

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Joshua



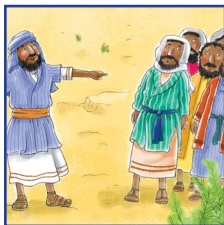
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A Story Bible Curriculum

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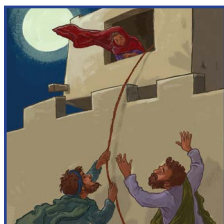
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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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Connecting with the Biblical Text

Moses did not live to enter the land God promised the Israelites. Their new leader, Joshua, led them into it. Joshua, the son of Nun, is first introduced in Exodus 17 when Moses instructs him to take an army to fight Amalek and his forces. As long as Moses holds up his hands, with Aaron and Hur assisting when Moses's arms got tired, Joshua and the army are strong. Eventually, Joshua won the battle because God was on the side of the Israelites. By Exodus 24, Joshua is known as Moses's assistant. In this story, Joshua faces the first test of his leadership as the people prepare to cross the Jordan River into the land God promised them. He is constantly urged by God to "be strong and courageous" (vv. 6, 7, 9). His task is to be brave, strong, and confident in God's promises. All of God's people might live by this advice.

Connecting with the World

"Be brave and strong." These people lived or live by these words spoken by God to Joshua.

- ✦ Martin Luther King Jr. is surely a person who was strong and courageous. Read about his life at the Nobel Prize website: bit.ly/GLMLKingLife.
- ✦ A woman of courage who took over after her husband's assassination, Corey Aquino represents faithful concern for others. Read about her at bit.ly/GLCorazonAquino.
- ✦ As a young woman, Malala Yousafzai bravely stood up to all manner of threats. For her story, see bit.ly/GLMalalaYousafzaiStory.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

God's words to Joshua, "Be brave and strong," are helpful in strengthening children to live their faith.

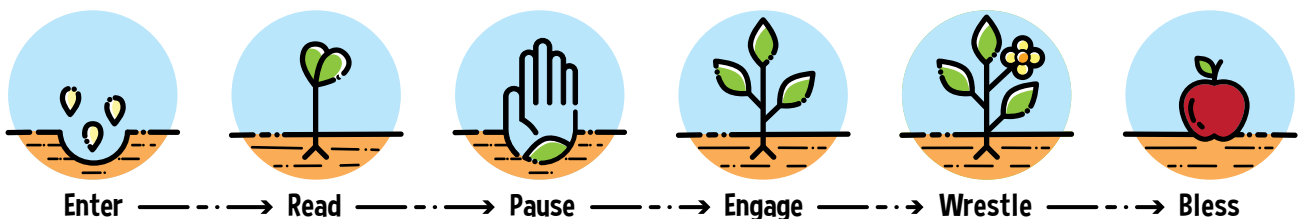
✦ **Goal:** To explore what it means to be brave and strong.

Alongside Joshua's story, provide contemporary stories of people who have lived courageous, faithful lives. Helpful books include *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles (Scholastic Paperbacks, 2010), about a young girl who defied the racist taunts and more to integrate the white elementary public school; *Back of the Bus* by Aaron Reynolds (Puffin Books, 2013), which tells the story of Rosa Parks through the eyes of a young boy; and *Courage* by Bernard Waber (HMH Books for Young Readers, 2002), which expands the meaning of courage and bravery in many directions, including less obvious ones. The words to Joshua could be a breath prayer for children when they are anxious, as they whisper or think "Be brave" as they inhale and whisper or think "and strong" as they exhale.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

- ✦ When have you needed encouragement from someone in order to complete a task or stay with a job or project? Perhaps a course at school was more difficult than you expected, or you agreed to a volunteer position that seemed beyond your capability. What or who helped you stay the course?
- ✦ Joshua was not the only one to receive the advice to be strong and brave. Isaiah also preaches this message in Isaiah 41:6-10. Read these verses and take courage from them. Also consider when you have urged someone to "take courage" (v. 6).
- ✦ When you are anxious, fearful, or feel unsettled, consider this portion of Paul's final greeting to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (CEB): "Stay awake, stand firm in your faith, be brave, be strong. Everything should be done in love."

God of strength, as I approach moments of anxiety or fear, I will remember your words to Joshua about being strong and courageous because you are always with me. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you may need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Pillows or cushions
- ✓ Art supplies
- ✓ A prop box with tunics, ropes for belts, fabric for headdresses (see the picture on pp. 100–101 in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*), and a map or a scroll
- ✓ *Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson (HMH Books, 2018) or internet-connected device
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 1

Preparing to Lead

Begin by breathing in deeply and then slowly exhaling. Take two more deep breaths in and out. Center yourself in the present moment. Pray for God to be with you as you prepare to lead.

Read Joshua 1:1–17 using a translation of your choice. As you read, make a note of what words, images, and ideas stand out to you. Note any questions this passage raises for you. Then read the story “Joshua Leads with God’s Help” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 100).

Reflect on these questions:

- ✓ When has God called you to be brave or courageous? What was this experience like?
- ✓ When have you served in a leadership role? What, if any, were your hesitations or fears? What gave you the courage to lead? Who were the people who helped you?
- ✓ What are some of the traits of good leaders? Who do you know that exemplifies these traits?
- ✓ What are some of God’s instructions that you seek to follow in your daily life? How do these instructions shape your decisions, actions, and interactions?
- ✓ When do you feel God’s presence with you most? How do you experience God’s presence?

