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## Forward

Welcome to a journey with Joshua — Israel's victorious leader! Your students will learn that they can have courage even when they feel afraid or face hard situations; that trusting in God means they must obey His Word and depend on Him to help them do what is right and good; and that having faith that pleases and honors God means believing what God says and acting on it.

I have designed these lessons to enable you to teach the Bible expositively. The idea is to have the kids read the passages in their own Bibles and the teacher explain the scriptures and give good practical applications that are age-appropriate. My goal is to ensure that children learn that God's Word is exciting and meaningful and that teachers teach sound doctrine!

Even though I've scripted the lessons, I don't expect teachers to read my lesson materials verbatim to the children as they teach. My lessons are meant to provide the details you need to get background information and some suggestions for child-oriented personal application. Once you know and understand the Bible lessons for yourself, you'll be ready to teach your class.

The two-column layout of this book is designed so that you can copy and cut the pages in half to fit into your Bible. When the children observe that you are teaching right out of the Bible, rather than from a

curriculum book, it validates God's Word and gives your teaching more authority.

You will discover that there is not always a Craft or Game idea suggested in each lesson. When I've had a good idea that really seems to support the lesson objectives, I've included it. But I have another handbook called *Tips and Tricks — Making Children's Bible Lessons Come to Life* that gives lots of suggestions for activities that will help reinforce your lesson and teach the memory verse. (This is available from my website:

<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/>)

Use the Teaching Schedule to help you organize your teaching rotation.

I pray that you will use these lessons for God's glory by teaching the Bible as an entire plan by a systematic and connected study of the Word.

*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:14)*

*Sheila Scroggins*

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## Teaching Schedule

Date	Teacher	Lesson	Memory Verse
		Joshua In Training (Exodus 17:8-16)	<i>Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. (Proverbs 19:20 NLT)</i>
		Two Trusting Spies (Numbers 13 – 14:35)	<i>Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. (Deuteronomy 13:4 NLT)</i>
		No Fear for Joshua (Numbers 27:15-23; Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 34:1-12)	<i>Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified...for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV)</i>
		Joshua Gets Ready to Lead (Joshua 1)	<i>Teach me your decrees, O LORD; I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. (Psalms 119:33-34 NLT)</i>
		Rahab Believes in God (Joshua 2)	<i>Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the LORD made the heavens! (Psalms 96:2-3 NLT)</i>
		Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3)	It is impossible to please God without faith. (Hebrews 11:6a NLT)
		Twelve Stones from the River (Joshua 4)	<i>Remember the wonders he has performed, his miracles, and the rulings he has given. (1 Chronicles 16:12 NLT)</i>
		Jericho Falls (Joshua 6)	<i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)</i>
		Achan's Sin (Joshua 6:18, 19; 7)	<i>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NLT)</i>
		Joshua's Fresh Start (Joshua 8)	<i>... The LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant... (Deuteronomy 7:9 NLT)</i>
		Joshua's Rash Decision (Joshua 9)	<i>I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray. (Psalm 17:6 NLT)</i>
		Joshua Fights for Gibeon (Joshua 10:1-15)	<i>Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. (Romans 12:17 NLT)</i>
		Joshua's Final Choice (Joshua 23 – 24)	<i>Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve....But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15 NKJ)</i>



# Joshua in Training

(Exodus 17:8-16)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

### *Scroll Scramble*

[Teacher, cut out the back of a brown paper bag and print the word, *ADVICE*, in large letters on the piece. Crumple the paper to make it look old and worn out. Then tear it into puzzle pieces and hide them around the room before the children arrive.]

Many people like to travel to Bible lands because they want to see where the stories in the Bible actually took place. Scientists, called *archaeologists*, work at dig sites in Bible lands to discover clues about the people and the places in the Bible.

People in Bible times used to write on animal skins or a kind of paper called papyrus which is made from the reeds found in rivers. They would make long pieces that they rolled up into scrolls. Archaeologists look for these ancient scrolls. When they find them, they read what people wrote and it helps them understand the history of the people.

Often these scrolls are damaged or have fallen to pieces. Archaeologists sort the pieces and try to put them together, so they can read them. It's like assembling really hard puzzles!

[Teacher, have the children find the pieces of the "ancient scroll" you have prepared and work together to discover the word "advice."]

The word, *ADVICE*, is from Proverbs 19:20. Find this verse in your bibles. What Does Proverbs 19:20 say will happen if you listen to advice and accept instruction? (You will be wise.) Who would you ask for advice from about making new friends or about doing a hard math problem? Why would you ask this person?

Today we'll talk about people we can ask good advice from – people God gives to help us learn to love and obey Him.

## Opening Prayer

Lord, thank You for putting people into our lives that teach us about You and who encourage us to follow hard after You. I pray that You will always give us the ability to know whether we've been given good advice or bad advice. Open the eyes of our understanding today; help us to be alert so that we may trust and obey You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. (Proverbs 19:20)*

## Lesson

Today we begin a journey back in time. Over the next 12 weeks, we're going to learn about a famous leader named Joshua and the places he lived. Can you find Exodus 17 in your Bibles?

### *Get the context of Joshua's story*

The Israelites had lived in the country of Egypt for hundreds of years. Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, made them work very hard as slaves. But the Israelite people wanted to be free! God chose Moses, one of the Israelites, to lead the people out of Egypt to the land God had promised to them. God did many amazing miracles to help the Israelites escape from Egypt.

Moses led this entire nation of people through the desert toward the land God had promised. It was a big job to lead thousands of people along with their sheep, goats, donkeys and cattle across the hot, dry desert! During this time, Moses chose a young man named Joshua to be his assistant. Joshua worked hard and did everything Moses told him to do.

Now, the Israelites weren't the only people in the desert. The Amalekite people lived in the desert near Rephidim (Rehf-uhd-ihm). And they were angry to see thousands and thousands of people and

animals crossing through their land! The Amalekites wanted to chase the Israelite people away!

Exodus 17:8

*While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them.*

Amalekite raiders attacked the Israelites. Moses turned to his assistant, Joshua and said...

Exodus 17:9

*Moses commanded Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand."*

Moses told Joshua to gather up some men and go out and fight the Amalekites. Joshua must have felt a little afraid of going into battle. He may not have had any experience fighting in battles. He was brought up as a slave in Egypt. He must have been glad to know that Moses would be up on the hill holding up the rod of God.

Moses' rod would remind Joshua of the power of God. You see, Moses used his rod many times when he was trying to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. [Teacher, recite some of the incidences such as when he threw the rod down on the ground and it became a snake, then picked it up again and it became a rod again. Or, the time he touched the Red Sea with it and the sea parted so they could escape Egypt.] Seeing Moses on the hill holding up the rod of God would help Joshua remember the power of God.

Exodus 17:10

*So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill.*

Moses was a great and powerful leader, but he knew that they would only win with God's help, so as Joshua led the Israelite army into

battle, Moses stood on the hill watching and praying for Joshua and the others. Do you think that it was hard for Moses to hold up the rod of God as Joshua and the men fought the Amalekites? [Teacher, have the children see how long they can keep their hands raised over their heads.] When it began to look as if the Israelite army was about to win, Moses began to relax. But, what happened when Moses lowered his rod?

Exodus 17:11

*As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage.*

When he saw that the Israelites were starting to lose the battle, Moses quickly raised his hands again. Moses didn't dare put his rod down again! His arms must have started aching as the battle went on for hours!

But, Moses hadn't come to the hill alone. He had brought his brother, Aaron, and Hur, his sister's husband. Aaron and Hur saw what was happening. They knew that Moses couldn't hold up his hands in prayer to God hour after hour by himself. So they decided to help Moses.

Exodus 17:12

*Moses' arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset.*

It wasn't easy for Aaron and Hur to hold up Moses' arms. Their arms must have ached after a while, too. But it was very important work—God put the outcome of the battle in Moses' hands!

As the sun was going down, finally the battle was won!

## Exodus 17:13

*As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.*

Then what did God tell Moses to do next?

## Exodus 17:14

*After the victory, the LORD instructed Moses, "Write this down on a scroll as a permanent reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven."*

God wanted Joshua to remember the powerful way He had helped His people win the battle with the Amalekites. So, He had Moses write it down on a scroll.

Then Moses built an altar to celebrate the victory God had given them.

## Exodus 17:15

*Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means "the LORD is my banner").*

Joshua would never forget the way God helped him in this battle. The scroll and the altar would be there to remind Joshua and everyone else how powerfully God had answered their prayers!

He had learned from Moses' example to love and obey God.

One of the ways God cares for us is by putting people in our lives who help us learn to love and obey God and who pray for us. Joshua learned about God from Moses. Do you have a friend who helps you know God better? Is there someone you know that encourages you to love and obey God? Loving and obeying God is something we all need to keep on learning!

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the people that you have put into our lives that teach us about You and who encourage us to love and obey You. I pray that You would help us to be good examples to our friends and to the others in our families. Help us to encourage others to remain faithful and true to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

#### Make Scrolls

Cut pieces of brown paper bags. Have the children write today's Memory Verse on it. As they work, ask them these discussion questions:

1. What does Proverbs 19:20 say will happen if you listen to advice and accept instructions? (You will be wise.)
2. Who are some people who give advice or instructions to kids your age? (Parents, teachers, friends, people on television.)
3. How do you decide whether the advice you're getting is good or bad? (Pray and ask God whether or not it makes sense. Then, ask someone you trust for their opinion.)
4. When has someone given you some advice or instructions that helped you learn more about God? What did that person say?
5. Have you ever gotten bad advice? How did you know it wasn't good advice?

When the children have the verse written out, have them crumble them up to make them look old. Then have them roll up their scrolls to take home.

**Game Center**

Use the following discussion questions to help reinforce the lesson objectives:

1. How did Joshua listen to advice and accept instructions? (He did what Moses asked him to do in the battle against the Amalekites; he listened to instructions and obeyed and he saw the power of God!)
2. What did Moses do to help Joshua remember the power of God? (Prayed. Wrote down what God did so that no one would forget. Built an altar as a reminder of God's power.)
3. When have you seen someone show that he or she loved and obeyed God? What did this person do? How could you show that you love God at home? At school?
4. Who helps you love and obey God?
5. What have your parents said or done that has helped you learn about God? How can you learn about God from your friends? From others?
6. What can make it hard for a kid your age to learn about God? (Friends don't want to learn. Too busy to read Bible.) What can other people do to help kids your age learn about God?

**Sword Drills**

1. Read **1 Samuel 3:1-10**. What advice did Eli give Samuel? What leader has helped you hear God's voice by helping you read and understand God's Word?
2. Read **Luke 11:1-4**. What did Jesus teach His disciples to do? What have you learned about prayer? Who taught you?

3. Read **1 Thessalonians 5:12-18**. Paul wrote these words to the people at the church in Thessalonica. What did Paul tell them to do? What can you do to obey these verses and show love to God?



# Two Trusting Spies

(Numbers 13 – 14:35)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever known people who were fearful? How do they act? [Teacher, let the children share their ideas.] Do you ever get fearful about things? Why do you think people get fearful? Usually people get scared because they forget that God has promised to be with them. They don't trust His promise to never leave them.

Moses was the leader of a group of very fearful people. Let's find out what happened when God refused to put up with their lack of trust anymore!

## Opening Prayer

Father, You when we do not trust You. I pray that you would make each one of us attentive to the lesson You have for us today so that we might learn to love and trust You more. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. (Deuteronomy 13:4)*

## Lesson

Today we are going to learn about some men who were assigned to go on a spy mission! Listen to discover what they found.

Find Numbers 13 in your Bibles.

After about two years of walking in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, God told Moses to send some men into the Promised Land on a spy mission.

Numbers 13:1-2

*The LORD now said to Moses, "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes."*

Moses carefully chose 12 men, one from each tribe (group of families), and gave them very clear instructions to go into the Promised Land and see what it is like.

Numbers 13:18-20

*See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps?*

These 12 men must have been very excited about this mission! They were going to be the first to see the wonderful country God promised to give them!!

For over a month, the people waited for the 12 spies to return. Mothers and children must have wondered when their husbands and fathers would come back. After all, this was an exploration into unknown territory. They all wanted to know what the Promised Land was like. Were God's promises true? Was the land really as wonderful as He had promised? Would they be able to take over the land?

The men finally returned 40 days after they had left. And they were bursting with news! Everyone gathered to hear their report and to see the great fruit the spies had found in the land.

Numbers 13:27

*This was their report to Moses: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces."*

They brought back a bunch of grapes so big it took two men to carry it back! (See verse 23)

But not all the news the spies brought back was good news!

## Numbers 13:28

*But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!*

The spies reported that the people who live there are fierce and powerful. The cities are huge, with high walls built around them! And, worst of all was the fact that there were giants in the land!

But, Caleb and Joshua tried to reassure the people by reminding them that God had prepared a wonderful place for them to live, but to claim it for themselves they would have to trust God.

## Numbers 13:30

*But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"*

Caleb and Joshua had seen the same fierce people and walled cities, but they remembered that God said the Promised Land was theirs! And, they trusted and believed God!

The other 10 spies didn't agree.

## Numbers 13:31

*But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"*

Soon all the children of Israel were scared and they began to murmur and complain.

## Numbers 14:1-4

*Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"*

The people were really afraid. God's promises didn't seem real to them now. Can you imagine? They wanted to go back to Egypt where they had been slaves under the rule of the Pharaoh!

But, Caleb and Joshua tried to encourage the people.

