

Joshua's Fresh Start

(Joshua 8)

Pre-Session Warm Up

What do you think it means to be faithful? (Be loyal and trustworthy. Keep promises.) Sometimes it's not easy to keep our promises!

Play a game of Hot Potato. Students pass object around circle as you play music. After a few moments, stop the music. Student with the object in his hand names a person who keeps his promises; then student describes a situation in which that person kept a promise. Repeat several times, asking students to name people and describe situations that fit these categories:

1. People who like you no matter what happens
2. People who listen when you need to talk
3. People who show up at the promised time
4. People who tell the truth

We've been describing the characteristics of faithful people – people who keep their promises and are trustworthy. Sometimes, even the most faithful people can't keep their promises, like when your parents pick you up late because of traffic or when your friend can't meet you at the park because his family had to do something else. But listen today to find out why people say God is faithful ALL the time.

Opening Prayer

Father, today we are going to learn that You are a faithful God. Help us to listen so that we might want to be more like You – faithful in all we think or do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

The LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant... (Deuteronomy 7:9 NLT)

Lesson

The Israelites were in the Promised Land! They had obeyed God and crossed the Jordan River. Then the Israelites defeated the city of Jericho with God's amazing help. But there was a problem. After the battle at Jericho, what happened that caused trouble for the Israelites? [Teacher, briefly review Lesson 9.] Because of Achan's sin, the Israelites had been defeated by the men of Ai. The Israelites had to run for their lives! The men of Ai chased the Israelites and killed some of them in the battle! Achan saw what happened and probably knew that his sin was causing the problem, but he didn't admit what he had done. Achan's sin caused trouble for all the Israelites and they must have wondered if God still loved them and would keep His promise to never leave them.

But Achan finally confessed his sin; and God reassured the children of Israel that He was still with them and would now give them victory!

Joshua 8:1

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take all your fighting men and attack Ai, for I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his town, and his land."

God promised Joshua that He would help them and that they would not lose this battle! Joshua must have been very encouraged to know that God always keeps His promises!

Then God told Joshua exactly how to defeat Ai. And, Joshua and the whole Israelite army got ready to obey God's instructions for the battle.

Joshua told some of the men to sneak around behind the city and hide.

Joshua 8:3-5

So Joshua and all the fighting men set out to attack Ai. Joshua chose 30,000 of his best warriors and sent them out at night with these orders: "Hide in ambush close behind the town and be ready for action. When our main army attacks, the men of Ai will come out to fight as they did before, and we will run away from them."

Joshua split the Israelite army in half. He told one group to sneak around the back of the city and wait. Then he told the other half to march with him towards the front of the city. Then, when the men of Ai came out to fight, they would turn and run from them.

Joshua 8:6-7

We will let them chase us until we have drawn them away from the town. For they will say, 'The Israelites are running away from us as they did before.' Then, while we are running from them, you will jump up from your ambush and take possession of the town, for the LORD your God will give it to you.

The soldiers did exactly as Joshua said. Some hid behind the city. All the others marched up to Ai so all the people of Ai could see them.

Joshua 8:14-15

When the king of Ai saw the Israelites across the valley, he and all his army hurried out early in the morning and attacked the Israelites at a place overlooking the Jordan Valley. But he didn't realize there was an ambush behind the town. Joshua and the Israelite army fled toward the wilderness as though they were badly beaten.

Early in the morning the soldiers from Ai streamed out of the city to attack the Israelites, just like they had done before. Then the Israelites began to run away, just like the last time. More and more men from Ai began to chase the Israelites, until all the men of Ai were in on the chase. They were in such a hurry that they left the city gates wide open!

Joshua signaled the men who were hiding on the other side of Ai.

Joshua 8:18-19

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Point the spear in your hand toward Ai, for I will hand the town over to you." Joshua did as he was commanded. As soon as Joshua gave this signal, all the men in ambush jumped up from their position and poured into the town. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.

The Israelites soldiers behind the city saw the javelin and put Joshua's plan into action. They quickly entered the city and set it on fire!

Joshua 8:20

When the men of Ai looked behind them, smoke from the town was filling the sky, and they had nowhere to go. For the Israelites who had fled in the direction of the wilderness now turned on their pursuers.

