

# The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24



### Worship Theme:



We can thank God for what he does.

### Weaving Faith Into Life:



Children will worship God for who he is and praise God for his provision.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>1</b> Let's Praise God! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	<b>Sing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The Power!"</li> <li>• "His Great Love" (Romans 5:8)</li> <li>• "It Is Well With My Soul"</li> <li>• "Power Shuffle"</li> <li>• "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"</li> <li>• "He Is the Light"</li> <li>• "Doxology"</li> </ul>	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment, Thanksgiving symbols, several self-stick notes per child, markers

## Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	<b>Show Me the Story</b> Act out the Bible story, and learn that God stopped the Jordan River.	
	<b>Say "Thank You"</b> Do nice things for each other, and say thank you when someone does something nice for them.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> 3 small rocks and 1 plastic bag per child
	<b>* Thanksgiving Snack</b> Enjoy turkey treats, and say what they're thankful for.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> 2 crackers, 1 piece of turkey lunchmeat, and 1 piece of cheese per child; hand wipes

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	<b>* Be the Story</b> Dramatize a paraphrase of God stopping the Jordan River.	
	<b>Reminder Rocks</b> Decorate rocks as reminders to thank God.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> 1 smooth rock per child, art supplies
	<b>* Thanksgiving Potatoes</b> Clean and wrap potatoes to serve as reminders to thank God on Thanksgiving.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> 1 potato per child, 1 square of cellophane, and 2 feet of curling ribbon per child; 1 copy of "Potato Instructions" handout per 8 children; tape; scissors; paper towels; 1 vegetable brush per 3 children

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>3</b> Let's Pray! <i>(up to 10 minutes)</i>	<b>The Offering</b> Make a pile with their offerings like the pile of rocks the Israelites created.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Offering bowls
	<b>Prayer Pile</b> Create a pile of "rocks" as they say what they're thankful for.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Potatoes from "Thanksgiving Potatoes" activity
	<b>What God Has Done</b> Sing a closing song and cheer for God.	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment

\* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together. Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2. Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

# *The Israelites Cross the Jordan River*

*Joshua 3:1–4:24*

Parts of this story seem like a rerun of the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea 40 years earlier. Remember, however, that apart from Joshua and Caleb, all of the people crossing the Jordan River were no older than children when Israel crossed the Red Sea. This totally new experience must have reminded them of the stories their parents had told them about the miracle of crossing the Red Sea.

Notice that the Jordan River was not just a trickling stream—it was at “flood stage.” In the area of Jericho, it would have been 10 to 12 feet deep, and the current quite strong.

The Israelites built a stone memorial with the rocks taken from the center of the Jordan River. The memorial would remind people of the wonders God had done for the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land, and the 12 stones together would remind them of the 12 tribes joined together as one nation.

The last verse of today's passage, Joshua 4:24, tells us why God dried up the Jordan for the people to cross: “so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.” God wanted his people to fear him—to give him the worship and service he deserved.

Remembering what God had done would give them encouragement and faith when they faced the difficulties of conquering this new land.

## ***Devotion for Leaders***

As we grow in our relationship with Christ, we become more Christlike. We can testify that we have been renewed and delivered from our different lives of the past.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Reread Joshua 4:24. Note the public display of power that God left as a reminder of his love and power. In times of darkness, it is often helpful to rest in the truth of what we have experienced in the past. Encounters with our Savior remind us that he is with us. Sharing these experiences with others can give hope to the hopeless and bring glory to the work God has done in you. Identify five people to whom you will testify of God's power in your life this week. After you share, watch how God's power in you affects the people you share with.

## Why We Worship for Leaders

During the Exodus, the Israelites experienced God's presence and power in many mighty ways. After Moses' death, when Joshua was leader of Israel, God continued to care for his people. But when the Israelites reached the Jordan River, they faced a huge obstacle. They needed to cross the river to reach the Promised Land, but it was swollen to flood stage.

When we face obstacles in our lives, God's glory really can shine. He helps us overcome trouble just as he stopped the Jordan River from flowing. It's easy to take God's incredible deeds for granted, but it's important to stop and thank God for what he does. What better time than at Thanksgiving? Let's thank God just as the Israelites did!

