

# Back to School

—→ with God ←—



## Bible Study

For those wishing to explore Joshua 1:1-9 further with teenagers or adults in the week that follows the **Back to School with God** service. If young people aren't used to small group Bible study questions, you could pass an object around the circle. If someone wants to answer they can speak, if not they can pass it on.

### Introductory Activity: what did you do this summer?

In the **Back to School with God** service we thought about what we might need to prepare for doing something new.

- Did you get up to a new activity in the summer, or go somewhere you'd never been before?
- For those of you who tried a new activity, did you need any equipment or knowledge?
- How did you feel before you tried something new / how did you feel before going somewhere you hadn't been before?
- What about afterwards? Were you glad you tried it / went?
- Did you feel at any point that you were strong and brave?
- Was anyone aware of God's help at any point?
- Would you do it again?

### Prayer

*Lead in prayer.*

### Link

One character in the Bible was getting ready for a new challenge. Can you remember from the **Back to School with God** service who that was?

We are going to explore Joshua 1:1-9 a bit further.

### Bible

Invite someone to read Joshua 1:1-9 (CEV)

<sup>1</sup>Moses, the Lord's servant, was dead. So the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had been the assistant of Moses.

<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Wherever you go, I'll give you that land, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Joshua, I will

always be with you and help you as I helped Moses, and no one will ever be able to defeat you.

<sup>6-8</sup>Long ago I promised the ancestors of Israel that I would give this land to their descendants. So be strong and brave! 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.

<sup>9</sup>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."

## Background

This passage continues the telling of Israel's history, immediately after the death of Moses, God's servant. God's people had been on a very long journey, one that lasted 40 years. God had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt (called the Exodus), crossing the Red Sea and through the wilderness. They had been journeying towards the 'Promised Land' – the land God had promised Abraham for his people. *If you have a Bible timeline you could show this visually.*

God wanted to provide his people a special place called 'The Promised Land', an area that represents God's compassion and concern for his people. This wasn't just a physical place; it was to be an area where the people could thrive and live in peace. Though the land was a gift, it required taking care of the land and a commitment to care for each other. When we talk about the Promised Land, we are discussing something much more important than a location on a map.

Moses had been in charge, with Joshua as his second-in-command. Joshua was an excellent army leader as well as Moses' helper. He had accompanied Moses when God gave the 10 commandments (Exodus 24:12-14). When 12 spies were sent to scout out the Promised Land, only Joshua and a man called Caleb were brave enough to say the land could be taken. That says a lot about his character. Only Joshua and Caleb would make it into the Promised Land. All the other people who left Egypt in the exodus would not see the new land they were supposed to go to (Numbers 28-30 and 14:38). They were now almost at the Promised Land – but not quite!

Joshua had been lined up to be Moses' successor, but the formal commission from God came only as Moses' life came to an end (Numbers 27:15-23; Deuteronomy 31:14-15 and 23).

- How old do you think Joshua would have been at this point in Joshua 1? *Take some guesses.* He would have been around 80 years old! He now faced a new challenge.

## Bible Study

*Choose from the following questions.*

1. **In Joshua 1:1 we read Moses had died. What kind of challenges would that have presented to Joshua?**

*The responsibility of leadership, of following in Moses' footsteps, of being God's representative to the people of Israel, of being an example to the people, of listening to God and following him closely. The people of Israel had been troublesome for Moses and the journey so far had been arduous – he was faced with a big task ahead.*

2. **Given what we know of Joshua, how might he have felt? Do you think he would have been raring to go, or a bit hesitant? Try and back up your answer from the Bible!**

*We don't know how Joshua would have felt, as the Bible doesn't tell us! However, we know he had experienced hardship in the desert, he was a warrior and a strong leader. He had shown courage in saying*

*the land could be taken when others doubted; this showed strength of character. He wasn't someone who followed the crowd. He had also been prepared for the task by Moses before he died.*

**3. Read Joshua 2:2-4. What was God telling Joshua to do in these verses? What would have been the practical challenges of doing what God said?**

