storybooks

Let children play a quiet game of I Spy. Most children will know how to play. If they don't, let another child explain. One child chooses an object and then describes it, saying, "I spy something round" (or other appropriate descriptor). The other children guess the object the first child is describing. They can use classroom objects for their game or use the pictures in *The Story for Children* or other storybooks. For a more active game with classroom objects, let children walk to the object they think the first child is describing.

Option 2: Promised Land Hideaway

Stuff You Need: 2 copies of Promised Land Hideaway Activity Sheet, markers

Print out the activity sheets before this lesson. If possible, print on brightly colored paper. Cut apart the cards on one copy of the handout and hide them around the classroom. (If you can't do this ahead of time, have class put their heads down while you do it.) Say, **I've hidden around the room some words that remind us what the spies found in the Promised Land. Now it's your turn to spy out the land. When you see one of the words, don't pick it up. Don't tell anyone what you saw. Instead, come to me and sign your name next to that word on this page.** Show the second copy of the handout. Allow plenty of time for everyone to find the hidden cards and sign their names next to each word on your copy of the handout. Then talk about:

- Why were Caleb and Joshua confident the Israelites could conquer the land?
- What did the reports of the other spies make all the people think?

Say, **Caleb and Joshua didn't listen to the bad reports. Instead, they put their confidence in what God said.**

Option 3: A Great Land

Stuff You Need: A Great Land Activity Sheet, crayons or watercolor paints and brushes

Give an activity sheet to each child. Instruct the children to look for gifts that God would give his people in the new land. Color or paint the land brand new!

OPTION 4: JOSHUA AND CALEB, THE SPIES' TELESCOPE

Stuff you need: cardboard tubes (from paper towel, toilet paper, wrapping paper, etc.), tape, markers, crayons, or paint

1. Give each student a long cardboard tube if you're making a telescope, or two small tubes if you're making binoculars.
2. Let students decorate their tubes as they wish.
3. If you're making binoculars help students tape the two tubes together, side-by-side.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Divide your class into groups of two or three. Have them pray together about trusting God no matter what. They may want to pray that they will have courage like Caleb and Joshua to trust God even when it's not the popular choice. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 6*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.