

Bi151 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 27 Twelve Spies (Num 13-14)

Everyone receives gifts from loving parents and friends at some time. By definition a gift is something we cannot earn. The first joy of a gift is opening it and discovering what it is. Its true value may be discovered only later. How strange it would be to just admire a gift from afar and never make it our own! In today's lesson God's people see the land their heavenly Father had given to them, but refuse to believe they can really have it.

When the Israelites arrived at Kadesh on the border of Canaan, God said to Moses, "Send twelve leaders, one from each tribe, to search out the land." So Moses selected the men and told them to go into the land through the Negev Desert and into the hills. He asked them to bring back information about the land—the people, the soil, the trees, the towns, and so on. He also instructed them to bring back some of the fruit that was growing in the land. The men journeyed about 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the southern point to the most northern point of Rehob and back again, taking about 40 days.

When they came back, two of them were carrying a large cluster of grapes on a pole between them, along with pomegranates and figs from the Valley of Eshcol. When the men gave their report, ten of the men said, "It is true; the land does flow with milk and honey. But, the people are big and powerful and live in cities with high walls." They gave an exaggerated and negative report that lacked faith in God, to make the people afraid and discouraged.

But two of them, Caleb and Joshua, gave a different interpretation—a positive one. They silenced the others saying, "We should go up and take possession of this land. We can certainly do it!"

The other ten objected, "No, we cannot attack these people! They are bigger and stronger than we are. We felt like grasshoppers next to them! The land devours those living in it."

The Israelites were afraid and wept when they heard the evil report. They forgot all the miracles God had done for them and they rejected His mercy. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why did God bring us here just to be killed by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. We should choose a new leader and go back to Egypt." When they heard that, Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the people.

Joshua and Caleb ran out in front of the people and tore their clothes, crying, "This land is very good, flowing with milk and honey, and the Lord is about to give it to us! Do not rebel against him; do not be afraid. We will swallow up all these people. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us!" (Num 14:6-9).

All the people of Israel talked about stoning Joshua and Caleb, but suddenly the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting. God said to Moses, "How long will these people treat

me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me? They saw the miraculous signs I did in Egypt. I will strike them down and destroy them and I will make you into a nation greater than they.”

Once again Moses interceded for the people. “If you put these people to death, the nations who have seen how you delivered them from Egypt will think you are not able to bring them into the land you promised. Display your strength by forgiving their sin. Show again that you are slow to anger, abounding in love, and forgiving sin and rebellion.”

The Lord again relented, saying, “I have forgiven them as you asked. Nevertheless, these people who saw my glory and miracles in Egypt but who have disobeyed me and tested me 10 times, not one of them will see the land I promised their fathers. I am sending this wicked community back into the desert, and they will stay there for 40 years—one year for each day they explored the land—until they are all dead. Everyone who is 20 years old or older will not see the land, except for my servants Caleb and Joshua. They will go into Canaan because they followed me wholeheartedly. Since these people worried about their children, I will take their children to enjoy the land they have rejected, and give it to them.”

The ten men who brought back a bad report were struck down by a plague and died. The Israelites mourned bitterly. Early the next morning the people said, “We now realize we have sinned. We will go up to the place the Lord had promised.”

Moses said, “No! Why are you disobeying the Lord’s command? This will not succeed; do not go up because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies and fall by the sword.” Nevertheless, in their presumption and pride, they went up into the high hill country of Canaan against God’s will. And just like Moses had said, they were defeated in battle by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Many were killed and the rest were chased back in disgrace.

So the people of Israel turned back into the wilderness where they remained for the next 40 years. All of those 20 years and older, who had come out of Egypt, died in the wilderness. The only exceptions were Joshua and Caleb, who had a different spirit and trusted the Lord. Still, the Lord was with them and guided His servant Moses. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out and God provided their daily food.

This story is **important** because it demonstrates that a lack of faith on the part of God’s people can actually delay God’s blessings. The majority opinion, even in the church, may not be the correct one or the one pleasing to the Lord.

The main **truth** of this story is that God’s gifts are given to those who trust Him wholeheartedly, even when they cannot yet see His provision.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions.

1. Why did the 12 men go into the land of Canaan?

A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "God told Moses to send them to search out the land," you are correct.

2. What was the reaction to the ten who brought back an evil report?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, “The Israelites were afraid and cried when they heard this report,” you are correct.
3. Who encouraged the people to believe God and respond with faith?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, “Caleb and Joshua,” you are correct.
4. What was the result of the people’s lack of faith in God’s power to give them Canaan?
A. [Pause for 8 seconds]. If you said, “Everyone who was 20 years old or older did not see the land” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Tell this story to someone who has never heard it before. After telling them this story, ask, “What is the most important truth you see in this story for believers today?” Discuss their answer or suggest that trusting God is what we must do even when the situation is difficult or the majority of believers have a different opinion.