

Joshua's Final Encouragement

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joshua 23:1–24:28

MAIN POINT: Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

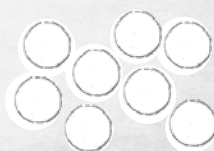
SMALL GROUP OPENING
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(25–30 MINUTES)
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Joshua was “getting on in years” (Josh. 23:1), so he gathered together the people of Israel to give an exhortation.

First, Joshua reminded them that God had fought for His people, and He had kept every one of His promises. (Josh. 23:14) Joshua wanted the people to remember and to live their lives based on what they knew to be true about God: God can be trusted. He is good, and He is faithful.

In Joshua 23:6, Joshua issued a challenge: “Be very strong and continue obeying all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.” Reading, studying, and obeying God’s Word is a mark of belief in God. Joshua reminded the people that

they were successful over their enemies because of their obedience to God.

Finally, Joshua gave the Israelites a warning. Just as all the good things God promised had been fulfilled, so would all the bad things He promised if the Israelites disobeyed Him. (See Josh. 23:12-13,15.)

Joshua gathered the people at the place where God had made a promise to Abraham. (See Gen. 12:6-7.) Joshua reminded the leaders of the past—from the birth of Isaac to Israel’s escape from Egypt. Joshua said, “Choose for yourselves today the one you will worship ... As for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh” (Josh. 24:15).

The Israelites had a choice: Continue to worship God or choose to serve other gods. In response to God’s faithfulness to His promises, the Israelites renewed their covenant to be faithful to the Lord.

As you share the story of Joshua’s legacy with kids, point them to a greater legacy found in Jesus Christ. After Christ’s resurrection, He sent His disciples out to tell the nations about Him. Jesus calls all people who trust in Him to tell others about Him.

5



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The BIBLE STORY

Joshua's Final Encouragement

Joshua 23:1–24:28

Many years had passed since Joshua and the Israelites had defeated Jericho, Ai (AY igh), and the kings of the land. God allowed the Israelites to rest from battles against their enemies. Now **Joshua was getting old and knew he would die soon. He gathered all the people of Israel because he had some important things to say to them.**

Joshua said, “You have seen everything the Lord your God has done—He has fought your battles for you.”

Then he said, **“Be careful to obey everything that is in the book of the law of Moses,”** and he said, “If you disobey God, He will no longer help you win battles. In fact, **you will die here if you disobey Him.**”

Joshua reminded all the people about the things God had done for them in the past. Joshua reminded them of everything, like when God called Abraham and gave him a son, Isaac, and when God gave Isaac two sons, Jacob and Esau. He reminded them that Jacob's children went to Egypt, where God sent Moses and Aaron.

Joshua told the people about how God had rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians, bringing them safely across the Red Sea and saving them from the Egyptians who were chasing them. Joshua reminded them of the many battles they had fought and won because God was fighting for them. **God had done so many great things for His people!**

Joshua commanded the people to make a choice. **“Fear the Lord and worship Him.** If you don't want to worship God, choose to worship the gods your fathers worshiped. As for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh,” **he said.**

The people replied, “We will certainly not abandon the Lord to worship other gods! **We know how much God has done for us, and we love Him!**”

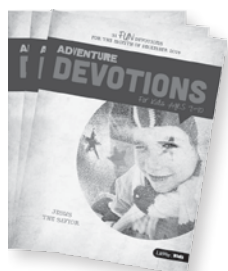
Joshua warned the people, “If you do abandon God to worship other gods, God will turn against you and harm you. He will destroy you, after all of the good things He has done for you!”

“No!” **the people said.** “**We will worship Yahweh!**”

On that day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. He set up a large stone under an oak tree next to the sanctuary of the Lord.

Joshua said, “This stone will be a reminder of your duty to serve the Lord, who fulfilled every promise in bringing you into this land.” Then Joshua sent the people away, and each man went home.