When the men from Ai looked back and saw the rising smoke, they knew they had been beaten. Soon the battle was over and the city of Ai belonged to the Israelites – just as God had promised them!

The first time the Israelites tried to conquer Ai Joshua didn't know that there was sin in their camp; he didn't seek God before going into battle! As a consequence, God allowed them to be defeated by their enemies. Then Joshua dealt with Achan's sin and then asked God for His battle plans. As a consequence, God blessed Joshua and gave him victory over Ai.

Sometimes people do things so bad and so wrong they think God will stop loving them. But the good news about God is that He is faithful to always love us – even when we disobey. He shows His love by forgiving us when we confess or admit our sin to Him. Then He shows His love by helping us make a new start and follow Him again. God never gives up on us!

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness. You are such a wonderful, loving God! I pray that You will help us to always be faithful, too. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Make posters that say, "God Keeps His Promises."

Game Center

Promise Seekers

Play a game similar to Marco Polo, as follows:

1. Choose and blindfold a child to be "It."
2. At your signal, have other children walk around the room.
3. "It" calls out "God is faithful to..." and the children respond by saying their names. "It" follows the voices to try to tag someone.
4. When "It" tags someone, the child tagged must:
 - Answer one of the discussion questions
 - Read the Memory Verse aloud
 - Describe a situation in which we need to trust in God's faithfulness

[Teacher, choose which one you want the class to do.]

5. The child who was tagged then becomes "It" and continues the game.

Or, use the following review questions in a discussion or a game of your choice.

1. How did God show His love and faithfulness to the Israelites in our story today? How did they show that they trusted God?
2. God is faithful to keep His promises. What are some promises God has made? (To love us. To forgive our sins when we ask. To answer our prayers. To do what is best.)
3. How does God show His love and faithfulness to children your age? (He answers their prayers. He forgives them. He helps them start obeying Him again when they have done wrong things. He helps them remember Bible verses. He gives them parents and other adults to help them.)
4. When might a child your age need to trust God's faithfulness? (When he or she feels afraid. When he or she does something wrong and asks for forgiveness. When family members fight.)
5. When have you trusted in God's faithfulness? What happened as a result?
6. How can you remember to trust in God's faithfulness when you are at school? At home? With friends? (Write reminders in your notebook. Ask your parents to tell of a time they trusted in God's faithfulness. Talk to friends about how God has helped you.)

Sword Drills

1. Read **Deuteronomy 7:9**. What does this verse tell us about God? What has God done to show that He is faithful? (Loves people in all situations. Sent Jesus so that our sins could be forgiven.)

2. Read **Psalm 145: 17-18**. What promises about God are found in these verses?
3. Read **Jonah 4:2**. How does Jonah describe God? What does it mean to be "slow to anger and abounding in love"?
4. Read **Romans 8:38-39**. What is the main idea of these verses? Look at the list of things that can't separate you from God's love! Which of these are you most glad about?
8. When did the men of Ai know they had been beaten? (When they looked back and saw the rising smoke of their city.)
9. What happened to Joshua when he didn't go to God to ask Him for the battle plans? (He lost the battle.)
10. When we sin against God and disobey Him, how can we get His forgiveness? (Confess your sins and ask Him to forgive you.)

Additional Review Questions

1. Why was Israel not able to defeat Ai the first time they attacked? (Achan had disobeyed God and took treasures for himself)
2. What was the battle plan for taking Ai?
 - Hide behind the city
 - Wait to ambush them
 - They must be ready at all times
 - Joshua and all of the people will come at Ai from the front
 - Joshua and all of the people will run away from the men of Ai when they come out to attack. They will draw them from the city.
3. What were they hoping that the men of Ai would think? (That Israel was fleeing from them like they did the last time.)
4. How many men did Joshua take into battle this time? (All of his fighting men, 30,000.)
5. Why could Joshua fight Ai with confidence? (God told him that He has delivered the city into his hands)
6. What is an ambush? (A surprise attack)
7. How did Joshua signal the men who were hiding on the other side of Ai? (He raised his spear.)