

Open Bible Stories - Wandering in the Wilderness

Introduction

Key Idea

The story of the wandering in the wilderness teaches us how God tests his people and provides for his people in the life of faith.

Core Belief Verse

"This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years." - Acts 7:36

God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham.

He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But, God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from their slavery.

God sent judgment on the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

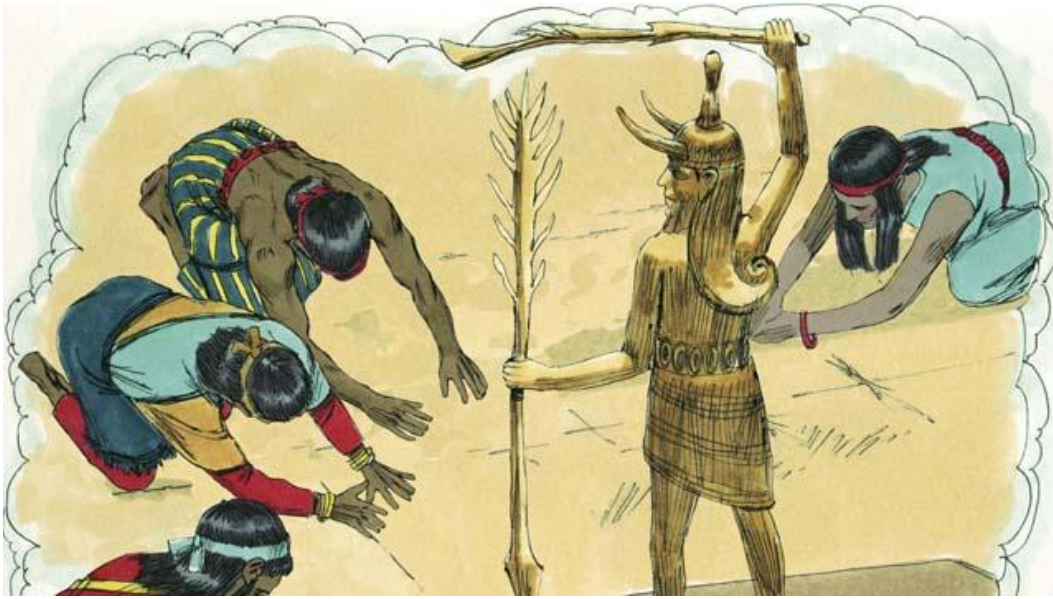
The Story: Wandering in the Wilderness

14-01



God finished telling the Israelites about all the laws that they must obey because of his covenant with them. Then he led them away from Mount Sinai. He wanted to take them to the Promised Land. This land was also called Canaan. God went ahead of them in the pillar of cloud, and they followed him.

14-02



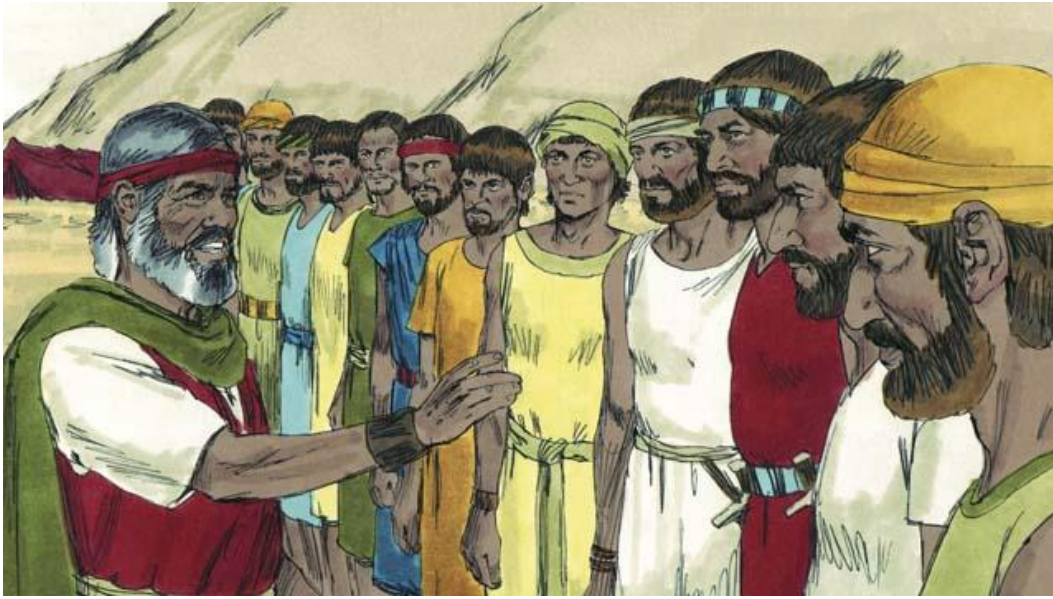
God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give the Promised Land to their descendants, but now there were many people groups living there. They were called Canaanites. The Canaanites did not worship or obey God. They worshiped false gods and did many evil things.

