

SECOND NATURE



Develop your Christian muscle memory.

Suppose I asked you whether you brushed your teeth this morning. Hopefully, you would say yes. But let's say I wanted to dig a little deeper and I asked you to describe the experience of brushing your teeth.

Awkward silence.

It's not because you didn't brush them; it's just because you don't give a lot of thought to brushing your teeth. You probably thought a lot about it when you were a kid, making sure you hit all the uppers and the lowers; maybe you even sang "The Alphabet Song" in your head to make sure you spent enough time brushing. But now you've been brushing your teeth for many years, and it's become a routine you go through without even thinking. Brushing your teeth has become second nature to you—an action so often repeated that it now exists in the realm of muscle memory.

In Christ, Christians are given a new nature, new desires, new tastes, and a new lifestyle. As we continue to grow in Christ, we will develop consistent patterns of living that are the spiritual equivalent of brushing your teeth—patterns of thinking, believing, and acting that become so ingrained in us that we scarcely even think about them.

Through the lives of seven biblical characters, this study will bring out some of those patterns that grow out of our belief in the gospel. By exploring these stories, we'll be challenged to actively develop these character traits until they become second nature.



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Second Nature

Session 1 **Caleb: Unwavering Faith** Numbers 13:26-30; 14:6-10,21-24

Session 2 **Solomon: Unfailing Wisdom** 1 Kings 3:3-14; 4:29-34

Session 3 **Ruth: All-In Commitment** Ruth 1:8-17

Session 4 **Barnabas: Ongoing Encouragement** Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:19-26

Session 5 **John: Single-Minded Focus** John 1:26-34; 3:26-30

Session 6 **Hannah: Trust-Filled Prayer** 1 Samuel 1:9-11,17-18,26-28; 2:1-3

Session 7 **Andrew: Active Witness** John 1:35-42; 12:20-26

Find additional tools and resources to support this study, all available online at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra.

SESSION 1

CALEB: UNWAVERING FAITH

► ***The Point***

Christ-centered living chooses trust in God, not in circumstances.

► ***The Passage***

Numbers 13:26-30; 14:6-10,21-24

► ***The Bible Meets Life***

I never saw it. Most of my family and friends saw it—or at least they claimed they did. I remain convinced they were all in on an elaborate hoax that started in the mid-1990s. Back then the latest fad was 3D holographic prints. You were supposed to unfocus your eyes, stare blankly at a repeating pattern, and then claim you saw a different image suddenly popping out at you.

“It’s a rocket!” “It’s a grasshopper!” “It’s a panda bear!” It’s hogwash! Or at least that’s what I told myself. It became a big joke around my house at the time, but the truth is I was a little unnerved in thinking something really was there, but my eyes just couldn’t see it. I didn’t like the idea that I couldn’t trust my own eyes.

Can we trust what we see around us? As Christians, we must accept the reality that our senses will sometimes lie to us. That’s why living in a Christ-centered way means making the choice to place our trust in God, not in our circumstances.

► ***The Setting***

After the Israelites’ departed Egypt by the Red Sea, they traveled for three months (see Ex. 19:1) and encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and entered into a covenant with the Israelites. The people left Sinai and made the long trek to the southern border of Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants. Twelve tribal leaders entered Canaan to inspect and evaluate the land. After 40 days, the scouts returned.

What does the Bible say?

Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites

(13:29)—These were different people groups who lived in the promised land before the Israelites. Recent evidence has confirmed that several ethnic groups were living in the land of Canaan during the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages (1550–1000 B.C.).

Numbers 13:26-30; 14:6-10,21-24

^{13:26} And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.” ³⁰ But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”

^{14:6} And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.” ¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

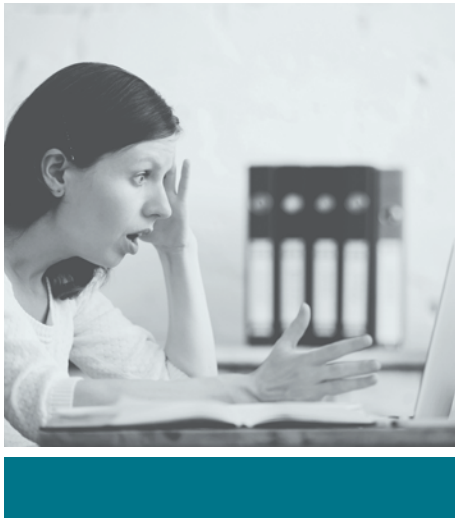
^{14:21} But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ²² none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. ²⁴ But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 7, “Second Nature,” to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the specific focus of each session.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 67 of the PSG: **“When have you felt like you couldn’t believe your eyes?”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Look for a “Magic Eye” book or collection at your local library or a book store, since those

books feature the same images referenced in “The Bible Meets Life.” Bring the book to your group gathering and see if your group members are able to identify the hidden pictures within the posters.

