

## GO FORWARD IN OBEDIENCE

All Activity Sheets

### KEY WORDS

OBEY HONOR FOLLOW BE WITH INSTRUCTIONS BRAVE DARE

### BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Joshua 3 – 4

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students know God will honor them when they follow his instructions, and that he will make them brave when they dare to obey him.

### MEMORY VERSE

“The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9b, NIV\*).

### PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Bible characters, even those who were involved in stories of miracles, may seem boring to children compared to characters in cartoons. Some of the children, especially the youngest ones, have difficulties differentiating fantasy from reality. One of our goals as teachers is to help them realize that the stories in the Bible are real. When your students name a television superhero, remind them time after time that the character is not real, but that the characters in the Bible were real. Today’s

Bible story tells us how God used his power to help those who trusted and obeyed him. Children live in an uncertain, often terrifying world. They need to know that the God of the universe cares for them and has the power to help them. In your teaching, emphasize that God knows and wants the best for us. Believing this will establish the foundation for trust and obedience.

This unit is sessions focus on trust in God. Joshua and Caleb trusted him when others did not. Joshua trusted that God would help him be the new leader. Joshua and the Israelites trusted that God would help them cross the Jordan River - even with its banks flooded - and take them into Canaan. Examples of these Old Testament heroes can help our elementary children know that they can also trust and obey God.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The 40 years of wandering in the desert ended. God led Israel to the banks of the Jordan River. The plans for his people were the same as before: they would go to Canaan and own the land that he had promised Abraham a long time ago. Obeying the divine mandate would not be as easy as it had been 4 decades ago. And it could still be harder now, as the banks of the Jordan River are overflowing.

Under Moses' leadership, God had given Israel a cloud and a pillar of fire to guide them. Now, the ark of the covenant was the visible sign of his presence. The priests went before the people, carrying the ark as a symbol of the presence of God who went before them showing them the way. After arriving at the Jordan and establishing camp there, Joshua waited three days until he received more instructions from the Lord. Finally, he told the people to prepare because God had said it was time to get going.

Sanctification would prepare the people to be witnesses of the powerful action of the Creator. It would show them their dependence on him. Only when we go to God and depend on him can the Lord do great wonders through us. After sanctification, the people were ready to cross the Jordan. As soon as the priests who carried the ark stepped into the water, the river dried up. The priests stood in the middle of the riverbed while the people crossed over dry land. After all had passed, Joshua called a person from each of the 12 tribes. He told them to take a stone from the bottom of the riverbed where the priests were standing. With those 12 stones they built an altar. That was for the people to remember the great power of God and how he used that power to help them when they followed his instructions.

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

### Follow the instructions

Before the session, tape or glue colored paper on the outside of a cardboard box shaped like a cube. Write the following instructions, one on each of the 6 faces of the cube:

Open the Bible to the book of Joshua.

Write your name on the board.

Walk to the door and then return to your seat.

Sing your favorite song.

Shake hands with three people without smiling.

Jump three times with your eyes closed.

Then, tell them: "Today we will see if you know how to follow directions." Have the children take turns throwing the cube up in the air, letting it fall to the floor. When the cube falls, the first child must read and do the instructions on the top of the cube. Then it is the next child's turn. Allow as many as like to have turns. Afterwards, ask them the following questions:

Were the instructions hard to follow?

Why do people give directions? (Because they need something to be done in a certain way or for us to learn something.)

Is it important to follow instructions? Why?

What can happen if you do not follow the instructions you are given?

Tell them: "The instructions of the game that we just did were just for fun, but following instructions is very important. In our bible story today we will discover how important it is to follow the instructions that God gives us."

## TEACH THE LESSON

Pass out the activity sheet for this session from the students' resources. Guide the children to cut out and assemble the figures. You will need for each child: pieces of cardboard to glue the figures to and colored pens, pencils or crayons (yellow or gold to color the ark). Once they finish assembling and coloring the figures, they can follow the Bible story that you will narrate.

### The daring crossing of the river

Instruct the children to look at Student Activity Sheet #234-A for the figure of Joshua speaking to the people. Joshua spoke to the Israelites and told them, "It is time to go to our new land. The priests will carry the ark of the covenant. Follow them, and that way

you'll know where to go. Wait and see, tomorrow God is going to do something amazing in our midst." Soon, all the people would see the power of God in action.

The ark of the covenant was a kind of golden box with two angels with their wings spread out on the top. It was the symbol of God's presence. The priests carefully picked up the ark and carried it, and thus the people would know that God was with them. (Tell the children to look for the figure of the priests carrying the ark.)