Christ Connection: As Joshua prepared for his own death, he left a legacy of obedience to God. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He appeared to the disciples and left them with a legacy: to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded. (Matthew 28:19-20)



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Joshua reminded the Israelites that God fought all of their battles. (See Joshua 23:3.) Jesus defeated sin and death when He died and rose again. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Joshua's Final Encouragement

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joshua 23:1–24:28

MAIN POINT: Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, encourage them to share their favorite thing to do when they have free time. Ask if their favorite hobby or game requires them to invest time, energy, or money.

SAY • These are fun things to do, and sometimes we have to invest a lot of time, sweat, and money into these activities. Sometimes it's easy for our hobbies to become priorities in our lives. We're going to talk today about keeping God first in our lives.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Promised Land Maze" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Promised Land Maze" on the activity page. Help kids write out the special message that Joshua gave the people. (*Answer: As for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh.*)

SAY • Joshua was a good leader. In our Bible story today, he was an old man and, just like Moses, he gathered the people for a special message before he died. Today, we will learn about Joshua's final message to Israel.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What do we have in common?

Make a circle of chairs, facing inward, with one less chair than the number of kids in the class.

Select one kid to stand in the middle and say something unique about himself, such as “I have been to the Grand Canyon” or “I can lick my elbow.” If the statement is true for any other children, they must stand up and switch chairs. The kid in the middle must also try to take an open seat. If only one kid agrees with the first kid’s statement, then that kid must give up his seat to the kid in the middle.

Whoever does not have a seat must stand in the middle and give a new statement. Continue playing as time allows.

SAY • We learned a lot about each other. God made each of you unique, but there are things we all have in common. The best thing we have in common is that God loves us and wants us to trust Him.

OPTION 2: How can we serve?

Tape a large sheet of paper to the wall or table. Encourage the kids to think of people whom God has placed in their lives (parents, teachers, siblings, friends, classmates, so forth) and make a column for each type of person.

Kids will brainstorm ways they can serve or help the people in each column. Make one final column for God and ask kids to think of ways they can serve Him.

SAY • God wants us to love and serve others, but we must keep God first in our lives. When we put God first, He helps us serve others out of love for Him.



• chairs

• large sheet of paper
• tape
• marker

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

• box

• stuffed beaver or image of beaver

[Large Group Leader enters carrying a box with either a stuffed beaver or a picture of a beaver.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Today is our last day at the

petting zoo. I have really enjoyed our time together!

But it's not over yet. We have one more animal and

one more story before we go. Are you ready?

Today's animal is one that may not be familiar to you. *[Open the box. Show the beaver.]* Do you know what this is? A beaver! Here are some fun facts about beavers:

1. Beavers have a set of transparent eyelids that help them see under water, kind of like goggles!
2. The two species of beavers are North American and European.
3. Beavers create two "rooms" in their lodges. The first room is like a den, where they dry off from swimming in the water. The other room is where the family lives!

4. Beavers use their thick, stiff tails like rudders under water and to help them balance on land.
5. Sometimes when baby beavers grow up, they stay with their family and have families of their own.
6. Beavers are most known for building dams, and they are very hard workers.

Beavers are very interesting creatures! It's neat to see how God created beavers to work so hard and stay together in families.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Wow, it sounds like families are very important to beavers. Families were important to the Israelites, too. [*Point to the timeline.*]

• Giant Timeline

In today's Bible story, Joshua had an important message for the Israelites and their families. Joshua was old, and he was getting ready to die. He wanted the Israelites and their families to choose whether they would serve the one true God or the false gods of Canaan. Hmm. I wonder what the Israelites chose. Let's find out.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Who would like to say our big picture question and answer that we've been learning for the past several weeks? [*Invite a volunteer to say the big picture question and answer from memory.*] Great job! **Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.**

- Bibles
- “Joshua’s Final Encouragement” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Main Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

LEADER • As Joshua got ready for his death, he drew a line in the sand for the people of Israel. Have you heard that expression before? When someone *draws a line in the sand*, it means that person wants you to make a decision, one way or another, and that you need to choose it for good. Let’s see what choice Joshua wanted the people to make.

Open your Bible to Joshua 23:1–24:28. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “Joshua’s Final Encouragement.”

