

LESSON 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

LESSON AT A GLANCE

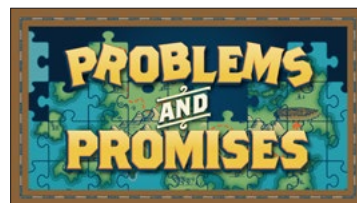
WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

GOD'S BIG STORY: After 40 years in the wilderness, God leads a new generation of His people across the Jordan River and into the promised land, showing that He can make a way through anything.

WORD OF WONDER: God keeps His promises forever. —from 1 Chronicles 16:15

- Play Stations:
 - Impossible Puzzle
 - Stacking Stones
 - Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Impossible Water Challenge
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- God's Big Story
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- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing
- Circle Time: Stones in the Water
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SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!



LESSON 2 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

WORD OF WONDER: From 1 Chronicles 16:15

When I was 20, a debilitating autoimmune disease forced me to consider quitting college. Plagued with aching joints and constant fatigue, my physical condition made it seem unlikely I would graduate at the end of the year. But day by day, God provided all I needed to earn my degree. Understanding professors, helpful friends, and good doctors allowed me to continue.

God prepared the way for Israel to go into the promised land. But even with other signs of God's provision, the 120-mile-long Jordan River still stood as an obvious barrier between the people and the fulfillment of God's promise. God instructed Joshua to have priests, carrying the ark of the covenant, lead the way.

Read Joshua 3:14–17. When the feet of the priests touched the water, the river stopped flowing, just as God had promised. The priests stood in the middle of the river holding the ark while the people crossed on dry ground. A new generation of Israelites watched God hold back the water, just as He had done for their ancestors at the Red Sea.

What obstacles or setbacks have you encountered in your life? How have you seen God make a way through a difficult situation? What is one way you can trust Him more today?

In this life, we will face big obstacles. This story reminds us that God can make a way through anything. We can thank God that all things are possible through Him!

—**Suzanne Gosselin**

Children's Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

LESSON 2 **FOR LEADERS**

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Joshua is a central in this story. Like Moses, who parted the Red Sea, Joshua is Israel's leader as they experience another water-crossing miracle—crossing the Jordan River on dry ground. After the Israelites crossed, they began to respect Joshua like they had Moses (Joshua 4:14).

WHAT?

Joshua 3–4 is about God showing the Israelites that He would make the way for them. Just like God parted the Red Sea when their ancestors escaped Egypt, God held back the Jordan River so that the Israelites could get across.

WHERE?

The story takes place at the Jordan River. This river is famous in the Bible as the body of water that Elijah parted with his cloak centuries later (2 Kings 2:8). It is also where John baptized Jesus (Mark 1:9–11).

WHEN?

The story takes place immediately after the spies returned from Jericho. They gave Joshua a good report, so Joshua gathered 40,000 Israelite warriors to attack the city. Then the entire nation of Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan on their way to Jericho.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the land God promised them. Over 1,000 years later, Jesus (whose name is the Greek form of Joshua) would be baptized in this same river and will ultimately lead us into God's promised kingdom of heaven.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 2 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

WORD OF WONDER: From 1 Chronicles 16:15

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: kid-friendly puzzle, bin, stones (variety of shapes and sizes), table, coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Impossible Puzzle

Set up: On a table, spread out the pieces of a kid-friendly puzzle. Hide the box or any pictures of the completed puzzle. To make it harder, hide one or two puzzle pieces.

Play: Encourage kids to try to put the puzzle together without looking at any picture of what it's supposed to be and without you providing any help. After a couple of minutes, bring out the missing pieces and the box, then allow kids to put the pieces together with the box or picture as a reference.

Play Station: Stacking Stones

Set up: Set out a bin with a variety of stones in different sizes and shapes (some should be flat, if possible).

Play: Invite the kids to stack the stones on the table. See who can build the tallest stack.

Play Station: Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a river.

Curiosity Activity: Impossible Water Challenge

SUPPLIES: small-mouthed jar or glass, water, note card

Leader Tip: Make sure to practice this experiment over a sink before doing it in front of kids. You could also put a tray beside you to hold the jar over just in case some water spills.

