



God Calls Joshua to Be His Servant

Joshua 1:1–9



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn to live as servants of the Lord.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Before Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses died and was buried by God.
- God encouraged Joshua by telling him that He would be with him wherever he went.
- God told Joshua to be strong and courageous and to obey and meditate on the Law.
- Believers are to be strong and courageous to obey God's instructions in the Bible.

KEY VERSE

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

APPLICATION

- Check to see whom you are serving.
- Remember that believers are to be strong and courageous in serving God.
- Memorize and think about God's Word.

NEXT WEEK

Rahab Shows Her Faith in God
Read Joshua 2.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Although the book of Joshua begins by referring to “the death of Moses the servant of the LORD” (Josh. 1:1), it is necessary to go back to the end of Deuteronomy to find the events surrounding Moses’ death. After 40 years of leading Israel, Moses had reached the age of 120 years (Deut. 31:2). Even at such an old age, his “eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished” (Deut. 34:7). God had preserved Moses’ health, but Moses could “no longer go out and come in” (Deut. 31:2), an idiom for a normal day’s work. Moses’ old age was not the only reason he could no longer lead the people. Because of his disobedience, God had told Moses he could not enter the Promised Land (Num. 20:12). While God was about to fulfill His promise of giving the land to Abraham’s descendants, Moses would be prevented from entering, not because of his age, but because of his sin.

Knowing that his death was approaching, Moses asked God to set a leader over the people (Num. 27:16). Moses was concerned that the people “not be like sheep which have no shepherd” (27:17). God commanded that Joshua was to lead the people (27:18). In a public ceremony, in the presence of the high priest Eleazar and all the Israelites, Moses laid his hands on Joshua, a visible sign that God had chosen Joshua to lead the people (27:22–23). Moses encouraged Joshua: “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed” (Deut. 31:7–8). Moses knew the challenge it was to lead the Israelites, but he knew from experience the strongest possible encouragement: the Lord had not left him, and neither would He leave Joshua!

Before the death of Moses, the Lord displayed His grace to him one more time. The Lord directed Moses to go up Mount Nebo, just east of the north end of the Dead Sea (Deut. 32:49). From Mount Nebo, Moses was able to see for the first time the land of Canaan, which God was about to give to Israel. Dramatically, the last words God said to Moses were, “This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have caused you to see it with you eyes, but you shall not cross over there” (Deut. 34:4). After seeing the land and being reminded once more of the faithfulness of God, Moses died. God buried his body (34:5–6). The people of Israel mourned 30 days for their leader (34:8).

Moses is called “the servant of the LORD” 18 times in the Old Testament (14 of these occurring in Joshua). Even though God punished him for not honoring His holiness at the waters of Meribah, Moses still was unlike any other prophet in Israel—“the LORD knew [Moses] face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Moses was the greatest prophet until John the Baptist came, and he was one of the few men in the Old Testament who were called “the servant of the LORD.”

The book of Joshua begins by calling Joshua “Moses’ assistant.” God had been preparing Joshua for leadership for more than 40 years. Joshua led Israel in its first battle after the Red Sea crossing against the Amalekites (Ex. 17:10). He accompanied Moses up the mountain when Moses was given God’s Law and the plans for the tabernacle (Ex. 24:13). Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who believed that God could give Israel the Promised Land (Num. 14). The Lord said of Joshua that he “wholly followed the LORD” (Num. 32:12). Although Joshua had been faithful and successful, God knew that he needed to be encouraged and exhorted in his new role as the leader of the Israelites.

God encouraged Joshua by promising him success in leading the Israelites. The first promise that God gave was the land itself. God had promised the land to Abraham, and now He was going to keep that promise. He encouraged Joshua, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” (Josh. 1:3). Finally, after seven centuries, Israel would possess the land (1:4). The second promise was that Joshua would have victory over his enemies: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life” (1:5). He would be unbeatable in battle. The third promise was that just as God had been with Moses, so He would be with Joshua. God said to him, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (1:5). This precious promise is repeated for believers in Hebrews 13:5. Jesus similarly promised His disciples, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

God’s encouragement was paralleled by exhortation. As Moses previously had exhorted Joshua (Deut. 31:7), the Lord now commanded Joshua to “be strong and of good courage” (Josh. 1:6, 9). Joshua did not need to fear because God would allow him to divide the land for the people (1:6). When in doubt or discouraged, Joshua could look to the end he was certain would come because the faithful God had promised success. He was never to “be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD [his] God was with [him] wherever [he went]” (1:9). Joshua was commanded not to fear, because God was with him. Believers also have the precious promises of God’s presence and His earthly and eternal care.

