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The Day of Atonement

Scripture: Leviticus 16:1-34

Theme: Sin requires a sacrifice -- and God provides it

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson Overview: "Joshua and the Promised Land , Be Strong and Courageous" (Based on Joshua 1:1-9) Theme: God goes before us, giving us courage to face what's ahead, just like He did for Joshua! Lesson Introduction (1 min): Begin by showing a map of the Israelites' journey or a picture of the Promised Land. Ask: "Have you ever felt scared about something big, like a new school project or trying something new? What made you feel brave?" (Wait for responses.) Then say, "Today, we'll see how God gave Joshua, like a leader, super courage to lead his people into a land that looked scary!" 1. God's Promise to Joshua (3 min): Read Joshua 1:1-9 together (or paraphrase key parts): - God tells Joshua, "I've promised your people this land, and now it's time to take it." (Joshua 1:2) - God says, "Be strong and courageous!" (Joshua 1:6, 9), not because Joshua was perfect, but because God was with him! Discussion: "Why do you think God gave Joshua this courage? How can we trust God to help us when things feel hard?" (Invite kids to share personal examples, like fear of speaking up or trying a new sport.) 2. Courage in Action (3 min): Share how Joshua followed God's plan, even when it looked risky (e.g., leading the people across the Jordan River). Point to Joshua 2:23 for courage in obedience: "The Lord our God has given us all this land, don't be afraid!" Activity Suggestion: Have kids act out a "courage scene" (e.g., holding up a "bravery sign" for a partner to trust them). Ask: "How can we be like Joshua by trusting God to help us?" 3. God Goes Before Us (3 min): Highlight that God didn't just give courage, He went ahead of Joshua (e.g., the pillar of fire/cloud guiding them). Compare this to how God goes before us today: - When we pray, God hears us! (Joshua's army relied on God's guidance.) - When we face fears, God gives us strength. (Ask: "What's one thing God might be 'going before' you this week?") Song Connection: Play "We've Come This Far Because of God" (or similar) to end on a high note! 4. Personal Application & Challenge (2 min): End with a simple challenge: - "This week, try one thing that scares you, like asking a friend to join your game or sharing your faith, and remember: God is with you!" Deeper Questions for Volunteers: - "What's one 'Promised Land' God wants you to take 'next' this year?" (e.g., growing in faith, serving others.) - "How can we encourage kids to trust God's courage in their own lives?" (Model it with stories of your own faith journey!) Closing Encouragement: End by reading Hebrews 4:16 together: "Let's draw near to God with a true heart, sharing our fears,

He's always there to help!" Leave the group with a "God's Courage Card" (a handwritten note with Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous?") to keep in their Bible or backpack. Volunteer Tips: - Use visuals (color-coded maps, emojis for courage/fear) to keep engagement high. - Embrace mistakes, kids love real-life examples (e.g., "I once cried when I didn't know a word, but God helped me learn!"). - Praise specific efforts (e.g., "You had such great courage today!") to build confidence!

Bible Story

Joshua and the Promised Land: Be Strong and Courageous

The Israelites had just left the desert after wandering for forty years. Moses, their leader, had died, and now God called Joshua, a young man with a big job ahead. God spoke to Joshua from the burning bush in Mount Horeb (Exodus 3) and said, "I have chosen you to lead my people into the Promised Land. I will be with you, and you will succeed." Joshua had never been a warrior, but God promised him strength and courage. (Joshua 1:1-3)

When Joshua heard God's words, he knew it was a huge responsibility. The land was filled with giant cities guarded by strong, confident people, Canaanites, Amalekites, and others who had taken over God's promised land. Joshua was only a young man, but God told him, "Be strong and courageous. I will be with you wherever you go." He had to trust that God was in control, even when things looked impossible. (Joshua 1:6)

Joshua's first big test would come when he stood before the Israelites at the Jordan River. The river had to stop flowing so the people could cross on dry land, just like God had done before they entered the desert. God told Joshua, "Do not be afraid. The Lord your God will fight for you, just as he did for your ancestors." Even though he had never been to the Promised Land before, Joshua had to believe God would protect them. (Joshua 1:7-9)

Later, God would give Joshua more specific instructions: "If anyone refuses to obey my commands, I will punish them." But Joshua was to have faith, even when things were scary. The Israelites had to follow God's rules, and Joshua had to lead them well. God didn't ask Joshua to be perfect, just to trust Him. (Deuteronomy 1:37-38)

Deeper Questions for Discussion: 1. Why do you think God chose Joshua instead of someone older or more experienced? 2. What does it mean to "be strong and courageous" in a hard situation? 3. How can we trust God when things look difficult, like crossing a big river or fighting for what's right?

