

LESSON 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

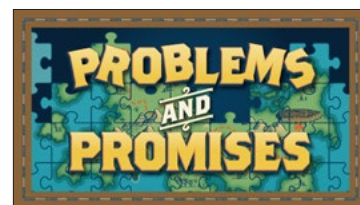
SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

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

- Welcome Question: What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Remembrance Stones
- Preteen Responding in Worship: "Remember When" Rocks



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**

Small 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

Pre–Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard, dry-erase marker

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "**I'm curious..**" before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **How do you feel after doing something really hard?**
- **Has anyone ever helped you overcome a hard challenge? Tell us about it.**



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.

Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

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

—1 Chronicles 16:15 (NIRV)

SUPPLIES: Bible (1/kid)

Our Word of Wonder for the Problems and Promises series reminds us that God remembers His promises and is faithful to keep them! Let's say

the verse together now. Open your Bible to 1 Chronicles 16:15. Read 1 Chronicles 16:15 several times together.

Gather your group in a circle. **Setting Scripture to a familiar tune can help us memorize it, so let's do that with our Word of Wonder!** Invite kids to sing 1 Chronicles 16:15 together to the tune of "Frère Jacques" (also known as "Are You Sleeping?"). Start by inviting kids to repeat after you. Once they have it down, see if they can take the lead with you repeating after them. Replace the traditional lines with Scripture as follows:

1 Chronicles 16:15 Song NIRV:

He will keep his (Are you sleeping?)

He will keep his (Are you sleeping?)

covenant forever (Brother John)

covenant forever (Brother John)

He will keep his promise (Morning bells are ringing)

He will keep his promise (Morning bells are ringing)

For all time to come (Ding dong ding)

For all time to come (Ding dong ding)

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

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. Invite kids to find Joshua chapter 3 in their Bibles.

Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible.

Invite kids to put one finger on the big chapter number "3" in their Bibles as you read Joshua 3:5-8, 11-17 and 4:1-7 aloud. (Some preteens may want to follow along, but because you'll skip some verses, it'll be easiest for most kids to simply listen carefully with their Bibles open on their laps.)

Elementary Questions

- **When the Israelites came to the Jordan River, what was on the other side?** (the land God had promised—Canaan and the city of Jericho)
- **What happened as soon as the priests put their feet into the water?** (The water piled up in a heap far down the river; the river stopped flowing.)
- **The river that separated the Israelites from their new home was over 120 miles long and very deep. How do you imagine the Israelites felt when they first saw the river? How would you have reacted?**
- **How many stones did God ask the Israelites to gather from the riverbed? (12) Why this number?** (one stone for each of the 12 tribes, or families, of Israel)
- **What is something hard you've experienced? How has God helped you get through that hard thing?**

God's people wanted to enter the land God had promised as their new home! But the sight of the deep, overflowing river in their way was probably quite scary! We aren't trying to cross the Jordan River, but all of us experience hard things in life. Let's talk with God in prayer and ask Him to remind us that He can make a way through anything.

Preteen Questions

- **When the Israelites came to the Jordan River, what was on the other side?** (the land God had promised—Canaan and the city of Jericho)
- **What did God ask the priests to carry into the river? What was significant about what they carried?** (the ark of the covenant, which was a wooden box covered in gold that represented the presence of God on the earth)
- **What happened when the priests' feet touched the water?** (The water piled up in a heap far down the river; the river stopped flowing.) **Do you think the priests' feet caused this to happen or something else? Explain.**
- **What did God tell the Israelites to collect from the riverbed? (12 large stones) What did they do with them?** (Set them up as a reminder of how God made a way for them through the Jordan River.)
- **How has God made a way through something difficult in your life? What is something you can do to help remember what God did?**
- **What's a challenge you're facing now?**

All of us face challenges in life! As Jesus-followers, we also know that God will never leave us. He will always be with us in the challenges and will make us stronger through them! Let's talk with God in prayer and ask Him to remind us that He can make a way through anything.

Leader Tip: Sadly, some kids may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or other trauma. While God can make a way through hard situations, what matters most is that kids know God loves them and is with them in the hard things—and that God is not OK with anyone hurting them. If you suspect abuse, share your concerns with your ministry leader right away.

Small Group Prayer Time

Remind the kids in your group that, just like God was with the Israelites when they crossed the river, God is with them, and He is always listening. Invite them to share any prayer requests and challenges they're facing. Ask if anyone would like to pray aloud for the group. Close this prayer time by thanking God that He can make a way through anything.