## Numbers 14:7-9

*They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"*

Nobody was convinced. In fact, they wanted to kill Caleb and Joshua, see verse 10! Moses was heartbroken at the sinful, fearful way the people had acted. God had done miracles every day for these people. He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt by parting the Red Sea. He had miraculously fed them and given them water! He'd promised over and over that He would give them this land. All they had to do was obey Him. And now they didn't believe anything God had promised!

Moses pleaded to God to forgive the people this awful sin of unbelief,

## Numbers 14:19

*In keeping with your magnificent, unfailing love, please pardon the sins of this people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt."*

Moses asked God to be merciful to these people.

## Numbers 14:20

*Then the LORD said, "I will pardon them as you have requested.*

God would forgive them! But because the people didn't believe, God said the people would have to wait to go into the Promised Land for 40 more years until the adults who had complained had all grown old and died out there in the desert.

## Numbers 14:23

*They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it.*

Only their children would be the ones to go into the Promised Land.

## Numbers 14:29

*You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die.*

The Israelites were so close to enjoying all that God had for them, but now, because of their stubborn unbelief, many more years of suffering and death awaited them. If only they had submitted to God and trusted Him instead of depending on their own understanding.

But what about Caleb and Joshua? God said, “Because Caleb and Joshua have obeyed me without doubting, I will bring them into the new land.”

## Numbers 14:30

*You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.*

Caleb and Joshua didn't follow the crowd, even when they were threatened with death. They believed God! And 40 years later, Joshua led the Israelites into the land God had given them. He and Caleb knew God keeps His promises!

The unbelief of Israel turned them away from God and from the wonderful place He had prepared for them. There is a far more wonderful place which God has prepared for you to live in someday. It is called heaven. To get there, we must put our trust in God.

It might seem easy to say at church that we trust God and will obey Him. But when our friends think that we are silly to believe in God or want us to do things we know God would not want us to do, it can be very hard to trust God and do what He wants us to do. But, obeying

God even when others don't will help us grow to love and trust God. And our obedience can help our friends see that they can trust and obey God, too.

Let's trust God like Caleb and Joshua did. When we think about all that God has done for us in the past, we will not be afraid of the future.

## Closing Prayer

Father, when we are tempted to doubt the promises You have made in Your Word, help us to stop leaning on our own understanding. Help us to remember that You never make mistakes. Help us to remember Your goodness and all the ways You have helped us in the past. Then, help us to have the confidence we need to do the things You want us to do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

### Game Center

Use the following questions in a time of discussion or review game of your choice:

1. What did Joshua and Caleb do that was different from the other spies? (They trusted in God's promise to give them the Promised Land.) Why do you think they were so different? (They believed God!) When can kids your age follow their example?
2. When are some times it is hard to trust and obey God? (When others make fun of you for obeying God; when you don't know God's promises; when your friends are making fun of someone at school or disrespecting a teacher.) At these times, how can you stand true to the Lord? You will be easily swayed to do whatever

your friends are doing or saying if your belief in God is not strong. If your belief in His promises is strong, you won't even consider dishonoring Him by doing whatever a friend is doing.

3. When have you had to stand up for what God says is true when others have disagreed? What happened?
4. What are some things that you think might happen if you choose to obey God when your friends don't?
5. What can you do when you feel that it is hard to trust and obey God? (Pray to God. Sing Him songs of praise. Talk to parents.)

### ***Sword Drills***

Give a prize or candy to the first person to find the verse. Give other rewards for answers to the questions.

1. Read **Deuteronomy 13:4**. What does this verse tell us to do? Why do you think doing these things is important?
2. Read **Psalms 56:3, 4**. When does the writer of these verses say he will trust in God? Why can we trust God to take care of us and not worry about what people do to us?
3. Read **Proverbs 3:5, 6**. What does it mean to trust in the Lord rather than follow your own understanding? How can praying and reading God's Word help you to remember God in all your actions?
4. Read **Galatians 1:10**. What does Paul say would happen if he was trying to please men? When are some times it is harder to please God than men? Ask God for strength to obey Him when the people around you do not obey.

# No Fear for Joshua

(Numbers 27:15-23; Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 34:1-12)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

What does it mean to show courage? (To do what is right even when it is hard or we feel afraid.) When have you seen someone show courage? (When someone got hurt.) When are sometimes children your age need courage? (Going to the dentist. Performing in a talent show. When you hear mom and dad arguing.)

[Teacher, ask the children the following questions and write their answers on individual pieces of construction paper. You will use these squares as game board pieces in the review game activity after the lesson.]

What are some words that make you think of courage? (“Brave.” “Strong.” “Honor.” “Confident.”) What are some times when you might need God’s promise of courage? (Going to a new school. Waiting for parents who are late. Being made fun of or picked on. Taking a test. Seeing a hurt friend. Going to camp. Admitting to a sin.)

We can have courage when we feel afraid or face hard situations. Today we’re going to discover how we can find courage when we need it.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we want to always be brave and strong and courageous. But there are times that we do get afraid. Today, I pray, that You will help us to learn what to do when we get into scary situations. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified...for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.  
(Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV)*

## Lesson

Moses had been leading the people through the hot, dry desert for 40 years. At last, the time they’d talked about, dreamed about, and waited for had come! They were going into the land God had promised to them!

Turn to Deuteronomy 31 in your Bibles.

Moses had to tell the people that he would not be going with them into the Promised Land. So, he gathered everyone together and began to speak...

Deuteronomy 31:1-2

*When Moses had finished giving these instructions to all the people of Israel, he said, “I am now 120 years old, and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has told me, ‘You will not cross the Jordan River.’”*

How do you think the Israelites must have felt when they heard that Moses would not go into the Promised Land with them? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

Moses assured the people they will not be left alone...

Deuteronomy 31:3

*But the LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy the nations living there, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua will lead you across the river, just as the LORD promised.*

Moses explained that God Himself would go into the new land ahead of them and would protect them. And then he announced that God had chosen Joshua to be their new leader.

Joshua had been Moses’ obedient helper for a long, long time. When the Amalekites had attacked the Israelites, Joshua was the man who led the new army. During the battle with the Amalekites, Joshua had carefully followed the instructions God gave to Moses and had bravely led the Israelite army to victory.

Joshua had also been one of the spies sent out on the famous spying mission 40 years earlier. Even though 10 of the others spies were afraid, Joshua showed courage. He and his friend Caleb did what was right and encouraged the people to believe God's promise to bring them safely into the land.

So, Moses encourages the people to be strong and courageous.

Deuteronomy 31:6

*So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.*

Through the years as Moses' helper, Joshua experienced many battles and all kinds of adventures. God used these experiences to prepare Joshua to be the leader of the Israelites. Because he worked closely with Moses, Joshua was able to watch what Moses did and listen to what Moses said. It was the perfect training and Joshua was the perfect man for the job!

It is important to understand that God did not choose Joshua because he was already a strong leader. Joshua became a strong leader because he had confidence in God. Joshua believed God when He said He would never leave him or forsake him!

That same God who commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous is with us, too! We can have confidence in God, just like Joshua did, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

Joshua must have felt excited and scared! This was a big responsibility to be the leader of the Israelites. So, Moses laid his hands on Joshua and encouraged him to be strong and courageous, too.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

*Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched, he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors he would give them. You are the*

*one who will divide it among them as their grants of land. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."*

Why do you think Joshua would need to have courage as the leader of the Israelites? [Teacher, explain that the Promised Land was not sitting empty while the children of Israel were down in Egypt for 400 years. The land was occupied by people not willing to give it up easily; there would be enemies to face and battles to fight.]

Joshua knew God had helped Moses be a good leader. It must have made him feel happy to know that God would be with him and would help him, too!

Moses' work was finished. But before God took him to heaven, He let Moses see the Promised Land from the top of Mount Nebo.

Deuteronomy 34:1

*Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab and climbed Pisgah Peak, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him the whole land, from Gilead as far as Dan.*

Moses climbed to the top of Mount Nebo and God showed him the Promised Land the Israelites would soon conquer.

Deuteronomy 34:4

*Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land."*

Then somewhere on that mountain, Moses died.

Deuteronomy 34:5

*So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said.*

God buried his body. No one knows where.

Then for 30 days, the people who had followed Moses all those years wept and were sad.

Deuteronomy 34:8

*The people of Israel mourned for Moses on the plains of Moab for thirty days, until the customary period of mourning was over.*

And, Joshua became the new leader.

Deuteronomy 34:9

*Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

The people knew what a good man Joshua was and how hard he had worked as Moses' helper. The Israelites knew that God was still with them. And they knew God had chosen Joshua to be their new leader! Now, the Israelites were ready to go into the new land God had promised to them and to do what He had commanded.

We can have confidence in God's love and promises just like Joshua and the Israelites did. No matter what happens at home or school or what may happen in the future, we can trust God and act with courage. We can act with courage because we know that God will always be with us and help us. And we can always ask Him to help us be courageous when we feel afraid.

## Closing Prayer

Father, it is so wonderful to know that You are always with us. It gives us courage to face the scary times in our lives. I pray that You would help us to grow in our faith in You so that we will never forget that You promise to always be with us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

### Game Center

Choose one of the following activities to help your students connect the Bible truth they have been studying with their day-to-day experiences.

#### **Faith Hop**

Materials needed:

- Squares made during the opening activity
- One dice

Procedures:

- Lay the squares out Hop-Scotch style in a trail on the floor through the class room. Or, set 12 squares on a table in a 3 x 4 grid.
- Have each student roll the dice and either hop (without shoes) that number of squares on the trail, or move a game marker on the table grid.
- Have the student read what is written on the square he or she lands on.
- Have the student use that word or phrase in a sentence. [Teacher, lead the children to make statements of faith as they form their sentences. The goal is to have the children give examples of times they need to be courageous and have confidence in God's love.]

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

1. How did God help Joshua and the Israelites have confidence in Him?
2. What is the promise to Joshua and the Israelites in Deuteronomy 31:6? (God will be with them. God will never leave them.) This promise is for everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus, too. How could this promise help a child your age feel brave? (God will be with anyone who asks for His help.)
3. What are some reasons to have confidence in, or trust in God's love? (God promised to always be with us. God always keeps His promises.)
4. What things has God done to show His love for all of us? (God gave us the Bible. God sent His Son, Jesus, to make a way for us to live forever with Him.) What are some ways God has helped you or someone you know?
5. When are some times a child your age might want to ask God for courage?
6. How might knowing about God's love and His promise in Deuteronomy 31:6 help a child your age in a hard or scary situation?

### ***Sword Drills***

1. Read **Deuteronomy 31:6**. What is the promise in this verse? How does God's love and care help you to be strong and courageous at school? in your neighborhood?
2. Read **Psalms 145:8-9, 17**. What do these verses tell us about God? What word means to care for and help someone?

3. Read **1 John 4:10**. What is the definition of love in this verse? How did God show His love to us through Jesus' death on the cross?

### ***Memory Verse Option***

Write 2-3 words of Deut 31:6 onto individual paper plates. Mix up the plates and place them on the floor. From about 5' away, have each student take a turn tossing a marker (candy, button, or coin) onto a plate. If a child gets the marker on a plate, he picks up the plate and puts it to the side in the right order.



# Joshua Gets Ready to Lead

(Joshua 1)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

### Opening Discussion

How many of you have gone on a guided tour or on a hike into an area you've never been before? Did you go with someone who had been there before? Was it good that someone led you? Would you have gotten lost without your guide? Did you take a map? Would you have seen everything that was important to see?

A guide is something or someone that leads others in the right direction. Who or what helps guide you in life? (Parents, teachers, maps, etc.)

### Line Leader

Students play a game similar to *Follow the Leader*. Students stand in a single line. The first student in line is the leader. The leader stays in one place and begins with a motion (moves legs, moves arms, bends to the side, etc.) The second student follows the leader; the third student follows the second; and so on. There will be a ripple effect similar to the wave performed at a sporting event. (See diagram.)



After several motions have been successfully completed, have the children sit down. Talk about the fact that the

“Wave” or ripple effect would not have happened if the followers didn’t do what the leader wanted them to do.

In the same way God’s Word leads us along the path of life. Only when we do what God’s Word tells us to do, will we be successful in life. Can you name something God’s Word teaches us to do?

Today we’re going to talk about the very best Guide and why it’s always good to know what it says in our life’s Guide Book, the Bible.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we know that You are our leader; we want to be good followers. Give us good listening ears this morning so that we might hear Your voice in our hearts. We want to learn the lesson that You have for us today here at Sunday school. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Teach me your decrees, O LORD; I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. (Psalms 119:33-34 NLT)*

## Lesson

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. He was their faithful and beloved leader for 40 years as they traveled through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. But just as they were getting ready to cross over the Jordan River and enter the land, Moses died and Joshua became the next leader.

Joshua 1:1-3

*After the death of Moses the LORD’s servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. He said, “Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am*

*giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you—*

Joshua had been getting ready for his new job as leader of Israel for a long time. He'd helped Moses for many years. He'd learned how to trust God as he watched Moses lead the people through all kinds of situations. Now he was the leader.

It was a big job for Joshua, but he was well trained and best of all God had reassured him that He would never be alone.

Joshua 1:5

*No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.*

Then the Lord gave Joshua some good instructions for success that we need to pay attention to as well.

Joshua 1:7

*Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.*

First God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous because the task ahead of him would not be easy. The Promised Land was not sitting empty while the children of Israel were down in Egypt for 400 years. The land was occupied by people not willing to give it up easily; there would be many enemies to face and battles to fight. They needed to remember to believe and trust in God.

