



LESSON 4

God calls Joshua to be His servant

JOSHUA 1:1-9



Servants of the Lord courageously trust in God and love His Word.



“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh 1:9).

Supporting Truths

1. Christians must be strong and courageous.
2. God gives good promises.
3. God is with His people.
4. Christians must meditate on and obey God’s Word.
5. Jesus is the great servant of the LORD who leads Christians into heaven.

Objectives

1. State that God called Joshua to be strong and courageous.
2. Explain that Joshua could be courageous by trusting in God’s promises.
3. Explain that Joshua could be courageous by trusting in God’s presence.
4. Explain that Joshua’s success depended on meditating on and obeying God’s Word.
5. Compare Jesus to Joshua.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God calls Joshua to be His servant • Joshua 1:1-9



Lesson Summary

Now that Moses was dead, Israel desperately needed a new leader. God chose Joshua, a man who had proven to be a faithful leader as Moses' assistant for nearly 40 years. But no man is capable of carrying out his God-given mission by his own strength. So God strengthened Joshua in three ways: He confirmed His promise about the land, He promised His presence with Joshua, and He commanded Joshua to meditate on God's law and obey it. By trusting God, Joshua could have courage to face any enemy who came against him.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Joshua and Jesus share the same name: "The LORD is salvation," but Jesus is actually the LORD Himself, not just a human being used by the LORD. He is the chosen servant whom the Father was pleased to crush. He thought carefully about God's law and sought to obey it, exhibiting strength and courage in the face of much greater difficulty. Jesus is the great and final leader of God's people, leading them into a heavenly land that lasts forever. As the people confidently followed Joshua to victory, we may with much greater confidence follow Jesus our Lord and Savior.

LAST WEEK



**God promises to
bless or curse**
Deuteronomy 28:1-68

THIS WEEK



**God calls Joshua to be
His servant**
Joshua 1:1-9

NEXT WEEK



**God approves
Rahab's faith**
Joshua 2:1-24

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

Servants of the Lord courageously trust in God and love His Word.

God's covenant to Abraham included making him a great nation set apart for Himself (Gen 12:2; 17:1; 18:19; 22:17) and blessing all nations through his descendant (Gen 12:3; 22:18). But as Israel was now about to enter the land, the most obvious aspect of the covenant was the promise that Abraham's descendants would possess the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen 12:7; 15:18–21; Josh 1:5). Would this promise come true, especially now that Moses had died? As the book of Joshua begins, God affirms His promise by selecting a new leader, promising His presence, and instructing the new leader on how to achieve success.

God called Joshua to be His servant (1:1–2)

After 40 years of faithfully leading God's people, Moses was dead (Josh 1:1). Up to this point in Scripture, he is the only man called "the servant of the LORD." He enjoyed an incredible relationship with God, even speaking with God plainly (Num 12:1–8). He had given Israel God's law, authored the first five books of our Bibles, and by his intercession rescued Israel from utter destruction (32:9–14, 30). Now that he was dead, Israel was leaderless. But God was not dead. Great leaders die, but God remains, and He is able to raise up new leaders.

In this case, God chose Joshua to be the next leader of His people (Josh 1:2). Joshua was a proven leader already. He had been Moses' assistant since the crossing of the Red Sea nearly 40 years ago. He had led Israel's army to numerous victories, as in the battle against the Amalekites (Exod 17:8–16). He had been one of only two faithful spies (Num 14:26). Moses even changed his name from Hoshea, which means "salvation," to Joshua, which means "The LORD is salvation," a reminder to Joshua of where salvation comes from (Num 13:16). So Joshua had proven himself faithful in lesser roles before God called him to greater leadership (Matt 25:23).

Joshua was an experienced leader and was already recognized as Moses' successor (Num 27:18–23), but this was still an intimidating call. How was he to lead over 2 million people across a river into hostile land? How was he to provide spiritual leadership to a nation known for its stubborn grumbling? How was he to defeat all the inhabitants of Canaan?

God confirmed His promises to Joshua (1:3–5)

God encouraged Joshua, first, by confirming His promise about the land. What God said to Moses still held true (Josh 1:3), and Joshua could be encouraged by realizing that this land was ultimately a gift from God, not something that in the end depended on him (1:2). God would be the one to give the victory (1:5). How encouraging it must have been to hear God say, "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life." Yet believers today are the recipients of an even greater promise.