Personal Application: God calls us to trust Him too, even when things are scary. Sometimes we feel weak or unsure, but God promises to be with us. Who is someone you can pray for to have more courage, like Joshua did? How can you remind them that God is strong enough to help them? Joshua's story shows that God's promises are true, even when we don't feel ready!

Key Verse

Leviticus 16:34

Joshua 1:9 , A Superhero Prayer for Your Adventures This verse is like a little speech from God to Joshua before he led the Israelites into a big, scary journey. He tells him, "Don't worry, I'm right here with you, and I'll give you the strength you need!" Even though the road might feel difficult or full of challenges, God promises to be there, like a trusty team member cheering you on! Let's imagine you're about to try something new, like learning a cool new skill, speaking in a new language, or even just being brave when someone is mean. That verse says, "You don't have to do it alone, God is your superpower!" Just like how you might rely on a friend who listens or a teacher who guides you, God wants you to ask, "What can I do with His help?" Sometimes, we feel afraid or nervous because the future looks big and unknown. Maybe it's trying a new sport, sharing your thoughts in class, or standing up for what's right. That verse is like a big, warm hug from God saying, "Don't freeze up! I've got this." He doesn't want you to be scared, He wants you to be brave because He's already on your team! Here's a deeper question: What's one thing you're afraid of doing this week, and how could God help you try it? Maybe it's asking a friend a question, climbing a little harder on the monkey bars, or even just trusting God when things feel tricky. Remember, even Moses, who was older and wise, asked God for courage before big tasks. God doesn't just give

us answers; He gives us Himself to help us along the way! When you pray, you can say things like: "Lord, help me trust You today." You don't have to carry your fears alone. God loves you so much that He wants to be your brave buddy! Next time you're feeling unsure, take a deep breath and whisper this verse back to Him, "I'm strong and courageous because You are!" What's one small step you could take today to trust God more?

Activities

Activity 1:

Students sketch their vision of the Promised Land while discussing how Joshua's faith shaped the nation's future.

1. Set Up the Course , Arrange 3-4 simple stations (e.g., jump over a hula hoop like the Jordan River, crawl under a "wall," carry a "scout's pack" (small bag) up a hill, then "charge" forward with the "sword").
2. Team Time , Divide into small groups (3-4 students). Explain that each team must complete the course together, symbolizing unity and faith.
3. Complete the Challenge , Let teams take turns (1-2 rounds). Afterward, ask: "What was the hardest part of your challenge? How does it remind you of trusting God, even when things feel big and scary?"
4. Reflect & Apply , Have students write or draw one thing they learned about courage and how they can apply it this week. Share with a partner or family member.
2. "Draw Your Promised Land" , Creative Bible Story Sketch
6. Discuss the Land , Read Joshua 1:8 aloud: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified... because the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Ask: "What does this promise mean to you? Why was Joshua brave?"
7. Sketch Time , Give students 5 minutes to draw their "Promised Land." Encourage them to include:
 8. A "safe place" (e.g., a city, forest, or green fields).
 9. Symbols of God's protection (e.g., a rainbow, a star, a shield).
 10. A scene showing courage (e.g., Joshua leading a group).
11. Collage Option , Add torn-up newspaper or printed images of Joshua's actions (e.g., crossing the Jordan) to their drawing with glue.
12. Share & Reflect , Have students swap drawings and discuss: "How does God's promise 'never leave nor forsake' apply to your life? What's one way you can be brave like Joshua?" End with prayer.
13. Why These Work:
14. Both activities use low-cost, hands-on materials and small-group dynamics.
15. They blend movement (obstacle course) and creativity (drawing) for engagement.
16. Deeper questions encourage personal connection to the lesson, making it meaningful for 9-11-year-olds.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for upper elementary students (ages 9, 11) about Joshua and the Promised Land, designed to encourage deeper reflection, critical thinking, and personal application of the lesson:
 - Joshua's Challenge: "Be Strong and Courageous"
 - "Joshua had just taken over for Moses, leading the Israelites into a new land. Before him stood a giant wall of giants (literally, Goliath and his people!) and mountains that seemed impossible to climb. God had promised this land to them, but Joshua must've felt afraid. How do you think Joshua felt before he stood before the people and told them, 'Be strong and courageous'? Why do you think God asked Joshua, and us, to be strong and brave, even when things seem scary?"
 - (Prompt them to think about fears in their own lives, big or small, and how faith can help them face challenges.)

