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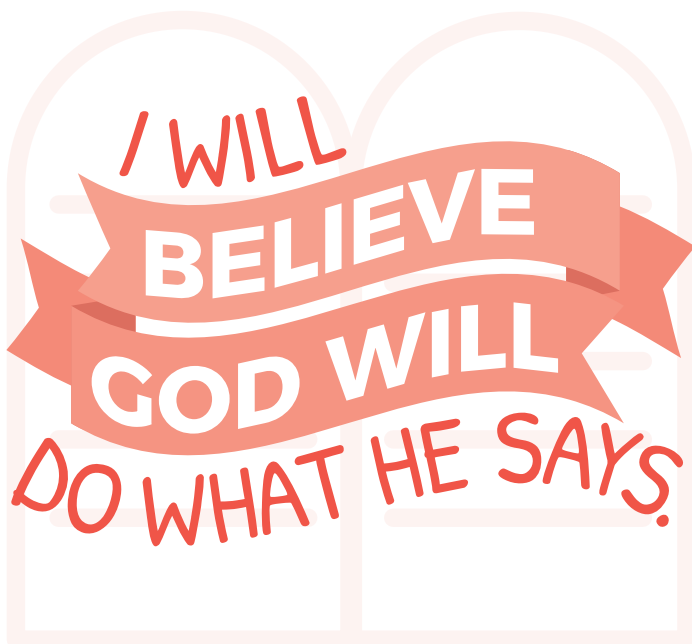
NOVEMBER 09, 2025

LESSON TEXT
Numbers 13-33

FOCUS VERSES
Numbers 14:30-31
³⁰Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.
³¹But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT
God desires His covenant people to believe His promises.

The Wilderness Wanderings



COVENANT CONTEXT

As we conclude our study of Exodus and move past Leviticus (instructions for covenant worship) to the Book of Numbers, we learn that being faithful and faith-filled is key to walking in covenant with God. The children of Israel did not trust God and gave in to fear when God called them to claim the Promised Land, so God led them to wander in the wilderness until their generation—and their doubt—died off.

SG *TEACHING OUTLINE*

Icebreaker: Recount a time you were in the minority in a group but you were right. How did it feel to know right and wrong are not swayed by numbers?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers and show that God is attracted to faith, not just large numbers or popularity.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

DISCUSS: *Do you speak more about your problems or your God?*

I. THE TWELVE SPIES

- A. On a Mission
- B. Back with a Bad Report

DISCUSS: *What comes to mind when you think of a slanderous report? How can slander hinder what God wants to do?*

- C. I will believe God will keep His promise, no matter how I see myself.

II. THE FAITHLESS GENERATION

- A. Rebellion and Plan to Return
- B. Wandering in the Wilderness **I**

DISCUSS: *If God made you the same deal as He made Moses, how would you have responded?*

- C. By God's grace, I will never return to what God has delivered me from.

III. A FAITHFUL GENERATION

- A. Joshua and Caleb **V**

DISCUSS: *Who are people like Joshua and Caleb in your life? How can you be a Joshua or Caleb in someone else's life?*

- B. The Pentateuch and the Promised Land
- C. The Lord will be my God, and I will be part of His covenant people.

Internalizing the Message

DISCUSS: *What needs to be made right in your life in order for your world to also be right?*

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to increase our faith so we can place our trust in Him to lead us to our promise
- For God to cover our mouths so we will speak by faith instead of speaking slanderous reports about God

LESSON CONNECTION

A missionary spent a great deal of his life traveling around the world, much of it for a missions agency. He spoke of a time when he visited and stayed for a while in an extremely remote, forested part of India where people lived very primitively. He was interested in something called missiology, which partly deals with how to take the gospel to other people groups. A key concept in missiology is learning what impacts the culture of the group you are trying to reach and understanding what matters to them and what they value.

After being there for a while and having many conversations, this missionary spoke with the chief elder. Through a translator he asked: “What are the five worst things people can do?” He expected an answer of murder or assault or some such crime many could consider the most heinous. But when the chief elder listed his top five worst offenses, his first was slander. The missionary asked, “Really? You would put slander ahead of murder?” The elder answered, “Yes. If you kill a man, you have killed him. He is gone. If you slander him, try to deceitfully destroy his reputation, you have killed him while he yet lives.”

When the children of Israel spoke a slanderous report concerning the Promised Land, they were chipping away at the reputation of their living God. He had proven Himself to them repeatedly since they left Egypt, and now at the brink of the Promised Land, they were declaring Him unable to deliver on His promise. Their lack of faith caused them to miss what God had prepared for them, and for many of them it became a sentence of death.

We must speak faith and not doubt about our God. He can deliver; He has already proven it. When you face overwhelming obstacles, do not slander the God who has already shown He is able to deliver you.