Although God confirmed His promise as certain, Joshua and the nation of Israel had to act in order to experience the promise. They had to cross the Jordan (Josh 1:2). They had to enter into all the land (1:3). While Joshua led Israel courageously into Canaan, the conquest was not completed in his days (13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–16; 18:3), nor has Israel ever possessed all the land that was promised (1:4). Joshua could say at the end of His life that all God's promises came true (21:45), not because the land was fully possessed, but because God had proved His faithfulness. He had fought their battles for them and given them all the land that they had been faithful to enter.

The LORD also encouraged Joshua by promising to be with Him (Josh 1:5). Not only that, but God promised to be with him just like He was with Moses. God

THINK ABOUT IT

Paul declares that no one can stand against those who are in Christ (Rom 8:31, 35). Those who are in Christ are more than conquerors (8:37). God will most assuredly bring our salvation to completion.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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made this same promise to Moses when Moses was so afraid he tried to reject God's call (Exod 3:14–15). But God was with Moses, working miracles through him, speaking to Moses as one friend to another, and giving Moses grace to lovingly lead a people that were often hard to love. So He would also be with Joshua.



THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus is also with all believers forever (Matt 28:20). He will never leave us or forsake us, so we need not fear (Heb 13:5–6).

God commanded Joshua to be strong (1:6–9)

So God's word, His promises, becomes the foundation of Joshua's strength. This command is repeated three times here as it was also repeated three times at the end of Deuteronomy (31:6, 7, 23). Joshua, Israel, and all believers need to be reminded often to be strong and **courageous** (Matt 14:27). He was to face danger without fear, not confident in himself, but in God—in God's promises, presence, and protection.

This confidence comes from being saturated with God's word. The commands to be strong and courageous surround two commands to love and obey God's law (1:7b–8). Moses had written the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—and now Joshua was to obey them carefully, without turning to the right or to the left (1:7; Deut 2:27; 17:11; 28:14). If he would do this, he would have success in his calling. So it is for all believers: God's Word is like a straight path, and those who walk in it are happy (Ps 119:1).

God emphasizes the command again, but this time He adds the command to meditate on the law day and night (1:8). **Meditation** literally is mumbling; it is mulling over God's words, thinking through them, lingering over them, praying them, and speaking them to oneself. The law is not to depart from Joshua's mouth—as if every time Joshua opens his mouth, God's law is the first thing to come out. Success in God's mission comes from

commitment to His word.

Finally, God again commanded Joshua not to fear, promising again to be with him wherever he went (Josh 1:9). In the end, it would be God who granted Joshua success. God would be with Joshua to enable him to obey His law, and God would be with Joshua to bless him with success. Joshua need not fear his own weakness, Israel's rebelliousness, nor Canaan's armies. Joshua need only trust God.

Likewise, all believers can be confident in the victory God provides through Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:57). In fact, "Jesus" is the same name as "Joshua." Joshua faithfully, yet imperfectly, led Israel into the Promised Land (Heb 4:8). But Jesus both faithfully and perfectly leads believers into their eternal home (John 14:3). He is the LORD's servant (Isa 42:1) and our great captain (2 Pet 3:18). He was strong and courageous in the face of the worst terror (Ps 22:1–21). He meditated on God's word and did not let it depart from His mouth (Matt 4:1–11). Following His lead and meditating on His word, believers can be strong and courageous servants of the LORD, fearing no man.

THINK ABOUT IT

Soaking up God's word leads to obedience, but neglecting God's word leads to disobedience (Jas 1:23–25). This command and promise applies to all believers (Ps 1:1–3).