## Easy Prep for Leaders

**Let's Praise God!**—Make sure your video equipment is ready. Gather a variety of Thanksgiving symbols and set them on a table. Symbol examples include squash and pumpkins, corn and other grains, Pilgrim hats, and praying hands. You may also want to collect various symbols of God's provision, such as clothes, money, toys, blankets, and a Bible.

**Thanksgiving Potatoes**—Photocopy the "Potato Instructions" handout (at the end of this session). Cut apart the sets of instructions so each child will have one.

**Preschool Activities**—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

## 1 Let's Praise God!

Play the music videos on the *KidsOwn Worship DVD* as children arrive. Greet kids by name, and say to each one, "I'm thankful to God that you came today."

When everyone has arrived, begin the worship session.

**Say** **Hello, everyone! Welcome to children's church. It's almost Thanksgiving, so today we're going to be thanking God for what he does.**

Point out the objects you set out beforehand.

**Say** **As we sing today, take notice of these items that represent our Thanksgiving holiday. They also symbolize the abundance of gifts God gives us. As you look at the Thanksgiving symbols, think about the gifts God gives us—the things he does and the way he loves us, gives us what we need, protects us, and more! God is so powerful, and he can provide for all our needs. Let's sing a song about God's power.**

 Sing "The Power!"

**Ask** • If we were to fill a box with God's gifts, what are some of the things that might be in it? (Food; friends; God's love.)

**Say** One of God's gifts to us is his love. Remember, God loves us no matter what! He loves you more than anyone else does! And he loves us all the same! That's something to celebrate. Let's sing a song about God's great love, which will last forever.

▶ Sing "His Great Love" (Romans 5:8).

**Say** Because of God's great love and the other wonderful gifts he gives us, God deserves our thanks. Let's pray a thank you prayer now: God, thank you for loving us and for all the other wonderful things you do.

Invite kids to share their own thanksgiving prayers aloud.

**Say** Another way we can thank God is to tell other people about the wonderful things he does.

Read 1 Chronicles 16:8.

**Ask** • What are some of the wonderful things God does? (Saves us from our sins; helps us when we need help; shows us how to do what's right; encourages us.)

**Say** Let's sing a song about thanking God no matter what.

▶ Sing "It Is Well With My Soul."

**Say** God does so many incredible things. We have so much to thank him for. Since God wants us to tell others about the things he does, let's sing another song that celebrates his power.

▶ Sing "Power Shuffle."

**Say** God is amazing and powerful! Let's clap and cheer for God and the incredible things he does!

Encourage kids to clap and cheer—even jump for joy—to celebrate God.

**Say** Sometimes we need God's help. Maybe we need God to help us out of a scary situation or to help us make a tough decision. We can always count on God to be with us in those times.

**Ask** • When are some times when you have needed God's help? (When I was sad; when I got lost; when my dad lost his job.)

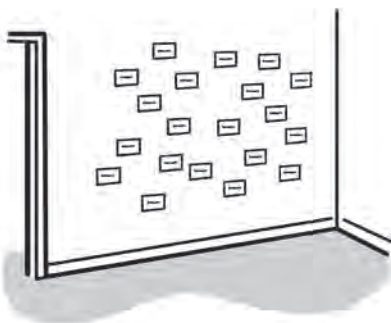
• How did God help you? (He sent a friend to cheer me up; he helped my family have enough money to pay bills.)

**Say** Let's thank God in a creative way for those ways he has helped us.

Distribute several self-stick notes and a marker or pencil to each person. Have kids write or draw on their notes things God has done in their lives that they're thankful for—for example, providing protection, showing power, providing for them, or creating the world.


### Worship Leader Tip

During the discussion, allow preschool children to answer questions first so they have a chance to give some of the easier answers. When older children answer questions, preschool children may feel a little intimidated and less willing to answer questions themselves. Let them go first so their answers aren't always taken and they feel less overwhelmed.



When kids have finished writing or drawing, have them stick their notes on a wall to form a large collage.

**Say** Remember what we've learned over the past several weeks: **God led the Israelites to the Promised Land. He protected them along the way and provided what they needed. God does the same for us. But even though we know God will always help us, it's important that we don't take that help for granted. We should always remember God's help and thank him for it. Let's sing a song to ask God to help us every day.**

 Sing "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah."

**Say** God always answers our prayers. He'll help us and guide us every day. Let's remember to turn to him and to thank him for the awesome things he does! Now let's thank God together through a responsive reading. I'll say a sentence, and I'd like you to say, "Thank you, God, for what you do" after every sentence. Let's begin.

