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EXPLORERS



Bible Studies



Teacher's GUIDE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Middle and Upper Elementary (Grades 2-6)



SUNDAY SCHOOL
PUBLISHING BOARD
Equipping Today's Church to Serve

Strength in Obedience

September 6, 2026—Lesson 1

Background Scripture: Joshua 1 • **Lesson Scripture:** Joshua 1:1-11

Key Verse: [The Lord said to Joshua,] “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (*Joshua 1:9*)

Lesson Objective: The students will discover that God taught Joshua to be strong, courageous, and obedient.

Materials Needed: *Middle Elementary* student books, Bibles (NIV), 4x6-inch heart-shaped template, yellow copy paper, white card stock, a white 22x28-inch poster board, double-stick tape, notebook paper, crayons, pens/pencils, markers, glitter glue, faith stickers, scissors, a hole puncher, a mobile device with Wi-Fi access. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, (1) label a poster board “I Obey God when I . . . !” (2) Create one yellow 4x6-inch heart shape for each student by copying the template onto yellow copy paper. (3) Prepare a list of faith action statements doable for this age group (examples: *Read my Bible; Help others; Obey my parents;* and so forth). (4) Copy the reproducible templates as instructed.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Say: When we are kind to others and help someone, we are obeying God. Each day, we can do something that demonstrates our love and obedience to God.

Display the “I Obey God when I . . . !” poster board. Distribute the yellow hearts to the students and a pen or pencil. Instruct the students to write or draw on their heart cutout at least one way they can obey God. Allow them to share their drawings or writings with the class. (Use your list to assist as needed.) Then have them place their hearts on the poster board, using the double-sided tape.

Close the activity by telling the students that today’s lesson is about Joshua, who obeyed God.

BIBLE VOYAGE



The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6-7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Strength in Obedience

Moses, a servant of God, was the leader of the Israelites. After Moses died, God chose Joshua to lead the Israelites. God told Joshua that He would lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and give them the land that God had promised Moses. God would give them every place their feet touched.

The land God would give the Israelites was vast, extending from the desert to Lebanon, the Euphrates River, the Hittite country, and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. God would be with Joshua as He was with Moses. God would never leave Joshua, and no one could stand against him.

God told Joshua to be strong and courageous, and to obey the laws that Moses had given them. God told Joshua to remember and do everything that God commanded. Joshua was to think about God’s instructions or laws. Joshua should not be afraid because God would be with him wherever he went.

Joshua directed the people to gather all their belongings. In three days, they would cross the Jordan River, and God would give them the land they had been promised.

After reading the story, ask the following questions:

1. What did God call Joshua to do? (*To lead the Israelites after Moses died.*)
2. What type of leader did God tell Joshua to be? (*He was to be a courageous, strong, and obedient leader.*)
3. What would happen in three days? (*Joshua would lead the Israelites to cross the Jordan River.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS



Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

True or False?

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Assist any students who struggle with figuring out the answers. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud and correct any false statements.

Answers: (1) T; (2) F (In *three* days, the Israelites would cross the Jordan River.); (3) T; (4) T; (5) F (God *did* want Joshua to obey Him.)

The Contemporary Story

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

You're a Leader

At school, Mr. Keaton said, "Patrick and Stella, I need to talk to you for a few minutes during break. I need your help."

On the playground, Patrick and Stella rushed over to Mr. Keaton.

Patrick asked, "What can we do to help?"

Mr. Keaton replied, "You two are great students, and I want each of you to be a class leader. Would you like to be my class leaders?"

Smiling, Patrick said, "Yes."

"I don't know if I can," Stella responded.

After Mr. Keaton spoke with Patrick and Stella, he said, "Go play. Talk to your parents and let me know if you want to be a class leader."

As they went to play on the swings, Patrick said, "Stella, you're already a great leader."

Stella said, "I just don't know."

After school, when Stella saw her dad, she said, "Dad, Mr. Keaton wants me to be a class leader. I don't know if I can."

Stella's dad said, "God is always with you. You are strong, and I know you will be a great leader. You need to know that you can do it."

