



Spying on the Promised Land

Goal: To trust in God's faithfulness.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Numbers 13:1–14:9

By God's direction, Moses selected twelve elders to "spy out the land" (13:2, 16–17, 21, 25). *Spy* here means to be very deliberate in sizing up a situation or an opponent. Among the spies were Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, and Hoshea (meaning in Hebrew "salvation"), son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses changed his name to Joshua (Yehoshu'a; in Hebrew "Yah is salvation" or "Yahweh saves"). The twelve spies wanted to reach the promised land, but they could not just walk in and displace a settled people. Their mission would be critical for the decisions that had to be made.

The spies found the land to be rich in resources (13:27). But ten of the spies were fearful. "We are not able to go up against this people for they are stronger than we" (v. 31). Caleb spoke out forcefully in favor of an immediate advance into the land (v. 30). He had not been convinced that the land could not be taken. He was confident that the Israelites could prevail and overcome any resistance (v. 30). The ten, however, claimed that the people were like giants, and they would be like grasshoppers to these giants! Joshua joined Caleb in urging Moses and the people to move ahead with the plan to enter Canaan (14:6–8). Joshua's confidence was in God's faithfulness to be with them wherever they went.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Uncertainty can be a vicious enemy. There is no way to know fully what the future may bring. To plant the fear of uncertainty is one of the most effective ways to stop a movement or derail a plan. Many times, people would rather live with bad circumstances than risk moving and finding the future or change to be worse than the present. To help children learn to trust God in the midst of uncertainty, name ways they already trust God: Families have moved from one town to another, not knowing what lie ahead. That's trusting God. Children have given their time to help somebody. That's trusting God.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

God can speak to us and tell us to do something. We may think, "That's a good idea." But it doesn't take long to rationalize the thought: "We can't do that because it doesn't make sense." "We can't do that because it doesn't fit our schedule." "I can't do that because I'm not _____ (*fill in the blank*) enough." How can you model faith, obedience, and trust to your children? Practice saying yes to God and invite the children to do the same.

*Gracious God, when things don't look the way I think they should,
help me trust in you and your way for my life. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2022–2023

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 4, 14, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

pomegranates, figs (or
fig cookies), and grapes
or **SCM 4a, 4b, 4c**

potted plants (optional)

Responding

Claiming

ten paper cups for each
child

Celebrating

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1; pictures cut
from **SCM 4d, 4e**

Offering

GN 2, GN 3

Extra

copies of **GN 4**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG C L FA T

Play “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (A Dios, el Padre celestial)”—**MM 15**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship area with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible. Provide fresh pomegranates, figs (or fig cookies), and grapes or **SCM 4a, SCM 4b**, and **SCM 4c**. Add potted plants if you have them.

As children create the space, encourage conversation about a place they have visited with good food and lots of beautiful trees, plants, and land. Invite stories and details. Compare and contrast a desert environment and a hilly area with lots of green space.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s Scripture passage is lengthy. Decide if you will have volunteers read it or use **SCM 4**. Ask for several volunteers to practice the reading.

FA *Many children have food and other allergies such as peanut, milk, egg, wheat, latex, grass, mold, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Provide alternatives to keep children safe.*

Singing

C

Listen to “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (A Dios, el Padre celestial)”—**MM 15; SCM 20**. Ask the children when they may have heard this song before. Explain that it is often used after the offering in worship. Ask the children what blessings they have received from God. Play the song again and invite the children to sing along.

Praying

L

Gather children to pray. Turn on the candle. Invite the children to respond to each sentence you pray with the following words and motions: “God, (lift both palms upward) you are faithful (squeeze both hands at chest level).”

God of grace,
God, you are faithful.



Even when we are scared to try something new,
God, you are faithful.
When we don't trust you and we are disobedient,
God, you are faithful.
When life is going great, and when it seems really rotten,
God, you are faithful.
We thank you for the grace of your faithfulness. Help us to
trust in that faithfulness. Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story C

Wonder together what it means to say "God is faithful." Invite thoughts and examples. Then consider together what it means that we are faithful to God. Encourage the children to share their thoughts or real-life examples of what it means to be faithful.

Tell them that the story is full of lots of imagery. Encourage them to use their imaginations as they listen.



Hearing the Story L

Invite a child to find Numbers 13 in the Bible. Ask for several volunteers to read Numbers 13:1–14:9 or **SCM 4**. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible in the worship area.

Provide sheets of paper and crayons, colored pencils, or markers. Encourage the children to illustrate what they hear as they listen to the story again. Read **SCM 4**. Use your voice, your expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Reflecting on God's Grace C L FA

If you provided food for the worship space, invite children to eat the fruits and to identify where they heard about these foods in the story. Invite the children to share their drawings and tell about the parts of the story they pictured.

Engage the children in conversation about the story, using the following questions:

- ▼ What from the story leaves you curious?
- ▼ What does this story tell us about God?
- ▼ Why do you think some spies trusted God but some didn't?