**God is good to us.** *Kids say, "Thank you, God, for what you do."*

**God loves us.** *Kids say, "Thank you, God, for what you do."*


**God takes care of us.** *Kids say, "Thank you, God, for what you do."*

**God gives us what we need.** *Kids say, "Thank you, God, for what you do."*

**God is good to us.** *Kids say, "Thank you, God, for what you do."*

**Thank you, God!**

**Good job! Let's sing another song to thank God for being the light of the world.**

 Sing "He Is the Light."

**Say** Now let's try a fun way of thanking God for the things we described in our collage.

Have kids form teams of five to eight.

**Say** In your team, come up with a thank you cheer for God. Think of yourselves as cheerleaders for God. You have five minutes to make up your cheers.

After five minutes, ask teams to perform their cheers for one another while looking at the collage for inspiration.

When all the teams have performed their cheers, lead everyone in clapping and cheering together.

**Say** ➤ As we sing this last song, think about all the gifts God has given us.

▶ Sing the "Doxology."

**Say** ➤ Now let's pray together.

**Pray** ➤ God, we thank you for your wonderful gifts to us. Remind us of your everlasting love and your power and protection in our lives. Help us to worship you in our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

## 2 Let's Learn the Point!

### *Preschool Activities, pages 159-160*

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (\*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

### *Elementary Activities*

#### *\* Be the Story*

**Say** ➤ I'm going to tell you a Bible story. As I do so, I want you to participate. Here are your instructions: When I mention the Israelites, say, "Hello!" When I mention the river, wave your arms from side to side and say, "Woosh!" like rushing water. Every time I mention the ark of the covenant, I want you to put your arms out at your sides and bend your elbows down to make yourself look like a box. When I mention Joshua, flex your muscles and say, "Fearless leader!" When I mention the stones, roll yourself up into a ball to look like a rock.

Encourage children to practice the motions and words before you launch into the paraphrase of the Bible story. Pause after each of the underlined words to prompt children to participate in the story.

**Say** ➤ When the Israelites got to the land God had promised them, they realized they had a problem. As they were traveling, they found themselves at the edge of the Jordan River. This was a problem because they knew they had to go across the river to get to the Promised Land. The Jordan River was fast and wide and deep. In fact, it was as full of water as it could get. It was almost overflowing!

**Ask**

- **How do you think the people felt at this point?** (Scared; afraid they'd have to go back; confused; disappointed.)
- **When have you felt afraid?** (When things didn't go the way I wanted them to; when I wasn't sure what was going to happen.)
- **What made you feel better?** (Having someone with me; when I realized everything would be OK.)

**Say**

**Joshua and the other leaders of the Israelites told the Israelites to get ready for God to do something amazing. They said, "The priests are going to carry the ark of the covenant into the Jordan River. When you see them carrying it, follow them. But don't get too close to the ark of the covenant. It represents the presence of God."**

**Joshua told the Israelites, "God will show you today that he is with you and he will take care of you."**

**So when the priests started carrying the ark of the covenant toward the Jordan River, the Israelites followed. When the priests put their feet in the water, something amazing really did happen! The river stopped flowing, and the water stacked up in one place! The priests who were carrying the ark of the covenant stopped in the middle of the river bed, and all the Israelites walked across the Jordan River on dry land!**

**Ask**

- **How do you think the people felt at this point?** (Excited; happy; relieved; thankful.)
- **When have you felt that excited?** (When I got a good grade I didn't expect on a test; when something good happened that I didn't know would happen.)
- **When have you felt that thankful?** (When God helped me; when God provided for my family.)

**Say**

**After the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River, Joshua told them to gather 12 stones from the middle of the river. Then the priests carrying the ark of the covenant walked out of the river, and the Jordan River began to flow again.**

**The Israelites carried the stones to the other side of the river and built a large pile of stones. These stones would remind them for years to thank God for what he did for them. Joshua told the Israelites, "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord...For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over."**

**Ask**

- **Why do you think God wanted the people to make the pile of stones?** (So they remembered how he helped them; the stones reminded them to thank God for what he'd done.)
- **How do you say thank you to God?** (I worship him; I pray.)



## Reminder Rocks

Give each child a smooth rock, and set out art supplies.

