

LESSON 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

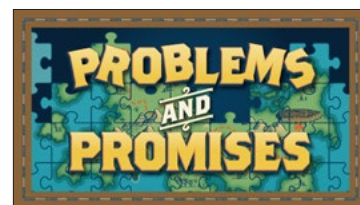
SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

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: He will keep his covenant forever. He will keep his promise for all time to come.

—1 Chronicles 16:15

- PRESERVICE
 - OPTION 1 STEM Activity: Colorful Breakthrough!
 - OPTION 2 Interactive Game: That Doesn't Seem Possible!
- Welcome Question: What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- SMALL GROUP
 - Declaring God's Wonder
 - Prayer of Invitation
 - Worship: Psalm 8, Over & Over
 - God's Big Story
 - Connecting the Wonder Truth
 - In Awe of God's Wonder
 - Responding in Worship: King of My Heart
 - Blessing Your Kids



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!

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: 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

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Joshua is a central figure 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.

LESSON 2 **ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN**

Large Group

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: 1 Chronicles 16:15

Series Bumper and Countdown Videos

Choose between the [Problems and Promises Bumper Video](#) and [Countdown Videos](#) to introduce the kids to the series.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Before kids arrive, display the [Jordan Welcome Question Slide](#) or write the following question on a whiteboard: “What is the hardest thing you have ever done?” Set out paper and coloring utensils.



Leader Tip: If you plan on doing the preteen worship response activity—“Remember When” Rocks—during Identity, consider having kids apply a layer of acrylic paint to their rocks as they arrive, so it can be dry by the end of the lesson.

As kids arrive ...

Greet each kid by name. Introduce kids to one another, pairing new kids with friendly regulars to help them feel welcome. Read the Welcome Question aloud to younger kids and help them get started by suggesting examples of hard things, such as running a mile or finishing a big school project. Invite kids to draw their answers, if they prefer.

At your start time ...

Welcome the whole group and invite a couple of kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question:

What is the hardest thing you have ever done? As time allows, invite all the kids to share their answers with a neighbor.

Today we'll hear about a time when the Israelites faced something so hard it seemed impossible to overcome, but God made a way for them to get through it!

OPTION 1 STEM Activity: Colorful Breakthrough!

SUPPLIES: large clear jar, water, cooking oil, table, food coloring, cover for jar (optional), lab coats (3, optional), safety glasses (3 pairs, optional)

Ahead of time, gather your supplies and set the jar, water, and oil on a table at the front of the room. Set the food coloring nearby but out of sight. You'll need enough water to fill about two-thirds of the jar and enough cooking oil to form a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch layer on top of the water. (Don't pour the water or oil into the jar ahead of time.) You'll need several drops of food coloring, either one color or multiple colors.

Display the **Colorful Breakthrough! Slide** and gather the kids so they can see the table at the front. **Let's get started today by doing a science activity! First, I need two lab assistants.** Select two willing kids and invite them to stand next to you at the table. If you have lab coats and/or safety glasses, put them on and have your lab assistants do the same. Go through the following steps one by one, inviting your lab assistants to help you with each step:

1. Pour water into the jar until it's about two-thirds full.
2. Carefully pour a small amount of cooking oil on top of the water until it forms a layer about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick.

There's now a layer of oil separating us from the water underneath.

How do you think we can break through to the water without sticking our fingers in the jar? Invite kids to share their ideas. Try as many of their

ideas as you can that are feasible. For example, if they suggest shaking the jar, gently shake the jar. (If you have a cover for the jar, cover it and shake the contents more vigorously.) No matter what you do, the oil should eventually settle back into a layer on top of the water. Take out the food coloring and hold it up for kids to see. Then do the next step with the help of your lab assistants:

3. Drop several drops of food coloring into the jar and watch closely. Eventually, the drops of food coloring will make their way through the oil and burst into the water below. (This might take a little time, depending on how thick the oil layer is.)