Before kids arrive, fill a small-mouthed jar or glass with water. Put a note card next to it. Make sure the opening of the glass is smaller than the note card, so the note card covers the opening completely when laid on top of the jar.

Today we're going to learn about God making a way for His people in what seems like an impossible situation.

Do you think it's possible to hold this cup of water upside down over my head and not get wet? If you think it's possible, jump up and down three times. If you think it's impossible, put your hands on your head. If you think I can do it, put your hands on your hips. Pause to give kids time to show their responses. **OK, we'll have to see! I need a brave volunteer.** Choose a child from the group. **If I hold this jar over your hand and turn it upside down, what's going to happen?** Pause for responses. **Yes! You're going to get wet! What if I put this little note card over the opening? Do you think that will keep the water from spilling out?** Pause to give kids time to share their guesses. **I'm going to demonstrate something that seems impossible with my brave assistant!**

Put the note card over the top of the glass and turn the jar upside down with your hand still on the card. Practice ahead of time so you know how it works.

While holding the jar, slowly and carefully remove your hand from the card. Instruct the volunteer to extend a hand. Move the jar over the top of the volunteer's extended hand to show the kids how the water doesn't spill out. Turn the cup back over and remove the card. **Thanks for being a brave assistant! Some things seem impossible to us, but God can do the impossible! We're going to see an example of this today when we hear God's big story. We'll hear about how God made a way for His people that involved water, kind of like our impossible experiment.**



Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, gray paper (12 sheets), marker, blue disposable tablecloth covers (2)

WORD OF WONDER
God keeps His promises forever.

—from 1 Chronicles 16:15

Ahead of time, write one word of the verse on each sheet of paper (God keeps His promises forever. —from 1 Chronicles 16:15). Some of the papers will be blank. Set out two blue disposable tablecloths on the ground parallel to one another with a space in the middle. Put the 12 sheets of gray paper on the ground in the middle space. These are the pretend stones in the riverbed.



Display the Word of Wonder Slide if using. **Our Word of Wonder for the Problems and Promises series is from 1 Chronicles 16:15: “God keeps His promises forever.”** Encourage the kids to say the verse with you. **God promised long ago to bring His people, the Israelites, into their special home, and in today’s story, He kept His promise and made the way for them to get there through a river. God keeps His promises! That’s what the 12 stones helped them remember. They stacked the stones into a pile.**

Joshua said to God’s people, “These stones help us remember how God made a way for us through the river!” That day, everyone knew that God was with them and that nothing was too hard for Him. We have a pretend riverbed with 12 stones. You’ll walk across the river, and when I call, “Freeze!” whoever is standing on a “stone” with a word on it will bring it to me, and we’ll put them together to say our verse.

Invite the kids to walk through the riverbed between the “walls” of water on either side. Periodically say, “Freeze,” and invite whoever is standing on a paper with words to bring you the paper. If you don’t get all the words the first time, play several rounds until you have them all. Put the papers in order and read the verse to the kids, inviting them to say it with you.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **GOD**—Point up.
- **KEEPS**—Spread your right hand out before you from left to right.
- **HIS PROMISES**—Place an index finger on your lips. Move your hand downward and open your palm.
- **FOREVER**—Draw large circles in the air with your index finger.
- **FROM 1 CHRONICLES 16:15**—Open your hands in front of you, like opening a book.

Gather the kids to discuss these questions:

- **What promise did God make to the Israelites in the part of God’s big story we read today?**
(to bring them to the special land—the promised land)
- **What promises has God made to us?**

VIEW THE GOD’S BIG STORY VIDEO
Watch the God’s Big Story Video as kids eat their snacks!



Declaring God's Wonder

Show the [Early Childhood Declaration Slide](#) and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

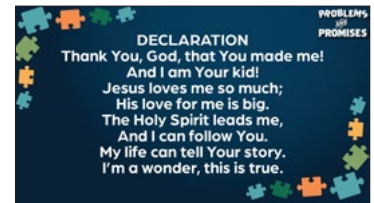
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for loving us. We believe that nothing is impossible through Your Holy Spirit! You see our present and future situations, and You promise to be with us always. We invite You to lead us, teach us, and help us to know you better today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn about how God prepares the way for us and leads us. Let's sing together and thank Him!