LARGE GROUP

Elementary Responding in Worship: Remembrance Stones

SUPPLIES: cardstock, scissors (prep only), river rocks (from Experience It!) or blue painter's tape, coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Stones Sheet \(1 per 2 kids\)](#), music from the [Problems and Promises Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Stones Sheet for every two kids onto cardstock, using two-sided printing with the flip on the long edge. Cut out each stone. If you used river rocks to create a river for the Experience It! Script, use them again for this activity. If you don't have river rocks, use blue painter's tape to create two long lines (about three feet apart from each other) that divide the room in half. The space between the tape will represent the Jordan River. Gather the kids. **Today in God's big story, God asked the Israelites to gather 12 middle of the river. When they reached the other side of the river, they set up the 12 stones at the place they camped. Why do you think they did this?**



Pause for responses. **Good ideas! God wanted the Israelites and their future children to remember how God made a way for His people through the Jordan River. Every time the people saw the 12 stones, they would remember what God had done to bring them through the river on dry ground! Let's create our own stones of remembrance as a way of thanking God for what He's done in our lives and to remember that He can make a way through anything.**

Set out coloring utensils and give a paper stone to each kid. Lead kids into a time of quiet reflection where they can remember a time when God led them through a difficult situation or time in life. Invite them to draw a picture of the hard situation on one side of their stone. On the opposite side of the stone, kids can draw a picture or symbol to show how God made a way through that challenge. Offer a few ideas to help kids get started. For example, they may have struggled in school, but God was with them and helped them. They could draw a classroom scene on one side of the stone and, on the other,

themselves smiling beside a cross and heart to show God was with them.

Consider playing the song “All Through History” or “Way Maker” from the [Problems and Promises Elementary Spotify playlist](#) during this time.

Once finished, invite kids to cross the river and place their stones on the other side. Once all the kids have finished, those who are willing can share their remembrance stones. Remind kids to share both the challenge and how God made a way through the challenge. After each person shares, repeat the Wonder Truth as a group: **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING!**

Make It Inclusive: If some kids struggle to focus or understand and follow instructions, pair them with a peer helper or offer them a seat near a leader who can encourage and help them as needed.

Preteen Responding in Worship: “Remember When” Rocks

SUPPLIES: river rocks (1 per kid), acrylic paint (multiple colors), paintbrushes, disposable cups, paper towels, table (optional), disposable tablecloth (optional), hair dryer (optional), paint pens/markers (optional)

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

Ahead of time, prepare the supplies. You'll need one river rock for each kid and painting supplies. If it works for kids to apply one layer of acrylic paint to their rocks when they first arrive, set up the painting station during Curiosity. Consider covering a table with disposable tablecloths. Include paint, paintbrushes, disposable cups filled two-thirds with water (for rinsing brushes), and paper towels (for drying brushes) at the station. Instruct kids to apply one thin layer of paint over their entire rocks in the color of their choice. Then, if possible, recruit an adult volunteer to expedite the paint drying process by using a hair dryer on the rocks while kids are engaged in other parts of the lesson. During this worship response, kids will add pictures, words, or symbols over the base layer using acrylic paint.

If it's not possible for kids to paint their rocks at the start of the lesson, they'll simply paint pictures, words, or symbols directly onto the rock during this activity.

Today in God's big story, God asked the Israelites to gather 12 stones from the middle of the river. When they reached the other side of the river, they set up the 12 stones at the place they camped. Why do you think they did this? Pause for responses. **Yes! God wanted the Israelites and their future children to remember how God made a way for His people through the Jordan River. Every time the people saw the 12 stones, they would say, “Remember when ...” and tell the story of how God brought them through the river on dry ground! Let's create our own “Remember When” rocks to help us remember what God has done in our lives and that He can make a way through anything.**

Set out painting supplies and river rocks (if they're not already out) and invite kids to paint a picture, words, or symbols to represent a time in their lives when God led them through a difficult situation. If their rocks are covered with a base layer of paint, they can paint on top of the base layer using acrylic

paint and paintbrushes or paint pens/markers (if available). If their rocks aren't already covered, they can paint directly onto the rock's surface.

To help kids get started, encourage them to think quietly about the following questions. You might also share an age-appropriate example from your own life of when God helped you through something difficult:

- **What is something difficult you've experienced?**
- **How did God help you get through this time? Or if you're currently in a hard situation, how is God helping you?**
- **What is a picture, word, or symbol that could represent what God has done for you?**

Invite kids to paint their rocks as a reminder of what God has done.

Consider playing the song "All Through History" or "Way Maker" from the [Problems and Promises Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids paint.

Once finished, invite kids to take turns sharing their rocks with the group.

They can start by saying, "Remember when ..." and then tell about what God has done for them.

Encourage them to take their rocks home and to share them with friends and family. When talking with others, kids can start with the words "Remember when ..." and tell about what God has done!