Wow! What just happened? Invite kids to respond freely. **Yes, oil and water don't like to mix, and since food coloring mixes with water and is heavier than oil, it sinks through the oil to reach the water. The food coloring made its way straight through the oil! In God's big story today, we'll hear about how God made a way through the Jordan River so His people could enter the promised land! Display the Jordan Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING.****



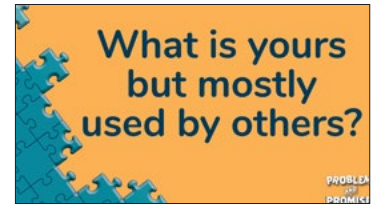
OPTION 2 Interactive Game: That Doesn't Seem Possible!

SUPPLIES: beanbag or tennis ball

Display the first *That Doesn't Seem Possible! Slide*. Invite kids to form a circle and sit down. **We're going to play a game called That Doesn't Seem Possible! On the screen, you'll see a brainteaser. As you discuss the answer, you'll pass a beanbag (or tennis ball) around the circle. Does that sound easy?** Allow kids to respond. **It might not be as easy as it sounds because I'm going to give you some challenges to complete as you pass the beanbag.**



Advance to the second *That Doesn't Seem Possible! Slide* and read the brainteaser out loud. Then, as kids discuss the answer together, challenge them to pass the beanbag or tennis ball around the circle using only their elbows. Once they have one or more answers, advance to the third slide to reveal the answer. *Go through all six brainteasers and their corresponding answers by advancing through all the slides.*



Each time you give kids the next brainteaser to discuss, also give them a new challenging way to pass the beanbag/ball. Here are some challenges to choose from: Pass the beanbag/ball by holding it between their feet (they must be seated on the floor to do this safely), pass it while holding it with only one finger of each hand, or pass it by balancing it on the back of one hand.

For your reference, these are the brainteasers:

1. What is yours but mostly used by others? (your name)
2. What goes up but never comes down? (your age)
3. What's bright and orange with green on top and sounds like parrot? (a carrot)
4. Which question can you never answer yes to? (Are you asleep?)
5. I'm light as a feather, yet the strongest person can't hold me for five minutes. What am I? (your breath)
6. We went through a river, but our feet walked on dry ground. Who are we? (the Israelites)

Wow! Those questions were challenging, and at first, a solution didn't seem possible.

It can be difficult for our brains to imagine solutions to different problems. We're limited by what we think we know or have already accomplished. Fortunately, God knows no limits, and He can solve any challenge. Display the Jordan Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING.**



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the **Jordan Declaration Slide**. Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

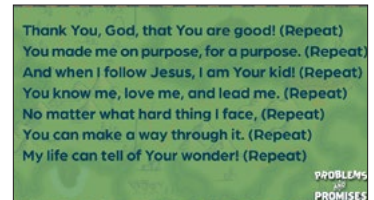
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

No matter what hard thing I face, (Kids repeat.)

You can make a way through it. (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **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

God loves us, and He's always with us, preparing the way for us to walk in His good ways. Let's worship Him now through music.

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

God's Big Story

Display the Jordan Title Slide.

Explain that today's story picks up in the third chapter of the book of Joshua as the Israelites are preparing to cross the Jordan River and enter the good land God had promised them.

Let's start by watching part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll experience more of the story!

Watch the God's Big Story Video.

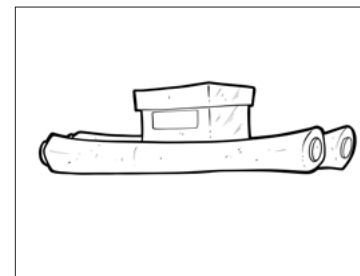


LESSON 2 CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: pool noodles (2), shoebox, gold paint, tape, river rocks (at least 12), blue tablecloths or fabric, markers

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: River Sound Effect (search on spotify)

Ahead of time, create a homemade ark of the covenant like the one in the image to the right, using two pool noodles, a shoebox painted gold, and tape. Line the river rocks up in two parallel lines to create a long river that stretches from one end of your room to the other. Fill the space between the rocks with blue tablecloths or fabric to create a river. You'll invite the kids to sit along the near side of the river while you tell the story. If possible, prep a volunteer to play and pause a River Sound Effect on Spotify during the story.



