



SESSION 1 of 4

Joshua

MEETING AIM

To reflect on leadership and how we can be leaders like Joshua was to God's people.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 1

BACKGROUND

This passage marks a change for the people of God. Moses – who had led them from Egypt to the very borders of the Promised Land – has died and they now have a new leader, Joshua. Joshua was Moses' apprentice, but now he has to step into leadership at a very uncertain time. There are difficult times ahead, and Joshua needs to depend on God. Fortunately, God gives him the reassurance he needs to take on the task. This session focuses on helping the young people think about leadership and depending on God, as Joshua did.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the young people and spend some time chatting about their week. Ask the groups some questions, such as: what is the best chocolate in a box of Celebrations? How many colours are there in a rainbow? KFC or McDonald's? Would you rather live by the sea or in the mountains? Which house from Harry Potter would you be in? Would you rather be a giant hamster with a trunk or a tiny elephant?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper and pens

Ask everyone to imagine they are in the following fairy tale:

You are a frog. You have been a frog for as long as you can remember, but you have a nagging feeling this is not who you really are. From your lily pad on the pond you see all kind of spectacular things going on in the world: business people creating exciting companies and making money; beautiful people appearing in adverts and singing to thousands on stage; people building families and laughing together as they grow old in ivy-clad cottages; adventurous types base jumping, mountain biking, swimming across lakes and hiking across Asia; doctors curing diseases; and princesses and princes leading the people.

One day the person of your dreams stops at the pond and looks at you, then says: "I'm going to break the spell and reveal who you really are...and give you the life you most want in the world." The person kisses you on your warty, froggy nose.

Who do you turn into? Where do you live, and what is your life like? Ask them to write their answers on the paper and all reveal them at the same time. Go around the group to discuss their answers.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: story from youthandchildrens.work/resources

Before the session, download the story from youthandchildrens.work/resources and either practise telling it yourself or ask someone else in the group to prepare it.

Gather everyone together and invite them to listen to the story. Explain that Moses has just died and that God has appointed Joshua as the new leader of his people. Joshua had been Moses' apprentice as the Israelites – the people of God – wandered through the desert toward the promised land.

Once the story is over, ask the young people to give their first impressions of what they have heard.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask someone, or a couple of people, to sum up the story. Use the following questions to start the discussion:

- What is the main theme of this story for you?
- What advice do you have for Joshua in terms of becoming all that he could be?
- What should Joshua do after this episode? What are the most important things for him to do in the days that followed? How can he establish himself as a great leader of the Israelites?
- What is God saying to you through this story?

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper; marker pens

Put the young people into pairs. Ask them to write a list of the ten most important attributes that all great leaders must have. Once everyone has finished, discuss their answers as a whole group. Then ask the following questions:

- Do most great leaders have all of these attributes when they start out?
- How do they get them?

- How does it happen in the movies? Does it happen like that in real life?
- How many of these characteristics do you personally have? How could you cultivate more?
- What does God hope you will be like one day?
- What raw materials is God looking for in order to develop you into all that you could be?

Ask the young people to imagine that they are leaders in their own community. What big idea could bring everyone more together? What characteristics would you need in order to be trusted (for example, people may need to feel listened to, they might need a credible Christian to be inspired by or they may need a business leader to help them create income and employment in their neighbourhood).

What resources does your community need in order to thrive and become a 'promised land'? This could be better public spaces, more jobs and investment, more time to spend together, a common thing to be proud of as a community, or more to do generally so there is less crime and violence.

Give the group (working alone, in pairs or all together) time to work some of this out and write down some ideas. If working together, use large sheets of paper so that everyone can contribute. Come back together after a few minutes and share your thoughts.

5 PRAYER

You will need: community ideas from 'Creative response'; music and the means to play it

Play some worship music. On their own or in groups, encourage the young people to reflect on their community ideas and to pray into these areas. Ask them to pray for provision from God but also for inspiration about how they could act or intervene themselves. If they can't be superheroes in their community alone, how could they combine to start meet some of the needs? Pray for wisdom about this, but focus on the people who need God's help. Pray for those in positions of power politically (councillors and MPs), but also for religious leaders, community leaders and other role models in sport, art and charity work.

