

Crossing the Jordan

Bible Passage: Joshua 1-4

Key Passage: ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. **Proverbs 3:5-6**

Bottom Line: I glorify God by trusting and obeying Him.

Big Picture Question: What does it mean to sin? To sin is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and His commands.

Christ Connection: *God went ahead of Joshua and the Israelites into the promised land. He showed His power to them so they would trust in Him. When Jesus came to earth, He showed His power so people would believe in Him and be saved from sin.*

LEADERNOTES:

CONTEXT

Only one geographical barrier separated the Israelites from the promised land of Canaan: the Jordan River. When the Israelites arrived, the Jordan River was flooded due to spring rains and snowmelt. Any other time, the river would have been manageable, but crossing the swollen river would have been as daunting as crossing the Red Sea. (See Josh. 4:23.)

The Israelites had mourned Moses' death for 30 days (Deut. 34:8), but now this new generation looked to Joshua to lead them into the promised land. God had chosen Joshua and promised to be with him. Joshua prepared the people to cross the Jordan River, and they agreed to obey him as they obeyed Moses.

God gave Joshua a promise and a command. First, He promised to go before them and drive out all the people of the land. Then God commanded him to tell the priests to carry the ark of the LORD (a symbol of God's powerful presence) into the waters of the Jordan. Then the waters of the river would be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above would stand in one heap. When this happened, all of Israel would know that God was with Joshua.

All of the people passed over on dry ground. Joshua set up 12 memorial stones as a reminder of God's faithfulness in bringing Israel safely across the Jordan into the promised land.

The Israelites could do nothing apart from God. He was with them, and He was going to fight for them. In John 15:5, Jesus said, "You can do nothing without me."

As you teach kids this week, emphasize that God was still at work with His people. He was going to do even bigger things for the Israelites—saving them from their enemies and one day sending them a Savior. The cross is our reminder of what Jesus has done for us: a miraculous saving we could never do for ourselves.

TEACHING FOCUS (Joshua 1-4)

For the next few weeks we are going to be learning about God's people as they moved into and conquered the land God promised them. We've talked about God's people in the wilderness. They had a chance to enter the promised land, but they did not trust God. As a result, they were stuck wandering for 40 years—long enough that all the people who refused to trust God had died! Their children were grown-ups now, and they were finally ready to enter the promised land. All that stood in their way was the Jordan River. Our story today is called "Crossing the Jordan."

*This story reminds me a little bit of the time God parted the Red Sea for the people of Israel to cross. I think that's on purpose. You see, at this point in the history of Israel, most of the people who were alive when God parted the Red Sea had died. The people who left Egypt and wandered the wilderness had changed a lot, and this new group—the children and grandchildren of those who were slaves—were learning to trust God. **God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross** and gave the next generation a miraculous water crossing.*

*That's why it was so important for the twelve men from the twelve tribes to pick twelve stones to make a memorial. God didn't want His people to forget His power or His love for them. He wanted them to know Him and glorify Him. That brings us to the big picture question: **How can we glorify God?** Any ideas? [Allow responses.] Those are some really good answers. **We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.** Say that with me: **We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.** God deserves our love and obedience because He is powerful and good. When we love Him and obey Him, it glorifies Him.*

TODAY'S TAKEAWAYS

- **God showed his power to Israel so that they would trust Him.**
- **He asked them to make a memorial because He wanted to make sure they never forget that He is powerful and can always be trusted.**
- **BL: I glorify God by trusting and obeying Him.**
- When God does something for me, I should never forget it so that I will always trust Him

Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (15 minutes)

Activities that encourage preschoolers to enter the classroom and begin engaging with peers and Small Group Leaders by providing age appropriate and hands on fun while introducing new concepts they will hear in the day's Bible story.

Prepare to offer the following activities to 3-, 4-, 5- year olds as they arrive.

Relay Stones

What you Need: 4 foam bowls, 2 plastic spoons, 24 "rocks"

What You Do:

- Form 2 teams.
- Line up teams at one end of the room.
- Place an empty bowl in front of each team.
- Place 2 bowls, each filled with 12 "Stones" at the other end of the room.