Lesson Outline

Servants of the Lord courageously trust in God and love His Word.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose Joshua to lead Israel (1:1–2).
2. God promised to be with Joshua (1:3–5).
3. God told Joshua to be strong and courageous (1:6, 9).
4. God told Joshua to read the Bible and obey it (1:7–8).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God called Joshua to be His servant (1:1–2).
 - God's servant Moses was dead (1:1–2a).
 - God told Joshua to lead Israel into the promised land (1:2).
2. God confirmed His promises to Joshua (1:3–5).
 - God promised to give them all the land that they entered (1:3–4).
 - God promised victory (1:5a).
 - God promised always to be with Joshua (1:5b).
3. God commanded Joshua to be strong (1:6–9).
 - God commanded Joshua to be strong and very courageous (1:6–7a).
 - God commanded Joshua to love and obey God's law (1:7b–8).
 - God commanded Joshua not to be afraid (1:9).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God calls Joshua to be His servant • Joshua 1:1–9



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Who did God choose to lead Israel into the promised land?**
God chose Joshua.
2. **What did God tell Joshua to be?**
“Be strong and courageous.”
3. **What reasons did God give to help Joshua be strong and courageous?**
God promised to be with Joshua and to give Joshua success.
4. **Joshua was supposed to meditate on and obey something. What was it?**
Joshua was supposed to meditate on God’s word and do it.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **Who died just before Israel entered the promised land?**
Moses died, after leading Israel for 40 years.
2. **What does the name Joshua mean?**
Joshua means “The LORD is salvation.”
3. **What was Joshua’s mission?**
Joshua’s mission was to lead Israel across the Jordan, drive out the Canaanites, and take possession of the land.
4. **What did Israel need to do in order to enjoy God’s promise about the land?**
Israel needed to enter the land—wherever they entered, God would give victory. But if they did not enter certain parts, they would not possess that land.
5. **What was special about the way God promised to be with Joshua?**
God promised to be with Joshua just like He had been with Moses.
6. **What does it mean to meditate on God’s Word?**
It means to “mumble” it: to think about it, talk about it to yourself, and pray it.
7. **What would happen if Joshua obeyed God’s law?**
Joshua would have great success.
8. **What was Joshua’s courage supposed to be like?**
His courage was not self-confidence. His courage was supposed to be in the LORD: in His promises, in His presence, and in His Word.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

FOOTPRINTS

Choose one of the ideas below to illustrate Joshua 1:3—"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses."

Classroom Footprints:

Cut out large footprints from colorful paper and tape them around the room, on floors, and walls. Later, have each child choose a footprint to decorate with stickers or "land" decor such as grass, dirt, sticks, flowers. Then, have them glue on the Bible verse.

Hopping Path:

Place footprints around the floor, and have children hop or follow the footprints into the classroom, perhaps finding treasure or going to various tables or activities for the day.

CHOOSING THE NEXT LEADER

Play a group game that requires a leader, such as "Follow the Leader" or "Simon Says." Have one child be the leader and then choose the next leader by performing a small ceremony.



ILLUSTRATE

RIGHT, LEFT, OR STRAIGHT AHEAD

Begin by making sure that all children know the difference between their right and left hands. Read Joshua 1:7 out loud, and discuss how it describes not turning to the right or the left. Explain that this meant that Israel was not to do anything except what God had commanded them. They were not to turn to the right or left, going their own way. Use paper or tape to create a narrow path for the children to walk on. Tell them they must follow the path and not step off it. Then have another teacher tempt them to come off the path with a treat or some other incentive. Explain that when we go our own way and choose to disobey His instructions, we turn to the right or left.

TEACHER TRANSITION

Have one teacher start the lesson time by teaching about Moses. When it's time to transition to Joshua's leadership, have a different teacher come to teach the rest of the lesson. You also could discuss what happened and how, at other times, teachers or leaders have changed.



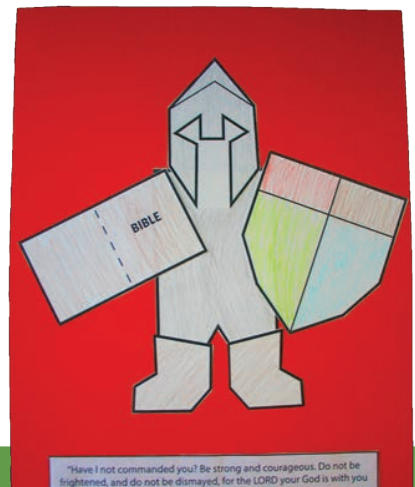
APPLY

DRESS-UP SOLDIER

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut soldier outfit pieces. Have children color the soldier outfit pieces and then glue the pieces to a sheet of cardstock. Talk about the Bible verse, and explain that God's soldier needs the Bible as his sword.