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SESSION 2 of 4

Joshua

MEETING AIM

To explore how God includes Rahab, an outsider, in his plans.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 2

BACKGROUND

It's easy to look at outsiders and say that they are not part of things or that they don't deserve to be included. This kind of attitude is common as children and young people grow up and find their place. Excluding others can give a (temporary) sense of being included ourselves. However, in this story we meet Rahab who, by all measures, should not have been part of God's story or plan. And yet God uses her, saves her and even makes her part of Jesus' family tree.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the young people and spend some time chatting about their week. Share out any refreshments you have brought with you. Celebrate in their triumphs and share in their disasters, and perhaps share a bit about your week with them.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: matchsticks (headless matchsticks are available cheaply from craft shops or online. If you can't get hold of them, use other tokens such as coins, beads or Lego bricks)

Play the matchsticks Yes / No game. Give everyone three matchsticks. They must mingle around the room, asking each other questions. Every time they trick someone into saying yes or no, that person has to give them a matchstick. Players with no matchsticks left can continue playing to try to get some back, but the winner after five minutes is the person with the most matchsticks.

After the game, ask if there are any people who can't be part of God's plan. To whom would they say yes or no? What qualifies people to be included?

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: story from youthandchildrens.work/resources

Before the session, download the story from youthandchildrens.work/resources

and either practise telling it yourself or ask someone else in the group to prepare it.

Gather the group together and explain that Joshua and the Israelites are camping on the banks of the River Jordan. Across the river lies the land God has promised them. However, there are already people living in the land. The first city the Israelites come to after crossing the river is Jericho.

Joshua sends spies into the city to discover more about it. But the spies become trapped in the home of Rahab, a woman – most likely a prostitute – whose house is in the city walls. Invite them to listen to the story.

Once the story is over, ask the young people to give their first impressions on what they have heard. Read Joshua 2 to the group and compare the two accounts.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions to start the discussion. Encourage everyone to contribute:

- How do you feel about this dramatisation? Is it realistic? Do you have a different picture of it in your head? What would you add or change?
- What was good and impressive about Rahab?
- What was bad or flawed about her?
- Why did the soldiers despise her so much?
- Why did she decide to help the spies?
- What is God looking for in people when he is deciding whom to use for his plans?
- In what ways might we consider ourselves to be outside God's plans?

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a pile of damp sand; 28 small name cards for each person from the following list; matchsticks from 'Intro activity'; sticky tape; blank cards; marker pens

Scatter the name cards around the floor. Read out the following as they look over the names:

Noah was a drunk.
 Abraham was too old.
 Isaac was a daydreamer.
 Jacob was a liar.
 Leah was ugly.
 Joseph was abused.
 Moses had a stuttering problem.
 Rahab was a prostitute.
 Gideon was afraid.
 Samson was a womaniser.
 Naomi was a widow.
 David was an adulterer (not to mention a murderer).
 Elijah was suicidal.
 Isaiah preached naked.

Jeremiah was too young.
 Jonah ran from God.
 Job went bankrupt.
 John the Baptist ate bugs.
 Andrew lived in the shadow of his big brother.
 The Samaritan woman was divorced (more than once).
 Martha worried about everything.
 Zacchaeus was a cheat.
 All the disciples fell asleep while praying (and ran away when Jesus really needed them).
 Peter denied Christ.
 Mary Magdalene was demon-possessed.
 Timothy had an ulcer.
 Paul was a Christian-killer.
 Oh...and Lazarus was dead.

Tell everyone to look over these names and choose one that they personally can identify with. Ask them to tape a matchstick to one side of it and symbolically stick it, like a flag, into the sand. Spend some time reflecting on the similarities and differences between yourself and that character, but finish by thinking of how God used the person and how he might use you despite, alongside or because of your shortcomings, cultural differences or uniqueness.

Create your own name card and stick it into the sand.

5 PRAYER

You will need: sand and name flags from 'Creative response'

As you look over the sand with the name flags in it, pray a prayer which recognises that no one has ever been perfect, but that God has used everyone who loved him in some way throughout history to build his Church.

Finish by reading the above list again, but after each two or three lines say: "And God still used them." The young people should reply together: "And he will still use me."