The second thing God tells Joshua to do is to be obedient to everything Moses wrote down. At this time the children of Israel only had the first five books of the Bible. We call them the Books of Moses because Moses had written them. They are also called "The Law" because they had all the instructions God had given Moses, including

the Ten Commandments. God tells Joshua to do everything that is in the books of Moses.

Joshua 1:8

*Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.*

God reminded Joshua to be very careful to obey all of His commands so that he would be successful in all that he did. He was to constantly read and study God's Word.

Then God encourages Joshua once again...

Joshua 1:9

*This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Why do you think that Joshua needed to be reminded over and over again to be strong and of good courage? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Here they were on the East side of the Jordan River. It was spring time and the river was swift and swollen. They knew they had to get over to the other side to enter the Promised Land. The people may have wondered how they would ever make it across – it was fast enough to sweep them away! They had often heard the story of how God had parted the water in the Red Sea many years before. But was this river too deep and swift?

Joshua calls his officers together to give his orders to the children of Israel.

Joshua 1:11

*"Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you."*

As the officers scattered to spread the news I can just imagine all the thousands and thousands of people getting ready to go across the raging river. There must have been people chasing down their grazing sheep and goats, sorting and packing their belongings and mending tents. Donkeys braying and snorting as burdens and bundles were tied onto their backs.

But in the midst of all this excitement, the people listened to Joshua and promised to obey him.

Joshua 1:16

*They answered Joshua, "We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us."*

The people promised to listen and obey all that Joshua asked them to do. I'm sure that gave Joshua all the confidence he needed to lead the children of Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land.

The Israelites needed a good strong leader who was following the Lord. Can you imagine the chaos if they had been left without guidance? And Joshua needed obedient followers to successfully lead the people into the Land.

We need guidance in life, too. Fortunately God has not left us on our own to figure out what to do and where to go all by ourselves.

Our Guide is Jesus and our Guide Book is the Bible. God has given us some guidelines in His Word for success. But He needs us to be obedient followers.

#1 we are to **be strong and courageous**. Jesus said He was the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). If we follow Him we will never be led astray in life.

#2 we are to **obey God's Word**. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in His Word. (2 Peter 1:3). It is our Guidebook for life, like a map. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. "

#3 we are to **read and study God's Word**. If we are to obey God's Word, then we must know what it says. So, we must take time to read it and think about what it says. What good would it do to take a map with you on a hike and then never look at it?

Jesus is our Guide; we are to follow His example in life. And, God's Word is the best Guide Book we can ever have. Reading and thinking about the Bible helps us know how to live and will give us courage to live the way God wants us to live.

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that you haven't left us wondering what to do in life to please You. Thank You that You have given us Your Word, the Bible. Give us a love for it and a desire to read it, understand it, and to follow it all the days of our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

#### *Guided Drawing*

- Make simple line drawings of the following objects on separate index cards: house, star, flower, tree, sun, etc.
- Have one child go to the white board and without showing the card or naming the object, guide the "artist" with simple directions. For example: "Draw a straight line." "Draw a circle on the top of the line," and so forth.
- When you have finished giving directions, let the class and the "artist" see the picture drawn on the card and ask, "How much did the drawing look like the picture on the card?"

After you do the first one, let the children take turns being the "Guide" and the "Artist."

Help the children discover how important it is to listen to instructions and to do exactly what they are told.

## Game Center

### *Guiding the Blind*

Let kids create an obstacle course using tables, chairs, inner tubes, scraps of lumber, a clothesline, and anything else you have on hand. Have kids form pairs. Have one partner wear a blindfold as the other partner guides him or her through the obstacle course. Then have partners trade roles. Compare relying on partners to relying on God. Explain that because God is all-powerful, when we trust in him we can always be strong and courageous.

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

1. In today's Bible story, God's Word helped Joshua get ready to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. What did God do to help Joshua be a good leader? (God gave instructions and promises to help Joshua.)
2. What are some of the instructions God gave to Joshua? Which of these instructions can we follow today?
3. What did the person who wrote Psalm 119:33-34 ask God to do? What did the writer say he would do? What is a way you can show you want to depend on God's Word? (Read the Bible. Ask questions about the verse you read. Ask God to help you. Obey the commands in the Bible verse you read.)
4. What are some things children your age depend on for guidance? (Parents, Maps, Friends, Teachers, Computers.) Why do you think a child your age might depend on God's Word to guide him or her?

5. What are some ways that God's Word has helped you or someone you know?
6. Why do you think it is important to read and think about God's Word?
7. When are some times that you might need God's Word to guide you? (When a friend hurts your feelings. When you feel afraid. When you want to tell a lie. When you feel all alone.)

### **Sword Drills**

1. Read **Psalm 25:4-5**. When do you need help knowing what to do? How can reading God's Word guide you? Pray and ask God to help you understand His Word.
2. Read **Psalm 119:72-73**. How do these verses describe God's Word? Why are God's words so valuable? According to verse 73, why can we trust that God's commands are best for us?
3. Read **Psalm 119:97-98**. How does the writer of this psalm show that He loves God's Word? (To meditate means to read and think about.) How can you show that you love God's Word?

# Rahab Believes in God

(Joshua 2)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

How many of you watch TV? Do you listen to the commercials? Some people boast about their products and tell you that they are the best. Do you believe everything you hear?

Some things you hear are true and some are not true. How do you know the difference? How do people decide whether or not to believe something? First of all, you need to decide if the person you are listening to is trustworthy. Then you need to think about whether or not it makes sense. And, it helps to ask another person you trust what they think.

What are some things you think are important to believe? (God loves us and He died for our sins.) How did you decide to believe in these things? Sometimes we believe in something because of what other people have told us.

Today we're going to talk about our choice to believe in God and trust in Him.

## Opening Prayer

Father, every day we are faced with choices. We need to learn how to have godly wisdom so that we don't believe in things that are not true. I pray that this morning You will open the eyes of our understanding so that we might be able to see with our hearts. Give us the ability to know what's true. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the LORD made the heavens! (Psalms 96:4-5 NTL)*

## Lesson

The children of Israel (about two million people) were about to enter the Promised Land. They were on the East side of the Jordan River getting ready to make their crossing. They were headed to the city of Jericho about five miles west of the Jordan River.

Jericho was a beautiful city with springs of water and many palm trees. It was known as the "City of Palms" (Deuteronomy 34:3). Many people traveled to Jericho to buy and sell goods.

Now, Jericho was built like a fortress. It had huge double walls around it – making it one of the strongest of the walled cities. The walls were so thick and strong that houses were built right into the walls! The people of Jericho had their own army (6:2) and they trusted in the strong walls around their city.

The people of Jericho also worshipped idols instead of the true God. And, because they believed in false gods, God wanted the children of Israel to wipe them out.

Before the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, Joshua secretly sent two spies to find out about the people and the city of Jericho.

The two spies crossed the Jordan River and sneaked into the city of Jericho. They soon found their way to a house built right into the wall – the house of a woman named Rahab. It didn't take long for the king to find out about the spies and where they were.

Joshua 2:2-3

*But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land."*

Rahab knew that if the king of Jericho found out that she was helping the Israelites, she would probably be killed! I'm sure Rahab was scared.

Rahab knew the king would come looking for them, so she had to think quickly what to do. She decided to hide the spies on the flat roof of her house under some stalks of flax she was drying. She didn't want the soldiers to find them. It would be trouble for all of them! So, here's what she did...

Joshua 2:4-5

*Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, "Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them."*

The soldiers hurried out of the city and along the road to the Jordan River looking for the spies. As soon as the soldiers went out, the heavy gates to the city were shut. Why do you think Rahab chose to help the spies? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

Joshua 2:8-9

*Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror."*

Rahab told the spies what people in Jericho had heard about the Israelites – how God divided the Red Sea so that they could cross and how He helped them defeat the powerful kings out in the wilderness on the other side of the Jordan River. Hearing of God's great power and care for the nation of Israel brought fear to the people of Jericho.

Rahab realized that the God of the Israelites was not like any of the idols the people of Jericho worshipped. She believed that He is all-powerful based on what others had told her about God.

Joshua 2:11

*No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.*

Because Rahab heard about the power of the one true God, she decided to put her faith in God to save her from her sins and chose to follow Him by helping the spies! When we tell others about what God has done in our lives, we can encourage them to choose to believe in Him and trust Him in all situations, just like Rahab did!

Rahab believed that the God of the Israelites would destroy Jericho. So, she begged the spies to spare her life and the lives of her family.

Joshua 2:12-13

*"Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families."*

The spies realized that Rahab had risked her life to help them. So, they make a bargain with her.

Joshua 2:14

*"We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety," the men agreed. "If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the LORD gives us the land."*

The spies were saying, "May God strike us dead if we do not keep our promise."

Rahab agrees and then helps them escape.

Joshua 2:15

*Then, since Rahab's house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window.*

Rahab lowered the spies down the wall from her window by a rope.

Joshua 2:16

*"Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way."*

Rahab told the spies to run for the mountains and hide for three days.

But, before leaving, the spies told Rahab to tie a red rope in her window so they would be able to tell which apartment was hers when they come back to fight the battle of Jericho.

[Teacher, explain that just as the red rope saved Rahab, the blood of Jesus saves us from the wrath of God.]

The spies did as Rahab told them to do. They hid in the mountains for three days and then hurried back to Joshua to give their report.

Joshua 2:24

*“The LORD has given us the whole land,” they said, “for all the people in the land are terrified of us.”*

All the people of Jericho had heard about God’s amazing power. They knew what He had done for the Israelites. But only Rahab took the step of faith. She chose to believe and trust the God she had heard about. And we’ll see later how her faith would make a difference for her whole family.

Every day God’s power helps us, even when we don’t realize it! We can learn about God’s power through the Bible stories we hear. Once we know about God’s great power, we can choose to believe in Him and put our trust in Him about any situation we may face. Trusting in God means we obey His Word, depend on Him to help us do what is right and good.

If you are a believer in God, it’s important for you to tell others about the wonderful God we have so that they too might choose to place their faith in our God and be saved like Rahab.

## Closing Prayer

Father, Rahab saw Your power and decided to put her faith in You to save her from her sins. Help us to see Your power as you answer our prayers and help us do right. I pray that You will give us the ability to

always put our faith in You no matter what situation we find ourselves in. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

#### *Red-Rope Reminders*

Make red-rope reminders so we can remember that God keeps His promises.

Give each child three strips of red cloth. Tell children how many beads they can choose, and then show them how to tie the three cloth strips together at one end and how to braid them. Show them how to add beads to their red ropes anywhere they’d like – simply by slipping a bead onto the strip that’s in the middle of the braid. To finish, have each child tie a knot at the end of the braid.

Tell the children they can hang their red-rope reminder in their window as Rahab did, or hang it on their bed, or wear it as a headband. Each time you see it, remember that God keeps His promises.

### Game Center

Use the following questions in a discussion or a review game of your choice:

1. What did Rahab know about God’s power? (See Joshua 2:8-11.) Why do you think she chose to believe in God and trust Him? How did she show she believed? (She hid the spies and helped them.)
2. How does God’s power help us today? (Answers our prayers. Gives us courage. Helps us do right.)
3. Why have you or people you know chosen to believe in God?

4. How can children your age show that they trust in God at school? At home? In the neighborhood?
5. When do you need to remember God's power and trust in Him to help you?
6. Discuss Rahab's lie with your class if appropriate to their age level. Was Rahab justified in lying to save the lives of the spies? Could God have saved the spies from detection without her lie? Does the fact that Rahab lied for a good cause make it right? (Notes from Life Application Bible: Although the Bible does not speak negatively about her life, it is clear that lying is sin. In Hebrews 11:31, however, Rahab is commended for her faith in God. Her lie is not mentioned. Several explanations have been offered: (1) God forgave Rahab's lie because of her faith; (2) Rahab was simply deceiving the enemy, a normal and acceptable practice in wartime; (3) because Rahab was not a Jew, she could not be held responsible for keeping the moral standards set forth in God's law; (4) Rahab broke a lesser principle – telling the truth – to uphold a higher principle – protecting God's people. There may have been another way to save the lives of the Israelite spies. But under the pressure of the moment, Rahab had to make a choice. Most of us will face dilemmas at one time or another. We may feel that there is no perfect solution to our problem. Fortunately, God does not demand that our judgment be perfect in all situations. He simply asks us to put our trust in him and to do the best we know how. Rahab did that and was commended for her faith.)
7. Discuss Rahab's occupation with your class if appropriate to their age. Why would the spies stop at the house of Rahab, a prostitute? (The Life Application Bible offers several explanations: (1) It was a good place to gather information and have no questions asked in return. (2) Rahab's house was in an ideal location for a quick escape because it was built into the city wall. (3) God directed the spies to Rahab's house because he knew her heart was open to him and that she would be instrumental in the

Israelite victory over Jericho. Whatever the case, God often uses people with simple faith to accomplish his great purposes, no matter what kind of past they have had or how insignificant they seem to be. Rahab didn't allow her past to keep her from the new role God had for her.)

### **Sword Drills**

1. Read **Psalm 96:1-3**. What do these verses tell us about God and His power? How did Rahab learn about God and believe in Him in today's story? (She had heard of God's great actions.) What can you do this week to show your trust in God?
2. Read **Psalm 103:1-3**. Which words in these verses describe God? How do these verses say God helps us? How has God helped your family in the past? When do you need God's help now?
3. Read **Daniel 4:1-3**. When he sent the letter written in these verses, King Nebuchadnezzar had just seen God rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from a fiery furnace. What amazing things have you learned about God?
4. Read **John 14:1**. What does this verse say we should do? What are some ways of showing trust in God?



