

UNIT 7 | SESSION 1

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

JOSHUA 1; 3-4



KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 24:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why can we trust God? We can trust God because He is faithful and does everything for His glory and our good.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God's presence went before the people, and the waters of the Jordan were stopped. God's people crossed safely into the Promised Land. Jesus went before God on behalf of sinners. All who trust in His life, death, and resurrection are saved from judgment and enter into eternal life.

STORY POINT: God gave Joshua courage to lead the Israelites.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

In Joshua 1, we learn the Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land following the death of Moses. God spoke directly to Joshua, commissioning him as the new leader of His people. The Lord commanded Joshua three times to be strong and courageous as he was about to guide the Israelites across the Jordan River.

What instructions did God impart to Joshua? How would God reveal to Joshua—and the rest of the Israelites—that He would be with them, just as He promised?

God urged Joshua to continue walking in the promises He made to Moses (Joshua 1:3, 5). To do so, Joshua would have to commit to walking in God's ways: being strong and courageous, observing Moses' commands, and meditating on God's Word. God reminded Joshua of His faithfulness and affirmed that He would exalt Joshua before all Israel. No one would be able to doubt that God chose Joshua to fulfill His promises.

Joshua commanded the Israelites to get ready for a miraculous move of God (Joshua 3:5)—a feat that would require faith. He then relayed God's instructions for crossing the Jordan River. As the priests stepped into the river, the waters stopped flowing, and God's powerful presence made a way for His people to safely cross into the Promised Land.

Teach boys and girls that, like the Israelites awaited God's provision on their journey, we, too, need a miracle: to be made right with God the Father through faith in the Son. This gift of salvation cannot be earned; it is a gracious gift that demonstrates God's power and love.

Also consider the impact of children's curiosity in this story. God commanded the Israelites to memorialize this event by setting out 12 stones. When Israelite children and future generations asked the meaning of these stones, the people could use it as an opportunity to recount the Lord's faithfulness. May this story instill within your kids the same sense of wonder the Israelites experienced. God's faithful promises never fail, including His promise to save anyone who repents of sin and turns to Jesus by faith. Be prepared to share the story of how God saved you through faith in His Son. Pray for His gracious love to begin transforming kids' hearts and minds today.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Gather the Stones" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ buckets, 5 per team
- ☐ cloth or fabric pieces, 10
- ☐ bucket items: cooked noodles, flowers, raisins, marbles, cake icing
- ☐ rubber bands, 5

Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ music



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ index cards, 2 per kid

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ music

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Crossing the Jordan River" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 7, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "Overview of South Asia" missions video
- ☐ world map

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Who Is (Psalm 24:8)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ large interlocking blocks



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** 🗨️ How would you feel if you had to move to a new city or country? Why? 🗨️

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Gather the Stones” activity page.

| **SAY** 🗨️ Today, we will see how God was with His people as He led them into the Promised Land. God told them to use 12 stones to make a memorial so they would remember how He was with them. 🗨️

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: WHAT'S IN THE BUCKET?



Before the session, set out five buckets for each team. In individual buckets, place cooked noodles, flowers, raisins, marbles, and cake icing. Cut 10 pieces of cloth large enough to cover the top of each bucket. Cut a hole in each piece large enough for the kids to stick their hand through. Fasten a rubber band around the bucket to hold the cloth on.

Form kids into two teams. Instruct each team to choose one courageous person to be the team leader. When you say go, direct the team leader to stick his hand into the first bucket. The rest of the team will follow. Repeat this process until all kids have felt the items in each bucket. (Tip: Place the cake icing at the end.) When finished, direct the kids to wash their hands.

| **SAY** 🗨️ Were you nervous or hesitant to place your hand in the buckets? It's easy to be nervous when we can't see what's coming next. But each team leader courageously led their team to the next bucket! Today, we will see how **GOD GAVE JOSHUA COURAGE TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES.** 🗨️

☐ OPTION 2: HOP IN, HOP OUT



Create a “river” by placing two lines of painter's tape on the floor. Tell kids that when they stand in between these two lines, they will be in the “river.” Guide kids to line up on one side of the river. When you play music, direct kids to hop in the “river” and hop out. Kids will continue to hop in and out as the music plays. Tell kids that when you stop the music, anyone who is in the “river” is out. Play as time allows.

| **SAY** 🗨️ Today, we will see how God kept His promise to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. God showed His power and made the way for the Israelites to cross a river on dry ground. Let's get ready to hear how God also made the way for us to be saved. 🗨️

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





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 “Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I am so glad you are here. Today, we will read from a book of the Bible called Joshua. If you have a Bible with you, will you take it out? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Let’s find Joshua together. Joshua is in the Old Testament and is the sixth book in the Bible. [Assist kids in finding Joshua by starting in Genesis and counting over six books.]

