

LESSON 13 || JOSHUA AND THE PROMISED LAND

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Joshua 1:1-3; Joshua 3-4:9

GOSPEL FOCUS: Luke 2:8-14

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- See how God was faithful in keeping His promise to bring the Israelites to the Promised Land.
- Be reminded that in Jesus, God came to be among His people in the flesh.
- Consider how Jesus' life on earth changed humankind forever.

OVERVIEW:

The time had come. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God was ready to allow the Israelites to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses had died, and a new leader had been appointed. Joshua would lead God's people. Once again, God parted a body of water to lead His people even closer to the land they had been promised. In this lesson, you will lead your students to see that God is always faithful. He kept His promise to provide a home for the Israelites, and He would soon begin to reveal His plan to prepare an eternal home for all people through Jesus.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

JOSHUA

- *Author:* Joshua does not state the author, but it is likely Joshua since he is the main character of most of the book.

- *Time frame:* Joshua was likely written in the late second millennium BC.
- *Purpose:* The book of Joshua is named for the main character. This book tells the story of God's faithfulness to His people as they enter the Promised Land. Under Joshua's leadership, the people experience the blessings that God had promised His people for generations.



LUKE

- *Author:* Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- *Purpose:* Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**– An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**– A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**– A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**– An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To help your students grasp the concept of faithfulness by looking at some things you can and cannot depend on in life.
- *Set-Up:* You’ll be reading, or having students read, a few simple case studies (listed below) that illustrate the concept of reliability. To add a little extra to each case study, you may want to arrange to display images that accompany the case studies. If you choose to do so, you’ll want to do a Google image search for the following images: Cal Ripken, Jr., the “centennial light,” and any screenshot from “The Tonight Show.”

FIRST, explain that you’re going to read three scenarios. **Ask students to be thinking about what they have in common:**

Scenario 1:

On September 19, 1998, something happened that hadn’t happened in 16 years: The Baltimore Orioles took the field, and shortstop Cal Ripken, Jr. wasn’t with them. This game ended the longest consecutive games played streak in Major League Baseball, a streak that will likely never come close to being broken again. Ripken played in an astonishing 2,632 games in a row. For perspective, the current active games played leader (at the time of this lesson’s writing) is Matt Olson with 221. Olson will have to play every game for the next 14 years to break Ripken’s record.

Scenario 2:

In a fire station in Livermore, CA, there’s a light bulb that has been shining (more or less) non-stop for 120 years. The bulb was given to the fire department way back in 1901. It survived several new buildings, being turned off for 20 minutes or so to allow it to be moved to its current location. Strangely, it didn’t begin to gain notoriety until a reporter took an interest in 1972. Since then, the bulb has been the feature of news stories, documentaries, and festivals. Believe it or not, there’s actually a live webcam you can access that shows the bulb burning 24 hours a day.

Scenario 3:

If I asked you to guess the longest-running talk show in American TV history, what would you say? If you answered, “The Tonight Show,” you’d be correct. “The Tonight Show” debuted on September 27, 1954. More than 13,000 episodes later, it’s still going strong. While your parents may remember Johnny Carson or Jay Leno, Jimmy Fallon quickly brought a younger demographic into The Tonight Show’s audience.

When you’ve finished, ask students what each of these has in common. Lead them to see that consistency or reliability is the answer you’re looking for. **Say something like:**

- If you were a baseball player or fan, for 16 years, you could rely on Cal Ripken Jr. to be in the lineup. If you’re a firefighter in Livermore, CA, you can rely on the centennial bulb to be burning when you walk into the fire station. And if you’re looking for late-night humor, The Tonight Show is a reliable option. Reliability is a good thing, especially when it comes to our relationships.

THEN, ask students to think about reliable people in their lives. Give them a chance to call some of these people's names out loud. **Ask them why they named some of those people, and answers might include the following:**

- They are always there for me.
- They do what they say they will do.
- I know the person loves me.

FINALLY, explain to your students that another word for reliable is "faithful." Explain that they have most likely heard that word used to describe God. Tell your students that this lesson is about the faithfulness of God. Explain that as you continue to look at the big-picture story of the Bible today, you're going to be reminded that God kept His promise to lead the Israelites to a land they could call home. **Say something like:**

- In our world, it's hard to find people who are faithful. But we'll learn today that God is perfectly faithful. Through Joshua ushering the people into the Promised Land, we'll see God keep His promise to Abraham. And then we'll see Him perfectly fulfill another promise thousands of years later in the form of His Son, Jesus. Let's take a closer look.