DISCUSS: *Do you speak more about your problems or your God?*

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE TWELVE SPIES

A. On a Mission

The children of Israel were ready to claim the Promised Land. They had followed the cloud from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, and now they stood on the brink of fulfilling a promise given to Abraham hundreds of years earlier. God instructed Moses to choose a leader from each tribe and send them as spies into the land. Moses sent them on a reconnaissance mission to gather information about the number and strength of the people, the condition of the cities, and the productivity of the land. This was already their land by covenant promise; God simply wanted them to see how great their new home was.

B. Back with a Bad Report

God knew all the facts before He sent them on the spy mission. He knew the people were strong, the cities were fortified, and the children of Anak lived there. God never needed the Israelites to tell Him the condition of the Promised Land; this was an exercise of faith for Israel. They returned carrying the bounty of the land. It was so abundant, one bunch of grapes had to be carried on poles between the shoulders of two men. (See Numbers 13:23, 27.) However, these men could only see the obstacles. The Bible says ten men brought back a bad report. The King James Version translates it as “an evil report” (Numbers 13:32).

According to many sources, the Hebrew word is even stronger: it means a slanderous or defamatory report. With this account, these spies were not just sharing their opinion, they were slandering and defaming God with this report. Remember, the land already belonged to Israel; it was their Promised Land. God’s purpose was to show them the beauty and abundance He had prepared for them. They were going to live in cities they had not built and eat from vineyards they had not planted. So for them to only focus on the enemy was an insult to God—the same God who had brought them through the Red Sea and destroyed their last enemy completely. How could they doubt that He would once again deliver the land He had promised to them?

DISCUSS: *What comes to mind when you think of a slanderous report? How can slander hinder what God wants to do?*

C. I will believe God will keep His promise, no matter how I see myself.

Our conversation matters. We must be careful that when we speak of situations in our lives, we are not slandering our God. If He has promised us, then it will come to pass because His Word is sure. When we face an obstacle, we must magnify our God more than our problem. Our victory begins with our words. (See Proverbs 18:21.) Ten men spoke death into a camp of thousands, not just because they believed themselves to be like grasshoppers, but more importantly, they believed the enemy thought the same. (See Numbers 13:33.) They spoke defeat about themselves, convinced the enemy also

saw them as defeated. The power of ten brought a death sentence upon thousands. Only two men, Joshua and Caleb, continued to have faith in God to be their strength. Our faith in God overcomes our fear, and our conversation has consequences of good and bad. Choose today, no matter the circumstances you are facing, no matter how you see yourself, to speak about the greatness of your God more than about your enemy.

II. THE FAITHLESS GENERATION

A. Rebellion and Plan to Return

Those ten men's slanderous reports turned the hearts of most of Israel, and they spent the night in mourning. However, the next day they went a step further by rebelling against God and Moses, even planning to return to Egypt. (See Numbers 14:4.) Moses and Aaron fell to the ground because they understood this was not just a statement made in anger; this was an act of rebellion against God who had faithfully proven Himself to be their deliverer. The congregation's fear and anger were so inflamed, they conspired to stone Moses and Joshua to death (Numbers 14:10). That was all God could take. His glory appeared at the tent before the eyes of all Israel, and He was ready to pronounce judgment upon His own people.

Rebellion and rioting are two things God will not tolerate. And when the children rebelled and rioted, God immediately showed up. Be careful your lack of faith in the God who has proven Himself to you repeatedly does not lead to rebellion. You may not know how God will work it out, and that is okay. Remember, God does not always call us to understand, but He does call us to trust Him. Let us increase our faith daily by remembering who our God is and all He has done for us.

B. Wandering in the Wilderness

Israel was so discouraged that they wished they had died in Egypt where at least they could have been buried. They were convinced the Canaanites would kill them and prey on their wives and children. (See Numbers 14:3.) God shared His plan with Moses to destroy the entire congregation and begin anew with Moses. If Moses were leading Israel for his own fame, that was a perfect plan. He could be considered the father of the faithful, not Abraham. But Moses was not leading for his own namesake; he was leading for God's.

Moses interceded for God's people who wanted to stone him. What mercy! They wanted to stone Moses, and Moses prayed for them and reminded God that if He destroyed the nation of Israel, the nations around them would declare that destroying them was the only reason He delivered Israel from Egypt. Moses also reminded God of His great nature in that He was slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and forgiving of iniquity. (See Numbers 14:13–19.) The ten spies had already slandered God, and Moses did not want another nation to follow in their faithless footsteps.