14-03



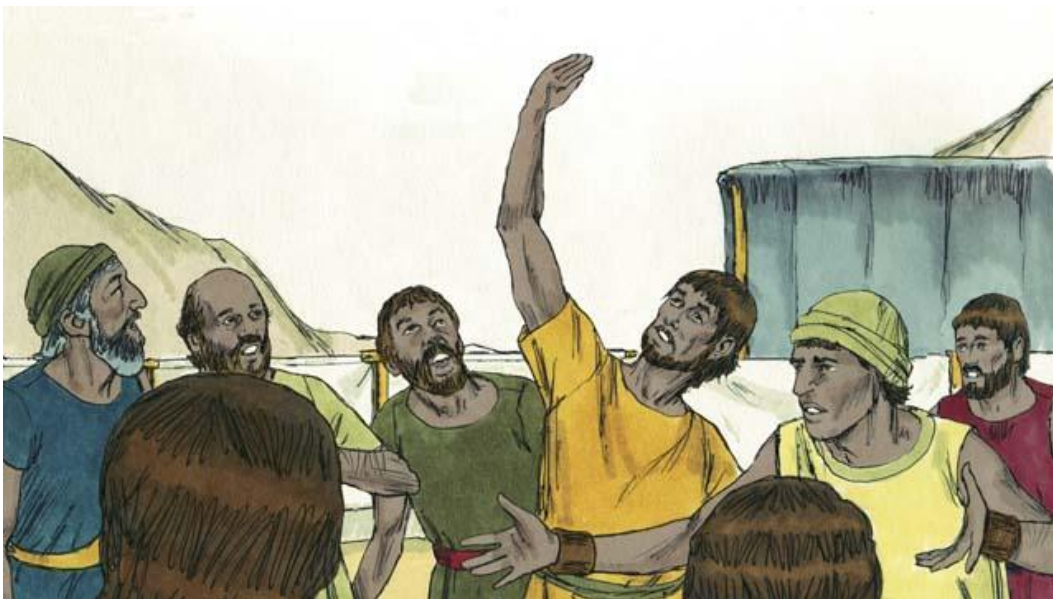
God told the Israelites, "After you go into the Promised Land, you must get rid of all the Canaanites there. Do not make peace with them and do not marry them. You must completely destroy all of their idols. If you do not obey me, you will end up worshiping their idols instead of me."

14-04



When the Israelites reached the border of Canaan, Moses chose 12 men, one from each tribe of Israel. He gave the men instructions to go and spy on the land to see what it was like. They were also to spy on the Canaanites to see if they were strong or weak.

