

The First Swim

A 20-minute lesson for Sunday school, VBS or midweek kids • Joshua 1:9

AGES	Best for 5–10. Adaptations for younger and older classes are on the last page.
YOU NEED	20 minutes • a screen with sound and internet • a clear bowl or jar of water • a fishing bobber or a wine cork • a coloring page and crayons • printed family guides to send home
EPISODE	The First Swim (3 min) — youtu.be/V6sni8846fE
MEMORY VERSE	Joshua 1:9
GRANDMA'S BIBLE STORY	Peter walks on the water — Matthew 14:22–33

THE ONE THING THEY TAKE HOME

Being brave is not the same as not being scared. LJ is still frightened when he pulls his goggles down — he goes under **anyway**, because he knows two things: God is with him wherever he goes, and his dad is standing right there. Courage is fear plus company plus God's promise.

Class plan

MIN	WHAT HAPPENS
0–2	Open with the bobber. Hold up the bobber over the bowl. "What happens if I push this all the way under and let go?" Push it under. Let go. It shoots back up. Do it twice more. "It comes back up every single time. Remember that."
2–5	Watch the episode. Play <i>The First Swim</i> (3 minutes).
5–10	Talk about it. Use the three questions below.
10–14	Open the Bible. Read Joshua 1:9, then tell the story of Peter on the water (teaching notes below).
14–18	Do the activity. The Brave Breath and the bobber (below).
18–20	Pray and send home. Pray the prayer below and hand out the family guides.

Talk about it

- LJ told his mom his stomach hurt. Was that true? (Careful here — it probably *was* true. Fear really does live in your stomach. He just wasn't saying the whole thing. Don't let this become a lesson about lying; it is a lesson about naming what is actually wrong.)
- Dad didn't say very much at the pool. He just stayed. Why did that help LJ so much? (Listen for: he wasn't alone. Children often expect help to look like advice. This is the episode's whole point — presence beats instruction.)
- What is something that feels a little scary to you right now, and who could stand beside you while you try it?

Open the Bible

"Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed, for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9 (World English Bible)

How to tell it. The disciples were in a boat in the middle of the night, a long way from shore, and the wind was against them. Then they saw someone walking toward them *on the water*, and they were terrified. Jesus called out, "Take heart! It is I. Don't be afraid." Peter said, "Lord, if it's You, tell me to come to You on the water." Jesus said one word: "Come." And Peter climbed out of the boat and walked.

Then he sank. He looked at the wind, got frightened, and started going down — and this is the part children need. Peter cried out, and *immediately* Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Not after a lecture. Not once Peter had got his courage back. Immediately. Ask the class: who else in this story got out of the boat? (Nobody. Peter sank because he was the only one who tried.)

GOING DEEPER WITH OLDER KIDS

Read Joshua 1:1–9 and ask why God says "be strong and courageous" *three times* to the same man in nine verses. Joshua was taking over from Moses and was almost certainly terrified. God does not tell him the job will be easy — He tells him who is going with him. Pair it with Deuteronomy 31:6 and 2 Timothy 1:7.

Activity: the brave breath and the bobber

4 minutes • the bowl, the bobber, and everybody standing up

- **Everyone stands.** Explain what LJ did at the edge of the pool: he said the verse, he pulled his goggles down, and he took one big breath.
- **Say it together.** "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. God is with me wherever I go."
- **Take the breath.** One big breath in, together, and let it out slowly. Do it twice. Tell them this is a real thing they can do at the top of a slide, outside a classroom door, or before a test.
- **Back to the bobber.** Push it under one last time and let it go. "Fear pushes you down. God's promise brings you back up — every time, like this."
- **Name one brave thing.** Go round the room; each child names one small scary thing they will try this week. Write them down and pray over the list.

DON'T RUSH PAST THE FEAR

The temptation is to tell children that if they trust God they won't be scared. That is not what the episode shows and it is not what the Bible says — Peter was frightened, Joshua needed telling three times, and LJ's hands were shaking. A child who is told brave people aren't afraid will conclude they are not brave. Say plainly: **being scared is not the problem. Being alone with it is.**

Close in prayer

God, when we are afraid, help us trust You. Thank You for the people You put beside us — the ones who don't say much and just stay. Give us brave hearts this week, and remind us that You go with us wherever we go. Amen.

Adapting it

Ages 3–5: the bobber and the breath only. Skip Peter sinking — tell them Jesus walked on the water and held Peter's hand. Ask: "Who holds your hand?"

Ages 10–12: this age has usually stopped admitting to being scared, so start there. Ask what people their age are actually afraid of and why nobody says it out loud. Then ask what Dad did that a friend could do for them.

Large group: pair the children up. One names a brave thing; the partner's only job is to say "I'll be there." Swap. That sentence is the whole lesson.

Short on time (10 minutes): bobber, watch, question 2, Joshua 1:9, the brave breath, prayer.

A note for teachers: a child in your class may be carrying something much heavier than a swimming lesson. If the "one brave thing" round surfaces something serious, don't handle it in front of the group — thank them for saying it, move on, and follow up privately with them and a parent afterwards.