**Say** ➤ **Just as the Israelites did, we're going to create reminders to thank God for what he does. Use the art supplies I've provided to decorate your rock. Be sure to decorate it in a way that will remind you to thank God.**

Encourage children to be creative as they decorate and to keep in mind that the rocks are to serve as reminders to thank God. After three or four minutes, put aside the art supplies. Have the children show each other their decorated rocks. Then ask the following questions.

- Ask** ➤
- **What are some of the ways you decided to decorate your rock?** (With pictures of things God has given me; with family members; with bright colors.)
  - **Why did you choose to decorate your rock as you did?** (Because God gives good gifts; because God gave me my family; the bright colors remind me of how happy God's gifts make me.)
  - **How can these rocks remind us to thank God?** (When I see it, I can thank God; I can set my rock somewhere so I see it every day and thank God.)

**Say** ➤ **There are many ways to express our thanks to God in everyday life. Let's remember to tell God "thank you" for all the wonderful things he does.**

## \* Thanksgiving Potatoes

**Say** ➤ **It's Thanksgiving time. It's time for us to celebrate the things in our lives that we're thankful for.**

- Ask** ➤
- **Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?** (To thank God for what he's given; to remember what God has done for us.)
  - **How does your family celebrate Thanksgiving?** (We eat a lot; we watch football; we celebrate with family.)
  - **How is our Thanksgiving holiday similar to what the Israelites did after they crossed the Jordan River? How is it different?** (We remember God with food, they remembered God with stones; like the Israelites, we do something to remember to thank God.)

Give each child a potato.

**Say** ➤ **These potatoes sort of look like stones, don't they? We're going to use these potatoes to thank God the way the Israelites used the stones.**

Show kids how to wash their potatoes, rinsing them under water and scrubbing them with a vegetable brush. Then have children pat their potatoes dry with paper towels. When all the potatoes are clean, give each child a segment of decorative

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# The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

## Worship Theme:



We can thank God for what he does.

## Easy Prep for Leaders

**Say "Thank You"**—Place three rocks in a small plastic bag for each child.

## Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have children do nice things for Theo during the "Say Thank You" activity.
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today's worship session.



## Show Me the Story

**Say** When the Israelites got to the land God had promised them, they realized they had a problem. They had to go across a big, deep river to get to the Promised Land.

**Ask** • What do you think that river looked like?

Encourage the kids to act like they think a big, deep river would act. Help them understand that the river would be powerful, fast, and probably frightening.

While the children act like the river, continue to paraphrase the story.

**Say** The leaders of the people told them, "The priests are going to carry the ark of the covenant into the river. When you see them carrying it, follow them. But don't get too close to the ark. God is going to do something amazing." So when the priests started carrying the ark of the covenant toward the river, the people followed. When the priests put their feet in the water, something amazing really did happen! The river stopped flowing, and the water stood in one place!

Show me what that must have looked like.

Indicate to children that they are to simulate the river by stopping where they are and lying still on the floor. Then as you continue with your paraphrase, walk among the children to represent the way the Israelites walked across the riverbed.

**Say** When the water stopped flowing, the people walked across the river on dry land! After they had crossed the river, they gathered some stones from the middle of the river and built a large pile of stones to remind them to thank God for what he did for them.

**Ask** • How do you think the Israelites felt after they crossed the river on dry land?

**Say** Show me how you think the people acted after they crossed the river.

Encourage children to express happiness by jumping, dancing, and celebrating.

**Say** Do you know what the Israelites said after they crossed the river? They said the same thing people say when other people do something nice for them.

**Ask** • What do people say when other people do something nice for them?

**Say** We can thank God for what he does. Let's say thank you to God all together: Thank you, God!

## Say "Thank You"

**Say** ▶ Let's play a game. We're going to practice saying "thank you." We're going to do nice things for each other and say "thank you." The nice things we do can remind us of the nice things God does for us. After someone does something nice for you, say "thank you."

Encourage children to do nice things for each other, such as patting each other's arms, handing out toys, or hugging. Remind children to say "thank you" after each nice gesture. Also, be sure each child is the recipient of at least one nice gesture.

**Say** ▶ Now we're going to say nice things to each other. The nice things we say can remind us of the nice things God says to us. After someone says something nice to you, say "thank you."

Encourage children to say nice things to each other, such as "I like you," "I'm glad you're here," or "You're nice." Remind children to say "thank you" after each nice statement. Also, be sure each child is the recipient of at least one nice statement.

