

Use Week of:

## Unit 8 • Session 1

# Crossing the Jordan

### BIBLE PASSAGE:

Joshua 1–4

### STORY POINT:

God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross.

### KEY PASSAGE:

Deuteronomy 31:8

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.



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Additional resources are available at [gospelproject.com](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

## LEADER Bible Study

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.

# The BIBLE Story

## Crossing the Jordan

*Joshua 1–4*

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in Canaan (KAY nuhn). **After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, it was time for the remaining people to enter Canaan.** Moses was dead, and **God chose Joshua to be the new leader of Israel.** God told Joshua, **“Be strong and courageous.”**



**Now the only thing keeping the Israelites from the land God promised to them 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. The leaders obeyed God. **The priests carried the ark of God ahead of the people to the edge of the river.** The ark reminded them 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. **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 all of the Israelites crossed safely on dry ground.**

**God told Joshua, “Tell the people to take 12 stones from the middle of the river where the priests are standing with the ark. They should carry the stones with them and put them down where they spend the night tonight.”**

**God wanted the stones to be a memorial.** A *memorial* is something that helps people remember a person or something that happened. 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 huge stones and made a memorial. **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.*

## **Bible Storytelling Tips**

- **Draw pictures:** On paper or a dry erase board, sketch pictures as you tell the story. Consider portraying the river, priests, Joshua, and the Israelites.
- **Use props:** Gather 12 smooth, palm-sized rocks. Write a key word or a name from the story on each rock. While telling the story, slowly stack the rocks as you get to each word.

# INTRODUCE the Story



**SESSION TITLE:** Crossing the Jordan

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Joshua 1–4

**STORY POINT:** God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Deuteronomy 31:8

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

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## Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss what they do when they need to cross a street. Talk about looking both ways, waiting for a traffic light to change, or other techniques to cross safely.

**SAY** • When crossing a street, we can do certain things to ensure we are safe. Those ideas won't help much if you need to cross a river! Today we will learn about a time God's people needed to cross a river.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Crazy Crossing” activity page. Instruct kids to find and circle the parts of the picture that don't belong.

**SAY** • A lot of those silly additions obviously did not belong in the picture. But would you believe that the heap of water at one side where the river stopped flowing actually *does* belong in the picture? Pretty cool, huh? Today we will hear about a time God stopped a river from flowing so His people could cross it.

• “Crazy Crossing” activity page,  
1 per kid  
• pencils or markers

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Cross the room

Gather the kids on one side of the room. Invite them to cross with you to the other side using different styles of movement. Cross using giant steps, baby steps, or by skipping, running, or galloping. You may adapt the game to be a race if you wish.

**SAY** • Great job crossing the room with me. One thing we didn't try was swimming. There was no water to swim across in our room. Would you try swimming to cross a river? Today we will hear about a time God's people crossed a river by walking. They didn't need a bridge either!

### OPTION 2: Part the water

Form pairs of kids. Give each pair a ball. The kids in each pair will toss the ball back and forth, taking a step apart after each successful catch. Challenge the kids to see which pair can maintain tossing and catching from the greatest distance apart.

**SAY** • After each successful catch, you had to move apart. You may remember a few weeks back when we learned about God causing two sides of the Red Sea to move apart. Today we will learn about a time God helped His people cross another body of water. This time it was a river, but the people still crossed on dry ground!

**LOW  
PREP**

• playground balls,  
1 per every 2 kids

## Transition to teach the story



# TEACH the Story



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**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

**Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Decorate the room to look like a school cafeteria or gymnasium set up for a large chess tournament. Paint rows of tables on foam board to be a background, and hang posters with chess-related imagery, like pawns or checkerboard patterns. Set up a table on the stage with a chessboard and assorted chess pieces. You may display the theme background slide.

## Countdown

- countdown video

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

## Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- chess books or magazines

*[Leader enters wearing casual clothing and carrying chess books or magazines.]*

**LEADER** • Hey, everyone! Check it out! *[Gesture to the room.]* We are almost all set up for the chess tournament. I'm so excited. I've been playing chess for years, and I finally think I might be good enough to win our local chess championship.

Chess is an awesome game. It takes a lot of patience and strategy to win, but it's so much fun. You have to know how each piece moves and what

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

pieces are more powerful. But just because a piece isn't the most powerful doesn't mean it can't be useful! For example, when a simple pawn—probably the weakest piece in the game—crosses all the way to the far side of the board, it gets promoted to be a rook, a bishop, or even a queen! Queens are definitely the most powerful pieces.

You know, in a strange way, it kind of makes me think of our Bible story. It's not about chess, but it is about crossing into enemy territory! Would you like to hear more? [*Allow responses.*] Great, I'll tell you!

### **Big picture question (1 minute)**

**LEADER** • 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. As we do, let's try to remember this big picture question: ***How can we glorify God?*** It's kind of tricky to answer, so listen to today's story, and I'll then reveal the answer.

### **Giant timeline (1 minute)**

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

**LEADER** • 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."



- Bibles
- “Crossing the Jordan” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Joshua 1–4. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Crossing the Jordan.”

**LEADER** • 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.

## Christ connection

**LEADER** • 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,

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

He showed His power so people would trust in Him and be saved from sin.

### Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 8, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about amazing things God has done for them. Guide them to discuss ways they can share their stories of God’s goodness with others.

· “Unit 8, Session 1”  
Questions from Kids  
Video



### Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the “Color Map” printable.

**LEADER** • This is a map of God’s world! The colored areas are parts of the world where being a follower of Jesus is not always safe. Still, God loves everyone living in these places and has not abandoned them. God is leading many people from these countries to places where the gospel can be shared. Believers in Jesus Christ loving these people and teaching them about Jesus.