God’s second exhortation is enmeshed between the commands not to fear. In verse 7, the phrase “be strong and very courageous” is similar to the other exhortation, but here the idea is more of resoluteness than of courage. God commanded Joshua to be resolute, “to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Josh. 1:7). For Joshua to be successful in his service, God commanded strict obedience to His Word, an obedience not varying in the slightest detail. Joshua was not to fail either by being negligent or by being prideful and choosing his way rather than God’s way. Absolute submission was necessary. Joshua’s resolution to carry out God’s Law would be strengthened by his meditation on the Law (1:8). God commanded Joshua to think about the Book of the Law day and night. Joshua’s being consumed with the Law would be evidenced by its presence on his lips. His success would be dependent upon his unwavering clinging to God’s commands.

The beginning of Joshua’s ministry was marked by a significant question: would he be faithful as Moses had? Would he accept encouragement from God’s promises and heed God’s exhortation? Would Joshua, Moses’ assistant, someday be called the servant of the Lord, even as Moses had? After his faithful life and death, Joshua, like Moses before him, was called “the servant of the LORD” (Josh. 24:29). Every believer should strive to be strong and courageous, to embrace God’s encouraging promises and heed His exhortations, so that he, too, can be called the servant of the Lord.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Footprints

Choose one of the ideas below to illustrate Joshua 1:3—“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”

Classroom Footprints

Cut out large footprints from colorful paper and tape them around the room, on floors, and walls. Later, have each student choose a footprint to decorate with stickers or “land” decor such as grass, dirt, sticks, flowers. Then, have them glue on the Bible verse.

Hopping Path

Place footprints around the floor, and have students hop or follow the footprints into the classroom, perhaps finding treasure or going to various tables or activities for the day.



The Call to Be a Servant

Materials: copies of the “Call to Be a Servant” craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons, yarn, brads

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft pages. Students should cut out the box with the phone base, phone dial, and verse from the second page and then glue the phone base to the back of the phone handset page. Then they should use a brad to attach the dial to the phone base. Have the students glue the verse at the top of the page. They should fold the handset down so that it rests on the phone base. Last, they should use yarn to attach the handset to the base, leaving enough room to open the flap.



A Servant of the Lord

Let some students try carrying bunches of objects across the room without dropping them. You can start with a few and then keep adding objects until none of the students is able to carry them all. Tasks can become difficult without any help. Now give the students a bag to put the items in, or let them help one another. Things can become much easier when we have someone to help us. When we help someone do something he is not able to do, or does not want to do, we are serving him. To help, we must do what the other person asks us to do. Do you think God needs a servant? No. There is nothing God cannot do or needs help with! But God has chosen to give us the privilege of helping Him do His work. He does not need our help, but He allows us to help anyway. Joshua was a servant of God because he carried out all the instructions God gave him. Joshua also served God by helping the Israelites carry out God’s instructions. A good servant does whatever he is told to do, exactly as he is told.



Choosing the Next Leader

Play a group game that requires a leader, such as “Follow the Leader” or “Simon



Says.” Have one student be the leader and then choose the next leader by performing a small ceremony. The ceremony should include calling out the next leader’s name, laying two hands on him, and telling him to be strong and courageous.

Right, Left, or Straight Ahead

Begin by making sure that all students know the difference between their right and left hands. Read Joshua 1:7 out loud, and discuss how it describes not turning to the right or the left. Explain that this meant that Israel was not to do anything except what God had commanded them. They were not to turn to the right or left, going their own way. Use paper or tape to create a narrow path for the students to walk on. Tell them they must follow the path and not step off it. Then have another teacher tempt them to come off the path with a treat or some other incentive. After the activity, discuss going off the path. Ask the students whether they were tempted to go off the path and disobey your instruction. Explain that this compares to following God’s instructions in His Word. God has given us a life path to walk along. When we go our own way and choose to disobey His instructions, we turn to the right or left.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Moses had been Israel’s leader for 40 years. He had guided them through the wilderness, spoken to God on their behalf, and taught them all of God’s commands. The Israelites respected Moses as their leader. Glad that their 40-year journey in the wilderness was nearing its end, the Israelites camped on the plains of Moab, waiting to take possession of the land God had promised. Moses had already prepared the Israelites by reminding them to obey God in everything they did. Now Israel waited for God’s direction to go in and conquer the land. But before God would allow Israel to do this, Moses had to die.

