

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

The Promised Land

CROSSING THE JORDAN

Joshua 3-4

Elementary Lesson

Year One, Quarter Three, Lesson Eight

[0330]

AIM: to use the story of Israel crossing the Jordan to teach my students that God always clears the way when we obey

OBJECTS TO HAVE: The word “challenge” written on a card
A picture of a river
A picture of the Ark of the Covenant
A picture of a pile of 12 stones
Your Bible

POINT OF CONTACT: Do you see this word? Can anyone tell me what this word is? That’s right—**challenge**. This word is **challenge**. Do you know what a **challenge** is? A **challenge** is when you have to do something that you do not think you can do.

If you are in school you have to take tests. Some tests are pretty easy; but some tests are a **challenge**. They are difficult, and you do not know if you can pass them or not.

At your house your parents ask you to do some jobs for them. I’m sure that some jobs are easy, like taking out the garbage. But I’m sure that sometimes your mom or dad asks you to do a job that is a **challenge** to you—you do not know whether you can do it or not.

If you play sports you have to face new **challenges**. Catching a ball when somebody throws it to you seems easy now; but the first time you did it, it was a **challenge** to you. Hitting a ball with a bat may seem easy to you; but the first time you did it, it was a **challenge** to you.

As long as you live you are going to face brand new **challenges**; but did you know that every **challenge** that is RIGHT to conquer, you CAN conquer? Today I am going to tell you how to conquer every **challenge** that you face.

STORY: The children of Israel were ready to enter the Promised Land. They had spent 40 years in the wilderness getting ready for this day. They had said goodbye to Moses, their leader, and God had raised up a new leader, Joshua. They had sent spies into the city of Jericho to help them know how to prepare. Now they were ready to start the battles that would give them the Promised Land once and for all.

But before they could begin to fight those battles there was a great **challenge** that they must face: the entire nation of Israel had to cross the mighty Jordan River. The Jordan River was both deep and wide, and at this time of year it was overflowing its banks, so that it was even more difficult to cross. And they could not just cross over one at a time, for there were millions of them, and they had to carry their children, their animals, and all of their belongings with them. How were they going to face this great **challenge**?

God gave Joshua, the man that He had appointed as the leader of the people, a plan for how they were going to do it. Joshua sent his men all through the camp of Israel, to make sure everybody could hear what God’s plan was. Here was the plan: The priests of Israel would pick up the Ark of the Covenant. (The Ark of the Covenant was the place where God came to meet with His people. The Ark of the Covenant carried the *presence of God*.) The priests would carry the Ark of the Covenant ahead of all of the people. They would walk right down to the banks of the Jordan River, and they would step into the water of the Jordan River. As soon as they stepped into the water, the water would stop flowing down, and would part. While the priests stood in the middle of the riverbed holding the Ark, all of the people of Israel would cross over to the other side. When everyone had passed over to the other side of Jordan, then one man from each tribe of Israel would go back into the river and pick up a large

stone. Those twelve men would carry those twelve stones over to where the people were standing. Each man would put the stone down and the twelve stones would make a pile. That pile would let everybody know for years to come that this was where the children of Israel crossed the river. Then the priests would carry the Ark out of the riverbed, and the waters would close back up.

Doesn't this sound like a crazy plan? The people of Israel might have wondered, "Is this really going to work? Is the mighty Jordan River really going to part?" But before that day was over, it happened exactly as Joshua had planned. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the crowd; as soon as the priests' feet stepped into the water, the water parted; as the priests stood there holding the Ark, the people crossed over the Jordan until everyone was on the other side; then 12 men of Israel took stones out of the riverbed to mark the place where God parted the Jordan River; and when the priests stepped out of the river the water closed back up. God had done a great miracle that day! Now the people were ready to take the Promised Land as their own land.

How did the children of Israel face this great challenge? They followed four simple steps. These same four steps will help you to conquer every challenge that you face.

First, they followed the instructions of their leader. They listened carefully. They did not say, "I have a better idea." They listened to the instructions, and then they did exactly as they were told. God has put some leaders in your life. He has put them there for your benefit. He has put them there to guide you, and to show you the right way to go. God has put your parents in your life to lead you in the right direction. God has put your pastor in your life to lead you in the right direction. God has put teachers in your life to lead you in the right direction. It is very important that you listen carefully to the leaders that God has put in your life, and that you follow their instructions.

Second, they trusted the presence of God. They said, "We are only going to go where the Ark of the Covenant goes." The Ark of the Covenant is where God met with His people. It carried God's presence with the people. They knew that, as long as they followed God's presence, they would be fine. One reason we do not win in the challenges we face is that we do not trust God's presence. We try to do things our own way. We think we can do things without reading the Bible, without praying, without going to church, without surrendering to the Holy Spirit; but we cannot. In order to face every challenge, you must have God's presence with you.