Play Psalm 8, Over & Over and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible; Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

Let's start by reading part of God's big story from the Bible. We're going to read from the Old Testament.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided. You can also show the Bible Story Picture to give kids a visual depiction as you tell the story.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only); blue paper or fabric (2 pieces); table; rocks, stones, or small balls (12); small, gold box (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: People Cutouts (1/SG)

Ahead of time, print and cut out the People Cutouts. Set out the blue paper or fabric on the ground or on a table (where kids can see, if possible) so the two pieces overlap one another. This is the pretend river. Put the 12 rocks, stones, or small balls in the middle of the blue paper or fabric. If you have a small, gold box to be the ark of the covenant, you can set that out too.



We're going to use these pictures and the wall to help tell the story.

A long time ago, God promised Abraham a big family. Abraham's family was called the Israelites. After many years, the Israelites were almost to Canaan—the special home God promised them.

The book of Joshua tells of how God helped a woman named Rahab in the city of Jericho take care of two Israelite helpers—spies who came to look at the city. Rahab told them, "Everyone here is scared because they know God is helping your people!" The spies went back to Joshua, their leader, and said, "God is getting everything ready for us!" Move the paper cutout people around, as if they're journeying toward the pretend river.

At last, it was time for the Israelites to go to the land God promised them, which we call the promised land. It was time for them to defeat their enemies in the city of Jericho. God prepared the way for His people. But there was one big problem: A huge river called the Jordan River was in the way. Make the paper people cutouts move up to the water and then stop. It was very long and full of fast, deep water. Move the blue paper or fabric so it looks like the water is moving a bit. The people couldn't swim across it, and they couldn't walk around it. It looked like the Israelites were stuck!

Early the next morning, Joshua told everyone, “Get ready! God is going to do something amazing!” Joshua told the priests, or men who helped in God’s special place, to pick up the ark of the covenant. If you have a gold box to be the ark of the covenant, pretend to have the paper people carry it. **The ark was a beautiful, golden box that showed that the presence of God with them.**

Joshua told the priests God’s instructions. God wanted the priests to walk into the river with the ark. Move the paper cutout people to cross the water. **Something amazing happened. As soon as the priests put their feet in the water, the river stopped flowing!** Move the two pieces of paper to the sides, so the middle is open. You can ask two kids to hold the papers up like walls of water. **The water that was far away piled up like a big wall, and the rest of the water flowed away until the riverbed was dry.** If you have a large pretend river, you can invite all the kids to walk across the river with you, then sit down to hear the rest of the story.

God told Joshua to choose 12 men to pick up one big stone each from the riverbed—one stone for each big family of Israel. Choose 12 kids (or only a few kids) to get the 12 stones from the pretend riverbed. **They carried the stones to their camp and made a tall pile.** Invite the kids to place the stones in a pile.

Joshua said to God’s people, “When your children and grandchildren see these stones and ask, ‘What are these for?’ you can tell them, ‘These stones help us remember how God made a way for us through the river!’ ” That day, everyone knew that God was with them and that nothing was too hard for Him. Move all the paper people to the other side of the river. You can have them cheer and jump up and down with excitement to be across the river.

God made a way for His people to pass through the river and showed that He always keeps His promises.

On that day so long ago, God’s people knew that He was with them and that nothing could stop Him. This still reminds us today that no matter what we face, God can make a way through anything.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God’s big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the promised land. Many years later, Jesus was baptized in the same river. One day, Jesus will lead us into God’s promised kingdom of heaven. God made a way for the Israelites to cross the Jordan River, and through Jesus, He makes the way for us to live with Him forever!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, and thank God for always going ahead of us and keeping His promises.

God, thank You for Your faithfulness to us. You are always with us and lead us. Thank You for keeping Your promises. You are trustworthy! We thank You for leading us with Your Holy Spirit. Help us follow You and trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you go today knowing that God will be with you, no matter what, leading you through hard times. May you remember He will make a way for you, even when it seems like there is no way.

