

Back to School

—→ with God ←—



All-age Service Outline

For an explanation of the vision of **Back to School with God**, an explanation and overview of resources and things to consider before your service, see **BSG23 An Overview of Resources**.

The all-age service outline below can be adapted to your own church situation. Timings are approximate and will vary according to the activities selected. See **BSG23 Children's Prayer Activities & Crafts** for resources for children. These could be set up at the side for children to do during the service or used separately in Sunday Club (or whatever it is called in your church) or a midweek club.

BSG23 All-age Service PPT Slides accompany this outline. Numbers given below refer to slides in this downloadable slide set. Do check these before the service and remove the slides you don't need. If you wish to print off your service to whoever advances slides, remember to renumber them where necessary. **BSG23 Bible Passage** and **BSG23 Prayers for Schools** are also provided.

Section 1: Welcome & introduction

LEADER

2 mins

Welcome to our service today! This morning we want to take time to think about going **Back to School with God**. **PPT Slide 1** This is a big week for many of our congregation as they start a place of learning for the first time or as they return to education after the school holidays. It is a week for getting ready to step out into something new. So, as a church family, we want to focus today on our children and young people and those who work in our school communities. You are all very important to us and we want to stand with you in prayer.

There are lots of people in the Bible who stepped out into something new. One of them was Joshua, who followed Moses in leading the people of Israel. In Joshua 1:9 we hear how God spoke to him and reassured him. Here is what God said: **PPT Slide 2**

Joshua 1:9 (CEV) I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

What fantastic words! Let's come before God in prayer.

PRAYER

3 mins

Your own prayer of adoration and worship, or a responsive prayer as follows. Invite everyone to repeat the words in bold on the accompanying PPT slides.

PPT Slide 3 Lord God, how awesome you are! You flung the stars into space. You made the mountains and the sea, and you made us. Thank you

that you pour your love upon us. Thank you that you care for us as a Father loves his children. Thank you that you promise to be with us.

Lord God, we are really thankful.

PPT Slide 4 We thank you for the summer holidays. We thank you for time outdoors exploring your wonderful creation. We thank you for time spent with family and friends.

Lord God, we are really thankful.

PPT Slide 5 Forgive us when we forget to thank you. Forgive us when we ignore you and shut you out. We remember that friendship with you came at a cost, the cost of your giving Jesus, your one and only Son.

Lord God, we are really thankful.

PPT Slide 6 Thank you for Jesus, for his death and resurrection, and his victory over sin and death. Lord, we worship you. You are our God, and we are your children. Help us to listen to what you want to say to us today.

Amen.

Our God is always there to help us, wherever we go, if we choose to trust him. He is unchanging, down through the generations. He is the God who promised to be with Joshua and whose promises still stand today. As he was with Joshua, he is with us. Let's worship God together now.

PRAISE

5 mins

Choose your own hymn or song of praise or one of the suggestions below. YouTube links are provided, but please check your church's copyright license before you live stream videos.

[Great Things](#) ©2018 Phil Wickham

[Praise my soul, the King of Heaven](#) Traditional.

[The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not Want](#) ©1996 Thankyou Music

[King of Kings](#) ©2019 Hillsong Worship

[Open the eyes of my heart, Lord](#) ©2015 Paul Baloche

[Hosanna \(Praise is Rising\)](#) Benton Brown, ©2005 Thankyou Music

Section 2: Bible exploration

BIBLE

2 mins

*Invite a young person, student, or a teacher to read **Joshua 1:1-9 (CEV)**. Email them **BSG23 Bible Passage** prior to the service and make sure they can pronounce all the place names!*

PPT Slide 7 Moses, the LORD's servant, was dead. So the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had been the assistant of Moses.

PPT Slide 8 The LORD said: "My servant Moses is dead. Now you must lead Israel across the Jordan River into the land I'm giving all of you.

PPT Slide 9 Wherever you go, I'll give you that land, as I promised Moses. It will reach from the Southern Desert to the Lebanon Mountains in the north, and to the northeast as far as the great Euphrates River. It will include the land of the Hittites, and the land from here at the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

PPT Slide 10 Joshua, I will always be with you and help you as I helped Moses, and no one will ever be able to defeat you. Long ago I promised the ancestors of Israel that I would give this land to their descendants. So be strong and brave!