Earlier that year, Moses had disobeyed God. Because of this, God punished Moses by forbidding him to enter the Promised Land. However, God allowed Moses to see the land that He would soon give to the Israelites. At the top of Mount Nebo, Moses viewed the good land God had promised. How exciting that must have been for Moses—to see God’s faithfulness in bringing the Israelites to this place. After seeing the land, Moses died, and God Himself buried Moses. How special to be buried by God, the one Moses had loved and worshiped. Deuteronomy 34:10 says that there had never been a prophet as great as Moses in the Old Testament. The Israelites cried over Moses’ death for 30 days.

Now that Moses was dead, Israel needed a new leader to take them into the Promised Land. God had already chosen Joshua. Remember, Joshua was one of the 12 spies whom God had sent into the Promised Land 40 years earlier. He and Caleb

had brought back a good report of the land and had trusted that God would give them the land despite any obstacle they would face. However, the people of Israel did not trust God, and all of Israel was punished. They had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Deuteronomy 34:9 tells us that Moses had “laid his hands” on Joshua. This act showed the Israelites that God had chosen Joshua as their new leader. God had given Joshua the wisdom and ability necessary to carry out His plan.

Joshua had a big job ahead of him. Taking over Moses’ role as leader would not be an easy task. His job came with great responsibility. First, he would have to lead the Israelites as they were about to drive their enemies out of the land. Next, he would have to divide the land among the Israelites. Joshua may have felt overwhelmed and frightened by what was to come, but God encouraged him. God promised to be with Joshua wherever he went. God told Joshua to “be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). What a great promise! Joshua did not need to be afraid—God was going to be his faithful, great companion and protector wherever he went. God also told Joshua to meditate on His laws and commands day and night. If Joshua was faithful to always obey God’s Word, God would give him great success.

Joshua had a big job, but he was ready for the work because he trusted God as his helper and guide. Joshua went to the leaders in Israel and told them to get ready because in three days, they would cross over the Jordan River and prepare to possess the land. The people were ready to obey Joshua. They were ready because they believed that God had chosen Joshua as their leader. The people trusted Joshua and God.

Can you think of any ways that Christians can be like Joshua? First, Christians need to be obedient to what God tells them to do. Second, Christians need to be strong and courageous as they live their lives to honor God. They need to be careful with their words and actions. Third, they need to remember that God is always with them. Let’s thank God for His guidance and love.



Lesson Questions

Who buried Moses?

God did. He buried Moses on Mount Nebo.

Who was Israel’s new leader?

Joshua.

What command did God give to Joshua?

Be strong and very courageous.

Who promised to always be with Joshua and protect him?

God.

Where were the children of Israel going?

To the Promised Land.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Teacher Transition

Have one teacher start the lesson time by teaching about Moses. When it's time to transition to Joshua's leadership, have a different teacher come to teach the rest of the lesson. You also could discuss what happened and how, at other times, teachers or leaders have changed.

Praise and Worship

Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord

Make Me a Servant

The B-I-B-L-E

Trust and Obey



Be Strong and Courageous

Use this finger play to help the students memorize this week's memory verse, Joshua 1:9.

God said to Joshua,
(*Point up; cup hands around mouth.*)

"Have I not commanded you?
(*Point to self; point out.*)

Be strong and of good courage,
(*Flex arm muscles; place hand over heart.*)

Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed,
(*Shake finger no; tremble as though afraid.*)

For the Lord your God
(*Form an L with fingers and draw sash from shoulder to hip; point up.*)

Is with you wherever you go."
(*Clasp hands; point back and forth across horizon.*)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Medal of Honor Discussion

Bring to class some war medals and explain what they are and why they are given. Better yet, invite a veteran to come in and talk about his medals. Talk about times when children have been strong and courageous for doing the right thing, obeying God.