LEADER • Joshua reminded the people about God’s faithfulness to keep every promise He made to the Israelites. Then Joshua encouraged the people to make a choice. Do you remember the choice Joshua gave the people? [*Invite kids to respond.*] They needed to choose to worship God or the false gods. Joshua wasn’t saying that worshiping false gods was OK; Joshua was saying that the people could not keep changing their minds about whom they served.

Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone. Whom did the people say they would worship? (*God*) As Joshua prepared for his own death, he left a legacy of obedience to God. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He appeared to the disciples and left them with a legacy: to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

Ask kids to determine if these statements are true or false:

1. The Israelites were not able to take over the promised land. (*False, God gave them the land; Josh. 23:1*)

2. Joshua was old and would die soon. (*true, Josh. 23:2*)
3. Joshua told the people to obey all of God's laws. (*true, Josh. 23:6*)
4. Joshua reminded the people of all that God had done for them. (*true, Josh. 24:2-13*)
5. Joshua told the people that it was OK to worship idols. (*False, Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone; Josh. 24:14*)
6. The people promised to worship God. (*true, Josh. 24:24-27*)
7. ***We can trust God to take care of us.*** (*true*)

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

LEADER • The people made a covenant and set up a memorial stone, but Joshua knew they would not be able to worship God alone. Just like the Israelites, even when we try really hard to obey God, we fail because we are sinners too. God sent His Son, Jesus, to keep the law we couldn't keep—yet Jesus died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from sin when we trust in Him.

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to say together Joshua 1:9 from memory.

LEADER • Joshua reminded the people that God had kept

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Wherever You Go" song

every promise He made. God keeps His promise to always be with us by sending the Holy Spirit to live within us when we trust in Jesus.

Sing the key passage song together.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

• “Unit 7, Session 5”
discussion starter
video

LEADER • Joshua gave the people a choice of two very different actions. Think about that as you watch this. Show the “Unit 7, Session 5” discussion starter video.

LEADER • Did mixing the gravy and gelatin turn out OK for Samuel? No way! We often hear that compromise is always a good thing, but is it? Can you think of any times when it isn't good to compromise or mix things together like Samuel did? [*Invite responses.*]

God did not want the people of Israel to worship false gods and worship Him. Those two don't mix! Only God deserves our worship!

Lead boys and girls to discuss things kids might worship besides God. How can they resist worshipping other things?

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)” song

LEADER • Let's worship God right now by singing together. Sing together “Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for keeping Your promises to the Israelites. Help us to choose to serve You and You alone each day. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- foam ball
- timer (optional)

Direct the kids to stand in a circle. Toss the ball to one kid and ask her the first word of the key passage. Encourage her to toss the ball to another kid to say the next word. Kids will continue tossing the ball until they have completed the key passage. Play again, seeing if they can complete the key passage faster in the second round.

SAY • Today we learned about Joshua's final encouragement, but I hope this key passage will be an encouragement to you. Joshua reminded the Israelites that God always keeps His promises. He keeps His promise to be with us by sending the Holy Spirit to us when we trust in Jesus.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline, Giant Timeline, or Big Story Circle
- index cards (optional)
- marker (optional)

Open your Bible to Joshua 24:2-13. Spread out the small group timeline, giant timeline, or big story circle where kids will be able to see the past Bible stories from Abraham to today's Bible story. Invite kids to raise their hands and tell you what they can remember from the Bible stories. If kids need help, encourage them to read the Bible passage above.

If you do not have timelines available in your classroom, write the following words on index cards: *Abraham, Isaac,*

Jacob and Esau, Moses and Aaron, Red Sea, wilderness, Jordan River, and Jericho. Place the cards on the table in order and invite kids to tell you what they remember about each person, place, or thing. (*God promised to bless Abraham, Jacob stole Esau's blessing, God rescued Moses to deliver His people from captivity, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because they did not trust God, and so forth*)

SAY • Joshua encouraged the people to worship God

alone. When Joshua spoke to the Israelites, he reminded them of all the things God had done for them. He showed how God kept His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by bringing His people out of Egypt and giving them the promised land. God also kept His promises to fight the battles for the Israelites so they could receive the land.