Then, discuss the following questions:

1. What was Stella not sure she could do? (*She wasn't sure she could be a class leader.*)
2. How did her father encourage her? (*He assured her that God is always with her, that she was strong, and would be a great leader.*)
3. Do you think that you can be a leader? (*Responses may vary.*)

Say: When we obey God, He gives us strength and courage. Patrick and Stella's dad knew that Stella was a leader. We must believe that God will help us to lead with courage and strength.

Exploring the Story in Ruby's Lab

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

See if any students did Ruby's assignment from the previous lesson (Summer 2026, lesson 13): showing kindness to someone new to their neighborhood, school, or church. Allow time for discussion of the insights and/or experiences that students share, then continue.

Let one or two students read Ruby's words aloud. Discuss Ruby's words with the students. Encourage the students to do Ruby's take-home assignment during the week and return prepared to discuss their efforts/experiences.

Obeying God

Instruct the children to circle the pictures that depict how Joshua obeyed or followed God. Discuss why picture #5 does not show Joshua obeying God.

All pictures should be circled except picture #5.

Make an "I Can Obey God, Too!" Bookmark

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 61*) and, using white card stock, make a copy of the bookmark template for each student in your class. Distribute the copies and art supplies. Have the students decorate their bookmarks. Then cut them out and punch a hole at the top, using a hole puncher. Direct the students to insert a strip of yarn through the hole and tie the ends of the strip into a knot.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: Why do you think it is sometimes difficult to lead? (*Provide time for discussion.*)

Lead the students in a discussion about being strong and courageous as we obey and follow God. Ask a volunteer to conclude the class session with a prayer, expressing a desire to obey God while demonstrating courage and strength.

NOTES

Stones and Zones

September 13, 2026—Lesson 2

Background Scripture: Joshua 4 • **Lesson Scripture:** Joshua 4:14-18, 21-22

Key Verses: [Joshua] said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’” (Joshua 4:21-22)

Lesson Objective: The students will be encouraged to remember and express gratitude for God’s blessings.

Materials Needed: Middle Elementary student books, Bibles (NIV), 4x6-inch blank “thank you” note cards, markers, crayons, stickers, pens/pencils, instrumental praise music, a music player or a mobile device with Wi-Fi access. (Optional: whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Say: Think of people in your life whom you are thankful for. God is happy when we are grateful for people (family and friends) in our lives. When we give someone a thank-you card, we express our gratitude to that person. (*Provide time for the students to share who they are thankful to know.*)

Distribute several blank thank-you cards to each student. Instruct the students to write the name of a person they are thankful for and a brief thank-you message on the blank side of the card. Assist if needed. Allow the students time to decorate their thank-you cards. As a class, pray and allow each student to offer a line thanking God for people they are thankful to have in their lives. Allow the students to share their thank-you cards with the class and arrange for them to be given to the person for whom they are grateful.

Close the activity by telling the students that today’s lesson is about Joshua, who led the people in showing thankfulness to God.

BIBLE VOYAGE

Refer to pages 6-7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Stones and Zones

God performed a miracle and held back the flooding waters of the Jordan River, so that Joshua and the Israelites were able to cross the Jordan River on dry land. God commanded Joshua to have one leader from each tribe select a stone from the middle of the dry Jordan riverbed. They were to build a monument with the twelve stones. The people obeyed Joshua’s instructions. And the Lord (God) exalted and praised Joshua before all the people. The people were amazed by Joshua and respected him throughout his life, just as they had respected Moses.

Meanwhile, the priests remained standing in the middle of the dry Jordan riverbed carrying the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Law of God. Then, the Lord (God) told Joshua to command that the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant come out of the riverbed. As soon as they stepped onto the riverbank, the Jordan River began flooding as before.

Joshua encouraged the people to tell their children—whenever they asked about the meaning of the stones—that the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.

After reading the story, ask the following questions:

1. What did God instruct the Israelites to do? (*Build a monument with twelve stones, representing one from each tribe in Israel.*)
2. How did Joshua and the Israelites cross the flooding Jordan River? (*God held back the flood waters, allowing the Israelites to cross the Jordan River on dry land.*)
3. What did the Israelites think of Joshua? (*They respected Joshua like they respected Moses.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Fill in the Blanks

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to

complete the activity in their student books. Assist any students who struggle with figuring out the answers. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) **Jordan River;** (2) **stone;** (3) **Joshua;** (4) **dry;** (5) **priests;** (6) **God;** (7) **Moses**

The Contemporary Story

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Reasons to Be Thankful

After school, Anthony and Eli’s dad said, “Your mom and I have some news about a trip.”