As we listen to our story, we will learn how God kept His promise to His people and led them into the Promised Land. God provided a new leader for His people—a man named Joshua. **GOD GAVE JOSHUA COURAGE TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray for God to help us hear the truth of His Word: ‘Dear God, please help us see how Your promises are always true. Give us hearts that trust You and follow Your Son, Jesus. Amen.’ ”

worship

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

* Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Let’s learn a new big picture question and answer to help us discover truth about God. Our question is, Why can we trust God? Why do you think we can trust God? [Allow responses.] The answer we will learn is, We can trust God because He is faithful and does everything for His glory and our good.

God can always be trusted because He is faithful. When we say God is faithful, we mean He never changes and always does what He says He will do. Unlike people, God never lies. In our story today, we will see how God kept His promise to bring His people into the Promised Land. He also promised to go before the people and stop the waters of the Jordan River. We’ll see that God did exactly what He promised. ”

* Battle belongs
* way maker
* offering

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “God promised His people, the Israelites, they would be given the land He promised Abraham. But after God rescued His people from Egypt, they continued to grumble, doubt, and complain. Their disobedience meant they would not enter the land, but one day their children would. And God was faithful to keep His promise. After Moses died, God appointed Joshua to lead His people. Today, we will see how God’s promise to bring His people into the land of Canaan came true. **GOD GAVE JOSHUA COURAGE TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES,** and they crossed the Jordan River. ”



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story



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

Open your Bible to Joshua 1; 3-4. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Crossing the Jordan River." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

“After the death of Moses, God spoke to Joshua and said, ‘You will be the new leader of My people. The promises I made to Moses are still going to come true. Get everyone ready to cross the Jordan into the land I promised to your ancestors!’

“Be strong and courageous, Joshua. You will lead the people to take the land. Each tribe of Israel will have its own territory. Think about My commands that I gave to Moses day and night, and follow them carefully, and you will have success. Be strong and courageous and do not be afraid or discouraged because I am with you!”

Joshua led the people to the edge of the Jordan River. The land God had promised was just on the other side. **After three days of camping by the river, the officers of the army told all the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD being carried, pack up your things and follow it.”**

Joshua said, **“Get ready, because the LORD is going to do something amazing!”** God would reveal His power to show the people God was with their new leader Joshua.

The priests carrying the ark of the covenant stepped into the Jordan River, and as soon as their feet touched the edge of the water, the water flowing downstream stood still. The people of God could cross over on dry land!

Once the entire nation crossed the Jordan River, God told Joshua to select twelve men to create something special to remember this important miracle. Joshua chose one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He told them to go back to the middle of the river, where the ark of the covenant was still being held, and to pick up a large stone and bring it back to the shore. They made a large pile out of the rocks.

Joshua said, **“When people ask you in the future, ‘What do these stones mean?’ you will tell them, ‘God stopped the Jordan River so that we could cross over into this land He promised us on dry ground.’”**

When the priests carrying the ark of the covenant fully crossed the river onto the bank, the Jordan River started flowing again. God showed His people and everyone on earth that He is mighty and powerful.

Christ Connection: God’s presence went before the people, and the waters of the Jordan were stopped. God’s people crossed safely into the Promised Land. Jesus

STORYTELLING TIPS

Remind kids: Prompt kids to remember how God also stopped the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross on dry ground to escape the Egyptians. Remind kids of God’s power and faithfulness.

Use dramatic voice: Change the tone of inflection of your voice as you read each the story.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

went before God on behalf of sinners. All who trust in His life, death, and resurrection are saved from judgment and enter into eternal life. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God’s people had waited to enter the land He promised to give them. But God’s promises never fail, and the time had come for them to go into the land of Canaan. Who did God choose to be the new leader of the Israelites? [Allow responses.] **GOD GAVE JOSHUA COURAGE TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES.** Joshua was chosen to lead the people into the land, and he was able to be strong and courageous because the Lord was with him. How can we be strong and courageous when we are afraid? [Allow responses.] We can trust God because He is good and promises to be with His children.

As Joshua led the people to the Jordan River, they needed a way across. Do you remember what God did? [Allow responses.] When the priests carrying the ark of the covenant stepped into the river, God stopped the water so His people could cross on dry ground. God is powerful! He made the way for His people to cross the river, and He made the way for anyone who trusts in Jesus to be saved.

After they crossed, Joshua instructed twelve men to select stones from the river. Why did God call these men to gather these stones? [Allow responses.] God wanted His people to set up the stones as a way to remember God’s power and faithfulness to help them cross the Jordan River.

