

Bible: Joshua 3:1 – 4:9

MAKING A MARK

THE AIM: To learn to step out in faith because of what God has done

The aim unpacked

The Israelites have a new leader in Joshua, and now it is time to become God's people, stepping out in faith. Our young people face many obstacles as they grow and develop. Moving into adulthood is as alien an experience for them as it was for the Israelites to move into the Promised Land. However, God is with us every step of the way, and that is the faith we need.

WAY IN



WHAT: magazine quiz

WHY: to see how we can overcome obstacles

WITH: magazine page 82

- 1 On their own, invite the young people to do the 'Choosing the way forward' quiz from page 82. Explain that they should choose a problem to tackle in each situation, and then come up with a solution before moving on.
- 2 Once they have done this, bring the group together and discuss what solutions they came up with. (This is a light-hearted activity, so don't be too harsh on some of their responses if they are not exactly ethical.)
- 3 Explain that in today's session, they'll see how a guy called Joshua overcame a huge physical barrier in order to move forward.



SCENE SETTER

WHAT: making your mark

WHY: to look at one way in which we make a mark

WITH: felt-tip or marker pens

- 1 Explain that graffiti artists often have a stylised way to write their name – a 'tag'. Your group may be able to tell you about some of the local 'tags'.
- 2 Hand out paper and pens and encourage the young people to create their own individual 'tags'. Explain that their tag should say something about them in its style, and perhaps even represent an event in their lives.
- 3 Invite the young people to show their tags to the group and explain why they have designed them in that way.
- 4 Explain that later they'll see how a guy called Joshua made a mark to remember a great event in his and Israel's life. If you choose to go on to *Bible Experience* 'Level 1 Connect', they won't hear this part of the story, so you might like to give an explanation at the end about Joshua's response in Joshua 4:1–9 and link it back to this activity.



THEMED GAME

WHAT: game

WHY: to see that many people are known by who they are with

WITH: sticky notes

- 1 Before the session, prepare some sticky notes by writing the names of famous pairs of people on them – one half of the pair on each sticky note. Make enough for the young people to have one each.
- 2 Ask everyone to stand in a circle facing inwards. Move round the outside of the circle and put a name on the back of each player.
- 3 Now challenge the young people to discover who they are and to find their partner. They can only ask questions that can be answered 'Yes' or 'No' – for example, 'Am I female?', 'Am I alive?', 'Am I a singer?', 'Am I one of the Spice Girls?', 'Am I married to David Beckham?' If all the answers were 'Yes', the person would be Victoria Beckham.
- 4 If appropriate, explain that Joshua was a great man in the Bible, a respected leader of the nation of Israel. He was great and respected because of who he partnered with.

BIBLE EXPERIENCE



LEVEL 1: CONNECT

WHAT: active learning
WHY: to learn to step out in faith because of what God has done
WITH: list of questions from resource page 84. Bible

- 1 Invite the young people to stand next to each other in a straight line across one side of the room. Explain that sometimes we need help in life, as God's people did.
- 2 Ask the questions from resource page 84. If the answer is that they decide without help, they can move one step forward; if they have help from a friend, two steps forward; if they have help from an adult, three steps forward. The 'winner' is the first one to cross the gap (you determine how wide it is beforehand).
- 3 Talk all together about times when we need help from someone more powerful than us, perhaps sharing a personal example.
- 4 Read Joshua 3 to the group, preferably from a modern version. Encourage the young people to try to imagine themselves standing at the side of the river as they listen.
- 5 Explain that the Israelites often needed God's help, and that crossing the River Jordan into the Promised Land was one of those times. Ask the young people to think silently about how often they ask for help.

- 6 Line the group up across the room again and tell them they are Joshua and the Israelites. This time the gap across the room is the raging River Jordan. Doing things by themselves (taking one step), by letting their friends help (taking two steps), and even letting their parents help (taking three steps), won't help them get across. Explain that it is only by trusting, or having faith, in God that they are able to cross the 'river'. Invite them to cross the 'river'.

- 7 Explain that sometimes we can't do things on our own. Sometimes the only way to get through something is to have faith in God.



LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

WHAT: discussion
WHY: to learn to step out in faith because of what God has done
WITH: magazine page 83, Bibles

- 1 Invite the young people to look at the 'Do you dare?' article on page 83. Challenge them to link up the action with the person who did it—either on their own, or suggest that they work in pairs if they are finding it difficult. After a while, go through the answers.

- 2 Ask the group which of the actions they would be prepared to do and in what situations. Give them some time to discuss this in pairs and then feed back to the rest of the group. Draw attention to 'Step into a raging river'. Explain that this is what they'll be thinking more about in this session.

- 3 In their pairs, invite them to read Joshua 3:1–4:9. Ask them to identify why the Israelites decided to go through the river. Why were they able to go through the river while it was in full flood?

- 4 Invite feedback from the whole group. If necessary, explain that the answer is not just that they saw that God stopped the river – it could have started flooding again at any moment. They needed faith in God in order to get to the other side.

- 5 Explain that the people in 'Do you dare?' had faith: not always in God, but in the fact that what they were doing was right. It enabled them to step out and take a risk. Joshua had faith in God and was able to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Ask, 'If we have faith in God, what could we end up doing?'



LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

WHAT: Bible study
WHY: to learn to step out in faith because of what God has done
WITH: Bibles, resource page 85 (optional)

- 1 If you have a large group, split into four smaller groups. If not, decide which of the four viewpoints (from the resource page or step 3) you will look at.

- 2 Encourage each group to read Joshua 3:1–4:9.

- 3 Give each group one of the sets of questions from resource page 85, or use the ones below. Answer them from the viewpoint of Joshua, the Levitical priests, the people or the men who carried the stones.

- What are the risks for you?
- What are you afraid of?
- What does God ask you to do?
- How does he help you?
- How do you feel after the event?

- 4 Invite each group to share their answers, and notice any differences in the answers from the different points of view.

- 5 Remind the young people that this is similar to the start of the Israelites' journey when God's people crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17–14:31). Invite the groups to read these verses quickly to recap the story and discuss what the major differences are between that account and this.

- 6 Invite each group to feed back. Try to draw out that this time the people were not being chased, and that they were going into the Promised Land, not into an inhospitable desert. Explain that God had been with the Israelites for their whole journey and was now giving them the land he had promised. God is with us too, and with faith we, too, can step out into what he has promised us.

- 7 Finish by reading Hebrews 11:1:1 to the group.

RESPOND



MUSICAL

WHAT: Listening to music
WHY: to encourage response of mind and heart to God
WITH: appropriate music, playback equipment

- 1 With the group together, encourage them to get comfortable, ready to listen to some music. Play a melancholic, isolationist song about being alone—such as the Jamie O'Neal version of 'All By Myself' (from the *Bridget Jones's Diary* soundtrack), or 'Eleanor Rigby' by The Beatles. Ask the group to think about how the song makes them feel.
- 2 Then play and listen to a more upbeat song about interdependence, such as 'Help!' or 'With a Little Help from My Friends' by The Beatles, 'You've Got a Friend' by Carole King, or 'You've Got a Friend in Me' by Randy Newman (from the *Toy Story* soundtrack).
- 3 After reading today's bible verses, ask the group to think about which song gives a better picture of what the Christian life should be like. Explain that we can rely on and trust in God, who is our Friend.
- 4 Spend some time in prayer and invite the young people to talk silently to God about his role in their lives. Encourage them to ask God to give them confidence in their faith, and to take a step forward in trusting him—but don't pressure them. You could play some quiet music while this is happening.



PRACTICAL

WHAT: challenge
WHY: to remind us to step out in faith because of what God has done
WITH: cross, small stones, Bibles (optional)

- 1 Invite the young people to sit in a semicircle around the cross. Arrange the stones in a pile around the base of the cross. Explain that because Joshua and the Israelites trusted in God and stepped out in faith, they were able to enter the Promised Land. A pile of stones was arranged as a visual reminder of the crossing of the river. (Recap Joshua 4:1–9 if you wish)
- 2 In a time of quiet, ask the young people to think about parts of their lives where they feel challenged, or are struggling. Encourage them to pray silently, asking God to help them.
- 3 Explain that the best way to cross our 'rivers' is to have faith in God. Remind the group that because of Jesus' death and resurrection we can have a closer relationship with God.
- 4 Invite the young people to take a stone each. Suggest that they put it in their pocket, purse or wallet, or in a place where they will see it regularly. This will be a reminder of what God has done for them, which should encourage them to step out in faith.
- 5 Close with a prayer such as, 'Lord God, thank you for being with us every day. Please help us to have the faith to step out boldly and do your will, just like Joshua and the people of Israel. Amen.'