Third, they obeyed God. Obedience is the key to success. Say that with me. You will never succeed in life if you do not learn to obey. If you learn to obey the rules, some day you will make the rules. God blesses obedient people. He blesses rule-keepers. God blesses people who say, "I want to do what is required of me, what is expected of me." God will not bless a rule breaker

Fourth, they remembered what God had done for them. That is why they used those stones to build a memorial. They wanted to be sure that they would never forget what God has done for them that day. Remembering what God does for you will help you in two big ways: first, it will remind you to trust God next time; and second, it will remind you that if God could help you overcome the OLD challenge, He can help you overcome the NEW challenge.

You will face many challenges in your life, many "Jordan Rivers;" but if you trust and obey God, and follow His instructions, you can conquer every challenge that you face. The children of Israel had many great battles ahead, but after they saw God part the Jordan River for them, they knew that God could take them through, no matter what the challenge.

Let's learn our memory verse. **Philippians 4:13** – *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

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Joshua 3-4

Teen and Adult Lesson

Year One, Quarter Three, Lesson Eight

[0330]

Teacher, choose one of the following truths to expand upon in teaching this portion of Scripture to your teen/adult class. Teach and apply the truth that you choose using statements and illustrations that are most helpful and applicable to your students.

- I. **TO PROCEED IN OBEDIENCE OFTEN REQUIRES US TO TAKE A STEP OF FAITH.** Faith is always a matter of obedience. A step of faith is not a random leap into the unknown. It is continuing to follow the clear path of obedience, as laid out in God's Word, even when proceeding in obedience looks impossible. When you are living a lifestyle of obedience, you will come to places where your obedience requires you to rely totally upon God, and not on circumstances.
- II. **THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A NEW GOAL IS ALWAYS A STEP OF FAITH.** So often, the first step towards some new level of achievement is the most difficult, the scariest. And it is always a step of faith, because it is a step into the unknown. It is a new experience, with new challenges. Your past experiences assure you that, just as God was with you before, He will be with you again. And the more God uses you, the more He will require you to step into places where you have never been.
- III. **A STEP OF FAITH IS ALWAYS BASED IN GOD'S WORD.** When I say, "I'm taking a step of faith," and you ask, "What is your Bible basis for your step of faith," I ought to be able to give you a Bible answer. When you think you are stepping out in faith, take the time to study the Scriptures, and know for sure that your actions are based in Bible principle. The expression "leap of faith" is not a Bible expression, and it implies that you are taking a blind leap, hoping for the best. But walking in faith, which IS a Bible expression, is not a blind leap that hopes for the best, it is taking every step as a step of obedience to God's Word, which is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Psalm 119:105.
- IV. **WHEN WE STEP OUT IN FAITH, GOD WILL MAKE A WAY.** God parted the waters for Israel when they stepped out in faith. The priests' step of faith was to put their feet in the water; the peoples' step of faith was to line up behind the priests before the water was parted. God honored their faith by making a path for them that led to the Promised Land.
- V. **WE SHOULD COMMEMORATE GOD'S VICTORIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.** After they had crossed the Jordan, they build two memorials for future generations to see. It is important that those who come after us see and hear a testimony of what God did for us, so they will have the faith to see God do what they need Him to do in their generations.

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3-4

[0330]

God Parts the Jordan River for His People

I. JOSHUA 3:1-6 INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PEOPLE

Key verses: 2-3

→ *The officers instruct the people to follow the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant*

II. JOSHUA 3:7-17 AUTHORITY FOR JOSHUA

Key verse: 7

→ *God uses the miracle of the parting waters to give credibility to His leader, Joshua*

III. JOSHUA 4:1-10 PREPARING TWO MEMORIALS AS THEY CROSS

Key verses: 8-9

→ *They put one memorial on land for future generations to see; Joshua buries a second memorial in the water*

IV. JOSHUA 4:11-19 THE WATERS OF THE JORDAN CLOSE

Key verse: 18

→ *When everyone had crossed over, God closed up the water behind them*

V. JOSHUA 4:20-24 THE MEMORIAL DEDICATED

Key verses: 21-22

→ *Joshua instructed the people to never let their children forget what God had done that day*

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

PHILLIPIANS 4:13

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Unscramble these key words and phrases from today's Bible lesson.

NIDLERCH FO

ERASIL

TROFY ERASY

LESSENDRIW

DIREPOSM DALN

HOUSAJ

ROJAND REVRI

KAR FO HET

TONECVAN

TWERA TERPAD

LEVEWT SNEOTS

LIMRACE

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

PHILLIPIANS 4:13

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The answers to today's puzzle

NIDLERCH FO ERASIL CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

TROFY ERASY FORTY YEARS

LESSENDRIW WILDERNESS

DIREPOSM DALN PROMISED LAND

HOUSAJ JOSHUA

ROJAND REVRI JORDAN RIVER

KAR FO HET TONECVAN ARK OF THE COVENANT

TWERA TERPAD WATER PARTED

LEVEWT SNEOTS TWELVE STONES

LIMRACE MIRACLE