

Joshua

Courage and Promise



Across the river, one faithful step at a time

Ages 8–12 · Intermediate English

An illustrated retelling · Joshua 1–6; 21:43–45; 23–24

A leader beside the river



Moses had died, and Joshua stood at the beginning of a task that felt larger than himself. Across the Jordan River lay the land Israel had been promised. Behind him were families who needed a leader.

God told Joshua to be strong and courageous, to keep the teaching given through Moses close, and to live by it. God promised to be with him. Courage would mean listening, remembering, and taking the next faithful step. Joshua sent word through the camp: it was time to prepare.

PAUSE & WONDER

What gave Joshua a reason for courage?

A scarlet cord in a window



Joshua sent two men to explore the land, especially Jericho. There, a woman named Rahab hid them from the king's messengers. She had heard what God had done for Israel and asked them to spare her family.

The men promised protection if she followed their instructions. Rahab helped them escape through her window and tied a scarlet cord there as a sign. Her family would gather inside her house. In a fearful city, a promise of mercy had been made, and it must be kept.

PAUSE & WONDER

Why did the promise to Rahab matter?

A path through the Jordan



The Jordan was swollen with harvest-season water. The priests carried the ark of the covenant ahead of the people. The ark was a sacred chest, a sign of God's covenant with Israel. Joshua told the people to watch and follow.

When the priests stepped into the water, the river's flow stopped upstream. They stood on dry ground while the people crossed. Families walked where water had been. The way opened before them, and the whole nation reached the other side.

PAUSE & WONDER

What happened when the priests stepped into the Jordan?

Twelve stones to remember



Joshua called the twelve men he had chosen, one from each of Israel's tribes. Each carried a stone from the place where the priests were standing in the river. They lifted the stones onto their shoulders.

At their camp in Gilgal, Joshua set up the twelve stones as a memorial. One day, children would ask what they meant. Their families could tell the story of the crossing and God's help. A memory carried in words could also stand quietly beside the path.

PAUSE & WONDER

How can an ordinary object help people remember?

A meal in a new land



At Gilgal, the people celebrated Passover. The meal reminded them of how God had brought Israel out of Egypt. They had crossed a river, but they still needed to remember the story that had brought them there.

They ate food grown in the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. Then the manna that had fed them in the wilderness stopped. A long season was ending. Ahead lay unfamiliar work, difficult choices, and a new way of receiving each day's food.

PAUSE & WONDER

Why was remembering the past important in a new place?

The quiet road around Jericho



Jericho's gates were shut. Its high walls looked strong. God gave Joshua unusual instructions: for six days, the people were to march around the city once each day, with priests carrying trumpets before the ark.

Joshua passed on the instructions. The people walked while the trumpets sounded, but they kept their own voices quiet. One circle, then back to camp. Another morning, another circle. They could not pull the walls down with their hands. They had to wait and follow what God had commanded.

PAUSE & WONDER

What made the instructions at Jericho unusual?

The promise in the fallen city



On the seventh day, the people circled Jericho seven times. At the long trumpet blast, they shouted. The walls fell, and the city was taken and destroyed. It was a terrible day for the people who lived there.

Joshua remembered Rahab. He sent the two men to bring her and her family to safety, just as they had promised. Amid the destruction, that promise was honored. Rahab and her family were spared, and she came to live among the people of Israel.

PAUSE & WONDER

Which promise did Joshua make sure was kept?

A place to make a home



Jericho was only one part of a long and difficult story. The years that followed brought battles, failures, and hard lessons. Israel did not always listen well, and Joshua had more to learn and more work to do.

In time, land was assigned to the tribes. Families could build homes, tend fields, and care for one another. Joshua reminded their leaders that God had kept his promises. The gift of a home also brought responsibility: they were to remain faithful to God in the way they lived.

PAUSE & WONDER

What responsibilities come with having a place to live?

A choice at Shechem



When Joshua was old, he gathered the people at Shechem. He told the story again: Abraham's journey, rescue from Egypt, years in the wilderness, and the land before them. Their life together had a history worth remembering.

Now they faced a choice about whom they would serve. Joshua declared that he and his household would serve the Lord. The people answered that they too would serve God. Joshua warned them to take that promise seriously. Faithfulness was something to practice, not merely something to say.

PAUSE & WONDER

Why is making a promise different from keeping it?

A stone, and a way of living



Joshua wrote down the covenant and set a large stone beneath an oak near the sanctuary. It would stand as a witness to the words the people had spoken. Then he sent each family back to its own land.

The story did not end with a trumpet or a fallen wall. It continued in homes and fields, in choices made when no crowd was watching. The stone could remind them, but people had to live the promise. Courage would keep taking the shape of trust, obedience, and faithful care.

PAUSE & WONDER

What might keeping a promise look like in ordinary daily life?

Words to carry with you

courage

Strength to do what is right even when afraid.

In a sentence: Joshua needed courage to lead the people.

covenant

A solemn agreement that binds a relationship.

In a sentence: The ark reminded Israel of God's covenant.

scarlet

A bright, strong red color.

In a sentence: Rahab tied a scarlet cord in her window.

memorial

Something kept or built to help people remember.

In a sentence: Twelve stones became a memorial at Gilgal.

mercy

Compassion shown to someone who is vulnerable.

In a sentence: The promise to Rahab was a promise of mercy.

faithfulness

Steadiness in keeping trust and promises.

In a sentence: Joshua called the people to daily faithfulness.

Explore the story

READ & REMEMBER

1. Why did Joshua set up twelve stones at Gilgal?
2. How was the promise to Rahab kept?
3. What did the Passover meal help the people remember?
4. What does the final scene suggest about everyday courage?

TRY THE LANGUAGE

Find a sentence beginning with When. Explain which event happened first.

Complete: A memorial helps people _____. Keeping a promise means _____.

THINK & SHARE

Describe a small object that reminds you of an important person or event. Then write one promise you can practice through a specific action.

A little help along the way

1. The stones helped future families remember and retell how God brought Israel across the Jordan.
2. Joshua sent the two men to bring Rahab and her family safely out of Jericho.
3. Passover recalled God's rescue of Israel from Egypt.
4. Courage continues in ordinary faithful choices. Language example: the priests stepped into the water, then its flow stopped. A memorial helps people remember; keeping a promise requires action. Reflection answers will vary.

One faithful step

Joshua's story joins courage with remembering, mercy, and the responsibility of a promise.

What promise could you honor through one small action today?

An original, abridged retelling of selected passages in Joshua 1–6; 21:43–45; and 23–24. Descriptions and dialogue are paraphrases, not quotations from a Bible translation. The book of Joshua also describes warfare, loss, and moral failures; this short retelling does not cover every event. Its battle scenes are presented without graphic detail. Trust in God is not a promise that every human plan will succeed.