Note: If you’re not able to locate a “Magic Eye” book, there are several websites that allow you to print out various optical illusions. You can bring one or more of these illusions to help illustrate Question #1, above. (We will also provide a link to one or more of these websites at biblestudiesforlife.com/adultextra.)

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 68 of the PSG. Introduce the theme of trusting God by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 68 of the PSG: **“Christ-centered living chooses trust in God, not in circumstances.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by acknowledging that you have room to grow as a disciple of Jesus. Pray that you and your group members would be inspired to follow the example of godly disciples like Caleb as you engage this study.

BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR

Want to know about biblical culture, people, archaeology, and history? *Biblical Illustrator* has articles that tie to each session in this study at lifeway.com/BI.

SECOND
NATURE

- **CALEB: UNWAVERING FAITH**
Numbers 13:26-33; 14:6-10, 24-25
- **SOLOMON: UNFAILING WISDOM**
1 Kings 3:1-15; 4:29-34
- **RUTH: ALL-IN COMMITMENT**
Ruth 1:16-17
- **BARNABAS: ONGOING ENCOURAGEMENT**
Acts 4:36-37; 11:23-24; 13:46
- **JOHN: SINGLE-MINDED FOCUS**
John 1:24-25; 3:20-21
- **HANNAH: TRUST-FILLED PRAYER**
1 Samuel 1:9-11; 17:16, 26; 21:1-2
- **ANDREW: ACTIVE WITNESS**
John 1:35-42; 12:20-26

TIP: When helpful, use this “Notes” column to record additional discussion questions, concepts, and activities that connect the study content with your specific group.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Numbers 13:26-30

²⁶ And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan." ³⁰ But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."

READ: Numbers 13:26-30 on page 69 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

SUMMARIZE: Help group members engage the main points from pages 69-70 of the PSG:

1. "The Israelites were desperate for God to make good on the promise He had given to Abraham centuries before: the promise of a land of their own. As we read Numbers 13, we find God's people on the brink of finally seeing that promise fulfilled. But there was a catch."
2. "Surely we can relate, can't we? We all have moments when our circumstances contradict our faith."
3. "One of the spies was not overwhelmed, however. Caleb had his eyes fixed not on the extent of the circumstances, but on the promises of God."

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Who or what are we tempted to trust instead of God?

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 69 of the PSG: "What people or circumstances have helped you learn how to trust?"

TRANSITION: Unfortunately, the majority of the Israelites were not as optimistic (or as confident in God) as Caleb. And, as we'll see in Numbers 14:6-10, that confidence almost got him killed.

Numbers 13:26-30 Commentary

Trust God more than your circumstances.

[Verse 26] The 12 scouts reported to **Moses**, the Israelites' leader; to **Aaron**, Moses' assistant; and to the assembled members of the covenant community. The Israelites were camped on Canaan's southern border. This area was the northern part of **the wilderness of Paran**. **Kadesh** means "consecrated" and was the abbreviated name for Kadesh Barnea. It was located in the Wilderness of Zin. The scouts not only gave an oral report but also exhibited samples of **the fruit of the land**. Numbers 13:23 states that they brought back a cluster of grapes so large two men had to carry it hanging from a pole they shouldered. They also brought "some pomegranates and figs."

[Verse 27] The scouts told Moses they **came to** Canaan and executed their mission. They first gave the good news: the land **flows with milk and honey**. This picturesque description expressed the land's fertility; it was abundantly productive. The spies who reported their findings at their mission's completion displayed the fruit they brought as evidence of the land's richness. This glowing description of Canaan did not mean the whole land was fertile. Much of it was not suitable for growing crops or sustaining flocks and herds. Compared with the desert terrain through which the Israelites had traveled, however, Canaan was an inviting and pleasant place to live.

[Verse 28] Hard on the heels of the good news concerning the land's fertility came bad news introduced by the word **however**. The term can be rendered "yet" to introduce a sharp contrast. The land's inhabitants were **strong**—fierce, formidable, and mighty. Their cities were **fortified and very large**, suggesting they were inaccessible, impossible to capture. Most of all, the spies observed that the **descendants of Anak** were there. **Anak** means "long-necked" or "strong-necked" and likely referred to tall or gigantic individuals. Anak's three sons had settled in Hebron and the hill country. These daunting inhabitants struck fear in the hearts of the spies.

