



SESSION 1 of 4

Joshua

MEETING AIM

To explore how God encouraged Joshua before he led the Israelites on the final leg of their journey into the Promised Land.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 1

BACKGROUND

Joshua followed in the footsteps of seasoned leader Moses, and was given the daunting task of guiding the Israelites into the Promised Land. God's words of reassurance just before Joshua took on this role didn't focus on his gifts, skills or experience, though he no doubt had these. Instead, this passage shows us that, above all our abilities, the greatest thing we need to know when we face unknown or difficult situations is that God promises to be with us.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Gather the children together for a time to catch up, build relationships and reflect on the week just gone. Have people share exciting news such as birthdays, trips or events. You might like to use the following question to start the conversation as a light-hearted way into today's theme: "What is the bravest thing you have ever done?"

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: relay batons (these could be made from rolls of newspaper held secure with sticky tape)

Hold a relay race with the children. Split the group into teams and line them up at one end of the room. Provide the first player in each team with a relay baton. On your shout, the first player must run to a marked spot at the other end of the room and back again before passing the baton to the next teammate. Once every team member has run, the team should sit on the floor. The first team to finish is the winner. If you have a small group you could do this as one team, doing the activity twice and timing each go, challenging them to beat their previous time on the second go.

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: lining paper; pens

Begin by recapping with the children how God had promised Abraham that one day his descendants would live in the Promised Land (Genesis 15) and how God had used Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and toward this land (Exodus 13-14).

Explain to the group that Moses 'passed on the baton' of being the Israelite leader to Joshua just before he died. It's a bit like a relay race, where someone passes the baton on for someone else to run the next part of the race. Moses handed over to Joshua so he could run the final leg of a very long, historical journey. It was Joshua's job to finish the race and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Ask the children to shout out words that describe how Joshua might have felt when he found out about his task. Give small groups of children a sheet of lining paper each. Encourage them to draw around a person in their group, then draw or write things that they think make a good leader onto the person outline.

When the children have had time to reflect, encourage them to share their ideas. Notice with them any trends in their thoughts. Are they predominantly skills, talents or experiences? Are they things that anyone can learn? Or qualities that some people have and others don't?

Ask someone to pretend to be a leader like Joshua (this could be a child or a leader). Invite the children to share any words they might say to encourage them before a big job.

Read Joshua 1:1-9 in a dramatic voice. Explain that this is what God said to Joshua to encourage him at the start of his daunting task. Wonder together about what else God could have said to encourage Joshua, and why he might have chosen to say what he did. Try to draw out the idea that God didn't list all of Joshua's gifts and skills, or the qualities he had that made him a good leader, like the ones we came up with earlier. Instead, God told Joshua that he should stay close to him and follow the instructions for living that he had given to Moses. He reminded him to be "brave, strong, bold and courageous" because God would be with him wherever he went.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions as prompts for discussion. Encourage the children to think about what the passage might be saying to them and how it could be applied to their everyday lives. Try to encourage wondering, reminding them that there isn't necessarily a single right answer.

- God had a big job for Joshua to do, but he has jobs for all of us to do every day. What things might God want us to do?
- Joshua had a daunting task and was going into the unknown. Do we have things in our lives that feel a bit like that?
- What might God say to encourage us in the tasks he has given us or to help us if we are feeling afraid or nervous?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: old maps or images of maps printed out; pens and scissors

Provide the children with the maps (or pictures of maps). Encourage them to draw around their foot on the map and cut it out. Ask them to copy Joshua 1:9 onto their outline or draw a picture that reminds them of today's session. As you work, continue your chat about the story. Some children might be worried about situations they are facing, so seek to reassure them that God will be with them. They should take the cutout home as a reminder that, just as God promised to be with Joshua, he promises to be with us, whatever we face.

5 PRAYER

You will need: relay baton(s) from 'Intro activity'

Encourage the children to think quietly or share openly about situations in which they would like God to give them courage. Sit or stand in a circle and pass the baton around the group. When each child has the baton they should pray for the person next to them, either aloud or in their head. In a larger group you may need to hand out multiple batons to speed this up.