14-05



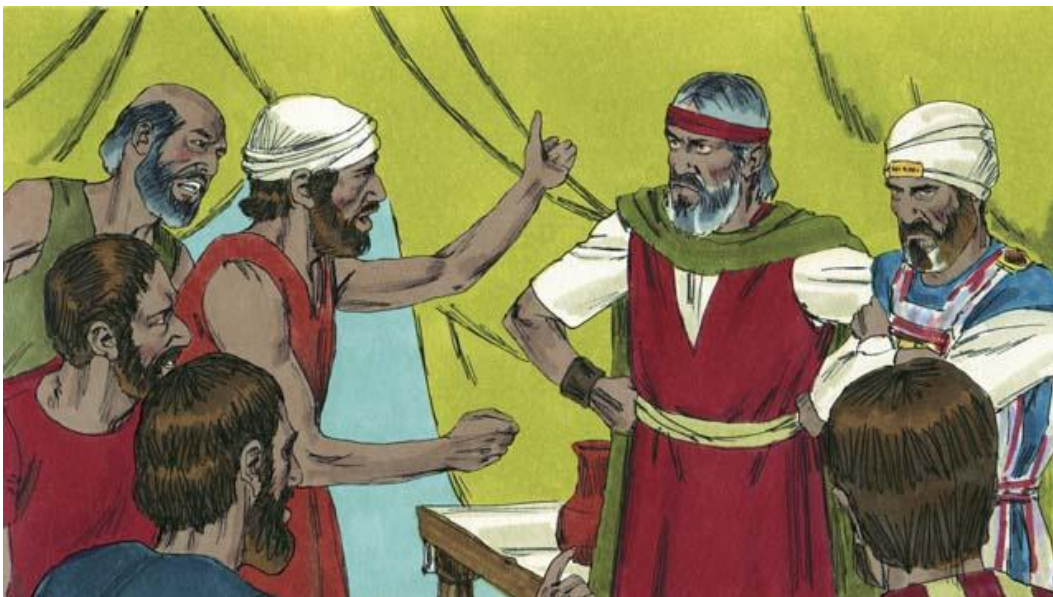
The 12 men traveled through Canaan for 40 days, and then they came back. They told the people, "The land is very fertile and the crops are plentiful!" But ten of the spies said, "The cities are very strong and the people are giants! If we attack them, they will certainly defeat us and kill us!"

14-06



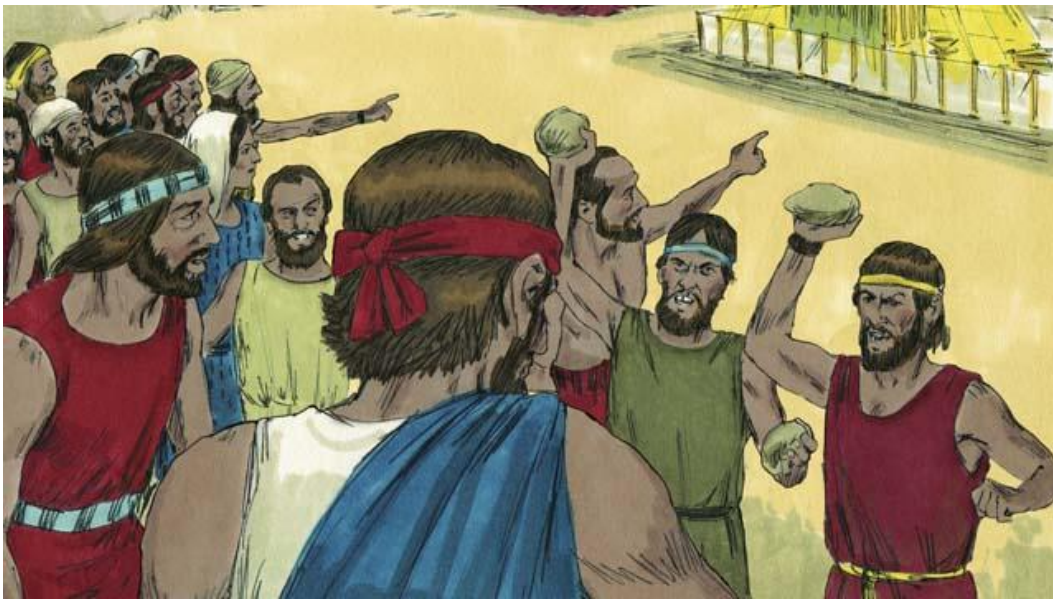
Immediately, Caleb and Joshua, the other two spies, said, "It is true that the people of Canaan are tall and strong, but we can certainly defeat them! God will fight for us!"