When you look at the Bible stories we have learned about God keeping His promise to the Israelites, how do you feel about God's promises to you? [*Invite kids to respond.*]

Remind the kids of the gospel: God's plan to send Jesus to die on the cross and rise again so that those who trust in Him can be forgiven of sin.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Encouragement strips

Provide strips of paper and markers for kids to write encouraging statements about other kids in the class. They do not have to write their names on the strips of paper, but they do need to mention the name of the person whom they are encouraging. After a few moments, collect the strips in a bowl, mix them up, and read them aloud.

SAY • All of us sometimes feel frustrated or discouraged

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



- strips of paper
- markers
- bowl or gift bag

because of situations we face at home or at school. In those times, we need encouragement. You know what? We also need encouragement as Christians. The Bible says that we should encourage one another daily so we can help each other when we are tempted to disobey God. [See *Heb. 3:13*.] What are some ways we can encourage one another to love and serve God?

OPTION 2: Knock down idols

- water bottles
- sticky notes
- markers
- small rubber ball or tennis ball

SAY • Joshua encouraged the people to worship God

alone. Joshua warned the people against worshipping the idols, or false gods, of the other people who were in the land of Canaan. Nowadays, we don't usually see people bowing down to a statue, but sometimes the things we love can become idols. What are some idols that people might worship today?

Help kids brainstorm things people tend to value more than God, such as money, relationships, success at school or in activities, popularity, celebrities we follow, our looks, possessions, and so forth.

As kids give you examples of idols, list them on sticky notes and attach the sticky notes to the bottles. Set up the bottles to resemble bowling pins and invite kids to roll the ball to knock down the idols.

SAY • When Jesus died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from sin, He defeated all the idols that we could worship instead of Him. Nothing comes close to worshipping Jesus! Can you think of a friend who doesn't know that Jesus died to rescue him from sin? Will you tell that friend about Jesus this week?

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write down or draw pictures of things that might be idols in their lives and then cross them out. Kids may also write the big picture question and answer on their journal page.

SAY • *Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.* God deserves our worship because He alone is God. He loves each of us and He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and rise again to rescue us from sin. God is good and faithful!

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for His faithfulness to keep every promise He makes. Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin just as He promised. Pray that the kids would understand that they are sinners who need Jesus to rescue them from sin.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Journal Page

God the Savior

Key Passage: Joshua 1:9

Big Picture Questions: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Session 1: Joshua and Caleb

Numbers 13:1–14:38

The Israelites did not trust God to give them the promised land.

Session 2: The Bronze Snake

Numbers 20:1–20; 21:4–9

God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.

Session 3: The Promised Land and Jericho

Joshua 2–4; 6

God fought for His people and led them into the promised land.

Session 4: Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

Joshua 7–8

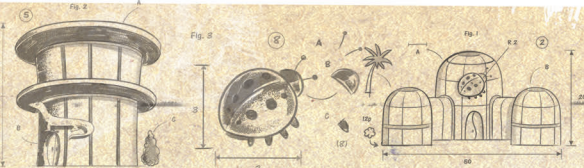
God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

Session 5: Joshua's Final Encouragement

Joshua 23:1–24:28

Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone.






“Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

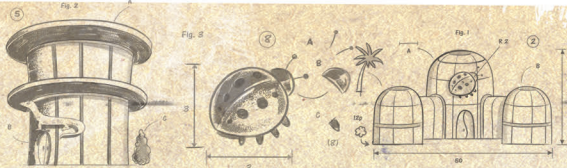


The top left corner of the page features several technical drawings of a fortification. On the far left is a circular tower with a crenelated top. To its right are various smaller diagrams, including a cross-section of a wall, a plan view of a building, and a palm tree. These drawings are labeled with letters and numbers, suggesting they are part of a technical manual or architectural plan.