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SESSION 2 of 4

Rahab

MEETING AIM

To explore with the children how, as Christians, we are sometimes called to stand out and be different from those around us in order to show God's love and follow his ways.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 2

BACKGROUND

The story of Rahab tells of a woman brought up in a non-believing society who was prepared to risk her life in order to stand out for God, protect his people and play a part in his big story. As Christians, we are also called to stand out for God, and to live courageously and often differently from those around us.

It's worth noting that the passage mentions that Rahab is a prostitute. You can choose whether or not to give this attention depending on your group, but you may need to be prepared to explain it if the children ask. You could say that it meant she had the kind of relationship God planned for married people with lots of people she wasn't married to. With older children it could be explored further as a good example of God using imperfect people.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Gather the children together for a time to catch up, build relationships and reflect on the week just gone. Have people share exciting news such as birthdays, trips or events. You might like to use the following question to start the conversation as a light-hearted way into today's theme: "If you could be a spy or a secret agent, what cool gadgets would you choose?"

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: popcorn kernels; a marker pen; small containers; a timer

Before the session, colour in three to five popcorn kernels with the marker pen and place a pile of popcorn kernels into a small container. Show the group the kernels you have made a different colour, then drop these into your container and mix them up. Challenge the children to take it in turns to see how many of the coloured kernels they can find in 20 seconds. If you have large numbers you might like to do this in

smaller groups so that more children get a turn. Make the link with the group that, just as the coloured kernels stand out and are different from the rest, today's passage is about someone who stood out by living courageously and differently compared with those around her.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a Bible

Split the children into groups of five or six, and explain that as you read through the story you are going to pause at various points and ask them to create a specific 'freeze-frame' (a frozen picture showing a situation). You might like to show them a quick example, such as a freeze-frame of a dinner party. Encourage them to think creatively about how they use their bodies to be people or objects. In the dinner example, some people could link hands in an archway to be the house, while someone else uses their back as a table for others to pretend to eat from.

Read Joshua 2:1-24, pausing at appropriate points for the groups to make the freeze-frames listed below. If you prefer you could tell the story in your own words or read it from a storybook Bible. Encourage all the groups to make the freeze-frames, and go around and look at them briefly each time, commenting on the great things you see.

- Spies being sent on a mission
- Spies hiding in Rahab's house
- Rahab talking to the spies
- The king's men looking for the spies
- Spies escaping through the window

Wonder with the children about how Rahab might have come to believe in God even though she was living in a city where people didn't. Ask the children to think about how it might have felt to be the spies on their mission. This passage doesn't make many explicit references to God or his actions, but ask the children where they see him in this story and what they think it could teach us about his character or his actions.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions as prompts for discussion. Encourage the children to think about what the passage might be saying to them and how it could be applied to their everyday lives. Try to encourage wondering, reminding them that there isn't necessarily a single right answer.

- How do you think Rahab felt hiding the spies?

- Why do you think the spies trusted her?
- How might God ask us, as Christians, to live differently compared with those around us?

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper; pencils; art materials
Encourage the children in small groups to think up a modern-day equivalent of Rahab's story: a situation where God might ask a Christian to courageously stand out or do something different from those around them.

Once they have come up with a contemporary story, encourage them to create small dramas or comic strips to present their scenarios to the rest of the group. When they have finished, invite the group to share what they have been doing if they would like to.

5 PRAYER

You will need: red embroidery thread; keyrings (optional); worship music and the means to play it

Provide the children with some red embroidery thread and encourage them to plait it into a bracelet or decoration for a keyring. It might be helpful to tie the threads together and tape one end down on a surface to secure them while they plait. As they do this, encourage them to chat to God about how they could live differently compared with those around them. You might like to play some gentle worship music in the background while they do this. The children can take their 'ropes' home with them as a reminder of this prayer and today's session.