[Verses 29-30] Canaan was home to a mixed population. Various tribes occupied territories in the land. The Old Testament sometimes refers to the whole population as "Canaanites." Not all the spies reporting on their mission's findings agreed with the majority opinion. **Caleb** strongly disagreed with the pessimistic, negative report the other spies gave. (Num. 14:6-9 indicates Joshua stood with Caleb in rebutting the majority report.) The majority report went counter to God's promise to give the land to the Israelites.

The word **But** can be used to introduce a contrast. First, Caleb calmed the people's fears the negative report raised. Although Caleb did not mention God at this juncture, his words reflect his total faith in God's promise, his courage in the face of imposing obstacles, and his resolve to obey God. Caleb's words rang with urgency and confidence. The Israelites needed to act quickly on God's promise; they needed to forge ahead into the land. They would **go up** into Canaan; that is, they would enter the land from the south and move north. Caleb had no doubt in his mind that they would **occupy it**. He trusted God rather than apparent circumstances.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Numbers 14:6-10

⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. ⁸ If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." ¹⁰ Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Time Tested" on page 71 of the PSG. If time allows, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



Use the chart below to record moments when you actively trusted God in the past. How did those moments influence your life?

I trusted God by:

What happened next:

A moment from
long ago.

A moment from
my recent past.

What did those moments of trust teach you about God?

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some fears that may keep us from going against the crowd?

READ: Numbers 14:6-10 on page 70 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 72 of the PSG: "What makes fear a significant obstacle to faith?"

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read through the bullet list on page 72 of the PSG in order to explore some of the benefits we receive from God's presence.

TRANSITION: As we conclude with Numbers 14:21-24, we'll see what God Himself had to say about the Israelite's refusal to enter the promised land.

Numbers 14:6-10 Commentary

Trust God to continually be with you.

[Verse 6] Joshua stood with Caleb in insisting that the Israelites act on God's promise and enter the land. Although others not mentioned may have shared their view, the biblical record named only four individuals who opposed the scouts' majority report and the people's decision to turn back: Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua. Joshua and Caleb **tore their clothes**. This act expressed distress, grief, and perhaps terror caused by the people's rebellion. Such open defiance of God deeply disturbed the two scouts because it represented a lack of loyalty to God and a lack of faith in His word and His ability to deliver on His promise.

[Verses 7-8] Joshua and Caleb gave their minority report—a report that agreed about the land's fertility but ran directly counter to the opinion that the Israelites could not conquer it. The two faithful scouts addressed the assembled people and affirmed they had traversed the land and **spied** it; they had searched it out thoroughly. It was **an exceedingly good land**; it was excellent or choice in quality, fruitful. The condition for taking the land was God's being delighted in His people. If God delighted in them or smiled on them, He would enable them to conquer and occupy the land. They implied the people could repent of their disbelief and disobedience and renew their faith. Joshua and Caleb emphasized that Yahweh, the Israelites' covenant God, would **give** them the land; His power, not their ability, would gain the victory.

[Verse 9] The Israelites' disbelief and disobedience constituted rebellion against God. Joshua and Caleb urged them to abandon their plan to return to Egypt. Furthermore, the two stalwart, courageous scouts urged their people not to fear Canaan's occupants. The land's inhabitants would be **bread** for God's people. Rather than be devoured as grasshoppers, the Israelites would be the devourers.

Joshua and Caleb gave two reasons the Israelites should confidently enter the land. The first was that the inhabitants' **protection** had been **removed** from them. The word **protection** can be rendered "shadow" or "shade." Joshua and Caleb were certain God would take away His shadow of protection over Canaan's inhabitants. The second reason the Israelites could press forward into Canaan was the most significant: **the Lord** was with them. The God who remained faithful to His covenant in the face of His people's unfaithfulness would accompany the Israelites into the land. That certainty alone should have banished their fear.

[Verse 10] Rather than repent and resolve to obey God, the Israelites were enraged and **said to stone** Joshua and Caleb. As the people prepared to murder, God intervened. **The glory of the LORD** was His brilliant radiance that signified His presence. In Exodus 40:34, "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" ("the tent of meeting," 40:35) the Israelites had constructed in the wilderness. The visible splendor and majesty was evidence God was drawing near to His people; He was meeting with them. In Numbers 14:10, His majestic presence stopped the people from stoning Joshua and Caleb, and it served as a prelude for God's conversation with Moses.