- Give the first child in each line a spoon.
- When you say go, direct her to walk to her team's bowl at the other end of the room, put a stone on her spoon, walk the stone on the spoon, back to her team's empty bowl, and drop it in.
- Then give the spoon to the next child in line.
- Guide preschoolers to continue until all 12 of their team's stones are in their bowl.
- The team that moves all their stones first wins.
- Encourage preschoolers to cheer on their team as they wait for their turn.
- If teams doesn't work best, you could just have one long line of kids.

What You Say:

"God used to stones to help His people remember Him and all that He did to get them to the promised land. We will spend the next weeks learning about this journey to the promised land. I pray that we all see God's power and learn to trust and obey Him more everyday.

Worship Time

Gather children on a rug or in a specific area of the classroom to tell the story. Some kids (especially the younger ones) may wander. That's okay. They're still listening and learning!

Play the DVD of All Star Kids worship (choose 1 song for today)

What You Say: "Way to go! You are such amazing singers. Now let's sit down to learn from the Bible today."

Story Time: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

Engage kids' hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible story and prayer experience in a Large Group setting.

Bible Story

What You Need: Bible

What You Do: Place a bookmark at Joshua 1-4 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it.

What You Say: " We know that the Bible is God's Word, and it is true. Our true story today comes from the book of Joshua. Can you say Joshua? Joshua is in the first part of the Bible, so it is in the Old Testament.

PLAY BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Talk about the Bible Story:

It was time to go into the promised land. God said to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. I will be with you wherever you go." Joshua told the people to get ready to cross the Jordan River. When the priests lifted up the ark of God, the people would follow the ark. The people obeyed. Joshua said, "You will know the living God is with us because the water will stop." That is what happened! God made the river stop

when the priests carrying the ark went into the water! Joshua told a man from each tribe to grab a stone to make an altar to remember what God did. All of the people crossed the river on dry ground.

Learn the Big Picture Question

What You Say: What does it mean to sin? To sin is to go against God and His commands. When the Israelites were obedient to do what God said, everyone got to see God's glorious power in making the Jordan River stop flowing.

Practice the Memory Verse

Open your Bible to Proverbs 3:5-6. Read the memory verse aloud several times.

What You Say: " God was with Joshua and the Israelites as they went into the promised land. God is with us too and by doing what it says in these verses we can see God work like Joshua did."

Transition to small group.

Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect through activities that are written to reach every learning style while reinforcing the Main Point that was introduced during the Bible Story and applying it to real life experiences. In addition, these activities provide preschoolers with an opportunity to build relationships with their Small Group Leader.

1. Stones of Remembrance

What you Need: salt dough stones (make ahead of time for each group), crayons and markers

What You Do:

- Give each kid a salt dough stone.
- They are going to take some time to decorate, so that they can remember what God has done for them. They can draw on their stone with marker or crayon. You may need to help them write any words they want to write on their stone.
- They can take their stone home when they are done.

What You Say: "What does it mean to sin? To sin is to go against God and His commands. Joshua and the Israelites believed God and obeyed the special instructions He gave them to cross the river. Everyone got to see how amazing and powerful God is as He stopped the water. God was glorified! When Jesus came to earth, He showed His power so people would trust in Him and be saved from sin. Jesus glorifies God more than anyone."

2. Practice signing the Memory Verse

What you need: Memory Verse Poster

What You Do:

- Show the poster to the kids
- As you say the words point to them on the poster
- Create simple hand motions to teach toddlers the memory verse. Sample hand motions include "**Trust in the Lord** (ASL sign – like pulling

a rope) **with all your heart** (point to heart) **and lean not on your own understanding** (point to head); **in all your ways submit to him** (ASL sign for all- draw a circle around your hand), **and he will make your paths straight** (hold hands up like making a road). **Proverbs 3:5-6**

What You Say: God was with Joshua and the Israelites as they went into the promised land. God is with us too and by doing what it says in these verses we can see God work like Joshua did."

Pray and Dismiss:

What You need: no supplies needed

What You Do:

- Pray- " God, thank You for leading Your people into the land You promised. We can see Your faithfulness clearly in the Old Testament stories, and we know that You are still faithful to us today. Help us to trust You and give You glory by loving and obeying You. Amen."

What You Say: Tell parents something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Send home their stone of remembrance and tell families, we are talking about sin and that we can trust and obey God.