# Crossing the Jordan

(Joshua 3)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

What is faith? The Bible says, “It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.” (Hebrews 11:1 TLB) [Teacher, explain this in terms your class will understand.]

There was once a tight rope walker that stretched a tight rope over the top of Niagara Falls. He walked back and forth across the tight rope to everyone’s astonishment. Then he took a wheel barrow and pushed it back and forth across the tight rope over the raging waters below. When he got back, he asked the crowd if they had faith in his ability to walk the tight rope once more. They all said, “Yes!” They’d seen him go back and forth a couple of times and they were sure he could do it again. So, he asked if anyone from the crowd was willing to get into the wheel barrow. At first there was not a single person who was willing to get in the wheel barrow and allow the man to push him over the falls. Did these people have real faith? Finally, there was one man in the crowd that was willing to get into the wheel barrow. Now, this man’s faith was real, wasn’t it? He was willing to allow the tight rope walker to push him over to the other side and back again.

Having faith that pleases God means believing what God says and acting on it. That kind of faith brings God honor. Today we are going to find out if the children of Israel had real faith or not.

## Opening Prayer

Father, to have faith in You is to know without a shadow of a doubt that You will always be there to take care of us, even when we find ourselves in a scary situation. Teach us this morning that we can rest in Your love and care. That we can choose to follow you by trusting and obeying You even when we are up against a hard situation. Help our faith to grow. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*It is impossible to please God without faith. (Hebrews 11:6a NLT)*

## Lesson

After traveling in the desert for 40 years with Moses as their leader, the Israelites were finally ready to go into the Promised Land. This wouldn’t be easy because there were hundreds of thousands of people, including young children and babies. And, they had to cross over a huge raging river to get there.

Joshua 3:1

*Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing.*

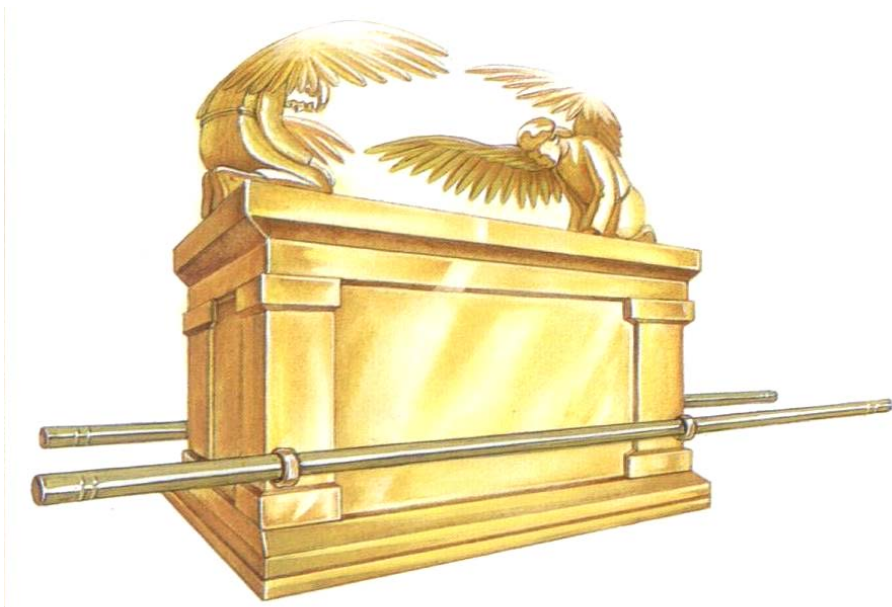
Joshua, the new leader of all these people, sent officers to tell the people to get ready to cross over the Jordan River.

Joshua 3:2-3

*Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp, giving these instructions to the people: “When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, move out from your positions and follow them.*

Joshua tells the people not to rush ahead, but to follow the priests who will be carrying the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant was Israel’s most sacred treasure. The ark was a gold-covered box with two angels facing each other on the lid. Inside the ark were the tablets of the Ten Commandments Moses received from God, a jar of manna (the bread God miraculously sent from heaven during the desert wanderings), and Aaron’s staff (the symbol of the high priest’s authority).



The ark of the covenant was a reminder of God's love and power. It helped the Israelites remember that God was with them and would take care of them. It would give them the faith to know that with God's help, everyone would cross that rushing river.

The big day the children of Israel had been waiting for had finally come. They were about to enter the Promised Land!

Joshua 3:6

*In the morning Joshua said to the priests, "Lift up the Ark of the Covenant and lead the people across the river." And so they started out and went ahead of the people.*

The priests picked up the ark of the covenant and started walking toward the river, just as Joshua told them to do. There was just one big problem! They had to get across the Jordan River which was running fast and deep! Then God spoke to Joshua...

Joshua 3:7-8

*The LORD told Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites. They will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses. Give this command to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant: 'When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there.'"*

There they were, standing on the banks of the mighty Jordan River, wondering how in the world they were going to get across. And God told Joshua, "Watch and see! I'm going to do a great miracle so that all Israel will know that I am with you just as I was with Moses." God was helping them to have faith in His great power and might!

The priests with the ark walked right to the edge of the rushing water. The current was dangerous! What would you have been thinking if you had been one of the priests? They must have thought that they might get swept away down the river!

Joshua encouraged the people to have faith and to trust and obey!

Joshua 3:13

*The priests will carry the Ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth. As soon as their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will stand up like a wall.*

And so it was...

Joshua 3:15-16

*It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.*

The town of Adam was several miles north of where the Israelites crossed the river! What do you think the people in the town of Adam thought when they saw the river stop in a heap?

The Israelites must have watched in amazement as the priests carried the ark into the middle of the dry riverbed. But they didn't watch for long! All the people, the entire nation of Israel, hurried around the priests and across the riverbed. Even though they moved as fast as they could, it took hours for all the hundreds of thousands of Israelites to cross the river! How might you have felt if you walked across the Jordan River with Joshua and all the Israelites?

Joshua 3:17

*Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.*

The priests remained in the middle of the riverbed until everyone was safely across the river. The enormous crowd of Israelites stood on the other shore. They must have looked at each other in awe. Their feet weren't even muddy. All of them were safe and dry.

The Israelites must have remembered the story of the time their parents had escaped from Egypt and crossed the Red Sea on dry land. God had taken care of their parents and He was taking care of them now, showing them that He was with them.

And now – wonder of wonders – they were in the Promised Land! What astonishing things God had done!

Now I want you to notice that God did not stop the waters *before* the priests stepped into the raging river. No! God waited for the priests to show their faith in God by stepping into the swift current. It says as soon as their feet dipped into the water, God stopped its flow. There are times in your life that God will not answer your prayers until you show your trust in Him. Sometimes you'll have to prove your faith in God's love and power by putting your trust in Him and stepping out in faith. If you don't, you may miss out on seeing God's promise to take care of you, even in tough situations. Unless the children of Israel had obeyed God, they would have been left with no way to cross the river and no idea of where to go next.

Into your life will come a Jordan-River experience — some big, overwhelming situation in life. Maybe it will be starting a new school and having to meet new friends. Maybe it will be going to the dentist or taking a test you don't feel prepared for. God wants you to trust Him and to step out in faith, knowing that He will use His power to help you!

The Israelites had followed God's instructions and all His promises to Joshua and to the people came true! Now the Israelites were ready to follow God and obey Him no matter what. They knew that God was with them just as He had been with Moses. They knew that God would help them do everything He commanded them to do.

Sometimes it seems that God only helped people and did miracles in Bible times. But God's care and love is for us, too! When we have problems, we can be sure that God will help us – through friends, parents or even Bible verses. So talk to God about your problems and trust Him to help you – just like He helped the Israelites. You can have faith in God's love and care for you.

## Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that You have promised to always be with us and to care for us with. Thank You that when we have problems or need help, You are always there to encourage us and to help us by demonstrating Your power and love for us. Help us to be brave and to step out in faith, even when we're having a Jordan-River experience. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

The ark of the covenant was a reminder to the Israelites that God was with them and would take care of them. It reminded them of God's love and power. What are some ways God has shown His love and power to you? (Sent Jesus to pay for our sins. Created the world.)

Answers our prayers. Gives us people who love us.) What are some objects that would remind you of God's love and power? (Cross. Ocean waves. Tall tree. Waterfall. The World.)

Have students draw pictures of things that remind them of God's love and power.

## Game Center

### *Trust Walk*

Set up a short obstacle course for children to go through, such as a chair to climb over, a table to climb under, a length of string to walk along, and so forth. Say: "The obstacles in our obstacle course remind us of the troubles or difficulties we sometimes have at school or at home. When you run into trouble, remember that God will listen when you pray to him and He will always love you and care for you. You can have faith in Him."

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

1. How did God show His love and power to the Israelites?
2. What do you think the Israelites might have said to praise God at the end of our story today?
3. How does God show His love and power to people today? (He forgives our sins and makes us part of His family when we believe in Him. He answers our prayers in the way that is best for us. He gives us what we need to live the way He wants us to.)
4. When is a time that a child your age might need help from a parent? A teacher? A friend? God? (Have to take a hard test. Get in a fight with a friend. Another child is being mean. Parents argue.) How do you think God might help a child in that situation? (Help to remember a Bible verse. Give an adult or friend to talk to

about the situation. Give an idea of what to do in the situation. Give courage.)

5. How has God helped you? What can you do to show that you are thankful for God's loving help?

### *Sword Drills*

1. Read **Psalm 32:7-8**. How does the writer of this psalm describe God in verse 7? How does verse 8 say God helps us? Thank God for His promise of help in the Bible.
2. Read **Psalm 59:16**. Who is this verse written to? (God.) When does the writer of this psalm say God is his refuge? (In time of trouble). How does the writer of this psalm praise God? (Sings and tells others about what God has done.) What reasons does the writer give for praising God? (God helped him when he had problems, God is a fortress, or the One who makes the writer feel safe.) How did God help the Israelites in today's story? (Stopped the river, so they could cross it safely.) How does God help us? What can we do to thank and praise God for His help? (Thank Him in prayer. Sing songs of praise to Him. Write a poem to thank Him.)
3. Read **Matthew 9:18-26**. Who asked Jesus for help in this story? Why? What happened? What do you or other people in your family need help with? Pray together, asking Jesus for His help with your needs.
4. Read **Romans 8:38-39**. What can separate us from God's love? What would you say to a friend to describe God's love? Thank God that He promises to always love and care for us.

# Twelve Stones from the River

(Joshua 4)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

How do you remember important things? (Tie a string around your finger. Write yourself a note.) What are things children your age should remember (Brush your teeth. Practice for a ball game, practice the piano.) How could you remind yourself to do these things? (Put a note on your mirror. Keep your baseball mitt by your door.) What kinds of things can be used as a reminder? (Post-it Note, calendar, notebook, answering machine, etc.)

What are some things that remind you of God's love and power? (The sun, a cross, or mountain.) What are some of the amazing things God has done that you want to remember? (Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. God answers prayer.)

Remembering the ways in which God has shown His power and love for us encourages us to worship Him. What can you do to remember these things?

Today we are going to find out about a way people in Bible times made reminders of important events. Listen to today's story to find out ways we can remember God's power.

## Opening Prayer

Father, open our spiritual eyes so that we might really see how good You have always been to us. Don't let us ever forget all the wonderful ways in which you have shown Your love and power in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Remember the wonders he has performed, his miracles, and the rulings he has given. (1 Chronicles 16:12)*

## Lesson

It had been a big day for Joshua and the Israelites – the biggest and most important day they could remember! The Israelites had lived in the desert for 40 years. And now, finally, they had crossed the Jordan River and were headed into the land God had promised to give them!

But this crossing hadn't been just any old river crossing! What do you remember about what happened when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River? The Jordan River was flooded because it was spring. But when the priests' toes touched the water, God made the water stop! Thousands and thousands of Israelites had scrambled across the dry riverbed while the priests, holding the ark of the covenant (the special chest that held God's commandments), stood right in the middle of the dry riverbed.

Now it was late in the day and all the Israelites, with all their belongings and animals, stood safely on the other side of the river. The priests with the ark of the covenant still stood in the middle of the river. The people must have wondered how long the river was going to hold back.

Joshua 4:1-3

*When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, "Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, 'Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.'"*

Joshua picked a man from each of the 12 family groups of the children of Israel. He told them to pick up a large stone and carry it on their shoulder to the place where they would camp tonight. God had told Joshua to pile the stones together to make a special marker to help the people remember this fabulous miracle the Lord had done that day. How do you think the men must have felt about going back into the riverbed to pick up rocks?

Once the twelve stones had been pulled from the riverbed, Joshua went down to where the priests were standing with the ark of the covenant and built another monument.

Joshua 4:9

*Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day.*

Finally, Joshua told the priests to come out of the river.

Joshua 4:15-17

*The LORD had said to Joshua, "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed." So Joshua gave the command.*

And as soon as the priests and the ark came out of the dry river bed the river started to flow again.

Joshua 4:18

*As soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant came up out of the riverbed and their feet were on high ground, the water of the Jordan returned and overflowed its banks as before.*

But what about the stones? God told Joshua to build a monument to remind the people of the day's events. God wanted the Israelites to always remember the wonderful way He had held back the river for them. The men laid their stones as Joshua directed them.

Joshua 4:20-24

*It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River. Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD's hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever."*

Why do you think God want the men to collect rocks from the river bed? What was special about those rocks? The rocks that the men

picked up came from the middle of the river. Normally it would be impossible to get to those rocks because they would be under the water. But God had stopped the flow of the river so all the Israelites could cross safely. Joshua took the river rocks and piled them up to mark the place the Israelites crossed the river. Every time God's people looked at that pile of river rocks, they would remember that God had helped them cross the river on dry ground.