14-07



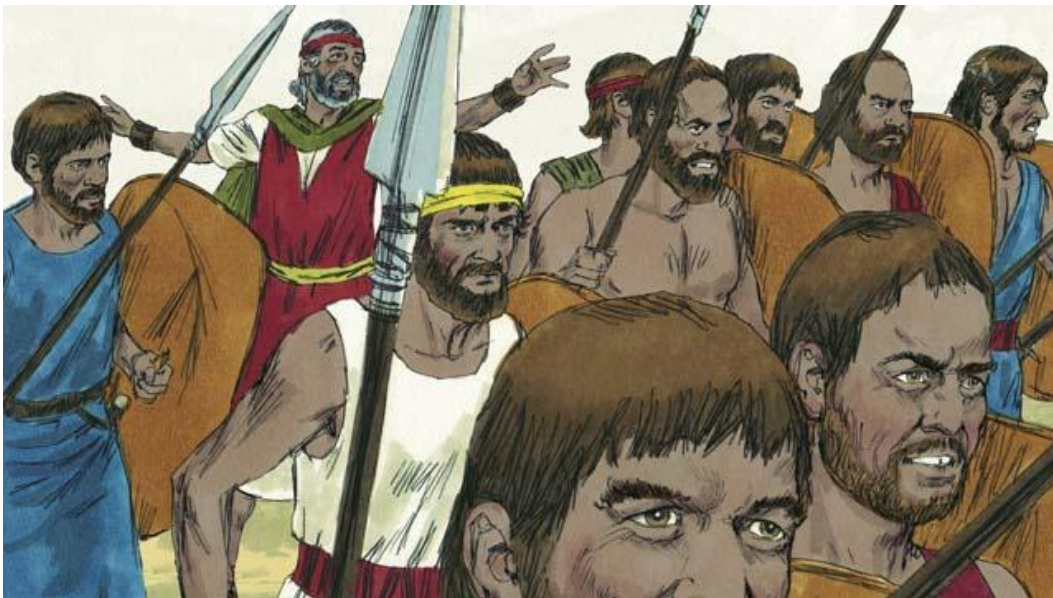
But the people did not listen to Caleb and Joshua. They became angry with Moses and Aaron and said, "Why did you bring us to this horrible place? We should have stayed in Egypt. If we go into the land, we will die in battle, and the Canaanites will make our wives and children to be slaves." The people wanted to choose a different leader to take them back to Egypt.

14-08



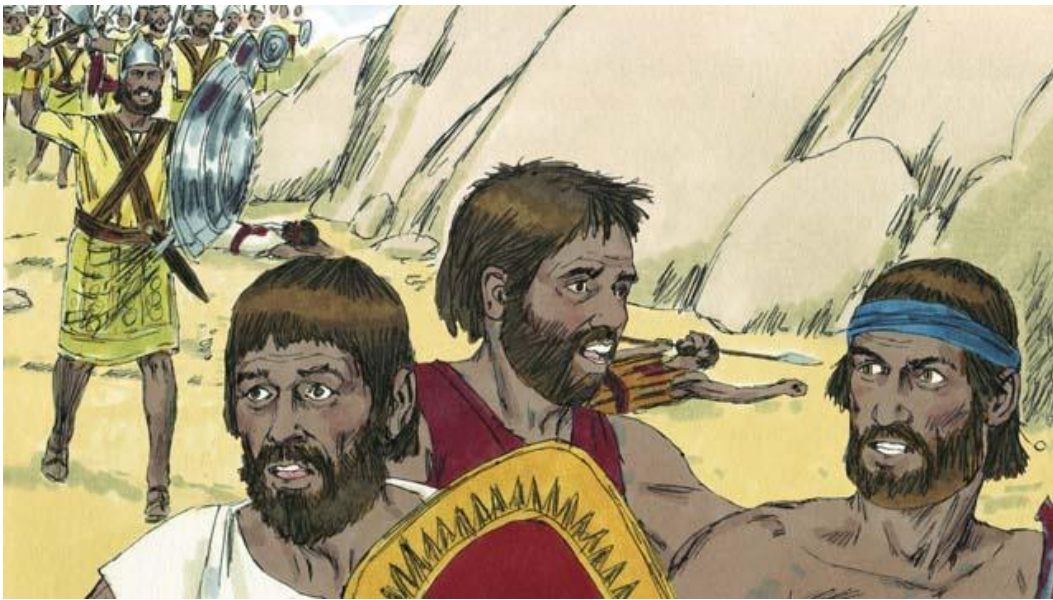
When the people said this, God was very angry. He came to the Tent of Meeting and said, "You have rebelled against me, so all of you will have to wander in the wilderness. Everyone who is 20 years or older will die there and never enter the land I am giving you. Only Joshua and Caleb will enter it."

