

CALEB THE SPY

(15–20 minutes, easy setup)

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with learners.

Encourage learners to take notes on their copies of the Learner Worksheet as you teach.

The underlined words in the Master Teacher Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Introduction: Have you ever wanted to do something challenging—like go skydiving—but allowed others to talk you out of it? Do you have any regrets about that decision? Or did you go on to complete the challenge after carefully considering the objections of the naysayers? How did you feel when you conquered the challenge? In today's lesson, we'll see how the Israelites responded to a challenge. While the nation waited at the edge of the Promised Land, twelve spies sized up their challenge. Although ten spies claimed the people in the land could not be conquered, Joshua and Caleb urged the nation to move forward trusting in God's promise to give them the land.

1. When we refuse to obey God, He disciplines us (Numbers 14:20-23).

- God had parted the Red Sea to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, yet they were so intimidated by the size of the people in the Promised Land that they forgot about God's power (v. 22).
- Because the people refused to trust God to overcome their enemies and bring them into the new land, God promised that none of them would ever see the land (vv. 20–21, 23).

Illustration: A young man feels God's calling to ministry. However, he resists God's call and runs from it, deciding to join the military instead. While serving, he is injured in a battle and loses a leg. After returning home, he finds himself once again seeking God's guidance and path for his life. God's plan for him to go into ministry was not changed by his disobedience, but the loss of his leg was a permanent consequence of his decision to run from God's plan.

2. When we choose to obey God, He rewards us (Numbers 14:24).

- God rewarded Caleb's faith by allowing him to enter the Promised Land, even though he would first wander in the wilderness for forty years because of the people's disobedience (v. 24).
- Caleb fully understood that The Future is in God's Hands. Why else would he willingly take such a great risk and invade the new land? That same conviction would carry him through forty years in the desert. He felt confident that God would remember his faithfulness in the future.

Interactive Questions: How do you think Caleb might have felt when he realized he'd have to wait forty years for his reward? What might Caleb have learned during this wait? In this era of instant rewards, how can we continue to trust God's faithfulness even when His response to us is delayed?

3. When we disobey God, He allows us to suffer the consequences (Numbers 14:25-38).

- Because they disobeyed God, the people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years so that no one who rejected the land was allowed to enter into it (vv. 25-35), and those who specifically stirred up dissention died by a plague (vv. 36-37).
- Only Joshua and Caleb remained alive to enter the Promised Land (v. 38).

Illustration: A father may forgive his son for taking the car out before he turned sixteen and then getting a ticket. Even though his father forgave him, the teenager still has a mark on his permanent driving record (and likely consequences at home). Likewise, the people of Israel faced some serious consequences.

Conclusion: God rewards us according to our trust in Him. Sometimes He rewards or disciplines quickly, but sometimes He waits forty years. We can rest assured, however, that even when His action seems long in coming, He has still not forgotten.