*God was telling him to take the land. This is a big geographical area! You could show a map. There were no planes, no drones to scout the land, just a hard slog on foot. The territory was widespread. Help the group think of other stories they know of Joshua from the chapters that follow Joshua 1: Rahab and the spies, the Battle of Jericho. The road ahead was paved with danger, opposition, battles, struggle.*

**4. What promises does God give Joshua in verses 1-9? What instructions does he give him?**

*Promises: v3, v5, v9; Instructions: v2, v6-9. You could involve the whole group, or divide into two and ask one half to find the promises and the other the instructions. Or, you may prefer one of the following creative options.*

- a. Group people in twos or threes, give them an A4 or an A3 sheet of blank paper. Ask them to draw a line either horizontally or vertically. On one half, write down the promises God gave Joshua. On the other half write the instructions he was given.*
- b. Hand out a printed copy of Joshua 1:1-9 (CEV). Hand out highlighters and invite individuals or small groups of 2-3 to highlight the promises in one colour and the instructions in another colour.*

**5. Do you think these promises and instructions were for all God's people, or only for Joshua?**

*Verse 2 says, "you must lead Israel across the Jordan River to the land I'm giving all of you." All Israel escaped from Egypt by faith and by trust in God's grace. All Israel would cross the Jordan in the same way, by faith in God's deliverance. We are part of the promise given to Abraham, the 'father of many nations'. We too, by faith in God's deliverance, can go forward trusting in his promises.*

**6. God commands Joshua to be strong and brave, never to be afraid or discouraged. How could Joshua follow this instruction to be strong and brave in the hard situations that lay ahead?**

*Young people in particular may talk about determination and finding strength within themselves, as this is the societal norm. Focus on God, not self. Joshua could be strong and brave in any situation because he knew God's character: the Bible shows us that God is loving, merciful and just. He is also holy and righteous, which means he is wholly good and pure. God's character is revealed in the bible through his actions and his interactions with people. God's love for humanity is demonstrated through his willingness to forgive people when they turn from their ways to God's ways (Exodus 34:6-7, Deuteronomy 32:4, Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 103:12).*

*Joshua had a personal relationship with God and knew God's previous faithfulness had been demonstrated time and again and retold throughout Israel's history, Joshua trusted in God's word passed down to him. Joshua was sure that God saying 'I am with you' was enough assurance to be successful (Psalm 3:5-6).*

**7. What does this passage reveal about God's nature and character? Let's go through it verse by verse!**

*(v1) He is personable and speaks to people directly; (v2) He raises up leaders; (v2-3) He directs his people; (v2-5) He is powerful as he is able to defeat his enemies; (v3-4) He has a plan for the future; (v5) He will protect his people and help them; (v5) He is ever-present; (v6) He keeps his promises; (v7) He wants his instructions to be followed carefully; (v8) He rewards obedience; (v9) He wants us to trust him – and he can be utterly trusted as he led his people, as he said here, to the Promised Land.*

**8. Adult group: (for youth groups, you may wish to share the following as direct teaching). Joshua's name means 'God is salvation'. The Greek name Jesus simply translates the Hebrew name Joshua. What parallels can you see between Joshua and Jesus?**

*Joshua willingly and obediently took up his God-given role as a deliverer/saviour appointed by God.*

*Moses was the great lawgiver, of a Law which, although good and holy, could never provide justification. Though it did point to Christ, the Law itself could not take away sin (cf 2 Corinthians 3:7, Romans 7:7, Romans 8:3-4, Galatians 3:19-22). Therefore, the Israelites needed a new leader to take over from Moses and receive new orders from God to move into their Promised Land.*

*Entry to the Promised Land and Israel's redemption from the wilderness was through the leadership of Joshua and his acting in the power of God. Joshua and Jesus are representatives of God to his people; Joshua and Jesus lead the way, save the people, give direction and bring people to a new land.*