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SESSION 3 of 4

Crossing the river

MEETING AIM

To explore how God reminds the Israelites of his faithfulness, and to reflect on and remember times when we have seen God keep his promises and do amazing things.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 3-4

BACKGROUND

God holds back the water in this passage so that his people can cross the river on dry land. Not only did they need this miracle to get to their destination, but it would also have reminded them of the time when God parted the Red Sea to rescue the Israelites from Egypt.

Here we see God instruct his people to build a memorial to help them and their ancestors remember the amazing way he had guided them. It's as if he knew how quickly they would forget his goodness! We so easily forget the ways God has provided for us, looked after us and answered our prayers. Today's session provides the opportunity to think about how important it is to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Gather the children together for a time to catch up, build relationships and reflect on the week just gone. Have people share exciting news such as birthdays, trips or events. You might like to use the following question to start the conversation as a light-hearted way into today's theme: "If there was one thing you never wanted to forget, what would it be?"

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: masking tape or chalk; paper
Use chalk or tape to mark two 'sides of the river' with a large distance between them on the floor. Split the children into teams and position them on one side of the 'river'. Provide the groups with pieces of paper to act as 'stones' and challenge them to get their whole team across the river as quickly as possible without touching the floor.

Make sure you give them fewer pieces of paper than the number of people in their team so they have to work together and

problem-solve to get across the gap. Note that the fewer pieces of paper you give them the harder it will be. If anyone's feet touch the 'river' while crossing that person must go back to the riverbank and start again.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: Bibles; large sheets of paper; collage materials

Split the children into smaller groups and allocate each one a passage from the list below. The children should use their Bibles to look up and read the passage in order to find out what is happening in their part of the story. Provide the groups with large sheets of paper and collage materials, then ask them to create a picture that depicts their passage. If you have a small number of children you could allocate multiple passages per individual group, and conversely if you have a large number you could assign each passage to more than one group.

- **Joshua 3:1-5:** Camping by the river
- **Joshua 1:6-16:** The Ark of the Covenant in the river; the water stops flowing (not including the part where the people cross)
- **Joshua 3:16-17:** The people cross on dry land
- **Joshua 4:1-9:** Twelve rocks are collected
- **Joshua 4:10-19:** The river starts flowing again
- **Joshua 4:20-24:** The rocks are set up at Gilgal

Gather everyone back together in a large group. They should show their picture to the rest of the children in the correct order and explain what is happening in their part of the story. In doing this you will be able to cover the whole passage with the group in an interactive way.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions as prompts for discussion. Encourage the children to think about what the passage might be saying to them and how it could be applied to their everyday lives. Try to encourage wondering, reminding them that there isn't necessarily a single right answer.

- How do you think the Israelites felt crossing the river?
- Are there other stories in the Bible this reminds you of?
- What might God be teaching us through this story?
- Which kinds of things would you like to remember about what God has done for you?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: rocks (or printed templates); marker pens or paints; worship music and the means to play it

Explain to the group that crossing the river in this way would probably have reminded the people of the time when God used Moses to part the Red Sea and helped the Israelites escape Egypt. In today's passage God asked the Israelites to build a memorial of rocks from the river to remind themselves and future generations of the wonderful thing God had done.

Provide the children with rocks to decorate using paints or marker pens. Encourage them to reflect on ways that God has been faithful to them in the past and to use this rock as a reminder of that whenever they find themselves facing something difficult. You might like to play worship music that speaks of God's faithfulness in the background, for example 'Do it again' by Elevation Worship. As you work, think more about the last question in 'Chatting together'.

5 PRAYER

You will need: a large sheet of paper (lining paper is ideal); Post-it notes; pens

Before the session, write the word 'Faithful' on a large piece of paper or a length of lining paper. Give the children Post-it notes and encourage them to draw or write prayers thanking God for his faithfulness. They might like to think about times when they have felt God close, seen him answer prayer or keep a promise he makes in the Bible. If they cannot think of an example from their own lives, they can choose to draw a story they know from the Bible in which God did something wonderful. Ask the children to stick their Post-it notes to the large sheet of paper as a way of saying thank you to God for these things.