God’s presence went before the people, and the waters of the Jordan were stopped. God’s people crossed safely into the Promised Land. Jesus went before God on behalf of sinners. All who trust in His life, death, and resurrection are saved from judgment and enter into eternal life. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

Gospel Poster Slide

SAY “ We don’t need the ark because God has a better way for us to experience His presence. He sent His son Jesus, who is God with us! Jesus came to earth and died for our sin so we can live with God forever. Have you trusted in Jesus? ”

(Tip: Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 7, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can we not be afraid to start new things, like go to a new school?
2. How does faith in Jesus give us courage to live for God, no matter where we are or what we’re going through?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

(optional)

SAY 🗣️ South Asia is home to more than 1.8 billion people. Some of the countries in South Asia include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. [Point to some of these countries on a world map.] South Asia also has the largest amount of people on earth who do not believe in the one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. 🗣️

* Play the video. Tell kids that for the good news about Jesus to become known to the many people living in South Asia, the local Christians will need courage to tell others about Jesus. Explain that many times, Christians in these countries face persecution, meaning they may be harmed or treated badly because they follow Jesus. Remind kids that just as God was with Joshua in today's story, God is also with these Christians to help them find courage in difficult situations. Pray that missionaries and Christians in South Asia will depend on the Lord for courage and strength as they share the gospel with the people of South Asia.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

* Before the session, print or write the key passage in bold letters on a piece of paper. Cut out each word and tape them onto large interlocking blocks. Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 24:8 together.

SAY 🗣️ The key passage reminds us that the Lord our God is strong and mighty. He is the King of glory! Let's try to piece together this verse. 🗣️

Invite the kids to gather together on the floor. Lay out the interlocking blocks and explain that the kids need to put the key passage back together. Show them the Key Passage Poster to help them remember the correct order of the words. Once they are finished, encourage them to read the key passage aloud together.

~~Lead kids to sing "Who Is (Psalm 24:8)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.~~

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY 🗣️ God, You are the strong and mighty King of glory. Help us remember Your power to save as we share Your love with others. Thank You for being with Your children. In Jesus' name, amen. 🗣️

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Joshua 1. Explain that the Bible is God's Word given to us. Tell kids that Joshua is the sixth book of the Bible. Explain that the book of Joshua is believed to have been written by Joshua.

Consider pointing out the location of the Jordan River (F6) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 1:8-9 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

SAY 🗨️ Has there been a time when you were afraid? [Allow responses.] Of course! We have all faced scary and uncertain situations. Joshua was going to lead the Israelites into an unfamiliar land, but God reminded him to think about and trust in His words day and night.

Because we live in a sinful world, we experience fear. But when we face difficult times, we can remember God's promises that He has given us in His Word because He is faithful and never changes. 🙏

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** 🗨️ How did God make the way for people to come into His presence? 🙏

Remind kids that God made a way for the Israelites to enter into the land He had promised because He went before the people. Tell kids He has also made the way for us to enter into His presence. Sin separates us from God, but through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God made the way for us to have our sin forgiven and live with God forever.

| **SAY** 🗨️ How did God show the Israelites that He is strong and powerful? 🙏

Prompt kids to recall how the priests carried the ark of the covenant into the river and the water stopped. Discuss how God stopped the river and allowed His people to cross on dry ground. Through this, God demonstrated that He is Ruler over all He has created.

| **SAY** 🗨️ Do we still need an ark of the covenant today? Why not? 🙏

Tell kids the ark of the covenant represented God's presence with His people. God was not confined to the ark. Nothing on earth can contain Him! Discuss how the ark was a symbol to help the people understand God's holy presence. Tell kids we no longer need the ark of the covenant because God sent His Son Jesus to dwell among us. Jesus died so that we could come into God's presence. When we place our faith in Jesus, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: READ, REMEMBER, AND RESPOND

Provide each kid with a Bible, a pen, and two index cards. Write the following Bible references on a dry erase board: Psalm 84:11; Isaiah 41:10; Philippians 4:19; John 3:16; John 14:27. Guide kids to look up two of the verses and copy each verse to a card. Or consider helping kids write a paraphrase of each verse.

SAY **GOD GAVE JOSHUA COURAGE TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES.** God gave Joshua courage through His promises and His presence. God told Joshua to think about or meditate on His commands and remember that He would be with Joshua. We will have times when we are afraid or unsure. God's Word gives us courage. We read the Bible and God's promises. Then we remember God's promises. We store them in our heart and think about them. And then when we face a challenge, we respond to the challenge with the truth of God's Word. The promises of God help us to remember that God loves us and is with His children.

☐ OPTION 2: RIVER ROCK WALK



Before the session, cut gray paper into the shape of 12 stones. If you have a large group, consider making a set for each group of five or six kids. Label three individual stones with the word promise. Use painter's tape to tape the stones in a circle on the floor.

Direct kids to stand on a "stone" and begin playing music. Tell kids that when the music stops, they must stand still. If kids are standing on a stone labeled promise, they can share a promise they have learned from today's story or a promise from the Bible such as "God promises to help His people." Play music again and repeat the activity as time allows.

SAY The Bible is full of God's promises. God always keeps His promises because He is faithful. God kept His promise to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Then He told His people to set up 12 stones to remember His faithfulness. We can remember God's promises and trust He will be faithful.

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

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

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

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.