Smiling, Anthony asked, “Where are we going?”

Eli asked, “Are we going to the beach? I love the beach!”

Their mom said, “It’s my family reunion. We’re having it at a park near your great-grandmother’s home.”

As his smile faded, Anthony asked, “Why do we need to hear all the family stories? May I stay home?”

Eli said, “I love Grandma’s stories. Her stories remind me of the reasons why I should be thankful for my family. I’m excited to go!”

Their dad said, “Yes, Anthony. You must go, and I hope you’ll learn some reasons to be thankful for our family, too.”

That night, Anthony’s dad said, “Anthony, you and Eli do not see our family often. I hope you both learn to appreciate the gift of family from God. Just listen to the great stories and history that are shared.”

Anthony said, “I’ll try to listen and learn.”

Eli said, “When you listen, you’ll learn many reasons to say, ‘Thank You, God.’”

Then, discuss the following questions:

1. Why didn’t Anthony want to go to the family reunion? (*He didn’t want to hear all the family stories.*)
2. What did Eli like about the stories? (*The stories remind him of reasons to be thankful for his family.*)
3. Think of a family story you are proud of and share it with the class. (*Responses may vary.*)

Say: Learning about our family history allows us to discover what our ancestors have created or built that has

helped shape who we are today. God is happy when we remember and are thankful.

Exploring the Story in Ruby’s Lab

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

See if any students did Ruby’s assignment from lesson 1: reading and obeying God’s Word during the week. Allow time for discussion of the insights and/or experiences that students share, then continue.

Let one or two students read Ruby’s words aloud. Discuss Ruby’s words with the students. Encourage the students to do Ruby’s take-home assignment during the week and return prepared to discuss their efforts/experiences.

Reasons to Give Thanks

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the worksheet activity in their student books. Assist any students who struggle with figuring out what to write or draw. After they complete the activity, ask volunteers to share their responses aloud with the class.

Worksheet responses and drawings will vary.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Ask: Do you think it is beneficial to learn about your family? Why or why not? (*Provide time for discussion.*)

Conclude by leading the students in a discussion about the importance of learning about our families and being thankful for our family history.

Encourage the students to always be thankful when someone shares their family history.

Ask a volunteer to conclude the class session with a prayer, expressing gratitude to God for everything He provides.

NOTES

Strength in Obedience

September 6, 2026—Lesson 1

Background Scripture: Joshua 1 • **Lesson Scripture:** Joshua 1:1-11

Key Verse: [The Lord said to Joshua,] “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (*Joshua 11:9*)

Lesson Objective: The students will examine how the Lord called Joshua to lead the people after the death of Moses.

Materials Needed: *Upper Elementary* student books, Bibles (NIV), a CD of instrumental praise music, a CD player or electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, pencils, pens, markers, other art supplies, scissors, copy paper, index cards. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂ Prior to class, clear the center of the classroom to facilitate ease of movement for today’s exercise.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Say: Today’s lesson examines how God called Joshua to lead the people of Israel. Joshua listened carefully to God’s instructions. Let’s play a listening game.

Have the students line up in a straight line in the center of the classroom. Ensure that there is a small space between each student. Go to the front of the line of students and whisper a word or short phrase (related to the lesson) into the first person’s ear. Then instruct that student to turn to the next student and whisper the same word or phrase into the next student’s ear. (They are not allowed to ask that the phrase be repeated or clarified.) They must turn to the next student and repeat—to the best of their understanding—what was whispered to them. The students should keep passing the word or phrase until it reaches the last student in the line. The last student has to say aloud what word or message they received. This can be a humorous yet insightful exercise in listening.

Tell the students that today’s lesson is about how God called Joshua to lead the people and how God instructed

Joshua on how to be a courageous and strong leader. Discuss with the students the importance of leaders’ listening to and following God’s guidance.

BIBLE VOYAGE



The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6-7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

If your students do not know how to locate the passage or verse they are looking for, teach and review Bible skills weekly through interactive drills, games, and other methods.