**Say** ▶ Now I'm going to give each of you a small bag of rocks, and I want you to say "thank you."

These rocks can remind us of the rocks the Israelites set up to remind them to thank God.

Give each child a bag of rocks, and encourage children to say "thank you."

**Say** ▶ Let's count our rocks.

Help children count to three.

**Say** ▶ These rocks can remind us to thank God for what he does. Since we all have three rocks, let's try to think of three different kinds of things God does for us.

**Ask** ▶ • I gave you a gift of three rocks. What kinds of gifts does God give us?

• You did nice things for each other. What nice things does God do for us?

• You said nice things to each other. What nice things does God say to us?

• What should we say to God for what he does?

**Say** ▶ Let's say it all together to thank God for what he does: Thank you, God!

## \* Thanksgiving Snack

**Ask** ▶ • What does your family do at Thanksgiving?


**Say** ▶ At Thanksgiving, most people thank God and enjoy the gifts he's given us by eating a meal. Many people eat turkey at Thanksgiving. Let's make our own small turkey meals now.

Have children wipe their hands with the hand wipes. Then help them make small turkey sandwiches. They should place a small amount of turkey lunchmeat and a small slice of cheese between two crackers.

**Say** ▶ As you eat your turkey, say one thing you're thankful for. We'll do this to thank God for what he does.

As kids eat their treats, allow each person to say one thing he or she is thankful for.

**ALLERGY ALERT**



Be aware that some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also be sure to read food labels carefully as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.

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cellophane. Show kids how to wrap their potatoes in the cellophane so the ends of the cellophane are gathered at the top. Then distribute pieces of curling ribbon and instruct children to tie their cellophane shut.

Give each child a copy of the instructions for baking potatoes from the "Potato Instructions" handout. Make tape available, and help kids tape the instructions to their cellophane.

**Say** Take these potatoes home and ask a parent to help you prepare it as part of your Thanksgiving meal. When you eat this potato, tell the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. Then remember to thank God for what he does.

If preschoolers do not participate in this activity, make extra potatoes for the "Prayer Pile" activity.



### 3 Let's Pray!

#### The Offering

**Say** One way to thank God is to share what he has given us with others.

**Ask** • Why do you think God wants us to share with others? (Because he wants us to show love; it's the right thing to do; because God is generous.)

• How can we help others by sharing what God has given us? (Giving old clothes to the poor; inviting a less-fortunate friend to dinner.)

**Say** Let's say thank you to God by making a pile with our offerings, just as the Israelites made the pile of stones.

Instruct kids to bring their offerings to the front of the room and make a pile with them.

**Say** We can thank God for what he does.

#### Prayer Pile

You'll need the potatoes from the "Thanksgiving Potatoes" activity.

Set the potatoes where everyone can see them.

**Say** God loves to hear us say thank you for the things he does. Let's tell him some of those things we're thankful for. Think of something you're thankful for that you haven't mentioned yet today. I'll start a sentence, and you finish it by telling God what you're thankful for. As you finish the sentence, take one of these potatoes and set it up here at the front of the room. We'll create a pile of potatoes like the pile of rocks the Israelites made, and we'll get to watch our prayers of thanks "pile up!"



**Let's pray. God, thank you for everything you do. Thank you for...**

Encourage children to finish the sentence and to create a pile of potatoes as they do so.

## *What God Has Done*

**Say** ▶ **As we close our worship time, let's sing "It Is Well With My Soul" again. As we sing, try to sing the song as a prayer, talking to God. I'm going to pause the song a few times so we can tell about great things God has done. So be thinking about what you'd like to share.**

 Sing "It Is Well With My Soul."

As children are singing, pause the music video a few times, and ask them to share what God has done.

**Say** ▶ **We can thank God for what he does. What great things has God done?**

After children have shared and sung, say "amen." Then lead the kids in a celebration of clapping and cheering for God!

As children leave, remind elementary students to take home their potatoes and the rocks they decorated. Remind them to put the rocks where they'll see them often and to thank God every time they see them.

# Potato Instructions

## Baked Potato

If desired, rub the potato with shortening, margarine, or butter.

Prick the potato with a fork.

Wrap the potato in foil.

Bake in a 425-degree oven for 40 to 60 minutes (or in a 350-degree oven for 70 to 80 minutes) or until tender.

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