



On your marks

Starting a new task for God can be daunting. Many Christians in this situation have found inspiration and support from the story of Joshua, who took over from Moses the task of leading the people of God. The following reflective story explores how Joshua trusted the Lord.

Get set

You will need:

- a roll of red cloth - this will become the base for the whole story
- a large rock to represent a mountain
- a gold box to represent the ark of the covenant - ideally, with ten small flat stones inside
- a strip of blue felt
- 12 smooth stones
- four larger stones, which can be piled safely on top of each other
- 12 gold stones
- one larger stone that can stand upright.

This is a story to be told in the style of Godly Play. Remember to reveal the story slowly from your right to your left so that the audience 'read it' left to right. Do not rush the story or look up at the group so the story itself, and not you, remain the focus. End with the suggested wondering questions and, if possible, a time of a free creative response in which people can express their own feelings about what they have heard using craft materials.

The story of Joshua can be found in Joshua 1,3,4,6,24. There is also a retelling of his story in The Barnabas Children's Bible (stories 73, 75, 76, 84).

Go!

Unroll the red cloth (from your right to your left), just enough for the first part of the story

Lots of important things happened to Joshua linked to mountains, rocks and stones.

He had been a friend of Moses right from the beginning. He had been a young teenager when they had escaped from Egypt through the water to freedom. He knew that God could be trusted.

Place a large rock on the red base cloth

It was on a mountain that Moses had prayed when Joshua was fighting a battle - God had helped them to win. He knew God could be trusted.

Joshua once climbed up another special mountain with Moses, when God gave Moses the ten best



ways for the people of God to live their lives. He knew God could be trusted

On another occasion, Joshua climbed over some mountains with eleven others to see the special land God had promised them. Only Joshua and one other had continued to trust in God to lead them to the Promised Land when all the others said it was impossible.

Joshua had become Moses' right-hand man - his deputy. He learned everything he knew about God from Moses. And when Moses went up another mountain for the last time, Joshua was very sad. Moses had told him he was going to die, and had asked Joshua to lead the people in his place. Joshua was scared and sad at the same time. It was then that God spoke to him.

Unroll the red cloth further and place the ark of the covenant/the ten best ways to live on the cloth

Everywhere the people of God went, they took a special box with them - the ark. Inside the ark were the ten best ways to live that God had given them, carved on stone.

When it was time for Joshua to take over, God's spirit came to Joshua and said: Don't be afraid. Be strong. Remember how I helped Moses. I will help you too. Never forget these special words I've given you. Think about them all the time. They will help you know what to do. I will be with you.

Unroll the red cloth further and position the piece of blue felt - as a river. As you say 'the waters dried up', roll back the blue felt. Then, as you say 'when they were all across', roll the blue felt back again. Finally, build a small cairn with the 12 stones.

When Joshua began leading the people of God, his first challenge was to cross a river - the River Jordan lay right across their path into the Promised Land. God showed Joshua what to do. They took the special box into the middle of the river and the waters dried up immediately so everyone could cross. When they were all across, the river flowed again. Joshua had trusted God, and God had done something amazing! To remind them what God had done, they gathered 12 stones from the river and made a monument.

Unroll the red cloth further and pile up four big stones... then knock them down

Joshua's next great challenge came in the form of a big city - the city of Jericho - surrounded by strong city walls. Surely, it could never be destroyed? But God showed Joshua what to do. They took the special box and marched around the walls of the city once a day for six days and then on the seventh day they walked around seven times. Next, they gave a great shout and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

You might like to invite everyone to make the lugubrious sound of a ram's horn and then give a great shout

God had done another amazing thing. God was with Joshua, and Joshua had trusted God.



Unroll the red cloth further and place the 12 golden stones, spread around evenly

There were many more battles to fight, but every time Joshua remembered God's words: he was to be bold and strong and trust God. The people of God defeated many enemies and took over the land that God had promised them. Finally, the 12 tribes of the people of God found new homes and settled down.

By now, Joshua was very old and he knew his death was near. So, he called all the people of God together to remind them how God had been with them and how they could always trust God and the words he had given them. He then asked them all: Will you trust God? Will you be on God's side? 'As for me and my family,' said Joshua, 'we will always serve the Lord God.' He asked them three times and each time they all replied: 'we will serve the Lord.'

Unroll the red cloth to its end and place one last 'standing stone' on it

After this, Joshua took a large stone and said to the people: This stone has heard what you have said. Every time you see this, remember that you have decided to trust God. Soon after this, Joshua, like Moses before him, died.

Joshua had never forgotten to be bold, to be strong and to trust God's words every step of the way. God had been with Joshua, and Joshua had trusted God.

Wondering questions

- I wonder which part of this story you liked the best.
- I wonder which part of this story is the most important part.
- I wonder which part of this story was special for you today.
- I wonder if there is any part of this story we could leave out but still have all the story we need.