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Joshua 1:9





“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9



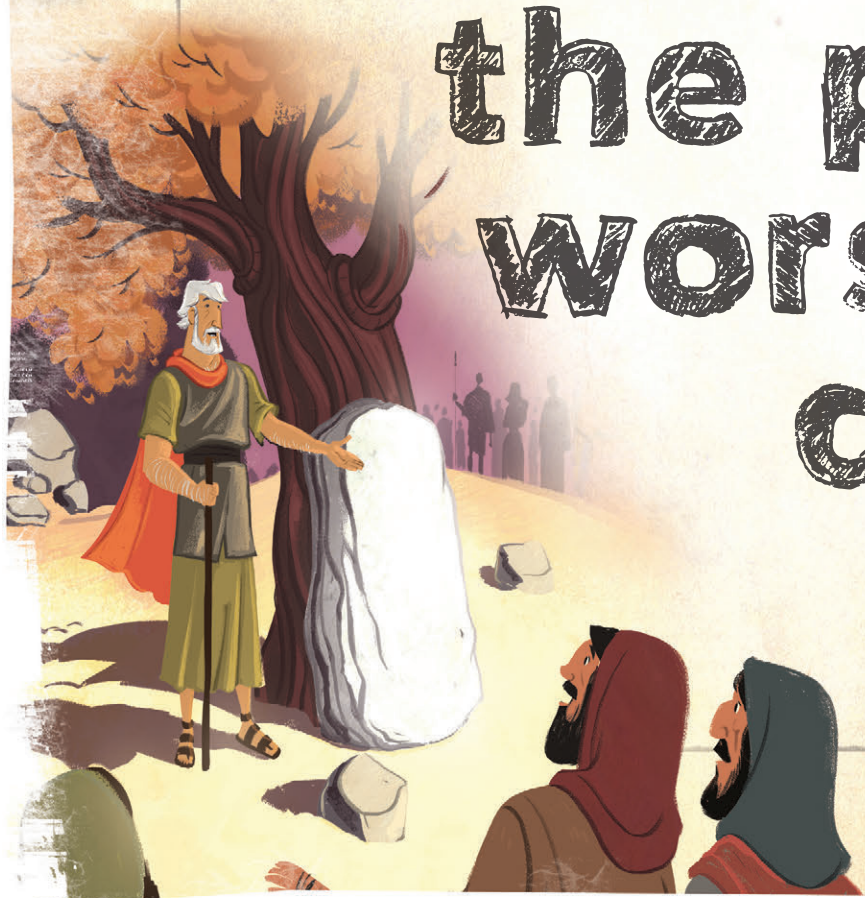


**“Have I not
commanded you? Be
strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid; do
not be discouraged, for
the LORD your God will
be with you wherever
you go.”**