Leader Tip: Be sure to save your homemade ark of the covenant to use later in this series and in future series!

Hello, everyone! Welcome to this week's Problems and Promises story! Let's pick up God's big story in the book of Joshua ...

Long ago, God promised to give Abraham a very large family and to give them the land of Canaan as their home. Many years went by, and Abraham's family became known as the Israelites, God's people. The book of Joshua tells of how God worked through a woman named Rahab in the city of Jericho, who hid two Israelite spies and told them that all the armies of Canaan were afraid because they knew God was on His people's side. The spies returned to Joshua and told him everything Rahab had said. At last, the time had come for the Israelites to enter the land God had promised and to capture Jericho. God had prepared the way.

But there was a problem ... The Jordan River separated the Israelites and Jericho. Play the River Sound Effect in the background. Set it to repeat. Point to the makeshift river and the stones lining the river as you continue. **This river was more than 120 miles long, and at that time of the year, it was so full and deep that it was flooding parts of the land. On their own, there's no way all the Israelites could cross it, and they couldn't easily walk around it either. It seemed like they would have to wait until the flood season was over.**

Early one morning, Joshua and all the Israelites went down to the Jordan River. Joshua told the people, "Set yourselves apart to the LORD. Tomorrow he'll do amazing things among you" (Joshua 3:5). Joshua told the priests, men chosen to serve in God's holy place, to go get the ark of the covenant and walk ahead of the people with it. The ark was a wooden box covered in gold that represented the presence of God on the earth.

Reveal the homemade ark to the kids. **Joshua told the priests God's instructions. They would carry the ark into the river, and as soon as they put their feet in the water, the river would stop flowing. The next day, the people packed up their tents, and the priests did what God had instructed. They picked up the ark and started walking toward the river. The moment their feet touched the water, the water piled up in a heap, far down the river, and the water stopped flowing, just as God had promised.**

Choose four kids to play the part of the priests, each grabbing one section of the ark's handles (pool noodles) and lifting it to their shoulders. Instruct them to carry the ark to the edge of the river. The "priests" in the front can touch their toes into the river. As soon as they place their toes in the pretend water, pause the River Sound Effect and bunch the blue tablecloths or fabric to one end of the river.

The priests stood in the middle of the river holding the ark while all the people of Israel crossed over the riverbed on dry ground. Ask the priests to stand in the middle of the dry river with the ark on their shoulders as you finish the story.

Just as God had parted the Red Sea for their ancestors, the new generation of Israelites saw God hold back the water for them. Invite all the kids still seated to stand and walk across the river to the other side, where they can sit back down.

God made a way for His people to pass through the river and showed once again that He would always keep His promises. Ask the priests to cross to the other side of the river and gently set the ark down before sitting down with the other kids. Thank them for their help!

To remember what God had done, God instructed the Israelites to gather 12 large stones from the riverbed, one stone for each of the tribes—or major families—of Israel. Gather 12 river rocks from the edge of the river as you talk and place them in a pile on the far side of the river. Then move the blue tablecloths or fabric back into place between the rocks. Play the River Sound Effect again in the background.

When they arrived at their camp that night, the people set up the 12 stones they had gathered from the middle of the Jordan River. Whenever their children, grandchildren, or great-great-great-grandchildren asked about the stones, they told them about how God had made a way for them through the Jordan River.

On that day so long ago, God's people knew that He was with them and that nothing could stop Him. This story still reminds us today that God can make a way through anything.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Jordan Wonder Truth Slide.

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



Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the land God promised them. Over one thousand 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.

In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

Is there any part of this story that made you think, "That's not possible"? Help your group to recall the various details of the story and spot God's hand in the details.

Imagine that you're one of the priests selected to carry the ark. How would you feel about being asked to go first and stand in the middle of the river? Allow kids time to imagine standing at the edge of the river. Reassure kids that there is no right or wrong answer. Encourage them to share their initial responses.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



WORSHIP VIDEO: [King of My Heart](#)

Blessing Your Kids

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: Just as God was with the Israelites as they crossed the Jordan River, He is with you through every challenge you face. May you always remember that He is the God who can make a way through anything.