Thinking about the many ways God has helped us in the past helps us believe in His love for the future.

## Closing Prayer

Father, I never want to forget your kindness. Please, don't let me take your love for granted. Keep my memory fresh of all the wonderful ways you have cared for me. I want to show you my appreciation each and every day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

#### *Memorial Stones*

Joshua built a special marker with 12 stones as a reminder of God's power. It reminded the Israelites to worship Him. What is something you could make to remind you of God's love and power?

Give each student a rock. Have students use markers to write or draw reminders about God on the rocks. Students may also decorate their rocks. As students work, discuss ways their reminders can help them worship God.

***Pet Rock Alternative*****Materials:**

- Acrylic craft paint
- Paintbrushes
- Wiggly eyes
- Glue
- One rock for each child

**Procedure:**

Set out the supplies. Have each child choose a rock. Invite children to decorate the rocks to look like silly creatures. As the children work, encourage them to tell about times when God has taken care of them.

Let's make our own special pet rocks. As you take care of your pet rocks, they can remind you that God takes care of you every day just as he took care of the Israelites.

**Game Center**

Use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

Tip: A student's words and actions are clues to needs and comprehension. Watch a student's facial expression and body language. Listen carefully to his or her words. Avoid letting your mind race ahead to what you want to say next. Instead, respond to a student by rephrasing his or her comments to be sure you understood. By carefully listening, you can determine what concepts need clarifying and what Bible truths need reinforcing.

1. What did Joshua do to help the people of Israel remember God's love and power? How do you think the people responded when they saw the memorial Joshua made?

2. What are some things that remind you of God's love? (Songs about God. Caring parents. Jesus' death on the cross.) What reminds you of God's power?
3. When might children your age worship God? Why? How?
4. How do you think remembering God's love and power might help a child your age in a difficult situation?
5. When are some times that you have been reminded of God's love or power? What did you see or do? What did God do?

***Sword Drills***

1. Read **1 Chronicles 16:12**. What does this verse tell us to do? What are some things you remember that God has done?
2. Read **Daniel 6:16-23**. How did God use His power to help Daniel in this story? When has God helped you in a hard situation? Thank God for using His love and power to care for His people.
3. Read **Psalms 27:1; 46:1-3**. How did the writer of these verses describe God?
4. Read **Romans 1:16**. How does the Gospel – the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection – show God's power and love? What helps you remember what Jesus did for you?

***Other Game Questions***

1. Why did the Israelites cross the Jordan River? (To enter the Promised Land.)
2. What did Joshua do to help the people remember God's love and power? (He had the priests carry the Ark of the Covenant before them.)

3. What was special about those particular rocks? (They came from the bottom of the raging river and reminded them of God's faithfulness.)
4. Whose idea was it to stack the stones? (God's)
5. What are some things that remind you of God's love and faithfulness? (The cross, the bible)
6. What other time did God do a miracle with water parting? (Red Sea)
7. What was the name of Israel's leader?
8. How do you think remembering God's love and power might help you in a difficult situation?
9. When might you worship God? (Any time, any place!)
10. Who stood on the riverbed while the water was stopped. (The priests with the ark of the covenant.)
11. Why did God have them stack the stones? (To always remind them of God's power and might.)



# Jericho Falls

(Joshua 6)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Have your parents ever asked you to do something that seemed silly (weird or dumb)? Did you question them or argue with them? [Teacher, let the children respond.] We don't always understand why our parents ask us to do things. In the same way, there will be times when God will ask you to do something that seems hard to understand.

You may wonder why God wants us to do things like be kind to people we don't even like or to forgive someone who was really mean to us. But when we choose to obey God's commands, even the ones that we don't understand, we are showing that we trust God. And trusting God even when we don't understand is always better than doing things our own way!

When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, they faced an impossible situation: a huge fortified city that God wanted them to conquer. God gave them some very strange instructions on how to overcome it! Did they obey?

## Opening Prayer

Father, You want us to live lives that are pleasing to you. Please teach us to trust and obey You even when it doesn't make sense to us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

## Lesson

The Israelites were finally in the Promised Land. God had opened the Jordan River and the people crossed over on dry land. Now they were ready to take the whole land. But doing this would not be easy. The land hadn't been sitting empty all the years they had been in Egypt. It was full of the Canaanites! And they didn't want the Israelites to come in. They had strong armies ready to fight and they had strong cities with huge thick walls around them.

But God had instructed them to conquer the Canaanites because they were wicked. They worshipped idols and lived lives that were detestable to God. God wanted the Israelites to rid the land of all these evil people and their evil practices. He wanted the Promised Land to be a place where His ways would be carried out by His people.

The first city the Israelites had to conquer was Jericho. Jericho was a beautiful city with springs of water and many palm trees. It was known as the "City of Palms" (Deuteronomy 34:3).

But, Jericho was built like a fortress. It had huge double walls around it – making it one of the strongest of the walled cities. The walls were so thick and strong that houses were built right into the walls! The people of Jericho had their own army (6:2), too, so they felt like they were invincible!

The people of Jericho knew the Israelites were coming, so they shut the gates to the city and waited for the battle to begin. They were counting on their army, the thick walls of their city and the protection of their false gods.

Joshua 6:1

*Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in.*

Jericho's gates were shut tight and their soldiers were standing ready to fight. To the children of Israel, it seemed there was no way to defeat Jericho. It seemed impossible, but God had a plan to help His people.

God hated the fact that the people of Jericho worshipped false gods. He wanted to punish the people in Jericho for their wickedness and prove that the land belonged to Him and not to the false gods the people of Jericho worshiped. So, God gave Joshua some very unusual battle plans.

Joshua 6:3-5

*You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."*

These were very unusual battle plans, weren't they! What do you think Joshua thought when he heard these instructions?

I'm sure that Joshua thought this would be a very strange way to conquer a city. But he didn't try to argue with God! Joshua trusted God, so he passed the orders on to the people. And the Israelites listened to Joshua and got ready to do exactly what God had told them to do.

The Israelites were to march around the city in a great procession. Soldiers were to be at the front, then seven priests with trumpets of ram's horns, followed by more priests carrying the ark of the covenant (the golden treasure chest that held God's law). More of the army got in step behind them.

As the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho, the priests blew their horns; the only noise was the sound of the horns and the stomp, stomp, stomp of thousands of marching feet! No one said a word. After they had marched around Jericho one time, the Israelites went back to their camp without a word.

Six days in a row the people marched silently around the city of Jericho one time, just as God had told them to do. What do you think

the people in the city of Jericho were thinking? Everyone in the city must have heard the sound of the trumpets and watched as the Israelites walked around their city walls in silence. They probably kept waiting for the attack to begin. They might have thought it was funny that the Israelites were just silently walking around the city blowing their trumpets! But, they must have been terrified, too!

On the seventh day the procession marched around the city once like they had done the previous six days, but instead of going back to camp, the people kept walking. They marched around a second time, a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time, a sixth time, and a seventh time – then, as they completed the seventh time around, they did something different!

Joshua 6:16

*The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the town!"*

The people shouted as loudly as they could and the huge, strong wall around the city of Jericho began to crack! Suddenly the big, tall walls of Jericho crumbled and fell down and the army of Israelites marched straight in, just as God had told them to do!

God told Joshua to destroy Jericho and all the people in it because they had put their faith in false gods (see Deuteronomy 20:16-18). There was only one family that was saved – Rahab's family. She was the woman who had helped two Israelite spies because she trusted in God's power. So, the spies rescued Rahab and her family because they promised to take care of her.

Joshua 6:23

*The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.*

Rahab and her family went to live with the Israelites.

Did marching around Jericho seem to make sense? God's battle plans seemed very strange, didn't they? Suppose the Israelites had said, "Let's not wait until the seventh day to shout. Let's shout on the third day". Do you think that God would have made the walls come tumbling down? Would they have been able to conquer Jericho?

The Israelites listened to God and trusted Him. And, even though it must have seemed strange, they did just what He had told them and the battle was won. Only by obeying God's instructions did Israel have victory over Jericho. They needed to know what God said, believe it, and act on it. Simply by marching, shouting and obeying, God gave them the victory!

We often have fears, frustrations, and problems in our lives that stand like fortified cities.

Do you have any "strong walled cities" in your life that you need to overcome?

- Maybe you are trying to learn something that is hard, like the violin or a foreign language.
- Maybe there are scary things that you are facing in life, like parents that argue.
- Maybe you have had your heart broken because a friend said mean things to you.
- Maybe you are having trouble with a sin that you just can't overcome, like being selfish or disobedient to your parents.

Whatever fear or frustration or problem you face, you can overcome it by listening to God and obeying His word.

As I said, many of the God commands can seem hard to understand. For example, in Matt 5:44 He tells us to love your enemies and to pray for those that are mean to you. But it's important for us to obey God just as He requests even when we don't want to. We must always trust and obey God. Remember, God only wants the best for us.

## Closing Prayer

Father, there are many obstacles in our lives that seem impossible to conquer. But today we've been encouraged to have faith in Your word and to obey You, even when we don't fully understand why You ask us to do the things You do. Please help us to trust and obey You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Act out the Story

#### **Materials:**

Cardboard tubes, old sheets, markers, and masking tape.

#### **Actors:**

- Joshua and his fighting men
- Priests with rams' horns (cardboard tubes)
- Priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant
- The rear guard
- "Wall" (children holding up a sheet)

#### **Experience:**

Optionally, allow children to make "trumpets" by decorating the cardboard tubes with markers and to draw large stones on the sheets to look like city walls.

Tell children to pretend that it's the seventh day in the story. Teacher is to count out loud as they silently march around the "Walls" seven times blowing their trumpets. When they complete the final time around, say, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!" to signal the "Walls" to fall down.

**Response:**

Ask: How do you think the Israelites felt while they marched around the walls? How did they see God's power on the seventh day? When have you seen God's power in your life?

Attach the wall sheets to a wall in your classroom. Have children use markers to draw or write their fears, frustrations, and problems on the wall sheets.

**Closing:**

Say: The Israelites might have been afraid of the people in the mighty, walled city of Jericho. But when they followed God's instructions, they saw that He was more powerful than anything. Point to the wall sheets. God is more powerful than our problems, too. Let's shout and watch them fall down.

Lead children in shouting, and then pull the sheets off the wall.

**Game Center****Musical Chair Game**

Play a game similar to Musical Chairs, but do not remove a chair each round of play. Set up a circle of chairs facing out, one chair per review question, and number the chairs. (Do not put the chairs in numerical order; mix up the numbering.)

Children "march" around the circle of chairs while music plays. When the music stops they quickly sit down. (You might want to play the song "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho" as the children march: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3QUS4B0iaM>.)

The first round of play, the child seated in chair #1 answers the first question. The second round of play the child, the child seated in chair #2 answers the second question, and so forth, until all the questions have been answered.

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

1. How did Joshua show that he trusted in God's commands? What happened because the Israelites obeyed and did things God's way?
2. What kinds of decisions do children your age have to make? What could a child your age choose to do in that situation that would show he or she trusts and obeys God?
3. How could a child your age show that he or she trusts God with all of his or her heart when he or she is at home or school?
4. When might other children your age think that doing things God's way is silly or wrong? (When everyone is teasing an unpopular kid and you know God wants you to be kind. When another child is doing something dangerous and you think you should tell an adult about it. When a friend has the answers to a hard test you have to take and you don't want to cheat.)
5. Why is it a good idea to obey God's commands?
6. What good things might happen when a child your age does things God's way? (Other people will trust him or her. Others will respect him or her. That person won't have to worry about getting caught doing something wrong. That person will know that God is happy with his or her actions.)

**Sword Drills**

1. Read **Proverbs 3:1-2**. What does it mean to keep God's commands in your heart? What does verse 2 name as benefits of obeying God's commands?
2. Read **Proverbs 3:5-6**. What do these verses say that God will do when we trust Him? Why is a straight path better than a

crooked path? (It is shorter and easier to follow.) What does it mean to say that God will make our paths straight? (God will show us the right way to live.)

3. Read **Romans 13:9-10**. How does obeying the command to love our neighbor help us obey all the other commands in these verses? What can you do to show love to others?
4. Read **Ephesians 4:29**. How can you obey God with what you say? When is it hard for you to remember to obey this command?

**Other Game Questions:**

1. What do you think Joshua thought when he heard God's battle plans? (He might have thought they were unusual.)
2. How did Joshua react when he heard God's unusual battle plans? (He didn't question God or argue with Him, he acted in trust and obedience.)
3. What do you think the people in the city of Jericho were thinking as they watched the Israelites circling their city? (First, they were afraid, then probably confused, then possibly mocking.)
4. How do you think the Israelites felt while they marched around the walls?
5. How do you think the Israelites felt when the walls came down? (Amazed, glad)
6. How do you think the people of Jericho felt when the walls came down? (Stunned, scared)
7. How many days did the Israelites circle Jericho? (7)
8. Why did Joshua save Rahab and her family? (The spies had made a promise to her.)

9. How many times did the Israelites circle the city? (13)
10. Why did the Israelites circle the city? (It is what God told them to do.)
11. Why did God choose to defeat Jericho without using Israel's army? (To show both Israel and Canaan that it was God, not Israel's army, that defeated Jericho.)