Strength in Obedience

After Moses’ death, the Lord spoke to Moses’ assistant, Joshua. The Lord told Joshua to prepare the people to cross the Jordan River. The Lord made the same promise that He had made to Moses: Their promised territory would extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. No one would be able to stand against them. The Lord promised to be with them just as He had been with Moses. He promised not to leave or turn away from them. He encouraged Joshua to be strong and have courage because he would lead the people to the land that had been promised to their ancestors.

The Lord told Joshua to obey all the laws that Moses gave him. He told Joshua not to turn from the Law, and he would be successful. The Lord told Joshua to study the Law constantly so that he would always do what was written in it. By doing this, he would be successful. The Lord commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous and not to be afraid or discouraged because the Lord would always be with him.

Joshua told the officers of the people, “Go and tell the people to get ready. In three days, they will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land that the Lord is giving them.”

Ask: What instructions did the Lord give Joshua to help him be a successful leader of the people? (*The Lord told Joshua to study the Law and to be strong and courageous.*) How did the Lord reassure Joshua as he took over leading the people? (*He promised that He would be with him always and that He would never leave or forsake him.*) How can we be encouraged by today's lesson? (*We can be encouraged by the Lord's promise because He will never leave us.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Chosen and Challenged (Part 1)

Steven was asked to represent his Sunday school class at the annual meeting. But Steven had a big problem: He was afraid that he would have to stand before the assembly and speak—and Steven was very afraid of public speaking!

"I don't know if I can do this!" Steven told his Sunday school teacher, Ms. Parker. "What if I become so nervous that I do something embarrassing?"

"I really don't think that will happen," Ms. Parker replied. "I spoke with the pastor, and we both agree that you would represent us well at the conference."

"Can I think about it?" Steven asked.

"By all means . . . and perhaps you can also speak with your parents about it," Ms. Parker suggested.

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Chosen and Challenged (Part 2)

When Steven got home, he talked with his parents about the opportunity the church was giving him.

"Well," his father said, "I know of one way to guarantee that you will be able to face this challenge: talk with God about it."

"You know, Steven, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to face your fears," his mother explained. "It's also an opportunity for you to learn to rely on God to give you the courage to face any situation."

Steven took his parents' advice. When he met with Ms. Parker, he was confident that he would represent his class well at the conference.

Ask: What was Steven given the opportunity to do? (*He was asked to represent his church and Sunday school class at a church conference.*) Why was Steven upset and worried? (*He became afraid when he had to speak before a group. He was scared of embarrassing himself.*) To whom did Steven turn for advice and guidance? (*He turned to his parents.*) Who can you turn to for advice and guidance? (*Responses will vary.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Word Jumble

Allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. After the students complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

Answers: (1) Law; (2) studied; (3) afraid; (4) know; (5) strong; (6) Moses

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer close the session in prayer, thanking God for being with them always.

NOTES

Stones and Zones

September 13, 2026—Lesson 2

Background Scripture: Joshua 4 • **Lesson Scripture:** Joshua 4:14-18, 21-22

Key Verses: [Joshua] said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’” (Joshua 4:21-22)

Lesson Objective: The students will recall God’s blessings and be encouraged to share them with others.

Materials Needed: Upper Elementary student books, Bibles, a CD of instrumental praise music, a CD player or electronic mobile device with Wi-Fi access, pencils, pens, markers, other art supplies, scissors, masking tape, white card stock, construction paper, self-adhesive magnetic strips. (**Optional:** whiteboard)

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BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

✂️ Prior to class, clear the center of the classroom. Cut out twelve eleven-inch-tall stone shapes from construction paper and tape them to the floor.

Welcome and Worship

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Opening Activity

Refer to page 6 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Say: It’s important that we remember the good things that God does for us. Then, we can share them with others. Let’s make a memorial of God’s goodness to us. A *memorial* is a structure or thing that reminds us of someone or something special.

Gather the students near the stones on the classroom floor. Working together, discuss at least twelve examples of God’s faithfulness. (For example, God loves and forgives us, God provides food and shelter for us, etc.) Next, give the students markers and have them write an example of God’s faithfulness on the twelve stone cutouts. Close out the activity by having the students step on a stone and verbally share an example of God’s goodness.

