



UNIT 7 | SESSION 2

GOD STOPPED THE JORDAN RIVER

JOSHUA 3-4

KEY PASSAGE:

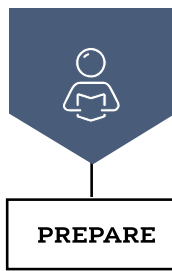
Psalm 119:105

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the Bible? The Bible is God's Word that tells us what is true about God and ourselves.

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 trust in Him and be saved from sin.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

The children of Israel often gave in to worry and bitterness. Their attitude revealed deeper heart issues: their belief that God had failed to take care of them and would fail in the future. It was in the 40 years of wandering in the desert that God showed them over and over that He was worthy of their trust. Yet they still did not trust Him.

When God provided supernatural food for them to eat, they craved the food of Egypt. (Num. 11:4-6) When they first encountered the inhabitants of Canaan, they were filled with fear because they didn't trust that God would be with them. (Num. 13:33) God went out of His way to deliver His people, protect them, and provide for them. He showed He is all-powerful and trustworthy.

Read Moses' words in Deuteronomy 6:20-24. Moses implored the Israelites to remember what God had done and testify to their children of His faithfulness. God had brought them out of Egypt to keep His covenant with Abraham. He gave them instructions for their good.

Meditate on Moses' proclamation: "We were slaves in Egypt, but God, by his grace, set us free." This truth is particularly helpful for us when we face difficulties and periods of anxiety. We can have peace in the present by looking backward in gratitude and forward

with hope. When we look back at our lives and the millions of ways God has provided and protected us, our hearts should be filled with gratitude. Based on God's character as revealed in Scripture and in our lives, we can look forward with hope, knowing that God, who has preserved us, will continue to do so until He comes to bring us home.

As you get ready to teach, prepare your heart by reminding yourself of God's faithfulness. Tell the kids in your group how God has shown Himself worthy of your trust. They too can put their hope in a God who never fails.

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

The purpose of miracles: The purpose of this miracle is to declare God's might to all the peoples of the earth and to encourage Israel to always fear the Lord. (Josh. 4:24)

WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “ Can you think of a time when something you really wanted seemed too hard to get or maybe you had to wait too long to get it? What was it? How did you feel as you waited? ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: HOOP DOWN



Instruct kids to stand in a circle and stretch their arms out in front of them with their index fingers extended. Place a hula hoop horizontally so that it rests on the tips of the kids' fingers. Tell kids that they must keep a fingertip on the hula hoop at all times, but they should not hook their finger around it or otherwise hold the hoop; the hoop must simply rest on the tips of their fingers.

Challenge kids to lower the hoop to the ground without dropping it. For an added challenge, do not allow kids to talk as they complete the challenge.

SAY “ Was that difficult to do? Sometimes getting a whole team of people to work together can be challenging. Imagine trying to get thousands of people to work together. With God's help, that's what Joshua had to do. We'll hear more of Joshua's story today. ”

OPTION 2: TRUST THE LEADER

Before the session, write the following obstacles on separate sheets of paper: river, mountain, tall grass, low tree limbs, lions. Teach the following motions for each obstacle:

river—paddle a canoe

mountain—make a climbing motion

tall grass—sweep arms side to side

low limbs—walk while ducking down

lions—back up slowly with arms overhead

Choose a leader to stand at the front of the room, facing the group. Stand at the back of the room and hold up the signs one at a time in random order for the leader to see. The leader should shout out the obstacle and lead the group in the correct action. As time allows, play again with a new leader.

SAY “ Which is more difficult: leading or following? Why? In today's Bible story, we'll hear about a time the Israelites needed to trust their leader in order to move forward. ”

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hello, everyone! I'm [your name], and I get to tell you today about how God has worked out His plan to rescue sinners. We find the stories in the Bible, God's Word. Do you have a Bible with you today? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] All the stories fit together to show God's greatness and our need for a Savior.

In fact, as we hear and study Bible stories, we will pay special attention to how God showed Himself to people. God gave us His Word so that we can know Him and His Son, Jesus. Let's get started. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

SAY “ Last time, we heard our new big picture question: **What is the Bible?** How would you answer that question? [Pause for kids to respond.] This seems like a simple question, but the answer is an important truth to understand: **The Bible is God's Word that tells us what is true about God and ourselves.** Maybe you've wondered, Is God like this? or, Is this really true about me? People have lots of different ideas about who God is and what is true about people. The Bible tells us the full truth.