Recall the names and faces of the children you will teach. Pray for each of them by name.

Before the children arrive, create a comfortable seating area with floor pillows, carpet squares, or cushions.



Enter into sacred space together.

Invite the children to gather in the seating area. Welcome them each by name, and let them know that you are glad they are here. Turn on the candle. Tell the children that you are turning on the candle as a reminder that God is present with us as we read the Bible. Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions as you pray:

Dear God, (*fold hands*) /
open our ears to hear you. (*point to ears*) /
Open our eyes to see you. (*point to eyes*) /
Open our hearts to feel you. (*place hands over heart*) /
Amen. /



Read a story of God's people.

Share that today you are going to read a story about a leader named Joshua. Ask the children to raise their hand if they have been a leader. Commend all the children who raised their hand for being leaders, and then invite them to put their hand down. Share that Joshua also had lots of helpers. Ask the children to raise their hand if they have been a helper. Commend them for being good helpers, and then ask them to put their hand down. Invite one or two children who raised their hand to give an example of when they have been a leader or helper.

Invite the children to listen to how Joshua lead the Israelites with God’s help. Read “Joshua Leads with God’s Help” (pp. 100–101).



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children into a time of quiet reflection. Encourage them to remember this story. Ask the children to reflect on this question: What does it mean to be brave and strong?

Leading

Have art supplies available for children to illustrate their reflection, if they choose.

After a few moments, turn off the candle. Share that you are going to continue thinking about the story of Joshua together.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Explore this story by engaging the children's curiosity and imagination using the following questions:

- How do you think Joshua felt when he became the new leader of the Israelites?
- Why do you think God tells Joshua not to be afraid?
- What does God promise Joshua and the people he was leading?
- How does God help Joshua?
- What does God tell Joshua time and time again? What do you think God's voice sounded like? Do you think God whispered or shouted these words?
- Who wrote down the instructions for Joshua?
- What did Joshua's helpers do?

Retelling the Story

- Invite the children to retell the story of Joshua leading with God's help by acting it out. Assign the following parts: Moses, Joshua, God, the helpers, the people, and a narrator. Invite the children to create a short play that retells this story. Encourage them to use props from the prop box.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Ask the children where they see themselves in this story. Have them consider if they are like Joshua, one of the helpers, or one of the Israelites. Share that like Joshua, God calls us to be brave and strong, to follow God's instructions, and to work as a team. Emphasize to them that just as God was with Joshua, God is with us today.

Invite the children to discover how this story connects to their lives. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What does being brave and strong mean to you?
- Can you be afraid and brave at the same time? Why or why not?
- Who do you know who is brave and strong? What makes them brave and strong?
- How can you help others to be brave and strong?

Suggest that being strong does not only have to do with physical strength. Invite the children to think about the many different ways we can be strong. For example, it takes strength to stand up for what you believe in and to do the right thing.

Choose one or both options:

Telling Stories

- Invite the children to tell stories using these prompts:
 - When is a time you were brave or courageous? What helped you to be brave? Who helped you to be brave?
 - Who do you know who is a good leader? What makes them a good leader? Who are the people who help them?
 - When is a time that God helped you to do something new or difficult? How did God help you? Who else helped you?
 - When was a time that you helped someone else? What did you do to help? How did you feel helping?

If working with younger children, choose one prompt and invite the children to illustrate their response with the art supplies. Encourage the children to share their artwork and their story.

Children Who Led

- Read *Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson about children who participated in the 1963 Children's March in Birmingham, Alabama, or show the YouTube video "CML Presents: Let the Children March by Monica Clark-Robinson" (bit.ly/GLLetChildrenMarch, 5:58).
- Wonder together:
 - Why did these children march?
 - How do you think the children felt when they were marching?
 - What helped these children to be strong and brave?

Leading

- How did these children help their community?
- What do you want to remember most from this story?
- ✦ The root of the word *courage* comes from the Latin word *cor*, which means heart. Tell the children that being brave begins in our hearts and then spills out into our actions. Being brave does not mean that we are not afraid; being brave means choosing to act with courage in the midst of fear.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Close with the following prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you:

Loving God, /
thank you for always being with us. /
Help us to be brave and strong, /
and loving and kind. /
Amen. /

Encourage the children to share with their parents/caregivers and friends the story of Joshua leading the Israelites. Encourage the children to hang up any artwork (or Resource Page 1) they made on their mirror as a reminder to be brave and strong this week.



Grow with more.

- Passing on the Message
 - ✦ Joshua had helpers who assisted him in getting the people ready to cross the Jordan River into the promised land. They shared Joshua's instructions and told the people what to do.
 - ✦ Play the telephone game, passing messages around the group.
 - ✦ Encourage the children to think of messages God wants us to share with one another, such as, "Be brave and strong," or "You are special."
- Being Brave This Week
 - ✦ Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and invite the children to color in the letters and then write or draw how they can be brave and strong this week. Encourage them to take their artwork home and hang it on the bathroom mirror as a reminder that God is with them throughout the week.
- Sharing Art
 - ✦ Invite the children to share the art they made during the session.

BE

BRAVE

AND

STRONG.

How I Can Be Brave and Strong This Week:

