

date: __1/14/18

Bible Passage: Joshua 1; 3—4
(Entering the Promised Land)

God Is Strength

REMEMBER VERSE

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Isaiah 40:29

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

As a child I was afraid of the dark. I would see shadows from trees outside and think they were ghosts. I would hear the roof of our house creak and think a kidnapper was coming. I would sometimes creep into my parents' room and complain I was afraid. My dad would simply walk me back to my room, tuck me back in, and pray with me.

At some point, I began singing songs—out loud. I remember singing a song titled “I’m Not Afraid” by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. Some of the lyrics were: “I’m not afraid of the darkness. Whom shall I fear if God be for me?” I would sing these words out loud, over and over again. I remember the power I felt while singing songs of courage and praise in the darkness. Feeling helpless and vulnerable, I instinctively knew the way to combat the fear was to declare that God is for me and with me and that I’m not afraid.

I already knew God was good. I knew He loved me. I knew He had all of the power. So, in those moments of fear, I knew He was my strength. As a scared little girl, I stepped out in faith. I physically projected my voice into the darkness in faith that God was for me. I proclaimed—out loud—I was not afraid of the darkness. Even today, whenever I am feeling afraid or vulnerable, I declare in faith that God is my strength.

Tori Funkhouser
TruStory Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Joshua held a special position as Moses' right-hand man and God's faithful servant. Moses appointed Joshua

to lead the people into battle. Moses asked Joshua to accompany him on Mount Sinai, when God gave him the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24). He told Joshua, along with the 12 other spies in Numbers 13, to survey the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies who possessed the faith to enter the Promised Land God had given them.

Even though Joshua and Caleb had faith to “take possession of the land,” (Numbers 13:30) the rest of the people were afraid. They grumbled and rebelled. Because of this, God said, “Not one of you will enter the land I swore ... to make your home, except Caleb ... and Joshua” (Numbers 14:30). Then He instructed the people and Moses to turn back into the wilderness and wander until a new generation had been born and the old one, over the age of 20, had died off. God also refused Moses entrance into the Promised Land because Moses, out of anger, struck the rock God had instructed him to speak to (Numbers 20:7–12).

When Moses was dying, he passed the mantle of leadership to Joshua, saying, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance” (Deuteronomy 31:7). The inheritance of the land would be the fruit of the promise that God made with the Israelites’ forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In Joshua, we read how God gave the Israelites victory, battle after battle, and allowed them to take the land, piece by piece. All the kings who heard about the Israelites and their mighty God were terrified. Not one of the kings was able to stand against Israelites because God, in His never-ending strength, was fighting for Israel.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

God knew it would require great strength and courage for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. But He did not leave His people to rely on their own strength. He gave them strength because He promised to be with them. He gave them the tools to act on their strength and courage by giving them Scripture to meditate upon.

God said, “Be strong and courageous ... for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). God also said, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (1:8).

As you lead this lesson, spend time meditating on Psalm 27:1: “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” When we meditate on Scripture, God promises that it will become firmly rooted inside of us. After you spend time in Scripture, pray the kids will experience God as the stronghold of their lives too. Pray they will recognize that His strength knows no limits.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Strong Straws

Lead your kids through an activity that identifies the source of strength. This fun activity will allow children to create a strong and solid structure using simple items.

SUPPLIES

- Drinking straws (25–30 for every 6 children, plastic)
- Modeling clay (1 medium-sized lump for every 6 children)
- Books (1 for every 6 children, lightweight)

RELATE

After the death of Moses, God used Joshua to lead the Israelites. God reminded Joshua many times to be strong and courageous. God promised that He would be with Joshua wherever he went. God promised to be Joshua's strength and support as he led the people.

Today we're going to build structures out of things that seem pretty flimsy: straws. On their own, they're weak, but when we connect them together, they become strong. That's kind of like us: As humans, we're weak. Joshua was just a person, and he was weak. But when we, as ordinary people, connect to God, the source of our strength, He makes us strong.

Invite the children to break up into groups of six, and give each group straws, modeling clay, and a book. Encourage kids to take a straw, squeeze and fold in half one end, and slide it into another straw. They can use this method to connect straws together. Then they can use modeling clay to help secure the ends and give their structure a more solid foundation.

Once each group finishes their structure, invite them to place a book on top to test the structure's strength.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Isaiah 40:29

Connect

Encourage the members of your community to get to know one another through engaging questions, energizing games, and creative activities.

Question

When was a time you had to be strong and courageous?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Joshua 1; 3—4

Storytelling Technique: Children Acting Out Narrative
God Is Strength

SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline animation](#) (see Resources)
- [Image: Ark of the Covenant](#) (see Resources)
- Optional: [Storytelling video](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Construction paper (12 sheets, gray or brown)
- Scissors
- Paper (1 sheet)
- Marker (dark-colored)
- Optional: Bible-times costumes

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut a large rock shape out of each sheet of construction paper. On the sheet of regular paper, write "The Law" in bold letters.

SET UP

During this week's Storytelling time you'll have several children help you act out portions of the narrative. Choose one child to play Joshua, a few kids to play the river, two kids to play the priests, one child to play the ark of the covenant, and 12 kids to represent each of the tribes of Israel. Give Joshua the paper with "The Law" written on it, and give one paper rock to each child representing one of the 12 tribes. (If you have a smaller group, choose a couple of children to represent all 12 tribes.)