14-09



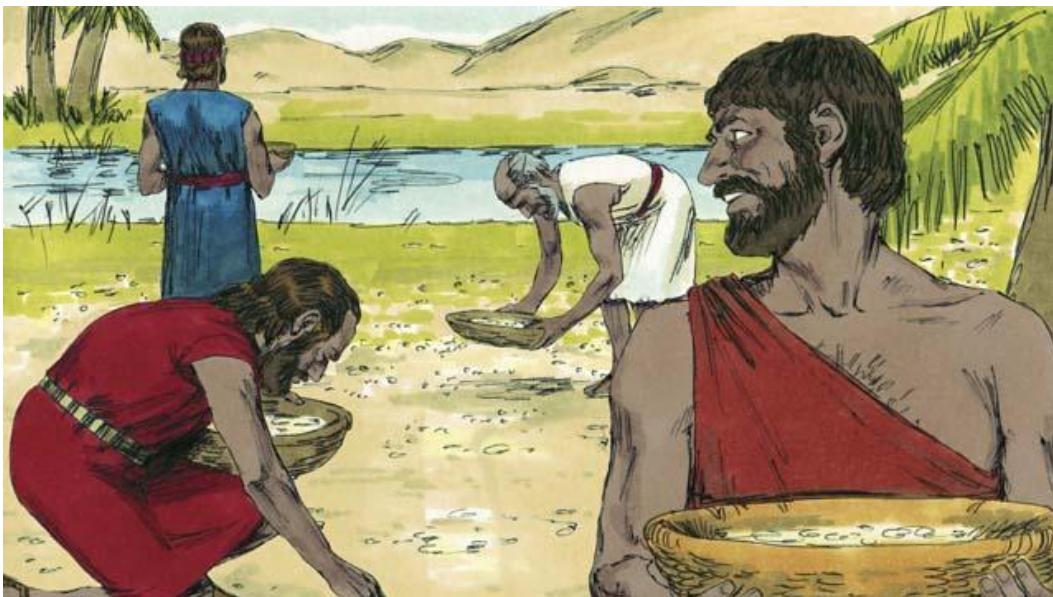
When the people heard God say this, they were sorry they had sinned. So they decided to attack the people of Canaan. Moses warned them not to go because God would not go with them, but they did not listen to him.

14-10

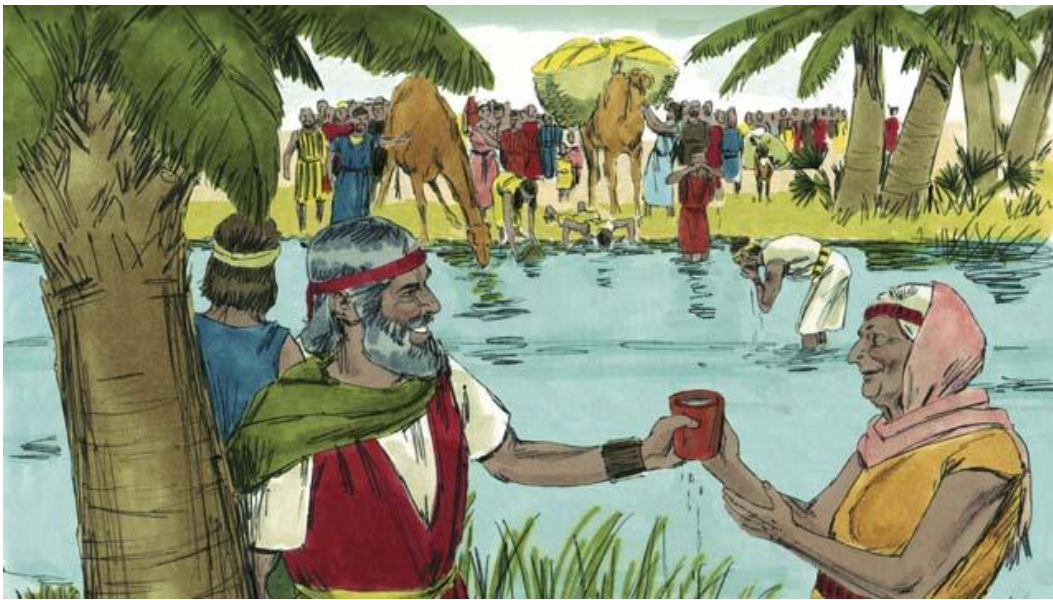


God did not go with them into this battle, so the Canaanites defeated them and killed many of them. Then the Israelites turned back from Canaan. For the next 40 years, they would wander through the wilderness.

14-11



During the 40 years that the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness, God provided for them. He gave them bread from heaven, called manna. He also sent flocks of quail (which are medium-sized birds) into their camp so they could have meat to eat. During all that time, God kept their clothes and sandals from wearing out.