Inform the students that today’s lesson is about how God instructed the people to gather twelve stones from the Jordan River to serve as a memorial to Him for holding back the flood waters.

BIBLE VOYAGE



The Bible Story

Refer to pages 6-7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Stones and Zones

The Israelite people had successfully crossed the Jordan River and set up camp. It was at this point that the Lord reaffirmed Joshua as the one who would lead the people following the death of Moses. The Lord did this in front of all the people. The people honored Joshua throughout his life, just as they had honored Moses.

The Lord spoke to Joshua and told him to order the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant (which contained the Ten Commandments) to come out of the Jordan River. Joshua ordered the priests to come out of the Jordan, just as the Lord had told him to do. The priests obeyed Joshua’s command, and they carried the Ark of the Covenant out of the Jordan River. As soon as they stepped onto dry land, the waters of the Jordan River returned to their natural course, and the flood waters ran just as they had before. This confirmed the miraculous nature of God’s power.

Then Joshua spoke to the people and told them, “In the future, when your children ask you what the twelve stones mean, tell them Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.” The stones would serve as a memorial to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Ask: What did the Lord instruct the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to do? (*He told Joshua to instruct them to come out of the Jordan River.*) What did Joshua tell the people to do for their future generations? (*He told them to gather twelve stones and place them as a memorial to show their descendants that God allowed the people to cross the flooding Jordan River onto dry land.*)

FUN EXPEDITIONS



Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher’s guide for general instructions for this section.

Working to Remember (Part 1)

Dana seemed to have a problem following directions. It seemed that as soon as someone started telling her what to do, she drifted off. When she came back from wandering mentally, the person had moved on or was waiting for a response from her. Many times, she had to ask them to repeat their instructions.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," Dana told her best friend, Nicole. "I can't seem to remember important things."

"I have trouble remembering sometimes, too," Nicole said. "But my mom helped me."

"Okay. I'll talk with my mom about it," Dana said.

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Lead the class to discuss whether there is an item in their home that reminds them of God's blessings.

The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Working to Remember (Part 2)

Later that evening, Dana talked to her mother about what was happening to her.

"Nicole suggested that I ask questions or repeat what the person is saying to me," Dana explained. "She also said that I should write lists to help me remember things."

"Those are good suggestions. I have some ideas that may help you, too," her mother replied. "I know how much you like to draw. Maybe you could draw pictures as a reminder. You can draw a present on the calendar for someone's birthday. Drawing a book to note the date that we take our trips to the library might also be helpful."

"Oh! I can do that!" Dana said excitedly. She then felt more confident about her ability to remember.

Ask: What problem did Dana have? (*She had trouble remembering important things.*) What did Nicole suggest that Dana do to help the situation? (*She suggested writing notes, or repeating back what was said, or asking questions.*)

Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Searching for Words

Allow time for the students to complete the activity in their student books. Assist, if needed. After the students complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

K	S	W	L	C	G	H	Z	G	D	K
W	A	T	E	R	S	B	Y	A	R	K
W	Y	T	A	C	T	X	V	G	Y	D
K	P	Q	D	S	O	F	T	H	J	A
G	B	J	Y	D	N	Z	G	N	J	H
H	H	J	F	V	E	V	B	N	O	N
J	P	R	I	E	S	T	S	P	R	W
S	D	G	N	J	P	S	D	W	D	U
W	C	G	T	H	N	J	S	W	A	K
F	Z	W	T	H	P	N	J	D	N	O
H	O	N	O	R	E	D	G	K	P	P

Make an "Stone to Remember" Footprint Magnet

Refer to the reproducible activity (*page 65*) and, using white card stock, make a copy of the stone footprint template for each child in your class. Pass out art supplies and scissors, and distribute a copy of the template to each student. Instruct the students to decorate and cut out the footprint, being careful to only cut around the outer perimeter of the toes. Attach a self-adhesive magnetic strip to the back of each footprint.

ENDING THE JOURNEY

Refer to page 7 of this teacher's guide for general instructions for this section.

Have a volunteer close the session in prayer, thanking God for always being faithful to His people.

NOTES