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* To show how God was faithful in keeping His promise of a homeland to the Israelites.
- *Set-Up:* You may want to show a map of the entry into the Promised Land. You can use maps in your Bible or find several on the Internet.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you'll be helping them learn about the preparation of the Israelites to enter the Promised Land from the book of Joshua. If you'd like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between the last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- After God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He called for a census to be taken among the people.
- When the Israelites first approached the Promised Land, the Lord would not allow them or Moses to enter because of their disobedience to His law.
- The people wandered in the wilderness for another 40 years before God allowed the new generation a second chance to enter the Promised Land.
- After the death of Moses, Joshua was chosen to be the new leader.

Start by asking the students to find Joshua chapter 1 in their Bibles. If you choose, provide the basic background for the book found in the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read verses 1-3. Point out that Joshua became the leader of the Israelites after Moses died, and God promised to give him victory in the new land (just as He had promised Moses).

THEN, move on to Joshua chapter 3 and read, or have a student read, verses 1-8. **Ask students what in the passage stands out as significant to them. What seems important or noteworthy?** *Answers will vary.* Students may mention some of the following:

- The Ark of the Covenant. The fact that the Ark of the Covenant was carried by the priests signified that this was a very solemn and special occasion.
- Consecration. The act of purification of the people, and the command to follow the exact way across the Jordan, has a hint of the new covenant to come – the washing away of our sins through the death of the spotless Lamb of God.
- Joshua as the new leader. God wanted the people to see that they could depend on Joshua's leadership. Just as God used Moses to part the Red Sea, He would use Joshua to part the Jordan River.

NEXT, read or have a student read verses 9-17. Have the students interact with these verses by **asking the following questions:**

- **Why do you think God described Himself as the Living God?**
 - *Answer:* To distinguish Himself from all the statues and images of false gods the Israelites may have encountered along the way and were to surely encounter as they entered the Promised Land.
- **Verse 10 seems to allude to the fact that inhabiting the land wouldn't be as easy as some of them may have thought. What evidence speaks to this? What promise does God make?**
 - *Answer:* There are seven nations mentioned, and there is conflict implied in God's words. And yet, God promised He was going to give them total victory (if they would trust in Him).

- **What was different about the crossing of the Jordan River compared to the miracle at the Red Sea?**
 - o *Answer:* The waters of the Jordan stopped when the feet of the priests touched the edge/Moses raised his hands to part the sea; the Jordan River dried up as far as the eye could see/The Red Sea parted in a narrower strip; the parting of the Red Sea delivered Israel from their enemy the Egyptians/the crossing of the flooded Jordan River put Israel right at the doorsteps of their first Promised Land enemy – Jericho.

THEN, help your students see that the crossing of the Jordan River was a mighty miracle of God and was done out of His faithfulness in keeping His promise to the Israelites. Explain that it was a well-orchestrated march by God's people, but the most important thing is that they obeyed all of God's instructions while crossing the river.

Continue the narrative by reading or having a student read Joshua 4:1-9. Tell the students to notice that everyone made it safely across the river. Help your students understand the symbolism and the significance of the building of the memorial stones mentioned in the passage by using the following questions to guide your discussion:

- **Describe who was asked to partake in the gathering of the rocks. Why is this significant?**
 - o *Answer:* One man from each of the 12 tribes of Israel was chosen to take a stone from the dried-up bed of the Jordan River. The men represented Abraham's great-grandsons and symbolized God's faithfulness to keep His promises of a mighty nation of people to Abraham.
- **What do we know about the role these stones played in the lives of the Israelites?**
 - o *Answer:* The Bible says the stones stood for years as a testimony to the miracle of crossing the Jordan River. Even after the memorial was gone, the stories of what they represented gave the Jewish people hope and faith in God's ways and His laws.

At this point, you may want to talk about the importance of significant moments of experiencing God in life, but that will be covered in the Wrapping Up part of the lesson.

FINALLY, conclude this part of the Bible study by pointing out that the crossing of the Jordan River was a big event in the lives of the Israelite people. They had escaped captivity and wandered forty years in the wilderness before God would give them the go-ahead to enter the Promised Land. Tell them that the story from today's lesson was just the beginning of the journey into the new land. Joshua would lead the people into many battles, with God securing their victories. As they marched through the Promised Land, they could move and fight with confidence. Close by telling them that the stone memorial was a testimony of God's faithfulness, something His people knew they would always be able to count on.

