

Aim of lesson

To show that what happens in our lives is God's way of preparing us for the work that he wants us to do.

There is a wealth of material available for this lesson, so be selective and choose that which will help your group. It may be necessary to avoid too much detail, but penetrate a particular incident, draw out the lesson pertinent to Joshua, and move on. This comment may be particularly relevant when events such as the plagues in Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the building of the tabernacle, are chosen to show Joshua's witness of God at work. These lessons are covered in Part 1 of these notes.

Bible background

Choose from Exodus 1 – 20, Numbers 13, Joshua 1.

Outline of lesson

Forty years of preparation

Begin by emphasizing that Joshua:

- had watched God working. He had spent 40 days on the mountain at Horeb, as Moses received the law from God (Exodus 24:13 – 32:17).
- had recognised God's hand in the events which he witnessed – for instance, he had seen how the Amalekites had been defeated (Exodus 17:1-14).
- had seen God's plan unfolding as a weak slave people were brought to nationhood by God. He had been Moses' assistant 'from his [Joshua's] youth' (Numbers 11:28).

It may be helpful to have this written on a large sheet of paper or blackboard as a reminder.

In Egypt

Introduce Joshua by discussing his early life. We do not know how old Joshua was at the time of the Exodus, but he knew what it was to be a slave. He saw God's judgment on Egypt and he was one of the slaves delivered from bondage. Discuss with the group the effects of 400 years of slavery on a nation. Help them to see through the eyes of Joshua the emergence of Moses and Aaron. Lead them to see how Joshua must have begun to understand the power of a Heavenly King almost forgotten by the people.

Introduce the workbooks and complete the section on Egypt.

In the Wilderness

Use the workbooks to highlight Joshua's learning experiences during the first year of freedom. From the crossing of the sea, to Joshua entering the land as one of the spies, took about a year; a short time which was packed with vivid revelations of God's power and constant care. Choose carefully the material which will help your group to see what these incidents taught Joshua about God, and how they may have helped in his development as God's chosen leader. Joshua would have learned from all these events:

- From the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17-22) he would have learned the power of God.
- At Marah (Exodus 15:22-25) he would have seen God's understanding of the needs of his people.
- He would have seen from the provision of manna (Exodus 16:1-12) God's loving care, and his desire that his people should obey him.
- When God brought water from the rock he would have seen that God really did have the power, and the will, to bring his people through the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-6)
- From his close involvement in the battle with Amalek (Exodus 17:6-16) he would have learned that with the help of God they could indeed overcome enemies more powerful than themselves.
- At Sinai (Exodus 19:16-21; 20:1-17) he would have learned the awesome power of God, that he needed to be approached with awe, and that he cared how his people lived.
- From the way the people ran wild and made a golden calf (Exodus 32:1-7,17-24) he would have learned how quickly they could forget God's commandments, and the need for strong leadership.

Sent to spy out the land

Make sure that the children are familiar with the story of the 12 spies being sent to find out what the land was like. Joshua may have been in his 20's when chosen as one of the spies. Discuss with your group those qualities which must have impressed Moses. Try to lead the group to understand and share something of Joshua's feelings when the spies who had returned, recommended that the people should not enter the land.

Consider how he might have felt as the people, possibly numbering about 2,000,000, with all their tents, cattle, sheep and household items, tools and equipment, turned back into the wilderness.

Digging deeper

Joshua and Jesus

This section considers the meaning behind the change in Joshua's name (Numbers 13:8,16). Hoshea means 'salvation' but Joshua means 'God saves', and one of the key lessons Joshua needed to learn was that victory came from God, not by the hand of man.

(The names Joshua and Jesus are equivalent, and in Hebrews 4:8 Joshua is given the name Jesus, though many translations, to avoid confusion, refer to 'Joshua').

In Joshua 1:8 God tells Joshua to meditate day and night on the words of the law, and to trust in him – it is this, not a strong army, that will bring victory. It reminds us that God's word can be a help to us even in the most unlikely tasks.

Relevance to our lives

Discuss with your group, in a general way, how God makes provision for us to live for him and to prepare for Jesus' return. Lead them to see that through prayer, through reading the Bible and talking about it, through trying to live in ways that please him, God is shaping our lives.

Prayer

Dear Lord, through our reading, through our talking, through our listening, help us to see your word of truth as a guide in our lives.

Other suggestions for activities

- More mature members of your group could be encouraged to see Joshua as a type of Christ, and the events of the first year as the gospel in embryo; for example, the 'baptism' in the sea, bread from heaven, the living water at Marah (1 Corinthians 10:1-5, John 6:48-51; 7:37-39, for instance).
- Where teachers feel that a deeper study of a particular incident would be beneficial in helping the group to see Joshua's development, drama could be introduced to advantage. Events such as the changing of the water at Marah, the giving of manna and quails, the revelation of God in the law and the return of the spies, could usefully be developed by dramatisation. If it is thought that a play would be helpful, encourage the group to use their own words.