# Achan's Sin

(Joshua 6:18-19; 7)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever done anything wrong secretly, hoping no one would find out? [Teacher, give several scenarios – gluing together a vase you've broken, borrowing your brother's toy without permission and putting it back in the closet so no one will know, and so on.]

Listen to our story today to discover a secret that someone buried, thinking no one would ever find out.

## Opening Prayer

Father, there are no secrets before You. You see everything we do and You know the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. I pray this morning You will help us to listen to this important lesson You have for us today because we want to learn the importance of living a life that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NLT)*

## Lesson

The children of Israel were now in the Promised Land, but the land had not been sitting empty all the years they were down in Egypt. They were going to have to take the land back from the Canaanites before they could safely settle there. They would have to face many battles and take the land city by city.

Last week we learned that the Israelites were able to conquer Jericho because God miraculously made the walls fall down. The defeat of Jericho was a great victory for Israel. They set fire to the city and destroyed everybody and everything in it except those things that God had told the people to set aside for Him.

In those days, when soldiers defeated a city, they usually got to take the valuable things from the city for their very own as a reward for winning the battle. But God was the one who had defeated Jericho, so everything in Jericho belonged to God.

Joshua 6:18-19

*"Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."*

Joshua ordered that nothing was to be taken from the city except silver, gold, bronze or iron. These were to be used for the house of God. The soldiers were not to take anything for themselves.

After they entered the city of Jericho, the soldiers went through the rubble, collecting the gold, silver, bronze and other riches. And every soldier brought everything he found to the treasury of the Lord. But, Joshua did not know that one man, Achan (AY-kuhn), disobeyed.

When Achan saw a beautiful robe, some silver and gold among Jericho's treasures, he desired them for himself and decided to steal them. When no one was looking, Achan took the robe, silver and gold and buried them underneath his tent!

Have you ever seen something that wasn't yours that you wanted so much? What was Achan thinking about when he buried his stolen treasures under his tent? [Teacher, draw ideas from children. To get them thinking, relate an example of someone wanting something he can't or shouldn't have.] He may have thought, "Who's going to know if I keep just a couple of things for myself?" But, did God see Achan bury the treasure? How do you think God felt about Achan's actions?

Joshua 7:1 [Teacher read...]

*But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites...*

Even if no one else sees your sin, God does. He knows all things!

Meanwhile, Joshua didn't know about Achan's sin. And he was getting ready to take the next city which was called Ai. So, Joshua sent some men to spy on the city just like he did with Jericho. And when they returned they told Joshua that this city would be easy to take.

#### Joshua 7:2-3

*Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there."*

Ai was a small fortified city near Jericho. And the Israelites thought that since the taking of Jericho was so easy for them, that Ai would be a chinch. But they didn't ask God about this; they didn't get the Lord's battle plans, like they did for Jericho. They relied on their own skills and strength. [Teacher, refer to last week's memory verse and point out that they leaned on their own understanding and didn't acknowledge God.]

So, Joshua only sent a small army into battle at the city of Ai. He was expecting God to give them another victory like the one at Jericho.

#### Joshua 7:4-5

*So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.*

The men of Ai came after the Israelites and killed some of them and chased them away. Israel lost the battle! This stunned the Israelites and they became afraid! The text says their hearts melted. How could Joshua hope to conquer the other large cities of the Promised Land if he and his army could be clobbered by a little city like Ai?

Joshua was horrified! He called his leaders to an emergency prayer meeting. He fell to the earth on his face before the Lord and cried out.

#### Joshua 7:8-9

*Lord, what can I say now that Israel has fled from its enemies? For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe our name off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?*

Joshua told God that when news got out about their defeat at Ai that the rest of the people in the land would think they were weaklings! He asked God how they would ever conquer the rest of the Promised Land. The Lord told Joshua that they were defeated because there was sin among the people.

#### Joshua 7:11

*Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings.*

Joshua was shocked; this was a very serious crime! Who would steal from God?

Then God gave Joshua specific instructions about what to do. Early the next morning, Joshua called the leader of each tribe of Israel to come before him one by one. God showed Joshua that the thief came from the tribe of Judah. That was Achan's tribe.

Now Achan, having heard what the problem was, could have admitted to Joshua right then and there what he had done. But he didn't. Why do you think Achan didn't admit his wrong? Maybe he was afraid, or maybe he thought he could fool Joshua. Whatever the reason, He just kept silent.

Next Joshua called the head of each family of the tribe of Judah to come before him. Achan knew he was the guilty one, yet he continued to keep quiet. He obviously didn't know that God was all-knowing. Finally, God showed Joshua that Achan was the guilty one.



## Joshua 7:19

*Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me."*

Finally, Achan confessed...

## Joshua 7:20-21

*Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. Among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest."*

At last Achan had no choice but to admit what he'd done. Joshua sent some men to search his tent and they found the stolen goods hidden just where Achan said they were. This, I am sure, made Joshua very sad.

## Joshua 7:25

*Then Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you." And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.*

What a shame that Israel had suffered defeat in the battle at Ai because of Achan's greed. Achan had to be punished; he had disobeyed God's command. Joshua put Achan and his whole family to death then burned all of his possessions. God showed the Israelites that disobeying Him has serious results.

Do we make God angry when we do wrong? Yes! Our sin has serious results, too. You may think that God's rules in the Bible are not important or that if others don't know what you've done no one will be hurt. But sooner or later, your sin will find you out.

God is a perfect, holy God who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. But the good news is that because God loves you, He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to earth to take your punishment.

If you have never received the Lord Jesus as your Savior from sin, you need God living in you to give you power to do what's right here on earth and to give you life forever in heaven (John 20:31).

This week when you are tempted to do wrong, stop! Think of the consequences of your choice; then thank God for His power as you do what's right. Remember you can't keep any secrets from God; He is all-knowing and all-seeing. But, never forget that God is also all-loving and merciful!

Do you know what to do when you sin? All you need to do is talk to God about it. Confess your sin to Him and He will forgive you. And, when He forgives you of your sin, He throws that sin into the sea of forgetfulness and He will never bring it up again! Isn't He wonderful? Aren't you glad that Jesus came and took the punishment that you and I deserve?!

## Closing Prayer

Father, please help us to remember it is not worth it to try to keep our sins a secret. You see everything and You will find us out. Our sin always causes trouble. But, thank You, Lord, for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to come to earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Thank You, also, for sending the Holy Spirit Who gives us the power to do what's right. Please help us to say "No" to sinful desires so that we might live holy and righteous lives that are pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Game Center

#### **No Secret Sins**

PREPARATION: You will need a colorful throw rug or blanket, paper, pencils, and a large trash can with a lid. You'll also need a Bible.

**PLAY:** Place the throw rug on the floor in the center of the room. Distribute the pencils and sheets of paper. Ask kids to write down something they've done wrong, such as lying, stealing, disobeying, or being unkind. Nonreaders may draw pictures. Reassure children that no one will see what they've drawn or written.

Then have kids wad up their papers and put them under the throw rug. Invite kids to sit in a circle around the rug.

**Say:** We all have secret sins that we haven't told anyone about. Achan took something he wasn't supposed to and then tried to keep it a secret. But it showed up just like all these bumps under the rug.

**Ask:**

- Who was hurt by Achan's secret sins? (Achan and his whole family, plus the whole nation of Israel.)
- What does God want us to do when we do something wrong? (Confess it).

Scoop up the paper wads, and wrap them in the rug. Open the large trash can, shake the paper wads into it, and put the lid back on.

**Say:** Hiding our sins doesn't make them go away. Only God can remove our sins and get rid of them. When God forgives our sins, he puts a lid on them, and we don't have to keep feeling bad about them. We're completely forgiven. Let's ask God to forgive us for the sins we wrote down.

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

1. What did Achan do after the battle at Jericho? What attitude do you think Achan had toward God when he did these things?
2. What are some reasons people choose to sin, or do things that are wrong? (They are selfish and greedy. They don't know about Jesus' gift of salvation and how He helps us to do right.)

3. Why do you think God's forgiveness is important? (Everyone does things that are wrong. We all need to be forgiven so that we can be part of God's family.)
4. What do children your age need to do to receive God's gift of salvation? (Ask God to forgive our sins, believe in Jesus and trust Him to save us.)
5. What does it mean to be saved from our sins? (We don't have to pay the penalty for our sins.)
6. What is a way to show thankfulness to God for His gift of salvation?

### **Sword Drill**

1. Read **Romans 5:8**. According to this verse, how does God show His love to us? What happened when we were still sinners?
2. Read **Romans 6:23**. According to this verse, what is the result, or wages, of sin? What is God's gift to us? What did Jesus do so that we could be given this gift? (God's Son, Jesus, loved us so much that He came to earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Because Jesus died for us and came back to life again, we can be forgiven and live forever with Him.)
3. Read **1 Corinthians 15:3-5**. What does Paul say is the most important thing he wants to tell others? How can you show that you believe in Christ's death and resurrection for our sins?
4. Read **1 John 1:9**. What happens when we ask God to forgive the wrong things we have done?

**Other Game Questions**

1. Why didn't Joshua send his whole army to conquer Ai? (Instead of consulting God, he followed the advice of his spies who told him that it was going to be easy to take Ai.)
2. Do you think it is wrong or sinful to want things? (Only if the desire for the thing is greater than the desire to please God. If wanting a thing leads you to steal, lie, or covet; you are breaking God's commands.)
3. If you see something that doesn't look like it belongs to anyone is it all right to take it? (No, you need to find its rightful owner.)
4. Why did Achan take the things that God told him not to take? (He wanted them more than he wanted to please God.)
5. Which of the Ten Commandments did Achan break? (#8. Do not steal, #9 Do not lie, and #10. Do not covet.)
6. What should Achan have done when he saw the robe, the gold, and the silver coins? (Take them to Joshua to put in the Lord's treasury.)
7. Where did Achan hide his stolen treasure? (Under his tent.)
8. How did Joshua find out that it was Achan who had sinned against the Lord? (God told him.)
9. What was the Lord's command about the plunder in Jericho? (Silver, gold, and precious metals were to go into the Lord's treasury, everything else was to be destroyed.)
10. What did Achan take for himself? (Silver, gold, and a robe.)
11. Who saw Achan hide the treasures? (God.)
12. If God must punish all sin, how can anyone escape from His punishment? (Only those who trust that Jesus Christ took the punishment for sin are saved from God's wrath.)
13. What happened to the Israelites because of Achan's sin? (They were defeated at Ai.)
14. What did Joshua do when he heard of Israel's defeat? (He was horrified and called his leaders to an emergency prayer meeting.)
15. What happened to Achan? (He and all his family were stoned to death and his possessions were burned with fire.)



## 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.)



# Joshua's Rash Decision

(Joshua 9)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

What kinds of decisions do you make? (What to wear to school. What book to read. What to eat for lunch. Whether or not to play at a friend's house. Whether or not to tell a lie.) The decisions we make have consequences. What would happen if you chose to eat only doughnuts? What would the consequences of going barefoot in a blizzard be?

How do you make your mind up? How do you usually decide? Who are some of the people in your life that can help you make wise decisions? (God. Parents. Friends. Police officer. Teacher.)

Sometimes it's not easy to know what decision we should make. Listen to today's story to find what happened to the children of Israel when they made a bad decision.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we are presented with decisions to make every day. We want to learn how to make wise choices in life. Please teach us how important it is to ask You for wisdom and for the courage to do what You tell us to do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray. (Psalm 17:6 NLT)*

## Lesson

God had given the children of Israel victory in both Jericho and Ai. He wanted the Israelites to wipe out all the people who were occupying the Promised Land because they worshiped false gods and did many

horrible things. God didn't want the Israelites to make friends with those people or have anything to do with them. God had told the Israelites to take over the whole land for His people.

The news of the Israelites' victories over Jericho and Ai spread through out the land. The people knew that the God of the Israelites was much more powerful than the false gods they worshiped. So the people were getting nervous. Actually, they were much more than nervous, they were terrified! All the kings who lived in the land met to decide what to do about the Israelites.

Joshua 9:1

*Now all the kings west of the Jordan River heard about what had happened. These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains.*

One group of people did not want to go to war against the Israelites; they knew they would be wiped out. These people lived in the towns around Gibeon. They knew that the one true God was helping the Israelites. And they knew that all the armies of the land together could not win a fight against people who had God on their side. So the people of Gibeon figured out a way to save their lives. They came up with a plan to trick Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua 9:3-5

*But when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wineskins. They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy.*

A few of the Gibeonite men packed up some dried-out, moldy bread in some old, cracked leather bags. They dressed up in clothes that were worn-out, dirty and dusty. They put on old shoes with holes in the bottoms. Then they traveled to where Joshua and the Israelites were camped.

Joshua 9:6

*When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us."*

A covenant is an agreement or a treaty – it's a promise of peace and protection between countries or people that cannot be broken.

The Gibeonites lied about where they were from because they wanted the Israelites to make a treaty with them. The Israelites were still not really convinced so the Gibeonites told Joshua and the others some more lies.

Joshua 9:12-13

*"This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey."*

Joshua and the Israelite leaders looked at the visitor's torn clothes and dusty shoes. They saw the old, moldy bread. It looked like they had walked a long, long way.

Joshua 9:14

*So the Israelites examined their food, but they did not consult the LORD.*

This was a big mistake!!! They should have asked God about this important decision.

Joshua 9:15

*Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath.*

Joshua and the other Israelite leaders decided the Gibeonites must be telling the truth. The Gibeonites' trick had worked! They would be safe! Making a treaty and promising to be their friends seemed like

such a good decision that Joshua didn't stop to ask God what to do. Joshua told the Gibeonites that the children of Israel would treat them as friends and would not attack them.