DISCUSS: *If God made you the same deal as He made Moses, how would you have responded?*

The Israelites should have been thankful for a godly leader who stood between them and God's justifiable anger. God listened to Moses' plea and spared the nation, but there were severe consequences for their slanderous actions. The people, from the ages of twenty years old and upward, who saw God's glory and all the signs He had performed to deliver them from Egypt and did not believe or obey, were sentenced to die while they wandered in the wilderness. The only two who would be spared were the only two who believed—Joshua and Caleb. Additionally, God decided their little ones they declared would be prey, instead, would inherit and dwell in the land they had rejected. (See Numbers 14:31.) Forty years they wandered in the wilderness: one year for each day the spies spent in the Promised Land. The wilderness, which should have been a temporary place, became a permanent burial for them. I

C. By God's grace, I will never return to what God has delivered me from.

Today we stand, like the children of Israel, before a great promise. However, we cannot allow a lack of faith to destroy what God has designed for us. Many of us have testimonies of how God has delivered us from a life of destruction, misery, and no hope. We cannot forget God's mercy, miracles, and mighty hand that delivered us. If God has brought you out, then declare today by God's grace, "I will never return."

III. A FAITHFUL GENERATION

A. Joshua and Caleb

Against the majority opinion, Joshua and Caleb never broke covenant with God. They never lost faith in His power to give them the Promised Land. They never spoke or agreed with an evil report. And because of their faithfulness to God, He was faithful to them, delivering them from death in the wilderness and into a land full of blessings and promise.

Don't allow an evil report to turn your faith to rebellion, denying you the promises of God. Caleb declared they were well able to overcome the obstacles because it was their Promised Land. Even when he was eighty-five years old, he was ready to claim new land, building faith in others. (See Numbers 13:30; Joshua 14:10–12.) The power of keeping covenant with God is revealed as He keeps covenant with you and gives you all He has promised. V

DISCUSS: *Who are people like Joshua and Caleb in your life? How can you be a Joshua or Caleb in someone else's life?*

B. The Pentateuch and the Promised Land

Abraham received a covenant promise and a land. The Israelites received the Promised Land and a detailed document explaining how to remain in covenant with God: the Ten Commandments. In *The Handbook on the Pentateuch*, Dr. Chris Paris reveals God gave both apodictic (prohibitive) and casuistic (conditional) laws in this document to the people. Apodictic laws are absolute, while casuistic laws regard conditional situations. God had repeatedly experienced the inconsistency of sinful humanity. Therefore, the Pentateuch gave the Israelites a detailed plan to remain in covenant. Just before

Moses’ death, he delivered this to the people in written form and in a public address in the Book of Deuteronomy. His last message repeated the laws to help live in covenant with God while living in the prosperity of the Promised Land.

C. The Lord will be my God, and I will be part of His covenant people.

If we have obeyed God’s plan of salvation according to Acts 2:38, we are blessed to have the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit to walk in covenant with God. The laws from the Old Testament only written on tables of stone have now been written on our hearts. When we say yes to the Spirit, we declare the Lord will be our God. We enter a new covenant with Him. However, we must learn from the children of Israel and not allow a lack of faith to cause us to rebel against God. We must have the spirit of Joshua and Caleb and determine we will live according to God’s plan so we can be called God’s covenant people.



Teacher Option: Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate the importance of getting our relationship with God right before trying to change the world.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

One Saturday morning a minister was busily trying to prepare his sermon under difficult conditions. It was a rainy day, and his young son was restless and bored with little to do. Finally, in desperation, the minister picked up an old magazine and thumbed through it until he came to a large brightly colored picture. It showed a map of the world. He tore the page from the magazine, ripped it into little pieces, and scattered the scraps all over the living room floor, saying, "Son, if you can put this page together, I'll give you a dollar."

The minister hoped this challenge would take his son most of the morning, but ten minutes later he heard a knock on his door. His son had completed the puzzle. The minister was amazed to see his son had finished the project so soon with the pieces of paper neatly arranged and the map of the world back in order. "Son, how did you get that done so fast?" "Oh," said the boy, "it was easy. On the other side was a picture of a man. I just put a piece of paper on the bottom, put the picture of the man together, put a piece of paper of top, and then turned it over. I figured if I got the person right, the world would be right." His father smiled and handed his

son a dollar. "Not only have you earned that dollar, but you've given me my sermon for tomorrow: 'If a person is right, his world will be right.'"

The Old Testament covenant was a great document to guide the behavior of the Israelites in their relationship with God and with others. However, as wonderful and detailed as it was, it could not accomplish what it was created to do. Why not? Because humanity was not right. Humans needed to be changed from the inside out so they could learn to obey the covenant laws. When God rewrote the laws onto the hearts of humanity through the infilling of His Spirit, new people, new creations were born. These new people were right. The law of God was written on their hearts, and they were able to live right through His Spirit. When we allow God's covenant to lead our lives, we will want to be in right relationship with God and with others.

Instead of focusing on putting the world together right, let's focus on getting ourselves in covenant with God. As the young boy so wisely said, "If a person is right, his world will be right."

DISCUSS: What needs to be made right in your life in order for your world to also be right?