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SESSION 3 of 4

Crossing the Jordan

MEETING AIM

To reflect on the obstacles between us and achieving what God has promised us, and to work with God to overcome them.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 3-4

BACKGROUND

Joshua and the people of God stand on the brink of the Promised Land, but the River Jordan stands between them and their opportunity to enter it. They have to trust that God will help them overcome this final hurdle.

This session will encourage the young people to think about what God has promised them, and what stands between them and his promises. Help the group to reflect on these promises (or to seek God for what he has in store) and explore how they can rely on him to bring them about.

5 GATHERING TIME

Welcome the young people and spend some time chatting about their week. Share out any refreshments you have brought with you. Celebrate in their triumphs and share in their disasters, and perhaps share a bit about your week with them.

Ask what memories of water they have. It could be a beach holiday or swimming in a lake. It might be a hot shower after a long muddy walk or a cold drink after a particularly hot game of football.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: two pint glasses; two jugs of water; Jenga blocks

Ask two volunteers to sit opposite each other. Give each a pint glass of water, a jug of water and an equal pile of Jenga blocks. The aim is to drink all the water in the glass, but you're only allowed to drink while your Jenga tower is fully built. If you have a full Jenga tower you can knock over your opponent's to stop them drinking and fill up the other person's glass from the jug.

After a set time limit, or if one player succeeds in draining their glass, ask for another couple of volunteers to play. Chat about the difficulties of achieving the goal of keeping their tower fully built. What obstacles did they have to overcome to achieve their goal?

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: story from *youthandchildrens.work/resources*

Before the session, download the story from *youthandchildrens.work/resources* and either practise telling it yourself or ask someone else in the group to prepare it.

Gather the group together and explain that the people of God, the Israelites, have to cross the River Jordan to reach the land God had promised them. They are standing on the banks looking at Promised Land. Invite them to listen to the story.

Once the story is over, ask the young people to give their first impressions of what they have heard.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask someone, or a couple of people, to sum up the story. Use the following questions to start the discussion:

- Where does Joshua's image of the dead, muddy fish come from? Why is this significant? (It refers to the time when Moses parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to escape from Egypt into the desert 40 years earlier.)
- Why was the Promised Land so important to the Israelites?
- What does this story tell you about God for the Israelites then, but also for us today?
- What impact would parting the Jordan River like this have had on the Israelite people? Would it have helped in their attack on the people who already lived there?
- Is there a 'promised land' for us as Christians? Do you have one as a church or an individual? This is not about geographical land, but a spiritual accomplishment, community or vision God has placed on your hearts.
- Which obstacles are in the way?
- What 'weapons', or strengths and opportunities, do we have along the way?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: a flat water slide, long tarpaulin or tent ground sheet; water
Lay out your water slide, long tarpaulin or tent ground sheet. Do this outside if possible (if you do it inside you'll need to limit the amount of water you use). Gather everyone on the near side and ask them to take their shoes and socks off. Pour some water on the slide – just enough for the group to get their feet wet and create a little splash, but not enough to make it slippery. Say that this represents the River Jordan.

Stand over the other side of the Jordan from your young people and encourage them to visualise this as a river that is blocking them from the Promised Land. What was the Promised Land for the Israelites? What is it for Christians? What is their personal promised land? What is it they want to move into (for example, a new season of life, a career, a calling or other things God might have placed on their hearts)?

Ask the young people to close their eyes and visualise any obstacles in the way and the things that stop or slow them down. You may wish to have a time to chat one-on-one about these obstacles and discuss what they can do to overcome them.

5 PRAYER

You will need: your River Jordan from 'Creative response'

While people are still standing on the river's edge, pray and ask God's Spirit to rest on the young people, to speak into their hearts, to embolden them again about taking that 'land'. Ask for God's supernatural intervention and action in their lives – his provision spiritually and materially, everything they need to get across.

Tell them that when they feel ready to slowly walk across the river as a symbol of embracing God's proactive leadership in their lives, but also the fact that they personally have to get up and get on with it themselves!

Afterwards ask for people to say how they felt and share what it meant for them. Ask them to pray for each other in pairs about moving into their respective 'promised lands' and around the obstacles they face.

