

LESSON 2

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: [Joshua 3–4](#)

GOD'S BIG STORY: After 40 years in the wilderness, God leads a new generation of His people across the Jordan River and into the promised land, showing that He can make a way through anything.

WORD OF WONDER: God keeps His promises forever. —[from 1 Chronicles 16:15](#)

CURIOSITY

Hands-on activities to spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God

- Play Stations:
 - Impossible Puzzle
 - Stacking Stones
 - Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Impossible Water Challenge
- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder



BELIEF

An interactive dive into Scripture that guides kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder

- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Word of Wonder: [From 1 Chronicles 16:15](#)

FAITH

An intentional conversation that helps kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own

- Circle Time: Stones in the Water
- Craft: Follow God Arrows
- Game: Stepping Stones

IDENTITY

An interactive worship response activity that creates space for God to remind kids that they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder

- Responding in Worship: Promise Stones
- Prayer and Blessing
- Closing Game: Walk This Way

Wonder@Home™

Designed for families to engage in the wonder of God together at home. This resource includes a video, worship playlists, activities, and more! [WONDER@HOME \(PDF\)](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

WORD OF WONDER: From 1 Chronicles 16:15

When I was 20, a debilitating autoimmune disease forced me to consider quitting college. Plagued with aching joints and constant fatigue, my physical condition made it seem unlikely I would graduate at the end of the year. But day by day, God provided all I needed to earn my degree. Understanding professors, helpful friends, and good doctors allowed me to continue.

God prepared the way for Israel to go into the promised land. But even with other signs of God's provision, the 120-mile-long Jordan River still stood as an obvious barrier between the people and the fulfillment of God's promise. God instructed Joshua to have priests, carrying the ark of the covenant, lead the way.

Read Joshua 3:14–17. When the feet of the priests touched the water, the river stopped flowing, just as God had promised. The priests stood in the middle of the river holding the ark while the people crossed on dry ground. A new generation of Israelites watched God hold back the water, just as He had done for their ancestors at the Red Sea.

What obstacles or setbacks have you encountered in your life? How have you seen God make a way through a difficult situation? What is one way you can trust Him more today?

In this life, we will face big obstacles. This story reminds us that God can make a way through anything. We can thank God that all things are possible through Him!

—Suzanne Gosselin

Children's Ministry Volunteer

Contributor to Wonder Ink

READ THIS!

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Joshua is a central in this story. Like Moses, who parted the Red Sea, Joshua is Israel's leader as they experience another water-crossing miracle—crossing the Jordan River on dry ground. After the Israelites crossed, they began to respect Joshua like they had Moses ([Joshua 4:14](#)).

WHAT?

[Joshua 3–4](#) is about God showing the Israelites that He would make the way for them. Just like God parted the Red Sea when their ancestors escaped Egypt, God held back the Jordan River so that the Israelites could get across.

WHERE?

The story takes place at the Jordan River. This river is famous in the Bible as the body of water that Elijah parted with his cloak centuries later ([2 Kings 2:8](#)). It is also where John baptized Jesus ([Mark 1:9–11](#)).

WHEN?

The story takes place immediately after the spies returned from Jericho. They gave Joshua a good report, so Joshua gathered 40,000 Israelite warriors to attack the city. Then the entire nation of Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan on their way to Jericho.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the land God promised them. Over 1,000 years later, Jesus (whose name is the Greek form of Joshua) would be baptized in this same river and will ultimately lead us into God's promised kingdom of heaven.



Curiosity

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Play Stations– you can save this for filling time at the end of class if you want!

WHAT YOU NEED: stones/blocks (variety of shapes and sizes), table, coloring utensils, [Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet](#)

WHAT YOU SAY: Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Play Station: Stacking Stones

Set up: Set out a bin with a variety of stones in different sizes and shapes (some should be flat, if possible).

Play: Invite the kids to stack the stones on the table. See who can build the tallest stack.