15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Numbers 14:21-24

²¹ But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ²² none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. ²⁴ But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

READ: Numbers 14:21-24 on page 73 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 73 of the PSG: **“When has God kept His promises in a way that helped you trust Him more?”**

Note: Be sure to give some extra time for group members to think through what they feel comfortable sharing in answer to this question—and how they prefer to share it.

RECAP: Read aloud the final paragraph on page 73 of the PSG:

Not every promise is a happy promise. But every promise is an opportunity to reflect on the faithfulness of God. Let’s not shrink back when we face difficult circumstances. Instead, let’s commit again to follow God wherever He might lead. We can do so with the confidence that God, who is faithful, says what He means and means what He says.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 73 of the PSG: **“How can we continually remind one another of God’s faithfulness?”**

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 8, “People and Places,” to give group members a visual look at the people and places you’ll be exploring throughout this study called “Second Nature.”

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” for this session: **“Christ-centered living choose trust in God, not in circumstances.”** As time permits, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts or questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does God reward those who are faithful to Him?

PEOPLE & PLACES



Numbers 14:21-24 Commentary

Trust God to be faithful.

[Verse 21] God forgave the Israelites for their refusal to enter Canaan, **but** the consequences of their disobedience would be severe. With an oath in which He swore by Himself, God solemnly guaranteed the results of the Israelites' sin. His oath contained two certainties. First, in the Hebrew text, the phrase **as I live** literally is "I live." Because God is, His pronouncement would become reality. Second, the earth's being **filled with the glory of the Lord** was evidence God lives and was able to accomplish His purpose in spite of the Israelites' sin.

[Verses 22-23] The generation of men who refused to obey God's directive to enter Canaan would not live to enter the land. These were males 20 years of age and above (see v. 29) and of military age. They had received ample evidence of God's power and faithfulness: His ten plagues on Egypt had issued in their rescue and His provision for them during their wilderness trek. Yet they had **put ... to the test** God repeatedly. They had tried God or put Him to the proof. They had done so **ten times**. Most likely, the number *ten* was symbolic of fullness or completion and had the sense of often or many. Although the men in the Israelite community had numerous proofs of God's power and presence with them, they had **not obeyed** Him. Ironically, the Israelite men who had lamented that dying in the wilderness would be better than being slaughtered trying to conquer Canaan would get their wish. They would not **see** (feast their eyes on, enjoy) the land God had promised Abraham and his descendants. God emphatically stated that none (not one) of the rebels would experience the exhilaration of conquest, for they had **despised** Him. They had expressed contempt for God and had rejected Him.

God's response to Moses' petition on his people's behalf emphasizes a sobering biblical truth. When we sin against God, genuinely repent, and ask for forgiveness, in His mercy and grace He will pardon us. The consequences of our sin, however, will ensue. We, and often others around or related to us, will experience the sin's results. Disobeying God or rebelling against Him is no light matter.

[Verse 24] God singled out Caleb as the exception to the fate of the other Israelite men. In 14:30, God added Joshua as an exception. The word **but** introduces a sharp contrast to the disobedient Israelites. Because Caleb insisted on obedience to God and maintained He would fulfill His promise, Caleb would enter Canaan and establish himself there. With the phrase **my servant**, God bestowed the highest possible honor on Caleb. Caleb had **a different spirit** or attitude. In contrast to the other Israelites' complaints, rebellion, and disobedience, Caleb was faithful, determined, and courageous. In addition, Caleb had followed God **fully**. Caleb never wavered in his faithfulness and obedience. Because of his right attitude and consistent loyalty, he would enter Canaan, the land he had scouted. His **descendants** would settle there.



Read the article "Spies in the Land" in the Fall 2017 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Who Were the Anakim and Nephilim?" (Spring, 2016) and "Caleb: All We Know" (Winter, 2011-2012) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: *Bible Studies for Life*.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 74 of the PSG. Based on our study this session, how will you actively trust in God, rather than circumstances? Consider the following suggestions:



- ▶ **Share.** Share with your group one set of circumstances that is causing you to waver this week.
- ▶ **Think.** Think about one specific person you know is dealing with difficult circumstances. Write a note of encouragement to that person.
- ▶ **Time.** Spend some time researching and gathering some of God's promises to His people. Write these on note cards to carry with you as reminders of His faithfulness.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 74 of the PSG:

An unwavering faith doesn't mean circumstances won't be daunting. It certainly doesn't mean you'll never face opposition or trouble. Instead, an unwavering faith trusts that your circumstances are not the final say. It means choosing to trust in God, regardless of what your senses might tell you.

PRAY: Conclude by actively declaring your submission to God's will. Proclaim that He is in charge, and ask His Spirit to increase your faith and trust in Him each day.



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Notes