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SESSION 4 of 4

Jericho

MEETING AIM

To reflect on following God, even during difficult or unusual situations.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 6

BACKGROUND

The story of the Israelites conquering Jericho is alien to our contemporary ears. We might find the unusual tactics surreal and the wholesale slaughter repulsive. It's important to address these concerns if the young people bring them up, and to reflect on what is going on and why. It's worth digging deeper into this for yourself before the session so you have some theories and ideas to share.

However, God is still at work here. Joshua and the Israelites learn a valuable lesson in terms of obedience (no military leader would have thought this was a good approach for attacking a city!). While God won't call us to the destruction we encounter in Joshua 6, he may call us to act in ways that might not appear logical at first. How do we react in such situations?

10 GATHERING TIME

Have a drink and snack together. Try playing the Malteser game to lighten the mood and get everyone chatting. The young people must tilt their heads back or lie on their backs and rest a Malteser on their lips. If they blow evenly but strongly enough they can make the Malteser float on a bed of air above their lips. Challenge them to see who can do it for the longest or get it the highest, but it only counts if they can drop back into their mouths afterwards!

How difficult was it? Did your group members think that it would be impossible before they tried it?

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a football-sized ball
Choose two or three 'attackers'. Everyone else should stand in a circle facing outwards and link arms. They are the defenders. The three attackers must try to kick or roll a ball into the circle without touching the defenders. The defenders can rotate, move around and use their feet, knees and hips to keep the ball out, but they must not unlink arms.

Once the attackers have been successful, change them over and play again.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: story from youthandchildrens.work/resources

Before the session, download the story from youthandchildrens.work/resources and either practise telling it yourself or ask someone else in the group to prepare it.

Gather the group together and explain that Joshua and the people of God are ready to attack Jericho – the first major city in their campaign – to take possession of the land God had promised them. Invite them to listen to the story.

Once the story is over, ask the young people to give their first impressions of what they have heard.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions to start the discussion, encouraging everyone to contribute:

- What are your first thoughts about the story? What emotions does it stir up in you?
- How do you feel about the violence God ordered?
- How was being a follower of God different in those times from now?
- Would you have had the courage to trust God and order the Israelites to walk around the city instead of attacking it?
- Why do you think he asked them to walk around the city in the way that he did? What did it achieve (apart from that the walls fell down)?
- What importance does this story have for us as Christians?
- What does Jericho symbolise to you, or for us as a body?
- Have you ever felt that God has asked you to do something strange or something you didn't understand the reasons behind?
- What things do we do because we are Christians that non-Christians wouldn't understand? How do you feel about that?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: art materials; large sheets of paper; notebooks; pens; Bibles

Spread the art materials and journaling notebooks out, then encourage the young people to create or write something that reflects what God has been saying to them through the story of the Israelites conquering Jericho. Have some Bibles handy so the group can check out Joshua 6 as they reflect and work. Don't give any guidelines as to what they have to do; simply give them the time and space to respond.

With activities like this, the end product isn't the most important thing. In fact, some might produce great stuff, while others come out with nothing. What is important is the process the young people go through. Creating something with their hands gives their minds and souls time to process what God is saying to them.

The story and the discussion in 'Chatting together' might have brought up issues the young people need to reflect on more deeply, and this activity will help them do that. Make sure you and other leaders are free to chat if they want to talk about any of these issues.

5 PRAYER

You will need: wooden blocks (giant Jenga would be best, but ordinary Jenga, Lego or Duplo would also be suitable); small blank stickers; pens

Give everyone a pen and a sticker. Ask the young people to write a word on their sticker that gets in the way of them being a radically obedient Christian. Use these bricks to build a wall. Spend a minute or two alone, quietly looking at the words and praying. When everyone has had a chance to do so, invite them to smash the wall down.

Tell everyone to get another sticker and write a word of thanks or praise about something they are grateful to God for, then stick these over the previous ones on the bricks (it doesn't need to be over their own sticker). Arrange these bricks into a cross shape and have the group members stand in a circle around it. Go around the circle with everyone reading a word from one of the bricks and praying a sentence of prayer to thank or praise God.

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