2. Play Station: Crossing the Jordan River Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a river.

Declaring God's Wonder

WHAT YOU NEED: Early Childhood Declaration [Slide](#)

Encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

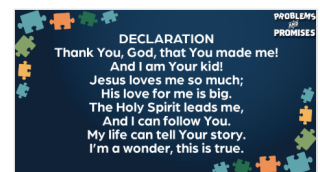
WHAT YOU SAY:

Thank You, God, that You made me! (*Kids repeat words and motions.*)

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (*Kids repeat words and motions.*)

Put your hands on your hips.



Jesus loves me so much; *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story, *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Belief

Guide kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for loving us. We believe that nothing is impossible through Your Holy Spirit! You see our present and future situations, and You promise to be with us always. We invite You to lead us, teach us, and help us to know you better today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

WHAT YOU NEED: Bible, [Bible Story Picture](#)

WHAT YOU SAY:

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week with the kids before the Bible story, to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? *Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.*

God's big story, waiting for me! *Point to yourself.*

Let's start by reading part of God's big story from the Bible. We're going to read from the Old Testament.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided below or read [Joshua 3:5, 7-8, 11-17](#) and [4: 1-3, 5-7](#) from the Bible. You can also show the [Bible Story Picture](#) to give kids a visual depiction as you tell the story.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

WHAT YOU NEED: blue paper or fabric (2 pieces); table; rocks/stones; small box (to represent the ark), [People Cutouts](#)

WHAT YOU DO: Set out the blue paper or fabric on the ground or on a table (where kids can see, if possible) so the two pieces overlap one another. This is the pretend river. Put the 12 rocks/stones in the middle of the blue paper or fabric. Set the small box out too.



WHAT YOU SAY: We're going to use these pictures and the wall to help tell the story. A long time ago, God promised Abraham a big family. Abraham's family was called the Israelites. After many years, the Israelites were almost to Canaan—the special home God promised them.

The book of Joshua tells of how God helped a woman named Rahab in the city of Jericho take care of two Israelite helpers—spies who came to look at the city. Rahab told them, "Everyone here is scared because they know God is helping your people!" The spies went back to Joshua, their leader, and said, "God is getting everything ready for us!" Move the paper cutout people around, as if they're journeying toward the pretend river.

At last, it was time for the Israelites to go to the land God promised them, which we call the promised land. It was time for them to defeat their enemies in the city of Jericho. God prepared the way for His people. But there was one big problem: A huge river called the Jordan River was in the way. Make the paper people cutouts move up to the water and then stop. It was very long and full of fast, deep water. Move the blue paper or fabric so it looks like the water is moving a bit. The people couldn't swim across it, and they couldn't walk around it. It looked like the Israelites were stuck!

Early the next morning, Joshua told everyone, "Get ready! God is going to do something amazing!" Joshua told the priests, or men who helped in God's special place, to pick up the ark of the covenant. Pretend to have the paper people carry the box. The ark was a beautiful, golden box that showed that the presence of God with them.

Joshua told the priests God's instructions. God wanted the priests to walk into the river with the ark. Move the paper cutout people to cross the water. Something amazing happened. As soon as the priests put their feet in the water, the river stopped flowing! Move the two pieces of paper to the sides, so the middle is open. You can ask two kids to hold the papers up like walls of water. The water that was far away piled up like a big wall, and the rest of the water flowed away until the riverbed was dry. If you have a large pretend river, you can invite all the kids to walk across the river with you, then sit down to hear the rest of the story.

God told Joshua to choose 12 men to pick up one big stone each from the riverbed—one stone for each big family of Israel. Choose 12 kids (or only a few kids) to get the 12 stones from the pretend riverbed. They carried the stones to their camp and made a tall pile. Invite the kids to place the stones in a pile.

Joshua said to God's people, "When your children and grandchildren see these stones and ask, 'What are these for?' you can tell them, 'These stones help us remember how God made a way for us through the river!' " That day, everyone knew that God was with them and that nothing was too hard for Him. Move all the paper people to the other side of the river. You can have them cheer and jump up and down with excitement to be across the river.

God made a way for His people to pass through the river and showed that He always keeps His promises.

On that day so long ago, God's people knew that He was with them and that nothing could stop Him. This still reminds us today that no matter what we face, God can make a way through anything.