Let's say our big picture question and answer together: **What is the Bible? The Bible is God's Word that tells us what is true about God and ourselves.** ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Joshua 3–4. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Stopped the Jordan River.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

GOD STOPPED THE JORDAN RIVER

“ God had promised that Abraham’s descendants would live in Canaan (KAY nuhn). He would give them the land. **After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, it was time for the remaining Israelites to enter the promised land. Now the only thing keeping the Israelites from their new home was the Jordan River.** The river was deep and wide. The Israelites could never get across on their own, but God was going to help them.

God told Joshua and the other leaders what to do. First, **the priests carried the ark of God ahead to the edge of the river.** The ark reminded the people that God was with them. **The rest of the Israelites followed behind the ark.**

Joshua said, “Listen. God is going to do something great. **When these men carry the ark of God into the river, God will stop the water in the river. Then you will know God is with us.**”

The people watched **as the priests carrying the ark took a step into the river. God made the water stop! The priests stood on dry ground** in the middle of the river, and **then all of the Israelites crossed safely** on dry ground.

God told Joshua, “**Choose 12 men to take 12 stones from the middle of the river** where the priests are standing. **They should put them down** in the place **where you spend the night tonight.**”

God wanted the stones to be a memorial. A memorial is something that helps people remember a person or event. **The people would see the stones and remember that God helped them cross the river.** In the future, when children saw the stones and said, “Why are these rocks here?” the people could tell their children that God stopped the water, and everyone would know that God is mighty.

The Israelites did exactly what God told them to do. They picked up 12 big stones to make a memorial. **Finally, the priests with the ark crossed the river, and the water began to flow again.** The river was deep and wide like it had been before. At last, **God’s people were in the promised land!**

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 trust in Him and be saved from sin. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use sound effects: As you tell the story, play sound effects of a running river and a chattering crowd of people.

Display props: Stack 12 stones in a pile on a table as you tell about the memorial the people created.

Small Group Discussion/Questions

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ This story is incredible. So much for obstacles! Do you remember that long before today’s story, God had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in the land of Canaan? After wandering in the desert and getting a new leader to take them into the promised land, the new generation of Israelites faced a huge obstacle. Open your Bible to Joshua 3. What was it? Look at Joshua 3:15. [Choose a volunteer to read the verse aloud.] That’s right—the Jordan River!

God spoke to Joshua and told him exactly what to tell the people to do. Do you remember God’s instructions? First, the priests carrying the ark of God would go in front, and then the Israelites would follow. Next, the priests with the ark were supposed to step into the water. The Israelites obeyed, and God stopped the waters. Finally, the Israelites crossed the river on dry ground.

What did God command Joshua and the Israelites to do next? [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Josh. 4:3.] God told Joshua to set up a memorial. Does anybody know what the word memorial means? [Pause for kids to respond.] Yes, a memorial is something that reminds us of an event or a person. What would the stones remind the people of Israel and their children about? [Pause for kids to respond.] Correct! It would remind them of God’s power and His faithfulness; God always keeps His promises.

Where do we find God’s promises to us? In the Bible. **What is the Bible? The Bible is God’s Word that tells us what is true about God and ourselves.** Joshua trusted in God and obeyed Him. We can also trust God and obey His Word, the Bible. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ God showed His power to Joshua and the Israelites so that they would trust Him. When Jesus came to earth, He showed His power so that people would trust Him and be saved from sin. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ Do you know of any other important events that happened at the Jordan River? ”

Explain that the Jordan River is mentioned in the Bible over 180 times. It is the main river in Israel. The prophet Elijah told Naaman the leper to go and wash in the river. Naaman obeyed and was cured of his leprosy. John the Baptist baptized people in the Jordan River. He baptized Jesus in the river. Encourage kids to remember today’s story when they hear other stories about the Jordan River in the future.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mark 1:5.)

| **SAY** “ Do you ever find it difficult to obey God’s Word? Why? ”

Invite kids to share their thoughts. Suggest that some of the Israelites, and maybe even the priests carrying the ark, might have wondered about God’s commands. But God always knows what is best for His people. Obeying God’s Word no matter how we feel shows that we love Him and that we really believe that He knows what is best for us.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 8:28.)

| **SAY** “ Can you think of a time you felt nervous about going somewhere new? How can remembering thinking about God help you when you feel afraid? ”

Encourage kids that God sent the ark of God for the Israelites to follow, and He goes before us when we follow Him. When we follow Jesus, we can trust that His Word—like a light and a lamp on a path—will lead and guide us as we read it and do what it says.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 119:105.)