To provide them with water to drink, God miraculously made it come out of a rock. But despite all this, the people of Israel complained and grumbled against God and against Moses. Even so, God was still faithful. He did what he promised that he would do for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



Another time when the people did not have any water, God told Moses, "Speak to the rock, and water will come out of it." But Moses did not speak to the rock. Instead, he hit the rock twice with a stick. In this way, he dishonored God. Water came out of the rock for everyone to drink, but God was angry with Moses. He said, "Because you did this, you will not enter the Promised Land."



After the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, all of those who had rebelled against God were dead. Then God led the people to the edge of the Promised Land again. Moses was now very old, so God chose Joshua to lead the people. God also promised Moses that one day he would send to the people another prophet like Moses.



Then God told Moses to go to the top of a mountain so he could see the Promised Land. Moses saw the Promised Land but God did not permit him to enter it. Then Moses died, and the Israelites mourned for 30 days. Joshua became their new leader. Joshua was a good leader because he trusted and obeyed God.

A Bible story from: Exodus 16-17; Numbers 10-14; 20; 27; Deuteronomy 34

Godly Wisdom - Living by the Wisdom from Above

- **Key Idea:** Grounding our lives in God's wisdom
- **Key Passage:** James 3:13-18
- **Main Session:** OBS 14 (Wandering in the Wilderness)

Sing a Song (3–5 minutes)

Choose a song to sing to praise God and encourage one another.

Recite the Core Belief Verse (3–5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

"Moses led them out of Egypt, after doing miracles and signs in Egypt and at the Sea of Reeds, and in the wilderness during forty years. Acts 7:36"

Read the Passage (5 minutes)

It takes wisdom to live godly lives in a sinful world. It takes wisdom to be a mature Christian community in a sinful world. In order to learn about godly wisdom that makes Christian community strong, read the passage below.

"13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let that person show a good life by his works in the humility of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. Instead, it is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where there are jealousy and ambition, there is confusion and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace among those who make peace. - James 3:13-18"

Explore the Idea (10–15 minutes)

Wisdom helps us to live godly lives and to enjoy loving community relationships. Use the following questions to discuss the kind of wisdom that pleases God.

1. What are the two kinds of wisdom described in this passage?
2. How is each kind of wisdom described? What are the characteristics of each kind of wisdom?
3. What bad characteristics are a great threat to your community? What good characteristics are most needed in your community?
4. How will your community develop wisdom that honors God and builds up the community?

Think about Your Heart (5 minutes)

Take some time to think about your own heart. Identify which list of characteristics most describes your heart and your community. Try to explain the reasons why you selected these characteristics. Then, identify which characteristics you want to most describe your life.

Pray to God (5 minutes)

Pray that God would help your community to have godly wisdom. Use the passage above to ask God for the specific characteristics that describe godly wisdom.

Movement 1: Understand the Story

Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.

Observation Questions

14-01

Where did God lead the Israelites after they left Mount Sinai?

God led them toward Canaan, the Promised Land.

How did God lead the Israelites to Canaan?

God went ahead of the Israelites in the pillar of cloud. The Israelites followed the pillar of cloud.

14-02

Who was living in Canaan, the Promised Land God said he would give to the Israelites?

Many different people called the Canaanites were living in the land.

What kind of people were the Canaanites?

The Canaanites did not worship or obey God. They worshiped false Gods. They did evil things.

14-03

What did God tell the Israelites to do to the Canaanites?

God told them to get rid of all of them, not to make peace with them, not to marry them, and to destroy all of their idols.

What did God say would happen if the Israelites did not get rid of the Canaanites and destroy their idols?

If the Israelites disobeyed God and did not remove the Canaanites and destroy their idols, the Israelites would end up worshipping the Canaanite idols instead of God.

14-04

When the Israelites reached the border of Canaan, who did Moses choose as spies?

Moses chose twelve men. Moses chose a man from each tribe of Israel.

What were these men supposed to do?

These men were supposed to spy on the land to see what it was like. They were also supposed to see if the Canaanites were strong or weak.

14-05

How long did the spies travel throughout Canaan?

The spies traveled through Canaan for 40 days.

What did the 12 spies say about the land of Canaan?

The land is very fertile and the crops are plentiful.

Why did ten of the spies say the Israelites should not attack the people of Canaan?