Medal of Honor Craft

Materials: colored construction paper, crayons, scissors, glue

Directions: Give the students construction paper, crayons, scissors, and glue. Have each student make, decorate, and wear his own medal. Give each a copy of Joshua 1:7 to glue to the medal.



Dress-up Soldier

Materials: copies of "Soldier" craft pages at the back of the lesson, crayons, scissors, glue.

Directions: Give the students a copy of the craft pages. Have them color and cut out the soldier outfit and then glue the pieces to the second page to complete the soldier. Talk about the Bible verse, and explain that God's soldier needs the Bible as his sword.



Encouragement Flags

Materials: pipe cleaners, clothespins, construction paper, flag templates (at back of lesson)

Directions: Remind the students that God instructed Joshua to meditate on His promises for encouragement to serve Him faithfully. Tell them that today they will make reminder flags. Give each student a flag template, a pipe cleaner, and a clothespin. They should cut out the flag and fold it in half. Then they should thread a pipe cleaner through the metal spring in the center of the clothespin and fold the pipe cleaner in half and keep twisting it to form a flexible "pole" at a right angle to the clothespin. Have them glue the end of the pipe cleaner between the folded flag template. On the blank side of the flag, have the students draw or write a description of some tasks they must be faithful to do.



To the Right or Left

Shrink the coloring sheet on page 1.21 to fit the center of a page. There should be enough space for a child's handprints to be placed on either side of the picture. Instruct the students to trace their hands on either side of the picture. Explain which hand is the right and which is the left. Discuss what it means for someone not to turn to the right or left in reference to obedience to God's Word.

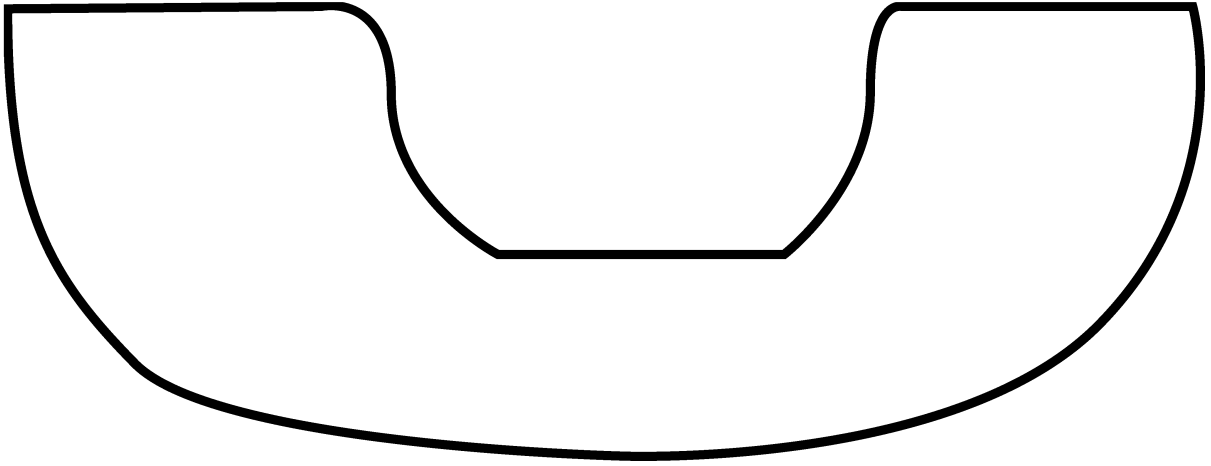
Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

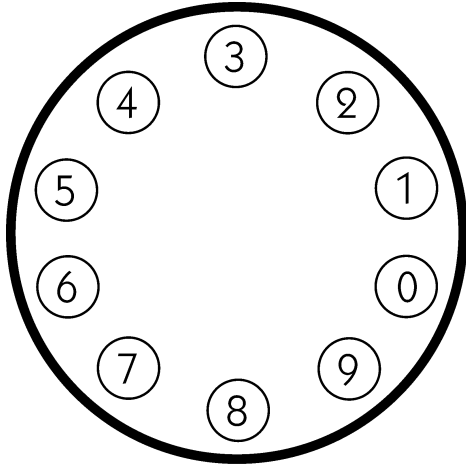
"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).