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TODAY'S BIBLE NARRATIVE AND THE GOSPEL.

THE THREAD

FIRST, ask the students to turn to the New Testament book of Luke. While they are turning in their Bibles, remind them that Luke is one of the first four books of the New Testament, known as the Gospels. Tell them that the author of the book, Luke, was not one of the twelve disciples but rather a doctor and a Gentile Christian.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 2:8-14, then ask if the story sounds familiar. Someone will probably say it's the Christmas story. Explain that many times when we read a very familiar passage, we don't take the time to unpack the verses to find a deeper meaning. Tell them that to do this, you are going to help them look at the angels' words and actions and the shepherds' reactions.

- **Let's look at the reaction of the shepherds. How would you describe it?**
 - *Answers will vary* but may include some of the following points: The shepherds were used to dealing with enemies while protecting their sheep. They were pretty fearless guys, but the appearance of the angels frightened even these tough guys. Some scholars say the appearance of the angels to the lowly shepherds was symbolic of the fact that Jesus was coming to save all people.
- **Let's look at the message of the angels. How would you describe it?**
 - *Answers will vary* but may include some of the following points: The angel first told them not to be afraid. The angel brought good news, which would, in turn, bring great joy. The Greek word for "good news" is the word gospel, and the arrival of salvation for all people was a reason for a joyous celebration. The words the angel used to describe Jesus were "Savior," or one who would save, "Christ," or anointed one, and "Lord," which refers to the Hebrew word, Jehovah. This magnificent declaration was followed by a spectacular display of angels giving their highest praise to God.

THEN, guide your students to see a couple of things. First, the tremendous declaration of the angels was followed by something so simple that it's almost easy to miss. Tell them the shepherds were told how they could find the baby Jesus so they could go and worship Him. Remind them that God is always at work pointing people to Jesus so they can have a relationship with Him and worship Him. Also, help them see that the birth of Jesus was an act of God's faithfulness because He kept His promise to send a Savior.

FINALLY, close the Bible study section of the lesson by **saying something like:**

- **God is always faithful. When we are faced with people who let us down or things that may seem untrustworthy, God is someone we can completely trust. He promised Abraham a mighty family of descendants, and He kept His promise. He promised Moses a permanent home for the Israelites, and He provided one. He promised a Savior for the world, and He sent His only Son, Jesus. God is always faithful and true, and we can put our complete trust in Him.**

IF YOUR STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* To help students identify times in their lives when God has been faithful to them.
- *Set-Up:* You will want to provide some strips of paper, preferably colored construction paper, and a pen or marker for each student.

FIRST, ask if anyone has ever had any major things happen in their lives, such as winning a sports championship, getting a special award, traveling overseas, seeing someone famous, etc. You may want to share some similar experiences from your own life. When the students have finished sharing, ask what makes the experience memorable. The main thing here is to help them realize these experiences have always stuck in their minds.

NEXT, remind the students about the miracle God performed at the Jordan River. Ask the students what God told Joshua to do to help the people remember the moment. Explain that the monument of rocks became a visual reminder of God's mighty

power and faithfulness to His people.

THEN, give each student a couple of strips of the paper you prepared ahead of time, along with a pen or a marker. Ask them to think of some major events in their spiritual lives, such as:

- The day they accepted Christ, the day they were baptized, a mission trip or ministry event, a special youth service, a youth camp or Disciple Now event, etc.

Have them write some of these significant spiritual moments on the strips of paper you handed out. You may want to share some spiritual markers from your life to encourage your students and help them see how God is faithful throughout life. Ask if any students would like to share some of the things they wrote down. Encourage them to put the “markers” somewhere they can be seen each day and be ready to add new ones. Also, remind them to be willing to tell others about the great things God has done in their lives.

FINALLY, close the lesson by helping the students see that God is always faithful. Tell them the things they wrote on their strips of paper should always be reminders of God’s power and His ability to keep His promises. Tell them that just as God was faithful in the Bible, He is the same God today and is 100% trustworthy.

Close with a prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness in all life situations.

- If you’ve purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they’ll be working through Week 13 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week’s verse their best shot.
- If you’re utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you’ll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn’t work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.