PPT Slide 11 Be careful to do everything my servant Moses taught you. Never stop reading the Book of the Law he gave you. Day and night you must think about what it says. If you obey it completely, you and Israel will be able to take this land.

PPT Slide 12 I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

CHAT

3 mins

The Bible passage we just read speaks of lots of different places. I wonder, what did you get up to in the summer holidays? Did you go somewhere you had never been before? Or try a new activity? Let's take a few moments to chat to our neighbour about what we have been doing these past weeks of summer. *Allow 3 minutes for this.*

TALK

18 mins

At this point you might like to invite all the children up to the front so that they can see and physically engage in what is happening. Alternatively, invite volunteers up as and when you need them. Prior to the service gather equipment for a hill walk, such as a backpack, a map, compass, walking boots, a walking pole, a water bottle, hat, gloves, snack, sun cream – or choose gear that is appropriate to an activity of your own choice. Hillwalking and Ben Nevis are referred to in the talk: change to a hill in your own country or a different activity, as long as the activity chosen involves stepping out and needing equipment.

Does anyone want to share what they got up to? *Listen to feedback.*

You have certainly had an exciting summer doing new things and going new places! I didn't actually try a new activity, but I am keen to climb Ben Nevis.

I have brought along some things I would need for the journey. Can anyone guess what they are? Would anyone like to hold my gear? *Pick a volunteer.*

(Encourage suggestions. As each item is named, hand it to your volunteer to hold or put inside the backpack. Don't panic if something is mentioned that you don't have: you could simply make a fuss of it being a great idea and something you would need to take in future. Likewise, if no guesses are made for the items

you have brought, give small clues to help the children name them. Once everything is mentioned take a step back and survey the volunteer.)

Wow! You are ready to step out on an adventure. You have everything you need to get going! *Encourage the volunteer to stay at the front wearing all the gear.*

I am now going to tell you about the man named Joshua that we heard about in our Bible reading. I need another volunteer to play Joshua. *Choose another child.*

Joshua was also getting ready to set out, much like our adventurer here (*motion towards hillwalking volunteer*). Yet he would soon discover that God's idea of getting ready to step out is very different from our own.

Until this point in the story Joshua had been learning from Moses, who was the leader of God's people the Israelites. But Moses had grown old and died. Now God was speaking to Joshua. He was telling him it was time to step out and lead God's people into the land he had promised to give them many years before. This is the point in the story we find Joshua now. *Stand behind the Joshua volunteer. He is listening to God.*

Let's pause for a moment. Like our hillwalker, let's think about what Joshua might need to lead his people through the desert and into the Promised Land. Any ideas? Remember, Joshua lived a very long time ago, so there were no cars and no Google maps or GPS!

(Encourage suggestions. If necessary, you could suggest things like a staff like Moses had, or a special tent where he could meet with God, or a horn to lead the people, or a weapon to lead the way into battle. Write suggestions on individual post-it notes and stick them to your 'Joshua'. You could involve children in writing or drawing on the post-it notes.)

These are all great suggestions! They make a lot of sense, as Joshua would want to be ready for his journey. Yet none of these are the things God wanted.

God's conversation with Joshua wasn't about getting ready in that kind of way; it wasn't about relying on his own strength, or even trusting in the things he might take with him. Instead, God told Joshua that he needed to be strong and brave – not by weapons (*remove a post-it*) not by all the things he might take with him (*remove a post-it*), not by his own cunning or cleverness (*remove a post-it*) – but simply by trusting in God (*remove remaining post-its*).

After all, it was God who had promised to lead his people to the Promised Land. It was God who had helped Moses in the past. It was God who had miraculously led his people through the Red Sea and through the desert. It was this same all-powerful God who would be with Joshua and help him now. He needed no one and nothing else.

Joshua had to realise that God is bigger than us. God is stronger than us. And nothing can stop God's plans. And the best bit for Joshua was that God spoke to him. God wasn't a far-away God, but very close. Because Joshua chose to trust God and follow him, he was able to step out into the unknown, knowing that God was right beside him, helping him all the way

No wonder Joshua could be strong and brave. And so can we! We can step out into an unknown place – somewhere like Ben Nevis, or somewhere like a new classroom or a new school – knowing the person going with us is Almighty God!