But they soon found out the truth...

Joshua 9:16

*Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby!*

The Gibeonites were actually some of the very people God had told the Israelites not to have anything to do with! But now, even though they had tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them, Joshua knew that he had to keep his agreement with the Gibeonites.

Joshua 9:19

*But the leaders replied, "Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them."*

Joshua knew that he had to keep the promise he had made because he had told God he would. He didn't want the children of Israel to get into trouble with God! He remembered what happened when Achan sinned and knew that God was serious about keeping promises. But Joshua did give the Gibeonites some consequences for lying to him.

Joshua 9:20-21

*This is what we must do. We must let them live, for divine anger would come upon us if we broke our oath. Let them live." So they made them woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community, as the Israelite leaders directed.*

Joshua couldn't let them get away with their lies. So, for the rest of their lives they became slaves to the Israelites, chopping wood and carrying water to God's house where the children of Israel worshipped Him. What are some consequences you face for making wrong decisions? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about the consequences of some of their actions.]

The Gibeonites gladly agreed. They would have to work for the Israelites, but at least they'd be safe.

Because Joshua did not ask God what to do, he was tricked into making a bad decision. He knew that trouble would probably come from this friendship with the Gibeonites – the people who had lied to them. It was a hard way to learn an important lesson: Always ask God for wisdom before you make a decision. It's always worth our while to present every choice, whether of small or great consequence, to our loving, all-wise Father!

It can be hard to make wise decisions! It seems that everyone has different ideas about what is good to do. But we should always ask God for wisdom when we have to make an important decision. We can talk to God at any time and any place. And we can trust Him to help us because He loves us. God is always there to hear you call out to Him; He always hears and answers our prayers. His ways are always the very best.

## Closing Prayer

Father, we have to make many decisions every day. We have to choose what movies to watch, whether to be friends with certain people, and whether we mind our parents when they ask us to do something. Thank You that You always listen when we call upon You for advice. Thank You that You give us the power to say, "No!" to sin. Please help us to always make wise choices as we go through our day. We want to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Craft Corner

### Game Center

### *Memory Verse Relay*

**Materials:** Bibles, large sheets of paper, markers, tape

**Preparation:** Print "Psalm 17:6" at the top of a large sheet of paper making one paper for each team. Tape papers to the wall on one side of the room. Place a marker and a Bible open to Psalm 17:6 next to each paper. (Put a sticky note in the Bible, in case someone closes it.)

### **Procedure:**

1. Divide class into two teams. Teams line up on the side of the room opposite from the papers. At your signal, the first student in each line runs to the paper, reads the verse from Bible and writes the first word of the verse on the paper. The Student then leaves the Bible open, lays down marker and returns to tag the next person in line. Second student then runs to find and write the second word of the verse. Play continues until all teams complete the entire verse.
2. Read Psalm 17:6 aloud together, and ask the following questions:
  - Why does the writer of this Psalm say he will pray to God? (He knows God will answer His prayer.)
  - What happened in today's story when Joshua forgot to pray to God and ask Him about the Gibeonites?
  - When are some times you need to pray to God and ask for His help?

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

1. What did Joshua do before he made the decision to trust the Gibeonites? Why do you think he made the decision he did? What happened as a result of Joshua's decision?
2. When are some times children your age have to make decisions? (When other kids want to copy their homework. When parents ask them to do chores without complaining. When playing with friends.)
3. What are some good things to do when you have to make a decision? (Ask God for help. Read the Bible and look for God's guidelines. Talk to an adult about the decision. Think about what will happen after you make the decision.) What are some unwise ways to make a decision? (Only think about what you want. Do whatever is easiest. Make a decision without thinking or praying about it.)
4. How does talking to God help someone make a wise decision? (Talking to God reminds us that we want to love and obey Him.)
5. Why do you think it is a good idea to talk to God about the decisions you make? (He helps us choose wisely.)

### ***Sword Drills***

1. Read **Psalm 17:6**. What does this verse ask God to do? What is a decision you want to talk to God about?
2. Read **Proverbs 2:6**. Where do wisdom, knowledge and understanding come from? Where can we read many words God has spoken? How can the Bible help you make good decisions?

3. Read **John 14:13**. What does Jesus promise in this verse? What are some good things to pray and ask Jesus for? Name some situations in which your family needs Jesus' help.
4. Read **Philippians 4:6-7**. Why don't people who trust in God need to worry? How does verse 6 tell us to pray? When will we have peace? Why?

# Joshua Fights for Gibeon

(Joshua 10:1-15)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Today's lesson is about mercy. Do you know what mercy is? (Mercy is when you don't get the punishment you deserve.)

Have you ever done wrong and not gotten the punishment you deserved? That's mercy! How did that make you feel?

Mercy is also when you choose to be kind to someone when they don't deserve it. Here are some examples of showing mercy:

- Helping a child who borrowed your skateboard without asking and then got hurt.
- Asking a child to play with you even though he or she called you a name.

It is not easy to show mercy to someone who has wronged us. For example, it's not natural to be kind to someone who has lied to us.

When are some other times that it is hard to be kind and show mercy to others? (When other kids call you names. When it seems that others are not being fair. When the umpire calls an out when you think you are safe. When someone forgets to keep a promise.)

Today's lesson is about a time that Joshua showed mercy and if you listen carefully, you will learn that to show others God's kind of love you will treat others with mercy; you will choose to be kind to someone when they don't deserve it.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we need Your help in showing mercy and kindness to others. When someone wrongs us or is unfair to us, we naturally want to lash out and get them back, but You have asked us to be kind, even to our enemies. Please give us the desire in our hearts to extend love to everyone we meet. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. (Romans 12:17 NLT)*

## Lesson

The Promised Land belonged to the Israelites – God had given it to them. But the people who were living there were not happy. They did not want the Israelites taking their land from them!

The news of the Israelites' victories over Jericho and Ai spread throughout the land. The people knew that the God of the Israelites was much more powerful than the false gods they worshiped. In fact, the people of Gibeon were so afraid of the Israelites that they tricked the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them. When the other kings in the land heard about this treaty they really got nervous. That meant the Israeli army was even bigger and stronger than before.

The peace treaty meant that Joshua and the Israelites must help the Gibeonites if they were ever attacked by enemies. And the Gibeonites would help the Israelites if they were attacked. This made the kings of the other cities very nervous!

When Adoni-Zedek (AD-un-ni-ZEE-dehk), the king of the city of Jerusalem, heard about the Gibeonites' peace treaty with the Israelites he got very upset.

Joshua 10:1-2

*Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured and completely destroyed Ai and killed its king, just as he had destroyed the town of Jericho and killed its king. He also learned that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel and were now their allies. He and his people became very afraid when they heard all this because Gibeon was a large town—as large as the royal cities and larger than Ai. And the Gibeonite men were strong warriors.*

Adoni-Zedek called four other kings together and planned an attack against Gibeon.

## Joshua 10:4-5

*“Come and help me destroy Gibeon,” he urged them, “for they have made peace with Joshua and the people of Israel.” So these five Amorite kings combined their armies for a united attack. They moved all their troops into place and attacked Gibeon.*

The attack of the five armies caught the Gibeonites completely by surprise! They were outnumbered! They needed help, and they needed it fast! So, they sent a message to Joshua.

## Joshua 10:6

*The men of Gibeon quickly sent messengers to Joshua at his camp in Gilgal. “Don’t abandon your servants now!” they pleaded. “Come at once! Save us! Help us! For all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have joined forces to attack us.”*

As soon as Joshua heard those words, he knew what he had to do. He had made a promise. And even though the Gibeonites had lied to the Israelites, Joshua wanted to keep his promise because he loved and obeyed God. (Joshua was an honorable man.) Joshua called for his army and they started off toward Gibeon.

## Joshua 10:7

*So Joshua and his entire army, including his best warriors, left Gilgal and set out for Gibeon.*

As they marched, Joshua must have remembered how he had been tricked into making a treaty with the Gibeonites because he had not bothered to ask God what to do. This time Joshua must have asked God if he was doing the right thing. And God was faithful to answer.

## Joshua 10:8

*“Do not be afraid of them,” the LORD said to Joshua, “for I have given you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you.”*

Encouraged by God’s words, Joshua and his army marched through the night to join the Gibeonites.

## Joshua 10:9

*Joshua traveled all night from Gilgal and took the Amorite armies by surprise.*

When the enemy armies woke up the next morning, they saw that instead of just the Gibeonites, they had to fight against Joshua and the entire Israeli army, too!

Then God did something crazy! He caused the enemy armies to panic. The armies began to run from Joshua and the Israelites.

## Joshua 10:10 [Teacher, read...]

*The LORD threw them into a panic, and the Israelites slaughtered great numbers of them at Gibeon. Then the Israelites chased the enemy along the road to Beth-horon, killing them all along the way to Azekah and Makkedah*

And, God wasn’t finished with them yet!! Look what God did next!

## Joshua 10:11

*As the Amorites retreated down the road from Beth-horon, the LORD destroyed them with a terrible hailstorm from heaven that continued until they reached Azekah. The hail killed more of the enemy than the Israelites killed with the sword.*

God sent huge hailstones down on the enemies—great balls of ice! The hail killed more of them than all whole Israeli army!

But Joshua knew that it was important to be sure all the enemies were beaten before they had a chance to reorganize and attack again. There was only one problem. The sun was going to go down soon. What do you think would happen if it got dark? The Israelites wouldn’t be able to see the enemy soldiers. And many of the enemies would escape.

The Israelites needed God's help if he was going to finish the job now. So, Joshua prayed a very bold prayer, right in front of all the people.

Joshua 10:12

*On the day the LORD gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the LORD in front of all the people of Israel. He said, "Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon."*

Did God answer Joshua's prayer?

Joshua 10:13-14

*So the sun stood still and the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day. There has never been a day like this one before or since, when the LORD answered such a prayer. Surely the LORD fought for Israel that day!*

God heard Joshua's prayer and answered it specifically! God stopped the sun from going down! It got to be suppertime, and the sun was still high in the sky. It got to be bedtime, and the sun still hadn't gone down!

God miraculously helped the Israelites win the fight.

God honored Joshua for keeping his promise to the Gibeonites. Joshua showed mercy and helped the Gibeonites even though they had lied to him and tricked him!

Loving and obeying God is more than just going to church or reading our Bibles. It also means treating others fairly and kindly, whether we think they deserve it or not! That means we need to be careful not to say mean things about kids who say mean things about us, to be kind to kids we may not even like to be around and to keep our promises even when it is hard. God wants us to choose to be kind to people, even when they don't deserve it. God doesn't expect us to do these things on our own – He will help us show mercy to others.

## Closing Prayer

O merciful Father, we love You so much! Thank You for showing us mercy. You sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins even before we understood that we were sinners. Help us to be merciful to others, too. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Game Center

#### 1. Mercy Shot

**Materials:** six to eight slips of paper, marker, paper bag, container (wastebasket or cardboard box) beanbag or Nerf ball.

**Preparation:** On three or four slips of paper, print the word "mercy." Place the slips of paper you wrote on, along with remaining blank slips of paper, in the paper bag.

**Procedure:** Students line up about 5 feet from container. Place paper bag and beanbag at the front of the line. First student in line faces away from the container and throws the beanbag over his head, attempting to get the beanbag into the container. Student gives beanbag to next student in line and then goes to the end of the line. Each student in line takes a turn. When the first student is back at the front of the line, invite student to pick a paper from the bag. If the paper is blank, student attempts backwards throw again. If the paper says "mercy" on it, student may stand about 1 foot from container or face the container when tossing the beanbag or student may choose to give the mercy paper to another student.

**Response:** Ask the children how the game changed when you could pick a slip of paper? (It was a lot easier if you could take a mercy shot. You could take the mercy shot even if you didn't do anything to deserve that shot.)

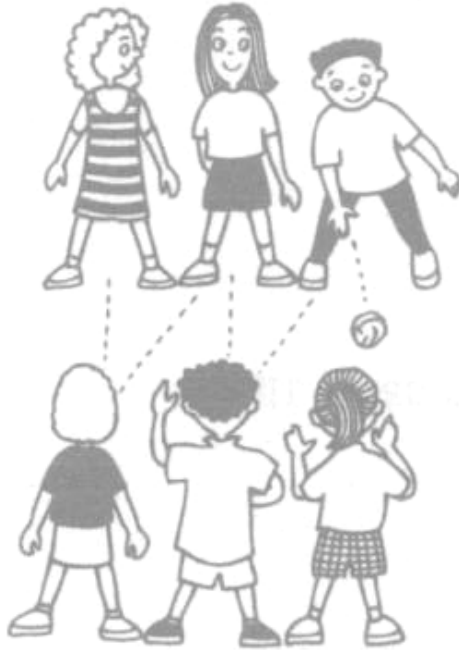
## 2. Foil Ball

**Materials:** Bibles, music, aluminum foil, one marble.

**Preparation:** Make several small balls from pieces of foil. Hide a marble in the center of one foil ball.

**Procedures:**

1. Lead students in a tossing game. Divide class into two groups. Groups line up facing each other, leaving about 3 feet between the two lines.
2. Using the foil ball with the marble in it, students toss the ball down the lines in a zigzag pattern. When the ball gets to the end of the line, the last student in each line runs to the front of his or her line and then tosses the ball to the student across from her or her. Practice a few rounds so that students get used to tossing and catching the ball in the correct pattern.
3. Play the music while students play the game again. Add the additional balls you prepared so that students are tossing three or four balls down the line at the same time. After a few moments, stop the music. Students unwrap the foil balls they are holding. Student holding the ball containing the marble answers one of the discussion questions below. Rewrap foil balls and play additional rounds as time allows.