· Allergy Alert  
· “Color Map” printable  
· fruit-flavored chewy  
candy (red, orange,  
yellow, green, and  
purple colors)

Give each kid one piece of fruit-flavored chewy candy. Explain that their candy color matches a colored part of the map. Give kids time to pray for people living in the part of the world that matches their candy. Ask that people living in these parts of the world will hear the gospel.

### Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read Deuteronomy 31:8. Then sing “Do Not Be Afraid.”

**LEADER** • Our key passage comes from the last reminders that Moses said to God’s people. Soon after saying this, Moses died. The passage reminds us that God is with His people. Everyone who believes that Jesus

· Key Passage Poster  
· “Do Not Be Afraid”  
song

is God's Son who died on the cross for our sins and rose again is part of God's people! When Christians read that God is with us, we know that it is true because of what Jesus did for us.

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

• "Onward, Christian Soldiers" song

**LEADER** • Let's praise God together.  
Sing together "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

**LEADER** • God, thank You for leading Your people into the land You promised. We can see Your faithfulness clearly in 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.

### **Dismiss to apply the story**

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

# APPLY the Story



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**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- sticky notes
- index cards (optional)
- tape (optional)

Display the key passage poster and read it through with the kids multiple times. Then cover a few of the words using sticky notes or index cards and tape. Read the key passage again, letting the kids fill in the missing words. Each time they succeed in saying the key passage, cover a few more words and repeat it again. Challenge the kids to memorize the verse over the next few weeks.

**SAY** • Our key passage teaches that God promised to be with His people. Those who trust Jesus for salvation are part of God’s family, and Jesus made the same promise to be with us forever. We can be bold and have courage because we have the almighty God with us all the time.

## Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help them use the table of contents to find Joshua 1–4. Explain that Joshua is not part of the Law. It is the first book in the Old Testament division called History. Joshua tells the history of the Israelites as they moved into and conquered the promised land. Review the other books in this division. (Judges–Esther)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did God tell Joshua as he became the new leader of the Israelites? (*Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid; Josh. 1:9*)
2. How did God help the people cross the Jordan? (*God stopped the flow of the water so that it piled up on one side, Josh. 3:16*)
3. What did Joshua do to remember the amazing thing God had done for His people? (*He instructed men from the twelve tribes to take 12 stones from the middle of the riverbed and set them up as a memorial, Josh. 4:3-7*)
4. Why do you think God helped His people cross the Jordan? *Guide kids to discuss the fact that most of the people who had seen God's amazing miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea had died. God helped them cross the Jordan River in an amazing way to demonstrate His power to them and strengthen their faith in Him.*
5. Why do you think God wanted the people to have the stones to remember what He did for them? *Guide kids to discuss the fact that God proves His faithfulness again and again, but people tend to forget and walk into sin. God wanted them to have a reminder that He is good and trustworthy.*
6. God told Joshua to be strong and courageous and to obey His commands. What commands do Christians need strength and courage to obey? *Discuss the different commands Jesus talks about, such as loving God, loving people, sharing the gospel, and so forth.*

**SAY • God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross.** He is good and provides for His people. We see that very clearly in the way He sent Jesus for us.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



## LOW PREP

• guest speaker

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment in Teach the Story.

### Activity choice (10 minutes)



#### OPTION 1: Guest speaker

Invite a person who came to your city from a different country to come speak with your group. If possible, try to invite a person who heard the gospel after coming to your country. Ask the person to share about his or her experience and to encourage kids to look for opportunities to tell others about Jesus. Allow time for questions and answers. You may suggest questions like, “Was it hard to make friends when you arrived?” “What did you believe before you heard about Jesus?” and so forth.

**SAY • God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross.** No barrier is big enough to stop God or His plan to rescue people from their sin through His Son, Jesus Christ. In many parts of the world, it is illegal or dangerous to talk about Jesus. Thankfully, God is leading many people, like our guest speaker, to places where they can freely hear and share the gospel. Sometimes they stay in those new places, and sometimes they get to return to their home country to share the gospel with people there!

- Allergy Alert
- plastic gems, coins, or other treasures
- flour, 1 cup
- used coffee grounds, 1 cup
- salt, ½ cup
- sand, ¼ cup
- water, ¾ cup
- ziplock bags
- marker
- wet wipes for cleanup

#### OPTION 2: Treasure stones

Follow the steps below to make treasure “stones” that the kids can take home and bake to harden.

1. Mix all dry ingredients in a medium bowl.
2. Slowly add water and knead until the mixture forms a dough about the same consistency as cookie dough.
3. Take a small lump of the dough and roll it into a lumpy ball shape, a bit larger than a golf ball.
4. Press your thumb into the center of the ball to make

- a small cavity.
5. Place a plastic gem, gold coin, or other treasure inside.
  6. Seal the treasure inside with more dough.
  7. Place the ball into a ziplock bag and seal it.
  8. Write on the outside of the bag *Bake on a cookie sheet in a 150-degree oven for 15–20 minutes.*

**SAY • God held back the Jordan River for His people to cross.** The stones that the Israelites took from the Jordan did not have treasures hidden in them, but they were used to remind the people of something valuable: God was with them. He is always faithful to provide for His people. You can take your treasure home and ask your mom or dad to help you bake the stone to make it hard. Then you can use it to remember what you learned today. *How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.*

### Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

Note: Recipe will make about 2-3 treasure stones, depending on the size. Consider multiplying the recipe for larger groups.

• pencils and crayons  
• paper  
• Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.