Watch God's Big Story

Watch the [Crossing the River Jordan God's Big Story](#)! Plus worship is available on the computer.



Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story?** Allow kids to answer freely.

Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the promised land. Many years later, Jesus was baptized in the same river. One day, Jesus will lead us into God's promised kingdom of heaven. God made a way for the Israelites to cross the Jordan River, and through Jesus, He makes the way for us to live with Him forever!

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, gray paper (12 sheets), marker, blue disposable tablecloth covers (2)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Word of Wonder [Slide](#) or [Video](#) (optional)

WORD OF WONDER

God keeps His promises forever.

—from 1 Chronicles 16:15

Ahead of time, write one word of the verse on each sheet of paper (God keeps His promises forever. —from 1 [Chronicles 16:15](#)). Some of the papers will be blank. Set out two blue disposable tablecloths on the ground parallel to one another with a space in the middle. Put the 12 sheets of gray paper on the ground in the middle space. These are the pretend stones in the riverbed.



Display the Word of Wonder [Slide](#) or [Video](#), if using. **Our Word of Wonder for the Problems and Promises series is from 1 Chronicles 16:15: “God keeps His promises forever.”** Encourage the kids to say the verse with you. **God promised long ago to bring His people, the Israelites, into their special home, and in today’s story, He kept His promise and made the way for them to get there through a river. God keeps His promises! That’s what the 12 stones helped them remember. They stacked the stones into a pile.**

Joshua said to God’s people, “These stones help us remember how God made a way for us through the river!” That day, everyone knew that God was with them and that nothing was too hard for Him. We have a pretend riverbed with 12 stones. You’ll walk across the river, and when I call, “Freeze!” whoever is standing on a “stone” with a word on it will bring it to me, and we’ll put them together to say our verse.

Invite the kids to walk through the riverbed between the “walls” of water on either side. Periodically say, “Freeze,” and invite whoever is standing on a paper with words to bring you the paper. If you don’t get all the words the first time, play several rounds until you have them all. Put the papers in order and read the verse to the kids, inviting them to say it with you.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **GOD**—*Point up.*
- **KEEPS**—*Spread your right hand out before you from left to right.*
- **HIS PROMISES**—*Place an index finger on your lips. Move your hand downward and open your palm.*
- **FOREVER**—*Draw large circles in the air with your index finger.*
- **FROM 1 CHRONICLES 16:15**—*Open your hands in front of you, like opening a book.*

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What promise did God make to the Israelites in the part of God’s big story we read today?** *(to bring them to the special land—the promised land)*
- **What promises has God made to us?**



Faith

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Circle Time: Stones in the Water

WHAT YOU NEED: stone/rock, music (can use music on computer in worship room or a leader's phone!)

WHAT YOU SAY: In today's story, we learned about how God led His people across the Jordan River. God told Joshua to choose 12 men to pick up one big stone each from the riverbed—one stone for each big family of Israel. They carried the stones to their camp and made a tall pile. God made a way for His people to pass through the river and showed that He always keeps His promises. Let's use this stone to help us discuss questions about the story.

Have kids sit in a circle and pass around the stone while playing music. Pause the music periodically, and whoever has the stone when the music stops will answer a question. Read one of the questions on the list below. Continue until all questions have been answered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who did God choose to lead the Israelites into the promised land? (*Joshua*)
2. Which river did the Israelites have to cross? (*the Jordan River*)
3. What special item did the priests carry into the river? (*the ark of the covenant*)
4. What happened as soon as the priests stepped into the river? (*The river stopped flowing.*)
5. What did the Israelites put into a pile to remember God's help at the river? (*stones*)
6. Can God make a way through something that seems impossible? Think of one other thing (from the Bible or your life) that God has done.
7. What is one way God has helped you (or your) family through something hard?

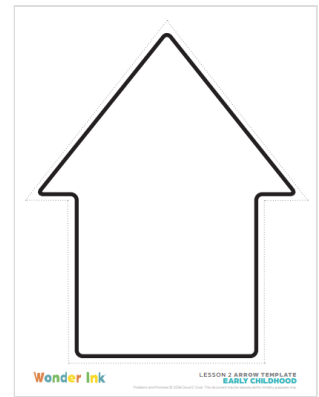
Today we learned how God was always with His people, making a way through what seemed like an impossible situation. Some things feel very hard or impossible for us to handle on our own, but we know God is always with us and helps us get through hard things.