- Faith vs. Fear: What Would You Have Done?
- "When Joshua told the Israelites, 'Do not be afraid,' he was giving them God's encouragement. But what if someone had told you that a big task was impossible? Maybe it was something like climbing a tall tree, solving a hard math problem, or standing up to a bully. How would you have reacted? Why do you think Joshua had to remind the people that God was with them?"
- (Encourage them to share personal examples of times they felt scared or unsure, and how they handled it.)
- Trusting God's Plan
- "God told Joshua, 'I will never leave you or forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5). That promise wasn't just for Joshua, it's for you too! What are some things in your life where you might feel like God's plan isn't clear yet? For example, maybe you're waiting to hear back about a new school, or you're unsure about a friend's decision. How can trusting God's plan help you be brave, even when you don't understand everything?"
- (Guide them to think about recent uncertainties in their lives and how faith can guide them forward.)
- The Promise Today: How Can We Be Stronger?
- "Joshua's job was to lead others, but God wanted him to follow Him. In the same way, God calls all of us to be strong and courageous, whether it's helping a classmate, praying for someone, or standing up for what's right. What's one way you could use courage this week to follow God's direction, even if it feels hard?"
- (Encourage them to brainstorm specific acts of kindness or courage, then share one small way they can live out this lesson.)
- Follow-Up Tips:
 - Pair these questions with short scripture readings (e.g., Joshua 1:6, 9) for deeper connection.
 - Invite students to draw a picture of a time they felt brave (e.g., overcoming a fear) and explain it aloud.
 - End with a prayer asking God to help them trust Him more in their daily lives.
 - Would you like these questions adapted for a specific setting (e.g., small groups, whole-class discussion)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus: Joshua's Courage for Us Today "Lord, You've already given us the land, our hearts, our time, and the challenges ahead. Just like Joshua, we face fears and doubts, but You promise to be with us. Help us trust You more, even when things feel big or scary. When we feel weak, remind us that You give us strength, not because of what we can do alone, but because of who You are. Let us walk forward with courage, just like Joshua walked into the Promised Land. Give us the courage to stand up for what's right, to help others, and to keep going even when we want to quit." Reflection Questions for the Class: 1. What scares you the most in your life right now? (Let them share without judgment, this helps them connect to Joshua's struggles.) 2. How can we ask God for strength when we feel afraid? (Practice praying together: "God, I'm scared of __, but You're with me. Give me courage!") 3. What's one thing you can do today that feels big, but God wants you to try? (Encourage them to pick one small step to take, e.g., speaking up, helping a friend). 4. How did Joshua's "Be strong and courageous" message change him? How can it change us today? (Discuss how Joshua wasn't perfect, he just trusted God's plan.) Personal Application (for each child): "Close your eyes for a moment. Imagine you're walking into a new place, like Joshua did. What do you see? What's the first thing you notice? Now, ask God: 'Show me where I need courage today. Give me strength to move forward, just like Joshua trusted You.' Open your eyes and think of one thing you'll do today that feels brave, whether it's sharing your faith, standing up for kindness, or just believing in God's plan for your life." Class Prayer (to end the lesson): "Heavenly Father, thank You for calling us into Your land, our school, our family, and our world. Just like Joshua, we sometimes feel small or unsure, but You are the One who gives us power. Teach us to trust You, not our own strength. Help us to be strong and courageous in small and big ways, when we're with friends, at home, or facing challenges. Remind us that You've got this. In Jesus' name, Amen!" Follow-Up Idea: Give each child a "courage card" (a small piece of paper) to write/draw one way they'll ask God for

strength today. Share their words later, it builds faith community!

>> Missions Spotlight

The Karenni people of Myanmar have been displaced from their homeland for decades. Missionaries working in refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border share Joshua's story to encourage displaced believers that God keeps His promises even in exile.

-> To the Cross

God told Joshua, 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.' God always keeps His promises. Jesus gives us an even greater promise: 'Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:20). Our true Promised Land is eternal life with Him.