Suggest that perhaps Joshua and Caleb remembered that God had been faithful to the Hebrews in the past when they left Egypt and this helped them to trust God with their future. Invite children to share ways that they have seen God be faithful in their past, their family's past, or the congregation's past.



Singing

Play and sing “To the Promised Land”—**MM 2; SCM 14**. Encourage the children to play rhythm instruments while marching about the room as they sing the song.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



Claiming God’s Grace

LD B SD

Use cups to demonstrate the importance of God’s faithfulness as the base of our lives. Provide each child with ten paper cups. Have them write “God” on four of them. Have the children name ways they have seen or experienced God’s faithfulness. Some ideas might be: moving to a new town, starting a new school or grade, experiencing the illness or loss of a loved one, being helped by someone when the need was great, and so forth. Invite the children to write or draw on the four cups with “God” on them, showing a way they have seen God’s faithfulness in the past.

Have the children line up their four cups upside down on the table. Comment that God’s faithfulness is the foundation of their lives. Wonder together what are situations in which they may find uncertainty or fear. Invite the children to write or draw one of these times on each of the remaining six cups.

Allow them to spend time building their pyramids with the experiences of God’s faithfulness at the base. Point out that, in the situations that may occur in which they are uncertain or fearful, God’s faithfulness holds them up.

Have the children draw a symbol—something from the story such as grapes, figs, or pomegranates, or a Christian symbol such as a cross or dove—on the top six cups to remind them that God will be faithful in their futures too.

Encourage them to stack their cups and take them home to build as a reminder that God’s faithfulness is what holds them up.



Celebrating God's Grace

C MS F

*Before the session, hide the pictures from **SCM 4d** and **SCM 4e** around your space, or other nearby spaces where you can easily go with the children.*

Provide copies of **GN 1** and encourage your group to go “spying” to find all of the items you have hidden. If your group is large, you may want to form small groups and assign certain pictures to each group. Tell the children they are looking for picture cards of the items and not to use items from the worship space. Once the children have found each picture card on the spy list, encourage them to work together to use the cards to retell today’s story.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will be praying,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*

Praying God's Grace

M L T

Recall together some of the things the spies saw that made them fearful. If necessary, suggest that one thing they saw were the people who looked like giants to them and this felt like a big problem that the spies could not handle.

Lead children in the following guided meditation:

Close your eyes.

Breathe deeply. *(allow a few moments for deep breathing)*

Is there a “giant” problem you are having? Or maybe someone you care about has a giant problem. Take a few moments to identify the situation that seems too big for you to handle.

(pause)

What would you like to say to God?

Imagine yourself standing small next to your big problem as you ask God to help you.

(pause)

Now imagine God saying to you with a loving voice: “I am with you. I am faithful. Even when things are hard and scary, you are not alone.”

Feel peace and love enter your heart and mind.

(pause)

Open your eyes and remember: God is faithful. Live in gratitude.



Offering God's Grace

C LB

Tell the children that they will create a visual litany to share with the congregation. Explain that a litany is a series of prayer requests that have a response repeated by everyone. Cut apart prompts from **GN 2** and the responses from **GN 3**. Give each child, or group of children, a prompt, a response, and a large sheet of construction paper. Have them glue their prompt on the top of the paper and the response at the bottom of the paper. Invite the children to illustrate their prompts. When everyone has finished coloring, have the children stand in order of the prompts and lead the litany by reading their prayer. Encourage everyone to respond together.

Offer this litany to your congregation by leading it in worship or displaying the children's pictures on a large sheet of mural paper and hanging it in a visible spot in your church.

GN 4 Solution:



Extra Activity

C

Hand out copies of **GN 4** and tell the children that they are spies looking for God. Encourage them to find the word "God" hidden throughout the picture. There are twelve instances of "God" in the picture. The children may color the picture if they wish. While the children are working, wonder together how God may be seen in their daily lives.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to clean up the worship space.

Invite the children to sing the following song to the tune of "If you're happy and you know it":

If you know that God is faithful, clap your hands (*clap, clap*).

If you know that God is faithful, clap your hands (*clap, clap*).

God is faithful and we know it, and we'll live our lives to show it.

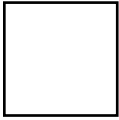
If you know that God is faithful, clap your hands (*clap, clap*).

Send each child with a blessing, saying, "(Name), have courage! God is faithful." Encourage them to respond with a "thumbs up."

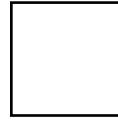
As children leave, encourage them to join you again next week.



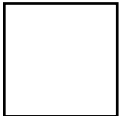
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



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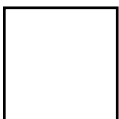
grapes



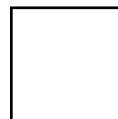
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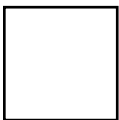
grasshoppers



pomegranates



thumbs down
and thumbs up



figs



giants

1

When we are called to do something ...

2

When we see things that make us fearful ...

3

When we are tired ...

4

When problems feel gigantic ...

5

When we know the Lord is with us ...

We trust in God's faithfulness.

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