Circle Time: Stones in the Water

SUPPLIES: gray paper (3 sheets), scissors (prep only), marker, blue paper or disposable tablecloth, stones or rocks (7, optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Problems and Promises Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, cut out seven stone shapes (they don't have to be perfect!) from gray paper and number them 1–7. You could also write numbers on real stones using a marker. Put blue paper or a blue tablecloth on the floor with the stones on top of it.

In today's story, we learned about how God led His people across the Jordan River. God told Joshua to choose 12 men to pick up one big stone each from the riverbed—one stone for each big family of Israel. They carried the stones to their camp and made a tall pile. God made a way for His people to pass through the river and showed that He always keeps His promises. Let's use these stones to help us discuss questions about the story.

Have kids sit in a circle around the blue "water" and stones. Pass around one stone while playing music from the [Problems and Promises Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#). Pause the music periodically, and whoever has the stone when the music stops will choose a stone and read the number on it. Read the question from the corresponding number on the list below. Continue until all the stones have been picked up and answered.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Who did God choose to lead the Israelites into the promised land?** (*Joshua*)
2. **Which river did the Israelites have to cross?** (*the Jordan River*)
3. **What special item did the priests carry into the river?** (*the ark of the covenant*)
4. **What happened as soon as the priests stepped into the river?** (*The river stopped flowing.*)
5. **What did the Israelites put into a pile to remember God's help at the river?** (*stones*)
6. **Can God make a way through something that seems impossible? Think of one other thing (from the Bible or your life) that God has done.**
7. **What is one way God has helped you (or your) family through something hard?**

Today we learned how God was always with His people, making a way through what seemed like an impossible situation. Some things feel very hard or impossible for us to handle on our own, but we know God is always with us and helps us get through hard things.

Let's pray and thank God for His faithfulness. He will never leave us!

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for being with us and making a way for us. God hears all our prayers!

Craft: Follow God Arrows

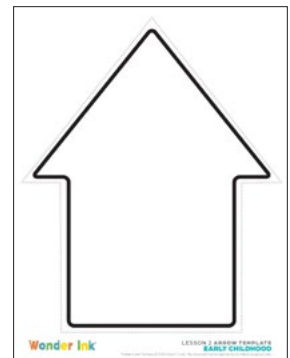
SUPPLIES: coloring utensils, kid-safe scissors, glue or tape (optional), construction paper (1 sheet per kid, optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Arrow Template \(1 per kid\)](#)

Ahead of time, print an Arrow Template for each kid and cut out each arrow.

Set out coloring utensils and kid-safe scissors. **Each of you has a Follow God arrow. You can draw a picture of yourself following God inside the arrow. When you finish, you can cut out the arrow and take it home. You can hang it up at home to remind you to always trust and follow God.**

Invite the kids to draw themselves inside the arrows. Encourage them to be creative as they draw. Some kids may just scribble inside the arrows, and that's OK! The arrow will still remind them to follow God. They can glue or tape the arrows to a sheet of construction paper, or just take the arrows home.



When we don't know where to go or what to do, an arrow can point us to the right way. This arrow reminds us to look to God and trust in Him.

The Israelites followed God to the land He promised. They trusted that God would take care of them. We can follow God and trust Him just like the Israelites did. He will never leave us and will always take care of us. These arrows will remind us that God can make a way through anything.

Game: Stepping Stones

SUPPLIES: blue disposable tablecloth; gray, brown, or black paper (1 sheet per kid); tape (optional)

Ahead of time, spread out a blue tablecloth to make a "river." Put sheets of gray, brown, or black paper on top of the tablecloth, just far enough apart that kids have to jump a little to get from one to the next, from one side of the river to the other.

What did God tell the Israelites to gather from the riverbed after they made it across the river?

Allow the kids time to answer. **Yes, stones! The stones were a reminder of how God made a way for them, even when it seemed impossible.**

We're going to pretend we have to get from one side of the river to the other, and we'll jump on these "stones" to get across. You don't want to fall into the water though, so be careful not to step off the stones. Have kids make a line and, one at a time, try jumping from stone to stone to get across the river. If they step or fall off and land in the "river," have them go back and start again.

Great job getting across the river using the stones. The stones help us remember God's faithfulness to the Israelites when He helped them get across the river to continue to the land God promised them.