The Call to Be the Servant



The Call to Be the Servant



“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying:...Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”

—Joshua 1:1, 7

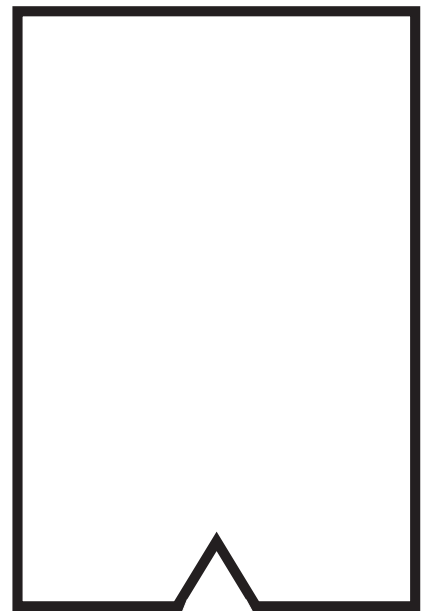
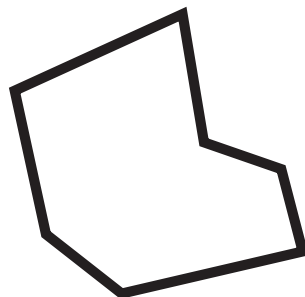
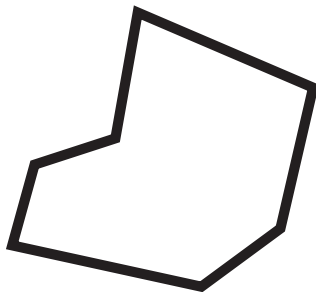
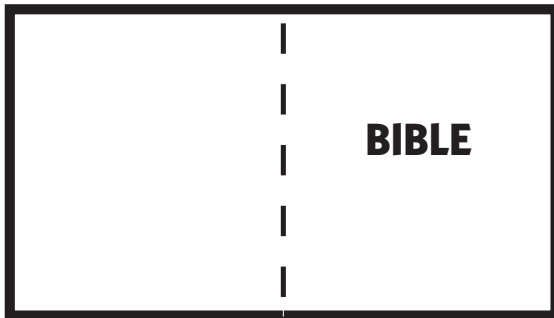
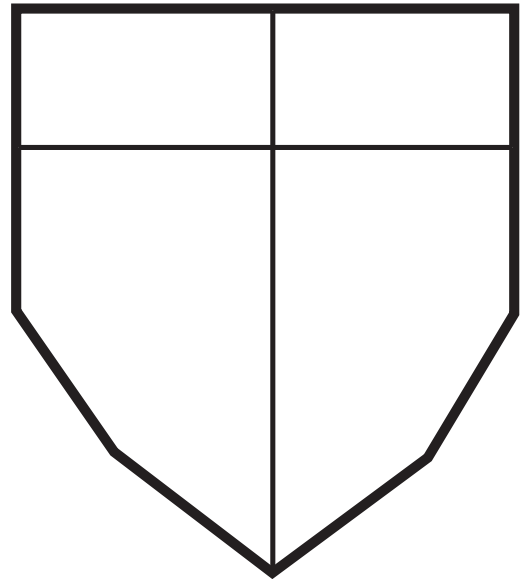
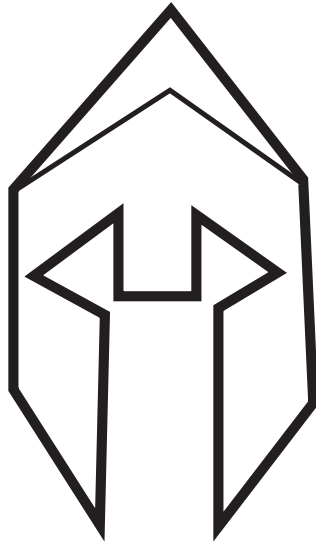
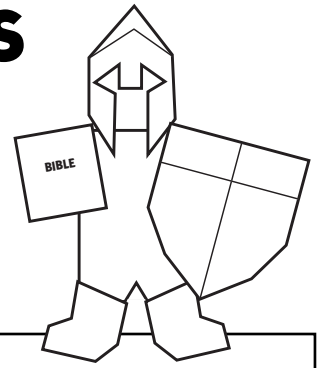
A large, simple outline of a water jug or gourd, centered within a rectangular frame. The jug has a rounded body and two short, vertical handles at the top. Below the jug, the text "Are you ready to answer the call to be a servant of the Lord?" is written in a simple, sans-serif font.