*The people of Israel needed to trust Joshua in order to take the land; we need to trust in Jesus in order to enter into salvation. A whole generation died in the wilderness, including Moses. We need to make sure we have entered into 'the Promised Land', not relying on rules or religion (as in the wilderness) but having personal faith in Christ and hearts willing to obey the Lord. Our salvation and inheritance from God is received through the powerful, redemptive work of Jesus Christ.*

**9. What does this passage tell us about ourselves? How do we stop ourselves being afraid or discouraged, as God instructs in verse 9?**

*We need reminding of our need to look to God and not trust in our own abilities and strength. God is faithful and keeps his promises but there are things we need to do on our part to stop ourselves becoming afraid and discouraged – including spending time with God, reading God's word, listening for his voice, being prayerful, thinking of times God has helped us in the past, sharing with others what God has done. As we did in the **Back to School with God** service, we need to commit his word to memory so that it can help us when we need it.*

**10. God said a lot to Joshua. What phrase or verse stands out to you from the passage as you think about your own life, and why?**

**11. In verse 9 Joshua is commanded not to be afraid, but to trust in God. Have you known God's help to be strong and brave? Can you think of a time when God helped you to be particularly courageous?**

*Either stay as a big group or invite people to share in twos or threes a time when they needed God's help to be strong and brave.*

*For a youth group another option would be to invite along an older member of the congregation. Often young people don't know older people in church or get an opportunity to hear their story. Hearing a testimony of God helping someone be strong and brave through a difficult period in their life would be very powerful. They could tell their story or else young people could interview them, asking questions such as:*

- a. Tell us about your youth and your time at school? Was it easy or hard?*
- b. What kinds of challenges have you faced in your life?*
- c. How did God help you through these hard times?*
- d. Were you ever tempted to give up or take a wrong turning?*
- e. What advice would you give us today? Are there any Bible verses that have helped you be strong and brave in the Lord? (encourage the older person to point to God's utter faithfulness in keeping his promises, and that we need to do our bit too – putting our trust in him, doing what the Bible says, reading it so we know what his promises are).*
- f. Can you pray for us?*

**12. We learned Joshua 1:9 as a memory verse. Can you remember it?**

*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.*

**13. Youth Group: Read Joshua 1:9. Either a) rewrite it in your own words b) make it into a banner or a poster b) turn it into a rap c) set the words to a song tune you know well.**

*Allow time for this then invite each group to present what they have prepared. After they have done this, encourage them to see that they could now share that verse with others. They may come across someone who is struggling. How fantastic to be able to share a verse like that that would point them to God and bring them hope!*

**Adult Group:** Joshua was the assistant of Moses. God tells Joshua in verse 7 to follow Moses' example, to follow the law given by Moses. Read Psalm 78:1-8. How can we model faith to the younger generation in a positive way that brings glory to God?

## Prayer

**Youth Group:** If you don't already know, check what school year everyone is going into and what challenges lie ahead for them this year. You might suggest categories such as new subjects, new teachers, exams, guidance for the future, friendship groups, responsibilities (some may be putting themselves forward for election as prefects or house captains or leading an SU Group). Pray for each individual by name.

We suggest the following prayers which could be said by one or two group members:

- Dear God, as we look to the new school year with all our worries and excitement, we come to you seeking courage and strength, just as Joshua did when he faced new challenges. Help us to have confidence that you are always with us, just as you were with Joshua. Remind us that we too can be brave and strong because you are our source of strength and that you have a purpose for our lives. Amen.
- Jesus, help us to rely on you when we feel overwhelmed or afraid. Teach us to trust in you. We know you are faithful and will never leave us or abandon us. In your name we pray, Amen.
- Lord, give us wisdom and understanding as we navigate friendships, new classes, joys, and challenges. Please guide us in making choices that will honour you. Give us the boldness to stand for what is true and to be salt and light in our school, helping us to reflect your love to others. Amen.
- As we face unknown territory in this new school year, we surrender our fears and worries to you. Fill us with your peace that passes all understanding. Help us to remember that in your strength, we can do all things. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Adult Group:** Pray for the children/grandchildren of members and your church children and young people; for your local school; for members of the congregation who work or volunteer in a school.