Dress-Up Soldier
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God calls Joshua to be His servant • Joshua 1:1–9



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

MEDAL OF HONOR DISCUSSION

Bring to class some war medals and explain what they are and why they are given. Better yet, invite a veteran to come in and talk about his medals. Talk about times when children have been strong and courageous for doing the right thing, obeying God.

COURAGEOUS

Ask the children what things make them afraid. What do they do when they are afraid? Who helps them to stop being afraid? There were lots of things that may have frightened Joshua. There were enemies without (Canaanites) and hardships within (leading the often stubborn and rebellious nation of Israel). Joshua may have even wondered at his own ability to carry out the massive job before him. But God promised to be with Him and told him how to have success. God's promises and presence removed fear and provided confidence and courage. If God is on our side, there is nothing we have to be afraid of.



ILLUSTRATE

CHEW ON IT

Have the children demonstrate how we can care for others by leading a blindfolded person around the room, taking care to protect him from tripping or injury. This will show the children how to show love to others and how they can "keep" their brother.

LIKE OUR SHADOW

God encouraged Joshua by promising to be with Him (Josh 1:5). No matter where Joshua went, He could be courageous because of the knowledge that God would always be with him. Our shadows help us to picture how God's presence will always be with us. We can never outrun or hide from our shadow and, even though there are times when we can't see our shadow, we can be certain that it is still with us.

The Call to Be a Servant
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



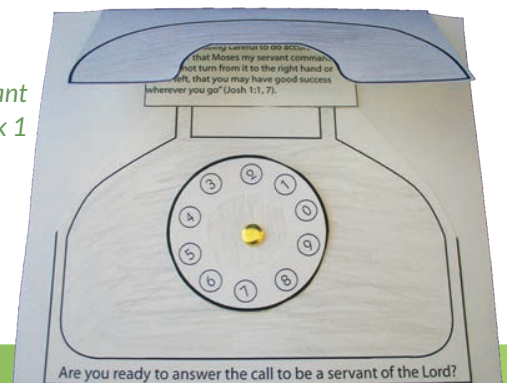
APPLY

THE CALL TO BE A SERVANT

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, glue, crayons, yarn, and brads.

Directions: Students should cut out the box with the phone base, phone dial, and verse from the second page and then glue the phone base to the back of the phone handset page. Then they should use a brad to attach the dial to the phone base. Have the students glue the verse at the top of the page. They should fold the handset down so that it rests on the phone base. Last, they should use yarn to attach the handset to the base, leaving enough room to open the flap.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

WHO'S STRONG AND COURAGEOUS?

Ask the children who they think is the strongest person and who is the most courageous person. Ask them why they think that person deserves to have that title. Explain that in today's Bible lesson, we are going to learn about a person who was "strong and courageous," but not because of his muscles or his bravery. He was courageous because of his confident trust in God's presence.

TRUE SUCCESS?

Ask the children what they need to do in order to have success in life. Tell them that in today's lesson, God tells Joshua what he must do in order to have success: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh. 1:8). According to this verse, what must we do in order to have success?



ILLUSTRATE

ALWAYS WITH YOU

When you were a baby, did you have something you liked to keep with you all the time? A blanket? A stuffed animal? A pacifier (binky)? Talk about a child you know that had to carry around his _____ everywhere he went. Explain that he did this because its presence him made him feel safe (even though this item did nothing to help him). But he couldn't bring it with him everywhere, and he eventual outgrew it. However, there is one person who is always with us—God. His presence gives us courage and provides us with real safety.

THE MISSION FIELD

Find out about a missionary from your church (or have one come to class). Discuss with the children how this individual has courageously served God by trusting in His promises and presence in hostile environments around the world. Explain that not all countries allow their people to practice any religion they choose and that the penalty for sharing the gospel can be death for those who do not obey their laws.



APPLY

JOSHUA'S RÉSUMÉ

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Lead the class in discovering how God had prepared Joshua to be leader of Israel by filling out the résumé worksheet. You may need to discuss the purpose of a résumé. Direct the children to look up the verses beneath each category and write notes about Joshua's life before he was called to be God's special servant to Israel.