



On your marks

We all face change – key transition moments in our lives. They are inevitable if we are to grow but they aren't easy. Yet God is at work to transform us, and is committed to changing us to be fully alive and like Jesus. This story from Joshua 1 is a springboard to start your group talking about change and new beginnings.

Get set

A key symbol for this story is a scroll. You will need paper, wooden poles and paints to make a large version of a scroll together.

For the reflection, you will need an outline of a tree and some 'post-it' leaves.

You can find a short retelling of this story in The Barnabas Children's Bible (story 73).

Go!

Opening up the story

Identify together one moment of change that you have faced in your life so far. It might have involved: a new school, a new house, making a new friend, becoming part of a new family and/or church, a new experience, relationship or responsibility.

- What sort of change was it?
- How did you feel about it?
- How did you cope with it?
- What helped you most to get through it?
- What did you learn from it?

Telling the story

The version of the story given below links the story in Joshua 1 to what had happened to Joshua during the previous 40 years and how God had prepared him for this day.

Talking about the story

Here are some 'wondering' questions for the story in Joshua 1:

- I wonder how Joshua felt as he took on his leadership role.
- I wonder what the people felt about their new leader.
- I wonder what they felt about his first big decision (i.e. to cross the River Jordan).
- I wonder what advice you would have passed on to Joshua.



Playing with the story

Make a scroll with the following keywords from the story:

God says:

- *Be strong*
- *Don't be afraid*
- *I will be there*
- *Remember what has happened before*
- *Never stop reading my words*

Or:

- *Rely on me*
- *Resist fear*
- *Recognise that I am with you*
- *Remember the past*
- *Read my words*

Group activity

In twos, become human scrolls using sheets with two children/adults as poles.

Reflecting on the story

- Read Psalm 1 together.
- Use its picture of a tree to help the group to pray, fixing leaf-like post-its or paper as prayers to an outline of a tree.
- At the base of the tree, place an open Bible and remind each other of God's words to Joshua to keep reading this book every day.

Story version of Joshua 1: The succession

They had cried their eyes out when Moses died. They had been numb with grief. For a whole month the people of God had wept on the flatlands of Moab. Moses had gone too soon. His job hadn't been completed. Their 40-day journey to the Promised Land had taken too long - 40 years too long; and Moses had only been able to catch a glimpse of their new home, from a distance.

Surely he had deserved better than that. But it had been their fault - their fault that they had wandered so long; their fault that Moses had lost patience with them time and time again; their fault that once he had got so angry that he had struck the rock with his staff. Moses had deserved better from them... but he had not given up on them, just as God hadn't given up. However, the next step was now over to them.

Yet there were only the two left: Caleb and Joshua. The only two to survive who could remember that



day when the angel 'passed over'; the day of the great escape; the day when the water rolled back; and the day when Moses sang and Miriam danced on the shore. Of the twelve spies, it had been only Caleb and Joshua who had come back hopeful not fearful. It had been Caleb and Joshua who had led that first battle with an untrained army in the early days of their travels - although Moses had made sure they knew that it was the Lord's banner they were flying and it was really the prayers on the mountain that won the day.

But it had been only Joshua whom Moses had adopted as a special assistant - someone to accompany him to the Tent of Meeting when the cloud of God came down. Only Joshua had been asked to go with Moses up Thunder Mountain where God gave the special words on stone. And only Joshua had seen how angry Moses had been when they returned to the sound of the people worshipping an animal as a god. Joshua had been there when the stones were smashed and he had felt angry too.

Perhaps that's why Moses had publicly chosen Joshua, laying his great hands on his shoulders and announcing that he would be his successor - the new leader. But that had all been in the future then... now Moses was dead and the 30 days of sadness were almost complete. Now it was over to Joshua - but he was afraid.

'Help him to be brave', Moses had said to the people - Joshua needed that help so much right now. 'Give him hope and strength', Moses had asked the people - Joshua felt so weak and hopeless at that moment. How could he ever step into Moses' sandals? It was too great a task, too heavy a responsibility. Surely no-one could ever succeed Moses.

But then Joshua remembered the time when there had been others upon whom the Spirit of God had fallen - when it wasn't just Moses who knew God so intimately. And Joshua remembered how worried he had been that Moses' authority was under threat. 'Moses, stop them!' he had cried. But now he also remembered what Moses had said: 'Joshua, Joshua... are you jealous? Would that God would put his Spirit on all God's people!' The promise of God's Spirit - God's help and strength - was never meant to be just for Moses. It was a gift waiting to be given to others too. It was a gift waiting to come to Joshua.

'Don't be afraid' were the words God whispered into Joshua's heart and mind and soul that day. 'Be strong and very courageous. I am with you wherever you go. Do not lose hope.' It was over to Joshua now to finish what Moses had started: to take the people over the river into the Promised Land. As God had been with Moses, so God would be with Joshua. It was his turn to be part of the story; the story of Joshua would be added to the story so far. 'And don't let the words of this story out of your sight' continued God. 'Read them, think about them, and pray them day and night.' The stories of Moses, of Joseph and of Jacob, Isaac and Abraham - God's story of working with ordinary people in this world - would now include his story - Joshua's story.

And the people of God did put their trust in Joshua just as they had trusted Moses. They did help him to be brave and to have hope. And both Joshua and the people turned their faces towards the Promised Land, which would be their new home. They were determined to finish what Moses had begun. The time for mourning was over and a new day was beginning. Now it was over to Joshua and



to God.