## 3. Give me an "A"

Print the words of Romans 12:17 on index cards, drawing blank lines for each vowel. Make one set of cards for each group of two students. (You might copy each set onto a different colored paper.)

Mix up cards in each set. When you say "Go," have each team fill in the vowels to complete the words of the verse. Then put the cards in correct verse order. Team that finishes first wins.

After game, read the verse and ask:

- (1) What does this verse tell us to do and not to do?
- (2) What does repaying evil for evil mean?
- (3) How did Joshua obey this verse in today's story?
- (4) How can we learn what is right to do?

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

1. How did Joshua show that he loved and obeyed God? (He showed mercy to the Gibeonites and kept his promise to help them.) How did God help Joshua win the battle against the five kings and their armies?
2. Why might it have been hard for Joshua to keep his promise to help the Gibeonites? When are some times that it is hard for kids your age to be kind and show mercy to others? (When other kids call you names. When it seems that others are not being fair. When the umpire calls an out when you think you are safe. When someone forgets to keep a promise.)
3. Why do you think God wants us to show mercy to others?
4. When has someone shown mercy to you? When might you be able to obey God by showing mercy to a friend or family member?



**Sword Drills**

1. Read **Micah 6:8**. What does God require of us, or want us to do? Tell one way you can act justly (be fair), love mercy (treat others with undeserved kindness) or walk humbly with God (read His Word and obey what He commands).
2. Read **Matthew 5:43-44**. Verse 44 gives a good example of what it means to show mercy. What is it? How can you obey this verse?
3. Read **Luke 6:36**. How does God show His mercy to us? How can we follow that example when we try to show mercy to others?
4. Read **Romans 12:17**. What does this verse tell us to do? (Do what is right.) What does it tell us not to do? What does repaying evil for evil mean? (To be mean to someone because they were mean to you.) How did Joshua obey this verse in today's story? (Helped the Gibeonites even though they tricked him.) How can we learn what is right to do? (Read the Bible. Talk to wise people. Pray.)

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# Joshua's Final Choice

(Joshua 23 -- 24)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

### *Service with a Smile*

Teacher, as an opening exercise, play a game of charades with the children. Have the child act out an action for the others to guess, as follows:

**Procedure:** Write the following on separate slips of paper for the children to select:

- Serving juice and cookies
- Serving a volleyball
- Serving a Ping-Pong ball
- Serving the Lord

### **Response:**

We use the word “serve” a lot. What does it mean to serve a volleyball? To serve food? To serve other people? What are some other ways people can serve?

How would you act out “Serving the Lord”?

Today we'll talk about what it means to serve God.

## Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for always being faithful to us. You love and care for us every minute of every day. We want to show You how much we love You. Teach us today what it means to serve You. We want to live our lives in such a way that is pleasing to You so others will want to know You better. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve....But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15 NKJ)*

Every day we have choices to make. (What to wear, what to eat, whether to obey your parents or not.) You can make good choices and bad choices. Every choice we make has consequences.

- What would the consequence be if you chose to disobey your parents? [Let children respond.]
- If you chose to only eat cookies or chips all your life, what would be the consequence? (Poor health)

A really important choice you can make is who to be friends with.

What do you think the consequences would be if you made a poor choice in a friend? That friend could lead you to do wrong things, like stealing or lying or cheating. It's very important to choose friends that will help you make godly choices.

The most important choice you will ever make is whether to believe that Jesus took the punishment for your sin or not. What would be the consequence of choosing NOT to believe that? (Eternal separation from God.)

## Lesson

Joshua led the Israelites in their new land for many years. The Israelites had one victory after another as Joshua and the people loved and served God and followed His commands. God helped them defeat 31 different kings!

Joshua divided the Promised Land among the twelve family groups of the children of Israel. By the time we pick up the story this morning he was 110 years old.

Joshua 23:1-2

*The years passed, and the LORD had given the people of Israel rest from all their enemies. Joshua, who was now very old, called together all*

*the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel. He said to them, "I am now a very old man.*

Joshua knew he was growing old. His long life as leader of the Israelites was coming to an end. But he hadn't finished the job of taking the Promised Land. There were still groups of people living in the Promised Land that God wanted to destroy. Joshua knew that the Israelites were going to have a lot more work to do.

So he called the leaders of the people together. He had seen God do many mighty miracles, and he wanted the Israelites to remember God's goodness to them. The people came to hear Joshua speak for the last time.

Joshua 23:3

*You have seen everything the LORD your God has done for you during my lifetime. The LORD your God has fought for you against your enemies.*

Joshua encourages the children of Israel. He is saying "You have seen the power of God, you know His track record. Even though I won't be here to lead you, don't worry, God will help you finish the job."

Joshua 23:5-6

*This land will be yours, for the LORD your God will himself drive out all the people living there now. You will take possession of their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. "So be very careful to follow everything Moses wrote in the Book of Instruction. Do not deviate from it, turning either to the right or to the left.*

Joshua warns the children of Israel to always love and obey God and not to ever follow after the false gods of the people who still remain in the land.

Joshua 23:7-8

*Make sure you do not associate with the other people still remaining in the land. Do not even mention the names of their gods, much less swear*

*by them or serve them or worship them. Rather, cling tightly to the LORD your God as you have done until now.*

Joshua then reminds the people that it is by God's might that the peoples have been driven out before them, and not by their own strength.

Joshua 23:9

*For the LORD has driven out great and powerful nations for you, and no one has yet been able to defeat you.*

Joshua again tells the people to love and obey God.

Joshua 23:11

*So be very careful to love the LORD your God.*

Joshua warns them not to follow after other gods and warns them about what will happen if they don't stay loyal to God.

Joshua 23:12-13

*"But if you turn away from him and cling to the customs of the survivors of these nations remaining among you, and if you intermarry with them, then know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive them out of your land. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes, and you will vanish from this good land the LORD your God has given you.*

As long as the children of Israel loved and obeyed God, all would go well for them. But, if they started to follow after false gods, then God would stop taking care of them.

The people promised to always love and obey God.

Joshua 24:24

*The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey him alone."*

But Joshua knew that just saying the words was not enough.

## Joshua 24:26-27

*Joshua recorded these things in the Book of God's Instructions. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the terebinth tree beside the Tabernacle of the LORD. Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God."*

Joshua took a large stone and set it up under an oak tree to remind the people of the choice they had made. The Israelites had promised to serve only God. This stone would always remind the people of the agreement they had made with the Lord.

If they broke that promise, they would know that they only had themselves to blame. It was their choice and they would have to face the consequences.

**Choices**

The choices we make can tell a lot about us. Our choices show what is important to us. When we love God, our choices will show others our love for Him. When we love God, we will choose to show God's kind of love to others. God will help us make wise choices.

**Service**

Our verse for today not only talks about choices, but also about serving. This verse encourages us to choose to serve God.

As we learned earlier, we use the word "serve" in lots of different ways. (We can serve food to people, we can serve a volleyball or a ping-pong ball in a game.)

Is it possible to serve people?

If you were hired to be a servant to someone, what sorts of ways might they ask you to serve? (Prepare and serve food, clean the house, etc.) A servant's task is to do what his "master" requires, to be pleasing to him.

What do you think it means to serve the Lord? How do you do that? When have you seen someone serve God? What did that person do?

What are some ways *you* could serve God? (Help others. Obey His commands. Tell others about Him.) We can also serve God by worshipping Him. We can sing songs to Him, pray to Him and read His word.

Is it possible for you to serve another god beside our God, the Creator of the Universe?

In Joshua's time a lot of people made fake gods of wood and stone. We don't worship fake gods today, but sometimes we pay too much attention to things that aren't really important. Sometimes those things can push God into last place in our lives.

Anything that distracts you from loving and obeying God, can become an idol. If you spend more time playing video games than spending time with God, those video games have become an idol!

What kinds of things keep *you* from putting God first in your life? (TV, sports, toys, video games, and friends.)

A true servant of the Lord desires to honor God with their thoughts, words and deeds.

But what if I went through a whole day, able to check off everything on my to-do list, but was grumbling and complaining as I did each task? Am I serving the Lord with my thoughts?

When I choose to be pleasing to God in whatever I do, then no matter what my task is, I can serve the Lord with my thoughts!

When I desire to live in a way that is pleasing to Him – in my thoughts, words and deeds – then I begin to hear God's voice. When I listen and obey, I learn what God's will is for me in life's many different situations. Then He can carry out His will through me; I become a true servant of the Lord!

If you are a child of God, then you should choose to serve, love and obey God and give Him first place in your life. Why do you think that God deserves your love? [Teacher, discuss who God is and what He has done for us.]

God deserved the love of the Israelites; He had proved Himself to be a mighty God on their behalf. And He deserves our love, too.

## Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your love and care. We pray today that You will help us to always choose to love, serve, and obey You by showing love towards everyone You send into our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Learning Activities

### Game Center

#### *Memory Verse Card Game*

**Preparation:** Divide Joshua 24:15 into sections. Print each section on a separate index card. Make two complete sets of verse cards. Mix together cards from both sets and place face down in a stack.

**Procedure:** Divide class into two teams. (If you have a large class, divide class into additional teams.) Students from each team take turns choosing cards from the stack, trying to collect a complete set of verse cards. If the student's team needs the card to complete the verse, student keeps the card, placing it face up in front of the team. If the student's team already has the card, he or she returns the card to the bottom of the stack. Play continues until both teams have completed the verse.

**Say,** Joshua said these words when he was reminding the people to love, serve and obey God. How did he serve God? (Obeyed what God asked him to do in the battles. Led the people across the river and

around Jericho like God told him to do. Helped the Gibeonites even though they tricked him. Always reminded the people of God's ways and why they should obey them.)

#### **Choose God**

**Materials:** Markers, scrap paper, a large trash can, a clothesline or rope, and a Bible.

**Preparation:** Place a trash can in the center of the room. Lay a ten-foot clothesline (or rope) circle around the trash can. Set out markers and scrap paper.

**Say:** In Joshua's time a lot of people made fake gods of wood and stone. How do you think it would feel to bow and pray before a statue made of wood or stone? We don't worship fake gods today, but sometimes we pay too much attention to things that aren't really important. Sometimes those things can push God into last place in our lives. What kinds of things keep you from putting God first in your life? (TV, sports, toys, and friends.)

#### **Procedure:**

Using the markers and scratch paper, write the word or draw a picture of at least three things that tempt you to use too much of your time.

[Teacher, explain to the children that the pictures will be used for a game and won't be kept.] When the children all have finished their pictures, have them wad them up into paper balls. Then, from behind the clothesline circle, have the children take turns shooting "baskets" with their paper wads. Each time someone "Scores," have all the children shout, "Choose God!" Play until all the paper wads are in the trash can.

Afterwards, have children join hands around the circle and end in prayer.] Dear God, we want to choose you today. We're throwing away things that tempt us to forget You. Help us remember that You're our one, true God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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

1. What are some reasons Joshua gave the people for choosing to serve and obey God? (God gave them food and water. God helped them defeat enemies.)
2. What are some important choices everyone has to make? (To become part of God's family or not. To serve God or to ignore God's instructions. To do what is right or do what is wrong. To care only about themselves or to care about others.) Why are these choices important?
3. When have you seen someone serve God? What did that person do? How did it affect other people?
4. What do you think people who have chosen to serve God should do? (Show God's love by treating others fairly. Be patient with younger brothers and sisters. Read and pay attention to the Bible.)
5. What are some ways you can serve God at home? (Help without complaining. Learn more about God by reading the Bible and praying.) At school? (Do the best job possible. Be kind to other kids.) With friends? (Keep promises. Help friends with problems. Say kind words.)

### **Sword Drills**

1. Read **Deuteronomy 10:12-13**. What do these verses say to do (the words "to fear" mean to honor or respect)? How can you serve God in these ways every day?
2. Read **Joshua 24:15**. What is the choice this verse tells us to make? Why do you think it is important to serve God?

3. Read **John 13:13-16**. How did Jesus serve His disciples? Why does He tell them to serve others? What can you do to obey Jesus by serving other people?
4. Read **Romans 12:11-13**. How do these verses tell us to act? How have you obeyed these verses in the past?

### **Other Game Questions:**

1. When Joshua was 110 years old, who did he gather together? (The elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel.)
2. Why did he call together the leaders of the people? (He knew he would soon die and he wanted to encourage them to keep following the Lord.)
3. Who or what does Joshua warn the people to stay away from? (The Canaanites and their false gods.)
4. What will the consequence be if the people do not turn away from the Canaanites and their false gods? (Verse 13 says they will vanish from this good land the Lord has given them.)
5. What promise did the people make to Joshua? (That they would always serve and obey God.)
6. What does Joshua do to help the people remember their promise to always serve and obey God? (He put a huge stone under a tree to remind the people of their promise.)
7. Why do you think that God deserves our love and obedience? (He is a great and mighty God. He loves us and protects us and provides abundantly for us.)
8. Why is it important to make good choices? (Every choice has a consequence. Bad choices lead to bad consequences.)
9. Why is it important to serve God? (He deserves our honor.)

10. How do we serve God? (To serve is to obey. When we choose show His love to other people, we are choosing to love and obey Him.)
11. What can distract us from choosing to serve God? (Our idols: TV, video games, sports—anything that keeps us from loving and obeying God.)