God spoke to Joshua, "Tell the priests to stand in the middle of the river. Tell people not to touch the ark. They must be kept at a distance."

The priests and the people obeyed God as Joshua instructed them. At that time of year, the banks of the Jordan River were overflowing with water. The water was very deep. The priests must have asked themselves, "Why does God ask us to do something that can be so dangerous?" But they decided to trust God and obey him. What do you think happened? (Allow the children to respond.)

Tell them to look for the figure of the river.

The priests put their feet in the water. The river stopped flowing! The water stopped completely! The riverbed was dry! How wonderful! The people looked with amazement and could see how the waters stopped running at the moment when the priests obeyed God and entered the water. These people had heard the story of how God had opened a dry road in the middle of the Red Sea when they were escaping from the Egyptians, but only a few had seen it with their own eyes. Now they were seeing the power of God in action!

The people of Israel crossed the river on dry land. But the priests remained in the middle of the Jordan.

After crossing the river, Joshua continued to obey every instruction that God gave him. God told Joshua, "Choose 12 men. Tell them to take 12 stones from the middle of the river close to where the priests are. Ask them to carry them to the place where we will stay tonight." So they did that. Those men went and got the heavy rocks and carried them on their shoulders from the middle of the river, where the priests had stopped, to their new homeland: Canaan. There was one stone for each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Ask the children to find the figure of the priests with the ark.

God told Joshua, "Tell the priests to come out of the river." The priests obeyed. And then, as soon as the last priest came out of the water, the water started to flow again. When the people saw what God had done, they honored Joshua as their leader. "God is with Joshua, just as he was with Moses," they all said.

Tell them to look for the figure of Joshua with the people.

Joshua led the people to the place where they would spend the night. There, Joshua used the 12 stones to build an altar.

Tell them to look for the figure of the 12 stones.

Joshua said, "One day our children will ask us questions. They will ask us, 'Why are these stones here?' Tell them that God helped us to cross the river on dry land. Tell them they can trust and obey God." That day the Israelites learned that God's power is greater and more powerful than any person or thing that could exist. God can do all things. He uses his power to take care of the world and people. We can trust him, even if we do not understand his plans.

Review the story and ask: "How did God show his power to the people of Israel in today's biblical story? (He helped them cross the Jordan River on dry ground.) What instructions did God give to the people? (That they could not touch the ark, that they were to bring 12 stones from the middle of the river.) Why was it important for the Israelites to follow God's instructions?" (To be able to reach the other side of the river and the promised land.)

Tell them: "Trust means obeying God even when we do not understand his plans. Joshua and the Israelites trusted and obeyed, and we can do the same.

## CONNECT THE LESSON

### Stones to remember

Before the session, gather a small stone for each child. They should be large and smooth enough to stick one of these words on them: "Trust", "obey" or "God's Power". Write those words on several sheets of paper. In the group, ask: "Why did God tell the people to build an altar of 12 stones?" (To remind them and their children how God had helped them.)

Give each child Student Activity Sheet #234-B and a rock. Ask them: "Which of these words would help you better remember this story and the power of God? Guide the children to choose "Trust", "Obey" or "God's Power" and stick it on their stone. Tell them:

“Our stones will help us remember this story. We can trust and obey God, even when we do not understand his plans and directions.”

## **PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE**

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

### **Fingerprint puzzle**

If you did not do this for the last session, prepare two sets of cardboard cards in the form of footprints, about 15 cm. long. On each footprint write one of the words of the memory verse. Divide the group in two, and give each one a set of cards. Ask them to place the cards with the text face down on the table and mix them up. Then have them assemble the puzzle / text correctly. The group that finishes first will be the winner. Then ask the children in the winning group to recite the memory verse by memory.

Another way to memorize by playing is: tape the footprints in order (forming the verse correctly) on the wall or on the board. Tell the children to read the verse together. Then let one of them remove one of the footprints. Then instruct everyone to repeat the verse, filling in the missing word. Continue this way by asking one child at a time to remove another of the footprints, until they have all been removed and they can say the entire verse from memory.

Those who have memorized Joshua 1:9 will be able to paste the memory verse on their candy jar. After dismissal, the children can take home their story of the crossing of the Jordan River. Tell them to tell their family and friends the story of God’s great power in helping his people cross the river on dry land.

## **WRAP-UP**

### **Pray**

Have a prayer time in which everyone can thank God for helping them. Finish by asking the Lord to help each child obey and trust him.

### **Encourage**

Encourage the children listen carefully to their parents and teachers this week so with God’s help they will obey these important leaders.

### **Invite**

Be sure to say something interesting about the next session. encourage the children to attend and to invite others.