Joshua 1:9



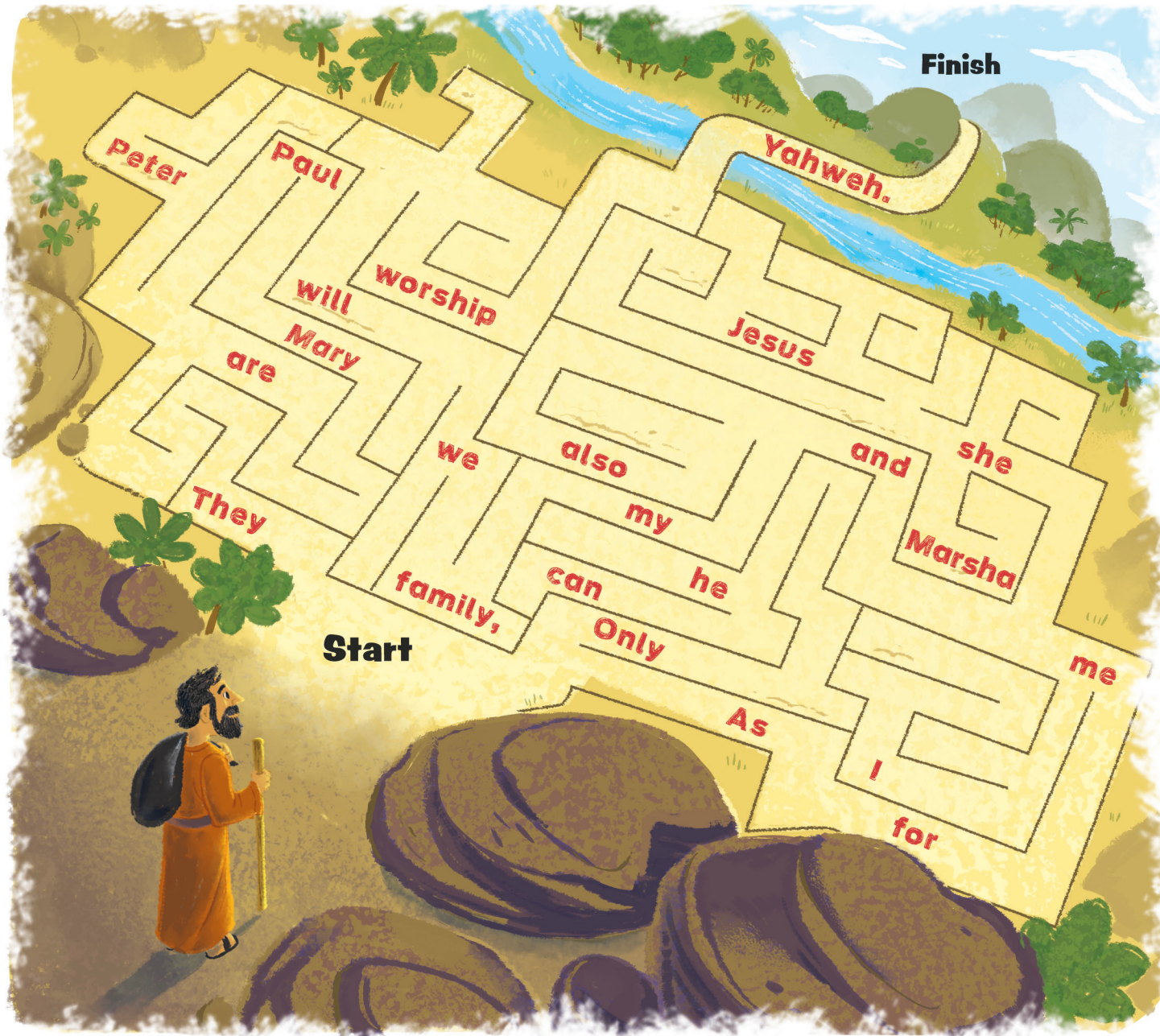
**Joshua
encouraged
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alone.**





Promised Land Maze

INSTRUCTIONS: Find your way through the maze. The words you cross will make up a sentence from today's story.



KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

BIBLE STORY: JOSHUA'S FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

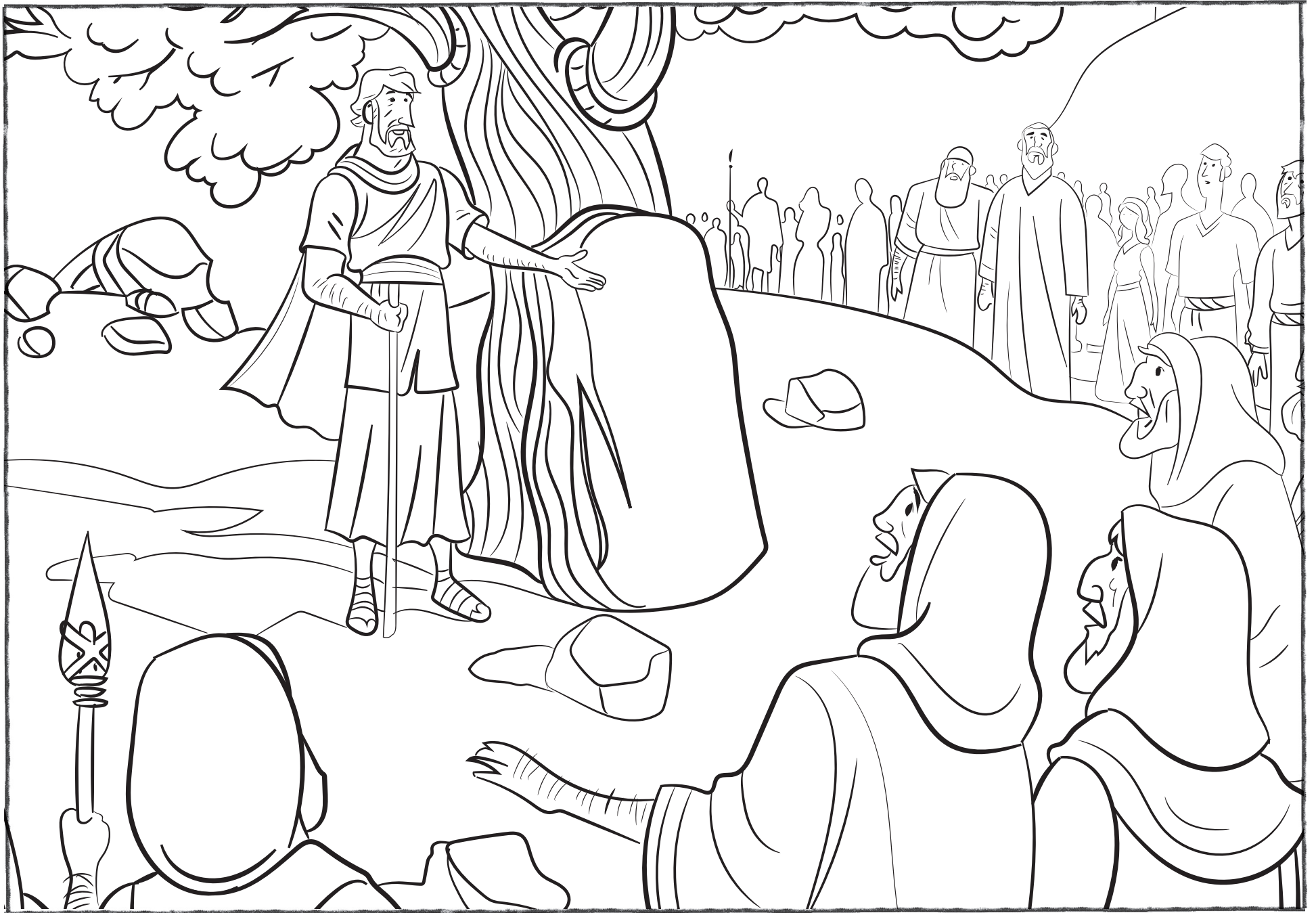
- When Joshua was old, he gathered Israel together to talk with them.
- Joshua reminded the people of how good and faithful God is.
- Joshua told the people to obey and worship God.
- The Israelites said they would worship and love God.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- How can we talk with someone about the gospel? What should we remember to talk about?
- What things do you worship instead of God?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Review the Bible stories learned to this point paying close attention to where you see God's goodness.
- Worship together as a family.
- Go further: Send an e-mail or letter of encouragement to an international missionary.



Whom can we trust?

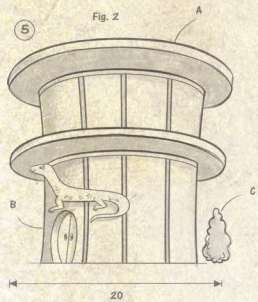
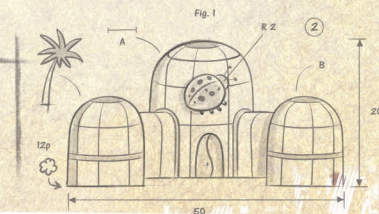
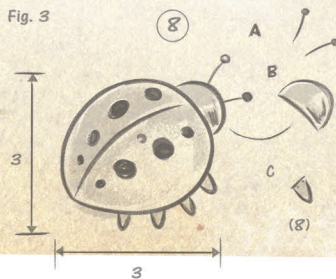


Fig. 3



Whom can we trust?

We can trust God to take care of us.