As we get ready to go back to nursery or school, whether we are a child, young person, or adult, we need to do more than just get our bags packed and our lunches made. We need to actively remind ourselves that we are going **back to school with God**. God is with us wherever we go. He says the same words to us today as he said to Joshua: **PPT Slide 13**

Joshua 1:9 (CEV) I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

This means if we choose to trust and follow God as Joshua did, even if we feel nervous about going to a new school, we go trusting that we are not alone, for God is with us. If we feel overwhelmed in class by a piece of work that is hard, we are not alone, the God who gives us peace is with us. If we are hurt by a friend, we are not alone, Jesus who was rejected by his friends understands us and will comfort us. We can be strong and brave, because the creator of all things is right beside us leading the way!

Let's remind ourselves of this by saying these words together:

Because God is with us, we can be strong and brave. PPT Slide 14

SONG

4 mins

Something for the children. There are lots to choose from!

[Be bold, be strong](#) ©1984 Morris Chapman

[Be strong and courageous](#) ©2004 Colin Buchanan

[Be strong and courageous](#) ©2022 Doug Horley & Mark Read

[God beside](#) ©2014 Fischy Music

[God is Bigger \(Awesome Cutlery\)](#) ©2015 Dan Adams

[Never be shaken](#) ©2009 Integrity Worship Music/Don Quixote Publishing

TESTIMONY

4 mins

Remember God's words to Joshua at the end of the passage we read earlier:

Joshua 1:9 (CEV) Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God and I will be there to help you wherever you go. PPT Slide 15

These words are as true for us today as they were for Joshua.

(At this point younger children could make a craft they can use later in the service. We suggest you write 'Be strong and brave' (or the memory verse) on a piece of card, provide pens and stickers to decorate it, then help them roll it up like a trumpet. Later on in the service they can use their trumpets and march around the church as everyone learns Joshua 1:9 as a memory verse.)

Choose one of the following options:

1. Turn to the person next to you and chat. **PPT Slide 16** Can you think of a time when you faced change at school or home or work - maybe a new baby, a new job, a house move? How did knowing God was with you help you be strong and brave?
2. Let's hear how God helped (*name of someone in your church family*) be strong and brave.

(Prior to the service think of someone who has come through a time of challenge in their life who would be willing to share a testimony. Suggestions are a young person (or parent) who had to cope with online learning during the pandemic; an older teenager who has a learning difficulty that made school challenging; someone who has had to move house and change school; a teacher who is looking for a permanent post. Ask them to share how God helped them be strong and brave.)

3. Let's watch a video testimony of a young person that God helped be strong and brave. Download and show **BSG23 Video Testimony**.

Section 3: Response

MEMORY VERSE

5 mins

It is good hear these stories of God in action, of God at work. They remind us that like Joshua, we can be strong and brave in our God today.

God told Joshua that *remembering God's words* would help him be strong and brave. Day and night Joshua was to think about God's words and remember them. We can do the same. For us, all of the Bible is God's word. It is there we find what he says.

We have been thinking about God's words in this service today as we have read Joshua 1:9. It is good to memorise these words, as remembering them when we are afraid or discouraged will help us to be strong and brave. They will remind us that God is right there with us.

(Teach the memory verse by repeating it several times. Or do it more imaginatively! Here is one suggestion: divide your congregation into four different sections. Allocate each section a different colour to read on the PPT slide. Each line of the verse is written in red, green, blue and purple. If your younger children made trumpets earlier in the service, invite them to march up and down and 'blow their trumpets' while the congregation say the verse.)

Let's learn this verse together. I will start by saying Joshua 1 verse 9. Just like a conductor in an orchestra, I will then point to each section in colour order. When I point to your section, stand up, say your part of the verse, and then sit down. Hopefully by the end we will remember the whole verse. Let's give it a go! We will try it a few times. The final time the words will disappear from the screen and we will say it from memory.

PPT Slide 17

Joshua 1:9 I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

PRAISE

5 mins

Choose a well-known hymn or a familiar song that fits in with the theme. Alternatively, invite your congregation to reflect as they watch a video. Some of the following songs are perhaps lesser-known and could provide an opportunity for people to listen and watch, asking for God's help to be strong and brave wherever they go this week.