Are you ready to answer the call to be a servant of the Lord?

Be Strong and Courageous

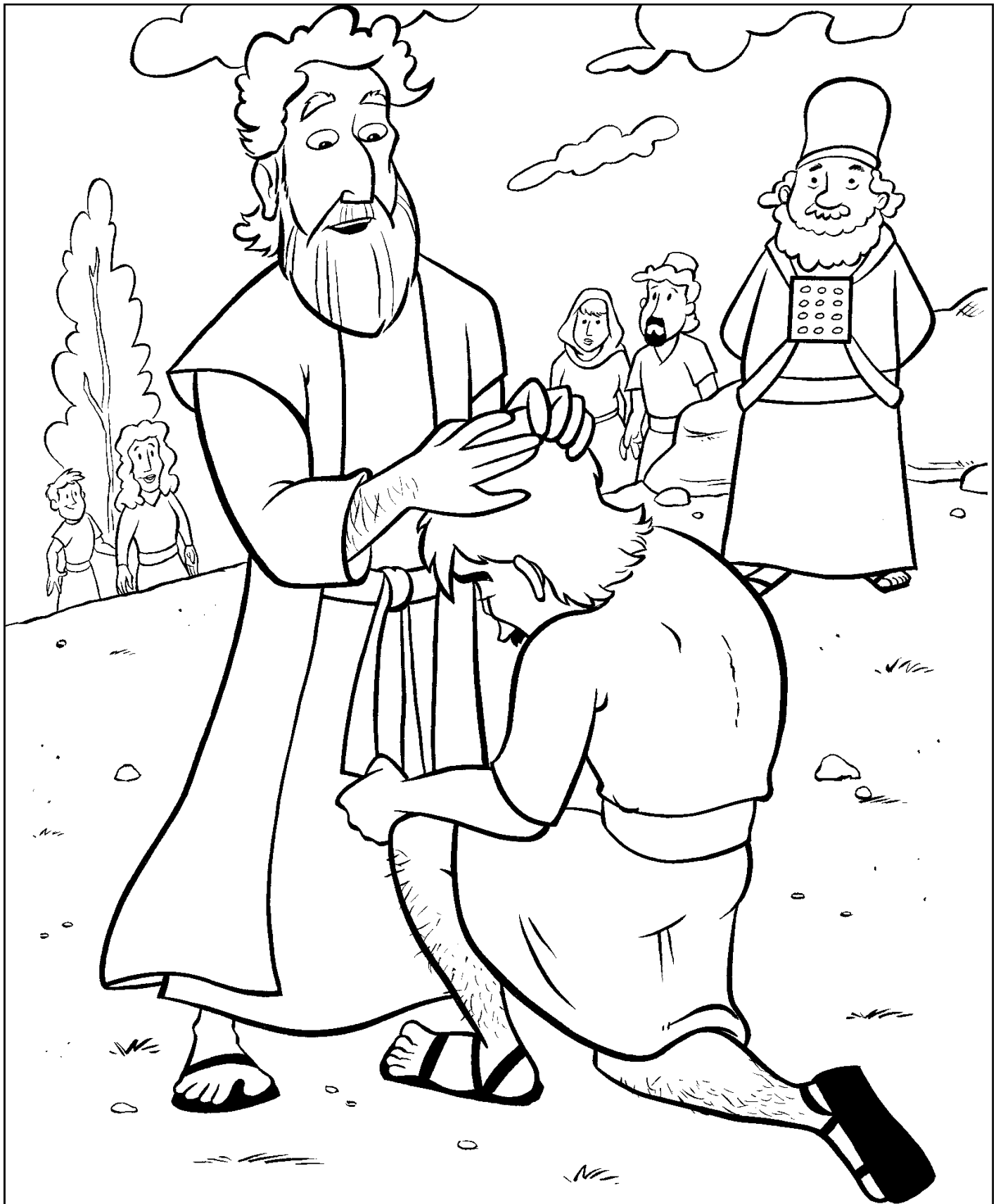
Soldier Pieces

Make a soldier by cutting out the pieces and gluing them to the "Be Strong and Courageous" template.



Be Strong and Courageous

“Only be strong and courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7).



**“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it’”
(Deuteronomy 31:7).**



"...that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left" (Joshua 1:7).