Craft: Follow God Arrows

WHAT YOU NEED: coloring utensils, kid-safe scissors, glue, construction paper (1 sheet per kid), [Arrow Template](#) (1 per kid)

Set out coloring utensils and kid-safe scissors.

WHAT YOU SAY: Each of you has a Follow God arrow. You can draw a picture of yourself following God inside the arrow. When you finish, you can cut out the arrow and take it home. You can hang it up at home to remind you to always trust and follow God.



Invite the kids to draw themselves inside the arrows. Encourage them to be creative as they draw. Some kids may just scribble inside the arrows, and that's OK! The arrow will still remind them to follow God. Help kids cut out their arrows. They can glue the arrows to a sheet of construction paper, or just take the arrows home.

When we don't know where to go or what to do, an arrow can point us to the right way. This arrow reminds us to look to God and trust in Him.

The Israelites followed God to the land He promised. They trusted that God would take care of them. We can follow God and trust Him just like the Israelites did. He will never leave us and will always take care of us. These arrows will remind us that God can make a way through anything.

Game: Stepping Stones

WHAT YOU NEED: blue disposable tablecloth; gray, brown, or black paper (1 sheet per kid); tape. *You're supposed to use the blue tablecloth as a "river," but I think the blue rug in the chapel room will do the trick!*

WHAT YOU DO: Put sheets of gray, brown, & black paper on top of the tablecloth, just far enough apart that kids have to jump a little to get from one to the next, from one side of the river to the other. Tape these down if it seems to slick.

WHAT YOU SAY: What did God tell the Israelites to gather from the riverbed after they made it across the river? Allow the kids time to answer. **Yes, stones! The stones were a reminder of how God made a way for them, even when it seemed impossible.**

We're going to pretend we have to get from one side of the river to the other, and we'll jump on these "stones" to get across. You don't want to fall into the water though, so be careful not to step off the stones. Have kids make a line and, one at a time, try jumping from stone to stone to get across the river. If they step or fall off and land in the "river," have them go back and start again.

Great job getting across the river using the stones. The stones help us remember God's faithfulness to the Israelites when He helped them get across the river to continue to the land God promised them.



Identity

Create space for God to remind kids that they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

Prayer and Blessing

Pray with the kids, and thank God for always going ahead of us and keeping His promises.

God, thank You for Your faithfulness to us. You are always with us and lead us. Thank You for keeping Your promises. You are trustworthy! We thank You for leading us with Your Holy Spirit. Help us follow You and trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you go today knowing that God will be with you, no matter what, leading you through hard times. May you remember He will make a way for you, even when it seems like there is no way.

Bonus Game: Walk This Way (if you need to fill more time!)

SUPPLIES: painter's tape, blindfolds (1 per kid-- we don't have enough for each kid, so they can take turns with what we do have!)

Ahead of time, put small strips of tape all over the floor in an open part of your room. Leave room for kids to walk around the tape, going from one side of the space to the other, without stepping on the tape.

In our story today, the Israelites needed to get across a river to get to their new home. Let's pretend we're walking through a river. We have to be very careful!

Instruct kids to find a partner. Give each pair a blindfold and have them choose who will wear the blindfold and who will be the leader. **One of you will be blindfolded and will hold onto your partner. The partner without the blindfold will lead the way through the pieces of tape, without stepping on any of it. Your goal is to get from one side of the room to the other without stepping on any tape.**

Have kids walk around the pieces of tape, one pair at a time, being careful not to step on any of the tape. When everyone is on the other side, you can let them switch roles and do it again, then collect the blindfolds and have kids sit in a group. **That would have been impossible to do blindfolded on your own and not step on any tape. You had to trust the person leading you, right? The**

Israelites wouldn't have had a chance getting through all the obstacles they came across without God leading them! We'll face many hard things in our lives too, and we can trust that God will always be with us and will help us get through anything that comes our way.