MORE ON THIS THEME:

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

- 10 *Be big* *Joshua 1*
- 11 *Help for the spies* *Joshua 2*
- 13 *The bigger they are...* *Joshua 6:1–20*

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CREATIVE

WHAT: breaking chains
WHY: to break free of anything that is holding back our faith
WITH: strips of paper, Bibles

- 1 This activity is best done with young people who are already following Jesus. However, it has pointers for those who have not yet taken this step of faith.
- 2 Remind the group that by Jesus' death and resurrection we are free from everything that has kept us away from God. Symbolically, the 'chains' have been broken.
- 3 Say that we often hold on to things that God has forgiven us for. This can stop us deepening our relationship with God, because we find it hard to really believe that God would forgive us. Ask everyone to think of anything they feel guilty about and to write these things on strips of paper.
- 4 Invite the young people to glue the strips together to make one paper chain.
- 5 Ask everyone to stand in a circle, facing outwards, holding the paper chain. Encourage them to talk to Jesus silently about the things on the strips.
- 6 Explain that you are going to pray, and when you say 'break', they should 'break out' of the paper chain. Say, 'Dear Jesus, thank you that you came to break (!) the power of sin and guilt in our lives.'
- 7 Explain that this is a symbol of complete forgiveness and a new start with God. You will need to be aware of where your young people are in their journey with God. For some it will be a renewing of their faith, for others it could be the first time that they are taking this step.

Take a look at these things that individuals or groups have done in the past. Which of them would you do? Can you link the event with the person or people who actually did it?

Answers on page 318

Bible bit

Joshua 3:1 – 4:9

Joshua and God's people, Israel, now had to move forward. They stood at the River Jordan, a 'physical' barrier that they needed to overcome. Joshua had faith in God. He had seen all the great things God had done when Moses was leader and now he had faith that God would again do great things.

Paul

Rusesabagina

Grace Darling

Step into a raging river?

Volunteer to die in someone's place?

David

Hide a spy?

Father

Maximilian

Kolbe

Hide hundreds of your enemies?

Go to a country where you can't speak the language?

Fight a giant?

Israelites in

Joshua 3

Cycle 80 km for charity?

Rahab

Row a boat to save sailors?

Gladys

Aylward

Hundreds of people

every year

You can find out more about these people by either looking in the Bible or searching for their names on the web – their stories are fascinating.



RESOURCE PAGE

USE WITH SESSION 12 BIBLE EXPERIENCE 'LEVEL 1 CONNECT'

Choices

Who helps you choose the following?

- Move one step if you make the decision yourself.
- Move two steps if a friend helps you.
- Move three steps if an adult helps you.

Choosing which socks to wear today.

Choosing which school to go to after Year 6.

Choosing which GCSE options to take.

Choosing which band is your favourite.

Choosing what to eat at dinner.

Choosing when to obey your teachers.

Choosing who to hang around with.

Choosing what to believe.

Choosing a Saturday job.

Choosing what to watch on TV.

Choosing where to go on holiday.

Choosing whether to get a piercing.

USE WITH SESSION 12 BIBLE EXPERIENCE 'LEVEL 3 SWITCH ON'

Read Joshua 3:1 – 4:9. Answer these questions from the viewpoint of one of or one group of the characters.

Viewpoint: Joshua

- What are the risks for you?
- What are you afraid of?
- What does God ask you to do?
- How does he help you?
- How do you feel after the event?

Viewpoint: Levitical priests

- What are the risks for you?
- What are you afraid of?
- What does God ask you to do?
- How does he help you?
- How do you feel after the event?

Viewpoint: The people

- What are the risks for you?
- What are you afraid of?
- What does God ask you to do?
- How does he help you?
- How do you feel after the event?

Viewpoint: The men who carry the stones

- What are the risks for you?
- What are you afraid of?
- What does God ask you to do?
- How does he help you?
- How do you feel after the event?