Preschool–Grade 6

Be Strong and Courageous

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Real courage comes from God's presence and God's Word, not from how strong we feel.
Bible passage: Joshua 1:1–9. Students read Joshua 1:1–18 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." *Joshua 1:9 (KJV)* and "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." *Isaiah 41:10 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Deuteronomy 31:1–8, Deuteronomy 34 and Joshua 1. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Courage Scale (5–10 minutes)

Put a line on the board from 1 (easy) to 5 (takes real courage). Read each situation, and students hold up fingers for how much courage it takes: 1) Starting at a new school. 2) Telling the truth when a lie would keep you out of trouble. 3) Praying out loud in front of others. 4) Saying no when friends want you to do wrong. 5) Taking over a job someone great used to do. Ask: *What makes something take courage? Where does courage come from?* Say: "Today we meet a man who had to take the place of Moses."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Joshua 1:1–18. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **minister** (1:1): helper, servant; **arise** (1:2): get up
- **the sole of your foot shall tread upon** (1:3): every place you walk; **coast** (1:4): border
- **fail thee** (1:5): let you down; **forsake thee** (1:5): leave you alone
- **divide for an inheritance** (1:6): give out as their own land to keep
- **observe to do** (1:7): be careful to obey; **prosper** (1:7): do well
- **meditate therein** (1:8): think deeply about it; **good success** (1:8): doing well God's way
- **dismayed** (1:9): discouraged and afraid; **whithersoever** (1:9): wherever
- **victuals** (1:11): food; **hearken** (1:17): listen and obey

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Notice: Joshua had served Moses since he was "a young man" (Exodus 33:11), and he had already stood up with Caleb and said, "the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:9). Moses laid his hands on him, and he "was full of the spirit of wisdom" (Deuteronomy 34:9). Yet God still told him three times to be strong (Joshua 1:6, 1:7, 1:9). Courage was something Joshua had to choose again for a new job. And the people ended their answer with the same words: "only be strong and of a good courage" (1:18).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. God's first words were "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise" (1:2). How do you keep going after a big loss or change?
2. God's promise in 1:5 is "as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." Why would that matter so much to Joshua?
3. In 1:7, being "strong and very courageous" is tied to obeying "all the law." Why does obeying God take courage?
4. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (1:7). What are small ways people drift from God's Word?
5. What would it look like for you to meditate on God's Word "day and night" (1:8)? What gets in the way?
6. Joshua 1:9 gives the reason not to be afraid: "the LORD thy God is with thee." How is that different from "you can do it"?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Isaiah 41:10: **fear thou not** means don't be afraid; **dismayed** means discouraged and afraid; **uphold** means hold you up. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Joshua 1:9 this week; keep working on Isaiah 41:10 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "God promised Joshua, 'I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.' God kept that promise in the biggest way: He came to be with us Himself. Jesus is called 'Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' (Matthew 1:23, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)." *Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.*

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is one "Jordan" in front of me, something hard I know God wants me to face?
2. How would it change things to really believe "the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9)?
3. Write a plan to keep God's Word in my mouth and mind day and night this week (1:8): one verse, when I will read it, and when I will say it.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: follow your plan, and pray Isaiah 41:10 when you feel afraid.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are with us wherever we go and will not fail us or forsake us. Give us courage to obey Your Word and not turn to the right hand or to the left. Thank You for coming to be with us and save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

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