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SESSION 4 of 4

Jericho

MEETING AIM

To discover that God used unexpected means to lead the Israelites to victory and to do the seemingly impossible task of breaking down the walls of Jericho.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 6

BACKGROUND

God worked in unexpected ways to bring down the walls of Jericho, and Joshua took a step of faith. It might have looked silly to others and felt like an impossible task, but he listened carefully and followed God's instructions. As a result, the glory of the victory could be given only to God.

It's worth noting that in order for the Israelites to inhabit the Promised Land a whole city's worth of non-believers were killed. This is difficult to understand and explain, but we shouldn't avoid it. If this comes up in discussion, let the children ask questions and wonder together as to why things might have happened the way they did.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Gather the children together for a time to catch up, build relationships and reflect on the week just gone. Have people share exciting news such as birthdays, trips or events. You might like to use the following question to start the conversation as a light-hearted way into today's theme: "Would you rather face an army of duck-sized horses or horse-sized ducks?"

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: building materials such as junk or recycling, Jenga bricks, Lego bricks, building blocks or playing cards

Challenge the children to build a wall as large and as strong as possible using whatever materials you have brought with you. Make the link with the group that today's passage is about a city called Jericho, which was surrounded by a huge, strong wall somewhat like a fortress.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a Bible

Ask the children to help you act the story out as you tell it. You may prefer to retell the story in your own words or read it from a storybook Bible such as *The Lion Storyteller Bible* (Bob Hartman) or *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (Sally Lloyd-Jones). Alternatively, you could read Joshua 6 from a child-friendly translation of the Bible with, such as the New Century Version.

Assign half the group to be the walls of Jericho and stand in a circle facing outwards. Ask the other half to be the Israelites walking around the walls. You might like to choose some to be those allocated to play trumpets and have them make noise as they walk while the others remain silent. When you get to the part about the Israelites shouting, have everyone make as much noise as possible and then instruct your 'walls' to fall down.

After you have told the story, wonder with the group about how Joshua might have felt in following God's instructions. You might also like to think with the group about other ways God could have chosen to give the Israelites the city of Jericho, and why he acted the way he did. Emphasise that the way things played out meant the Israelites couldn't claim it was their skills or abilities that made the walls fall down. Instead, they knew it must have been the result of God's power.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions as prompts for discussion. Encourage the children to think about what the passage might be saying to them and how it could be applied to their everyday lives. Try to encourage wondering, reminding them that there isn't necessarily a single right answer.

- How do you think the Israelites felt when they were walking around the wall?
- On a scale of one to ten, how confident do you think they were that this plan would work? Why?
- What do you think the people in Jericho would have thought about God when they saw the walls come tumbling down?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: pens and paper

Explain to the group that we don't know exactly what the Israelites shouted at the wall, but we know that God commanded them all to shout. Ask if they have heard of the term 'battle cry', where soldiers would shout out a phrase or slogan as they headed into battle to explain the cause they were fighting for. In modern times we might be more used to hearing chants and shouts at protests or at sports events, which send a message to the supporters and to the opposition.

Encourage the group to create a 'shout': a short verse or chant, perhaps with a rhyme or rhythm, that might represent the kind of things the Israelites were thinking at the time. They could do this in small groups or individually, and could either perform their chants aloud or write them down for others to read.

5 PRAYER

You will need: brick-shaped paper; lining paper; pens; glue

The walls of Jericho acted as a fortress around the city, and breaking through them might have felt like an impossible task to the Israelites as they stood facing them. There may be things in our lives or in the lives of those around us that we want to see happen but feel are impossible. Give the children brick-shaped pieces of paper and encourage them to write or draw on them the things they want to see God do, even if they feel like these are big, crazy or impossible prayers. Encourage them to stick their prayers onto a length of lining paper to create a prayer wall.

Pray with the group for these things, then have them rip the wall up – like the walls of Jericho tumbling down – as a way of asking God to answer their big prayers. Alternatively, the group might like to keep the picture and store it somewhere, revisiting it from time to time to see which prayers God has answered. You could do both by taking a photograph of the wall to keep before ripping it up.

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