[Courage](#) ©2018 Stuart Townend

[Desert Road](#) Casting Crowns

[God is for us](#), ©2018 City Alight

[He will keep you](#) ©2022 Sovereign Grace

[Never once \(God you are faithful\)](#) ©2011 Matt Redman

[You make me brave](#) ©2013 Bethel Music Publishing

PRAYERS

4 mins

1. Prayers for Schools

Prior to the service, invite different people to lead in prayer. We suggest a child, teenager, a student, and an adult (a parent, someone who works or volunteers in a school, or someone from the church family with a heart to pray for schools.) Download **BSG23 Prayers for Schools**, print it or email it to those taking part.

We are now going to pray for everyone who is involved in the return to education this week. I have invited several people to take part – if you can come up to the front now that would be great! After each one prays, we will repeat the words on the slide: **PPT Slide 18**

Because you are with us, we can be strong and brave!

Secondary pupil

Lord God, you said to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, I will be with you." Thank you that you are the God of all generations. I thank you for the example of people who have gone through times of change and have proved that you keep your promises. Thank you that you were with them and deepened their faith in you. I pray for those of us at school. I

pray that we will step out into a new school year trusting you to lead, guide and direct our paths. Help us wherever we go.

Because you are with us, we can be strong and brave!

Primary pupil

Lord God, you said to Joshua, “I have commanded you to be strong and brave.” When we go into a new classroom, when we have a new teacher, when we come across work that we haven’t done before, help us to remember these words. Thank you that we are never alone. You are with us, wherever we go.

Because you are with us, we can be strong and brave!

Student

Lord God, you said to Joshua, “Never stop reading The Book of the Law. Day and night you must think about what it says.” Thank you for the Bible. Thank you that the Bible can guide us, teach us, strengthen us, and give us hope for the future. It reveals who you are, uncovers your big story of salvation, and tells us how to live in a way that pleases you. Give us courage to obey everything it says, even when doing so might be hard and unpopular.

Because you are with us, we can be strong and brave!

Adult

Lord God, you said to Joshua, “Get ready to cross the Jordan River.” You gave him a task to do, and you had a plan. Thank you that you know the places we live and work and have a plan for our lives. You have placed people who love you in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities. You have given them a special job to do. Help them to do it well. May the love of Jesus be seen in them. Give them boldness and confidence in who you are. Remind them of your promises. May they be aware of your presence and listen to you. We ask your blessing on them and on all our children and young people in this new school year.

Because you are with us, we can be strong and brave!

All Together: Amen.

2. Memory Verse Prayer Cards

BSG23 Memory Verse cards can be downloaded and printed locally or be ordered for SU Scotland or SU Northern Ireland (see **BSG23 An Overview of Resources** for details.) Hand out the cards and invite everyone to write a prayer or message of encouragement on the reverse to give to a young person or someone who works in a school. They can hand this to the person at the end of the service or, if it is for someone not in church, give it to them

at some point during the week. Alternatively, the cards could be handed in to local schools.

3. Back to School Video and Unscripted Prayer

Show Go Chatter's [Back to School](#) video on the theme of Joshua 1:9. It costs £7.50 to buy to download. In it children share their anxieties and excitement.

Afterwards, and if numbers permit, you might like to invite all those going back to school or education this week to step forward. Ask them what they are nervous about, and what they are looking forward to. Pray into these things, and for a good start as they go **Back to school with God**.

As a further option, present young people and school staff with a copy of the [Little Book of Help](#) produced by Lifewords UK.

PRAISE

5 mins

Own choice, or one of the following:

[By faith](#) Stuart Townend, Keith & Kristyn Getty ©2009 Getty Music Publishing

[Forever](#) Chris Tomlin ©2001 sixsteps music

[He will hold me fast](#) ©2013 Getty Music Publishing

[In Christ Alone](#) ©2022 ThankYou Music

[Mighty to Save](#) (Everyone needs Compassion) ©2006 Hillsong Publishing

[Everlasting God](#) ©2005 ThankYou Music, Brenton Brown & Chris Tomlin

[Your Grace is Enough](#) ©2003 ThankYou Music