

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.

Worship & Story 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."

What You Do: Introduce the 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.

PLAY BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Check diapers and serve snack.

Activities

Depending on the size of your group, you may lead each activity two or three times. Not every child may want to participate in the activities. That's okay.

1. River Sensory Bags

What you Need: shower gel, ziptop bags, plastic fish, aquarium pebbles, and other river items, duck tape, people figures

What You Do:

- Assemble the bags before class.
- Invite kids to squeeze and explore the bags to look at the water.
- Have them pretend and try to part the water as the bag lays on the table.
- Have them walk on "Dry ground" with the little people figures.
- What did God do?

What You Say: "God made the Jordan River stop so His people could cross. God promised to be with Joshua. God is always with us too. "

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 His chosen people, just like He is with us. When we are practicing these verses, we should be aware that God is with us no matter what and we can trust and submit to Him.

Pray and Dismiss:

What You need: coloring page

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 the coloring sheet and tell families, we are talking about sin and that we can trust and obey God.