They said, "The cities are strong and the people are giants. If we attack them, they will defeat us and kill us!"

14-06

What did Caleb and Joshua say about the people of Canaan?

They said, "The people are strong, but we can defeat them. God will fight for us!"

14-07

How did the people respond to the report of the spies?

The people did not listen to Caleb and Joshua. They became angry with Moses and Aaron. They regretted leaving Egypt and feared dying in battle.

What did the people want to do after they heard the report of the spies?

They wanted to choose another leader and go back to Egypt.

14-08

What did God think of the Israelites' refusal to enter the land?

God was very angry with the people. God said that they had rebelled against God.

How did God say he would punish the people for their disobedience?

They would wander in the wilderness until everyone twenty years or older, except Caleb and Joshua, died.

14-09

How did the people react to God telling them their punishment?

The people were sorry they had sinned.

What did the people do to try to correct their sin?

They decided to attack the people of Canaan. Moses warned them that God would not go with them, but they did not listen and went up into Canaan anyway.

14-10

Why were the Israelites defeated when they attacked the Canaanites?

They were defeated because God did not go with them into the battle.

What happened after the Israelites were defeated by the Canaanites?

The Israelites turned back from Canaan and wandered the wilderness for 40 years.

14-11

How long did the Israelites wander in the wilderness?

They wandered for 40 years.

How did God provide for the Israelites in the wilderness?

God gave them manna, sent flocks of quail, and kept their clothes and shoes from wearing out.

14-12

What miracle did God do with a rock to provide for Israel?

God caused water to come out of a rock to provide for the Israelites.

How did the Israelites commonly respond to God and Moses?

The Israelites complained and grumbled against God and Moses.

How did God respond when the people complained and grumbled?

God was still faithful to his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

14-13

What did God tell Moses to do to provide water out of a rock at a later time?

God told Moses to speak to the rock and water would come out of it.

Why was God angry when Moses struck the rock?

God was angry because Moses dishonored God by not speaking to the rock as God told him to do. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses hit the rock twice with a stick.

How did God punish Moses for his disobedience?

God said that Moses would not enter the Promised Land.

14-14

What happened after Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years?
After Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, all the rebellious generation died.

When Israel reached the edge of the Promised Land again, who did God choose to replace Moses?

God chose Joshua to lead the people into the land of Canaan.

Who did God promise to send one day in the future?

God would send another prophet like Moses.

14-15

What did God tell Moses to do before Moses died?

God told Moses to go up on a mountain to see the Promised Land. Moses saw the Promised land but God did not allow him to enter it.

What happened after Moses died?

The Israelites mourned for 30 days after Moses died. Joshua became their new leader.

What kind of leader was Joshua?

Joshua was a good leader because he trusted and obeyed God.

Movement 2: Theological Questions

What Does This Story Teach Us?

1. Why do people disobey God? What does Israel's failure to take Promised Land tell us about the causes of disobedience?
2. How can people mature their faith in God? How can God's discipline of and provision for Israel help mature the faith in God?
3. Why is godly leadership important for God's people to grow in their faith? What examples of godly and ungodly leadership do we see in this story?

Movement 3: Live It Out

Personal Implications & Applications From The Story

Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.

1. Think about this week. Where does "Wandering in the Wilderness" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
2. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of the wandering in the wilderness teaches us how God tests his people and provides for his people in the life of faith.

Movement 4: Retell the Story

Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.

1. Can someone retell "Wandering in the Wilderness" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

Church Ministry

Reflect on how this story can edify and mature the Christian community. Design a way to minister this story to your church community.

Ministry Preparation: Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. What setting, audience, or approach would you use? Record your ideas below.

Ministry Implementation: Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching or lead a discussion. Record your ministry plan below.

Ministry Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. What went well? What would you do differently? Reflect on your experience below.

Movement 5: Share It

Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.

1. Who is one specific person you will share "Wandering in the Wilderness" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Mission Engagement

Consider how you will witness this story to unbelievers. Design a way to share this story and engage them in what it teaches about Christianity and the gospel.

Witness Preparation: Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. What context, relationship, or opportunity will you use? Record your ideas below.

Witness Implementation: Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a natural conversation or teaching. Record your plan below.

Witness Reflection: Think about what you learned from sharing this story with unbelievers. What did they respond to? What questions did they ask? Reflect on your experience below.