RELATE

Has there ever been a time you missed out on something that you'd been looking forward to? Interact with responses. Optional: Share a time you experienced this. **Some of the Israelites experienced this too. Before we hear more, let's pray together.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Remember how God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt? After that, God made a covenant with them and showed them how to set themselves apart for Him by giving them the Ten Commandments. Well, the Israelites stopped trusting in God and disobeyed Him. So God disciplined them for their lack of faith and told Moses they wouldn't enter the Promised Land. Instead, they wandered in the desert for 40 years! Though the people disobeyed, God didn't forget His promise to give the Israelites their own land. The next generation of God's people would see the Promised Land.

When Moses was about to die, he gave a man named Joshua the job of leading God's people into the Promised Land. Ask the child playing Joshua to come forward. Invite the kids to open their Bibles to Joshua 1:3–6, and read these verses while the kids follow along. **When God told Joshua to be strong and courageous, He wasn't telling Joshua to be physically strong, God wanted Joshua to be spiritually strong and trust in God's strength as He led the Israelites. How does someone be spiritually strong and courageous?** Allow responses. **Good thoughts.**

It takes faith to be very strong and courageous! Faith is trusting and obeying God. First, God told Joshua to read through the law (the Ten Commandments) that He gave Moses. Have Joshua pretend to read "The Law." **God knew that reading this would increase Joshua's faith.** Have a child read Joshua 1:9 while the others follow along. **God reminded Joshua that He is strength and He would be the source of Joshua's strength and courage. Joshua didn't have to be strong by himself—he had God with him!**

Joshua followed God's instructions and told the people to prepare to cross the Jordan River. The Jordan River cut God's people off from the Promised Land, so crossing this river was an important first step in getting to the land. Invite the children playing the river to lie on the ground, wave their arms in the air, and make the sounds of rushing water. **The people said to Joshua: "Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses"** (Joshua 1:17).

Before the people crossed the river, Joshua gave them instructions. First, he told them to follow the ark of the covenant carried by the priests. The ark of the covenant was a large box made of wood and gold. Tech: Cue Ark of the Covenant image. The ark held the Ten Commandments. The priests carried the ark into the river. Invite the kids playing priests to carry the child playing the ark across the river by grabbing him by his wrists and ankles. Then read Joshua 3:15–16a while the rest of the kids follow along.

As soon as the priests stepped into the water, it stopped flowing! Have the kids playing the river stop moving. **The priests, holding the ark of the covenant, stood in front of the waters until all of the Israelites had crossed the river and reached the other side. Does this sound familiar to anyone?** Allow responses. **Yes! God did the same thing for His people when Moses led the Israelites across the Red Sea. Once again, God was showing a new generation His strength and mighty power and, as a result, increasing their faith.**

Then Joshua chose 12 men, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Invite Joshua to gather the kids playing the 12 tribes. **God told Joshua to have each man take a stone out of the middle of the Jordan River and carry it to the other side. God wanted these rocks to be a reminder that He had cut off the**

river's flow. Have the 12 carry their rocks to the other side of the river and place them on the ground.

While the men collected the rocks, the priests stood in the middle of the Jordan river. Once everyone had crossed the river, the priests followed with the ark of the covenant to the other side. Have the priests and the ark finish crossing through the river. **Can you guess what happened next?** Choose a child to read Joshua 4:18 out loud. **Wow! When the priests' feet touched the other side of the river, the water came rushing back!** Have the kids playing the river begin to wave their arms and make rushing water sounds again.

The Israelites experienced a long season of pain as they were forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. God disciplined that entire generation because they didn't have faith that He was strong and would take care of them. However, the next generation of Israelites chose to follow the path that God had provided for them. It must have been difficult at times, but they knew God was their strength, and they followed His leading as He brought them into the Promised Land.

After God disciplines us, it can take courage to submit to God's way for our lives, especially when we don't know what will happen. But God is the source of strength and courage. When we choose to trust and obey Him, He gives us everything we need to follow Him. Share a time when God gave you strength to change your path.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Is Strength

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **To whom did Moses give his job of leading the Israelites?** Deuteronomy 31:7
- **What did the Israelites have to cross to get to the land God had promised them?** Joshua 1:2
- **Who made the waters of the river pile up so that the Israelites could cross safely?** Joshua 3:13
- **How do you think it might have felt to walk through the river on dry ground?**
- **When have you asked God to be your strength in a tough situation?**

Questions for Older Kids

- **Who made the waters of the river pile up so that the Israelites could cross safely?** Joshua 3:13
- **How do you think it might have felt to walk through the river on dry ground?**
- **What did the stones the Israelites set up represent?** Joshua 4:5–7
- **How can you remember all the ways God has been faithful to you and given you strength?**
- **How did God's miracle at the Jordan River strengthen the Israelites' faith?** Joshua 4:21–24

- How is God the source of our courage and strength?
- When have you asked God to be your strength in a tough situation?

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

As you bless your kids, tell them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share the joy and love they have received from God.

Open a Bible and read Psalm 27:1, 4:

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? ... One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Now invite the children to echo a response to each phrase you say.

Leader: **The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?**

Children: The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?

Leader: **The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?**

Children: The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

Leader: **One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:**

Children: One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:

Leader: **That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.**

Children: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

End by praying the following blessing over your children:

May you know that God alone is the source of your courage and strength. May you seek Him every day of your life.