

God Establishes His People

Date: 09.20.2026 | Spies Sent Into Canaan
Scripture: Numbers 13-14

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God keeps His promises. We can trust Him even when we feel afraid.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

Joshua and Caleb trusted God when others were afraid. We can trust God and obey Him because He always keeps His promises.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

Joshua and Caleb trusted God's promise and showed that we can obey God and trust Him, even when situations seem scary or impossible.

STUDENTS:

The Israelites allowed fear of their circumstances to overshadow God's promises, but Joshua and Caleb trusted God's character and remained faithful. Following Christ means choosing faith, believing God's Word, and trusting that Jesus has secured God's promises for those who follow Him.

ADULTS:

Israel's refusal to enter the Promised Land revealed that unbelief is not merely a lack of confidence but a rejection of God's character and promises. Joshua and Caleb demonstrated that true faith trusts God's Word. For those in Christ, God's promises are secured.

MEMORY VERSE

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring to you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:13-14



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly? Since the fall, no mere human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly, but consistently breaks it in thought, word, and deed. NCC q.13

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS



Moses wrote the book of Numbers, which details the 38 years between the Exodus and the end of Israel's wilderness wanderings. The first part of the book tells the story of the generation that left Egypt and was intended to enter the Promised Land, but failed to do so because of unbelief and disobedience. The second part recounts the generation that would eventually enter the land. One of the major themes of Numbers is Israel's repeated failure to trust the Lord's promises and obey His commands.

Two years after God brought Israel out of Egypt, He instructed Moses to number the people. Moses conducted a census of the adult men eligible for military service, totaling more than 600,000. God had clearly fulfilled His promise to Abraham to make his descendants into a great nation. The twelve tribes were organized into camps surrounding the Tabernacle, and the tribe of Levi was set apart to serve as priests.

At Mount Sinai, God gave Israel not only the Ten Commandments but also many other laws concerning worship, sacrifices, ethics, purity, and priestly duties. He provided detailed instructions for constructing the Tabernacle, the portable tent where His presence would dwell among His people. Whenever God moved, His people were to follow. A pillar of cloud by day and fire by night guided Israel through the wilderness.

This portion of Israel's journey began with obedience, but it was soon marked by grumbling and rebellion. Despite witnessing God's mighty acts in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, His provision of manna and water, and hearing His voice at Mount Sinai, the people continually complained about their circumstances. They forgot His faithfulness and longed to return to Egypt. Rather than trusting the God who had rescued them, they focused on their hardships and questioned His goodness. In rejecting Moses' God-appointed leadership, they ultimately rejected the Lord Himself (**Numbers 12:4-15**).

Despite Israel's failures in chapters 11–12, God continued to lead them toward Canaan, the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In *Numbers 13*, the Lord instructed Moses to send twelve men, one from each tribe, to scout out the land. Their task was to assess the land, its cities, and its inhabitants. After forty days, the spies returned carrying evidence of the land's abundance. Their report confirmed God's promise: "The land where you sent us... truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit" (*Numbers 13:27; see also 13:23-24, 26-27*).

However, ten of the spies focused on the obstacles rather than on God's promise. They reported that the people were strong, the cities fortified, and the descendants of Anak lived there (*Numbers 13:28-29, 31-34*). Though they held the proof of God's blessing in their hands, fear filled their hearts. They saw themselves as grasshoppers compared to the inhabitants of the land and doubted that God could fulfill His promises.

Only Caleb and Joshua responded with faith. Caleb urged the people to trust God and move forward, confident that the Lord would give them victory. Joshua and Caleb understood that success did not depend on Israel's strength but on God's faithfulness. They pleaded with the people not to rebel against the Lord and reminded them that God was with them (*Numbers 14:6-9*).

Instead of listening, the congregation gave in to fear. They wept, complained against Moses and Aaron, and even wished they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness (*Numbers 14:1-4*). Some proposed choosing a new leader and returning to Egypt. Their unbelief revealed a deeper problem: they did not trust God's character despite all He had done for them. When Joshua and Caleb called the people to faith, the congregation even talked about stoning them (*Numbers 14:10*).

The Lord appeared at the Tabernacle and declared that Israel's unbelief was ultimately contempt for Him: "How long will these people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, despite all the signs that I have done among them?" (*Numbers 14:11*). God would have been perfectly just to destroy the nation for its rebellion.

Yet Moses interceded on behalf of the people. Rather than appealing to Israel's worthiness, Moses appealed to God's glory and character. He reminded the Lord of His own words: that He is "slow to anger

and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (*Numbers 14:18*). God answered Moses’ prayer and forgave the people, but He also disciplined them. The unbelieving generation would not enter the Promised Land. Instead, they would wander in the wilderness for forty years until that generation died out. Only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land because they trusted the Lord (*Numbers 14:20-38*). A plague struck down the ten spies who spread the bad report as judgment for leading the people into unbelief (*Numbers 14:36-37*).

This account highlights the seriousness of unbelief. Israel had seen God’s power, experienced His provision, and heard His promises, yet they chose fear over faith. Their failure points us to our own hearts. Like Israel, we often struggle to trust God when circumstances seem overwhelming. Yet unlike Israel, Jesus perfectly trusted and obeyed the Father in every situation. Where Israel failed in the wilderness, Christ succeeded. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He secured forgiveness for all who trust Him. The story of Joshua and Caleb reminds believers that faith is not confidence in ourselves but confidence in the God who always keeps His promises.

TELL THE STORY

Numbers 13-14



Hey Oh! Stories of the Bible: Joshua and Caleb

Biggest Story Storybook Bible: Big People, Little Faith.

The Lord spoke to Moses and told him to send men to the land of Canaan. This was the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob many years ago. Moses selected one man from each of Israel’s tribes, twelve men in all. He told the men, “Go up into the land and see what it is like. Tell us how many people there are, and if they look strong or weak. Tell us if the land looks good for crops and if it looks like a good place to live.”

So, the men went up into the land and spent 40 days there. When they returned, they showed the Israelites some grapes, pomegranates, and figs they had taken. They said, “This land is flowing with milk and honey. However, the people in the land are strong, and their cities are large and well-defended. The people in

the land are giants.”

Caleb said, “Let’s go up there now! We can surely conquer the land.” But some of the other men said, “We can’t attack the people! They are stronger than we are. We felt like little grasshoppers compared to how big they were!”

The people were afraid. They didn’t think that they would be able to conquer the land God had promised. Some of them wished God had never led them out of Egypt. They doubted that God would keep His promise and help them win.

But two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, said, “The land we passed through is extremely good. If the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Don’t rebel against the LORD, and don’t fear the people. The LORD is with us!”

The glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting, and He said, “How long will these people doubt Me after all that I have done for them? None of the people who doubted me will ever see the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, except for Caleb and Joshua. Everyone else will die in the wilderness. Their children will enjoy the land, but they will not enter it.”

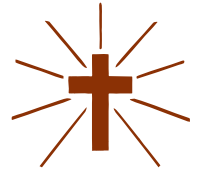
REBUILD THE STORY

1. Why did Moses send twelve spies into the land of Canaan?
(*Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20*)
2. What evidence did the spies bring back that showed the land was good? (*Numbers 13:23-27*)
3. What was different about the report given by Joshua and Caleb compared to the other ten spies?
(*Numbers 13:30-33; 14:6-9*)
4. How did the Israelites respond when they heard the negative report from the ten spies? (*Numbers 14:1-4*)



5. What did Joshua and Caleb tell the people about entering the Promised Land? *(Numbers 14:7-9)*
6. Why was God angry with the Israelites?
(Numbers 14:11)
7. How did Moses respond when God announced judgment on Israel? *(Numbers 14:13-19)*
8. What were the consequences of Israel's unbelief, and who was allowed to enter the Promised Land?
(Numbers 14:20-24, 29-35, 38)
9. The Israelites had seen God send the plagues, part the Red Sea, provide manna, and lead them with a cloud and fire. Why do you think they still struggled to trust Him when they reached Canaan? What are some ways believers today can forget God's faithfulness?
10. The ten spies and the two faithful spies saw the same land, people, and challenges. Why do you think they came to such different conclusions? What does this teach us about viewing difficult situations through faith rather than fear?
11. Joshua and Caleb stood for what was right even when everyone else disagreed with them. Why is it sometimes difficult to trust God when the majority thinks differently? Can you think of a situation where following God might mean standing apart from others?
12. Moses interceded for the people and asked God to show mercy instead of judgment. How does Moses' role point us to Jesus, and why is it important that Jesus intercedes for believers today? *(Numbers 14:13-19; Hebrews 7:25)*

GOSPEL EMPHASIS



Moses reminded the Lord of His great name and character, for He is a God who is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (*Numbers 14:18*). Israel’s rebellion deserved judgment. After everything God had done for them, they still chose fear over faith and rejected His promise. Yet God showed mercy and spared the nation because Moses interceded on their behalf.

This story reminds us that Israel’s problem was not simply fear of giants—it was unbelief. Throughout Exodus and Leviticus, God had repeatedly shown His power, holiness, and faithfulness. He rescued His people from slavery through the Passover lamb, parted the Red Sea, provided manna and water in the wilderness, gave them His Law at Mount Sinai, and made a way for sinful people to approach Him through the Tabernacle and sacrifices. Even after the people worshiped the golden calf, God forgave them and continued to dwell among them. Again and again, God proved that He was trustworthy, yet the people continually struggled to believe Him.

Like Israel, we often doubt God’s promises and choose fear instead of faith. We have broken God’s commands and deserve His judgment because of our sin. But just as Moses stood between God and the people, Jesus stands as our greater Mediator. Moses pleaded for God’s mercy, but Jesus secured God’s mercy through His own sacrifice. All of the sacrifices in Leviticus pointed forward to Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished what no animal sacrifice could ever fully do—He paid for sin once and for all and brought us into a right relationship with God.

Joshua and Caleb trusted God to lead them into an earthly promised land, but Jesus leads believers into an even greater promise—eternal life with God. Because of Christ, we do not have to live in fear. We can trust God’s promises, knowing that the God who delivered Israel, dwelt among His people, accepted their sacrifices, and showed them mercy is the same God who has provided salvation through His Son. Our response should be the same as Joshua and Caleb’s: faith in God’s character, confidence in His promises, and obedience to His Word.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for all of the examples You gave the Israelites of Your goodness, and thank You for continually reminding us as well. Help us not to easily forget or turn away from Your blessings, but remember them as markers of Your salvation in us during times of doubt. Thank You for Your mercy in the lives of the wavering Israelites, and thank You for the mercy You show us daily! Help us to live in Your holiness.



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Numbers 15-20