

September 20, 2026-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: He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations. —1 Chronicles 16:15

CURIOSITY Large Group or Small Group

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

- Welcome Question: What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- Curiosity Questions
- Preteen Interactive Game: That Doesn’t Seem Possible!
- Declaring God’s Wonder



BELIEF Large Group

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: Hear It, Watch It, Experience It!
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God’s Wonder

FAITH Small Group

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

- Word of Wonder Activity
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time

IDENTITY Large Group or Small Group

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: “Remember When” Rocks
- Blessing Your Kids

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 \(PDF\)](#)

Wonder Ink

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: [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

LESSON 2 **FOR LEADERS**

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Joshua is a central figure 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.

Large Group or Small Group

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Can Make a Way Through Anything

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 3–4

WORD OF WONDER: 1 Chronicles 16:15

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Write the following question on a whiteboard: “What is the hardest thing you have ever done?” Set out paper and coloring utensils.

As kids arrive ...

Greet each kid by name. Introduce kids to one another, pairing new kids with friendly regulars to help them feel welcome. Read the Welcome Question aloud to younger kids and help them get started by suggesting examples of hard things, such as running a mile or finishing a big school project. Invite kids to draw their answers, if they prefer.

At your start time ...

Welcome the whole group and invite a couple of kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **What is the hardest thing you have ever done?** As time allows, invite all the kids to share their answers with a neighbor.

Today we'll hear about a time when the Israelites faced something so hard it seemed impossible to overcome, but God made a way for them to get through it! But first, it's time to be curious!

Curiosity Questions

Ask the following “I’m curious” questions. Say, “I’m curious ...” before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one.

I'm curious ...

- **How do you feel after doing something really hard?**
- **Has anyone ever helped you overcome a hard challenge? Tell us about it.**

Elementary STEM Activity: Colorful Breakthrough!

SUPPLIES: large clear jar, water, cooking oil, table, food coloring, cover for jar (optional), lab coats (3, optional), safety glasses (3 pairs, optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Colorful Breakthrough! Slide](#), [Jordan Wonder Truth Slide](#)

Make It Inclusive: Kids who are especially energetic, such as those with ADHD, often thrive when they get to help demonstrate STEM experiments. Keep this in mind when choosing two kids to be lab assistants.

Ahead of time, gather your supplies and set the jar, water, and oil on a table at the front of the room. Set the food coloring nearby but out of sight. You'll need enough water to fill about two-thirds of the jar and enough cooking oil to form a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch layer on top of the water. (Don't pour the water or oil into the jar ahead of time.) You'll need several drops of food coloring, either one color or multiple colors.

Display the [Colorful Breakthrough! Slide](#) and gather the kids so they can see the table at the front. **Let's get started today by doing a science activity! First, I need two lab assistants.** Select two willing kids and invite them to stand next to you at the table. If you have lab coats and/or safety glasses, put them on and have your lab assistants do the same. Go through the following steps one by one, inviting your lab assistants to help you with each step:



1. Pour water into the jar until it's about two-thirds full.
2. Carefully pour a small amount of cooking oil on top of the water until it forms a layer about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick.



There's now a layer of oil separating us from the water underneath. How do you think we can break through to the water without sticking our fingers in the jar? Invite kids to share their ideas. Try as many of their ideas as you can that are feasible. For example, if they suggest shaking the jar, gently shake the jar. (If you have a cover for the jar, cover it and shake the contents more vigorously.) No matter what you do, the oil should eventually settle back into a layer on top of the water. Take out the food coloring and hold it up for kids to see. Then do the next step with the help of your lab assistants:

3. Drop several drops of food coloring into the jar and watch closely.

Eventually, the drops of food coloring will make their way through the oil and burst into the water below. (This might take a little time, depending on how thick the oil layer is.)



Wow! What just happened? Invite kids to respond freely. **Yes, oil and water don't like to mix, and since food coloring mixes with water and is heavier than oil, it sinks through the oil to reach the water. The food coloring made its way straight through the oil! In God's big story today, we'll hear about how God made a way through the Jordan River so His people could enter the promised land!** Display the [Jordan Wonder Truth Slide](#). Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING**.



Preteen Interactive Game: That Doesn't Seem Possible!

SUPPLIES: beanbag or tennis ball

Invite kids to form a circle and sit down. **We're going to play a game called That Doesn't Seem Possible! On the screen, you'll see a brainteaser. As you discuss the answer, you'll pass a beanbag (or tennis ball) around the circle. Does that sound easy? Allow kids to respond. It might not be as easy as it sounds because I'm going to give you some challenges to complete as you pass the beanbag.**

Then, as kids discuss the answer together, challenge them to pass the beanbag or tennis ball around the circle using only their elbows. Once they have one or more answers, reveal the answer. Go through all six brainteasers and their corresponding answers.

Each time you give kids the next brainteaser to discuss, also give them a new challenging way to pass the beanbag/ball. Here are some challenges to choose from: Pass the beanbag/ball by holding it between their feet (they must be seated on the floor to do this safely), pass it while holding it with only one finger of each hand, or pass it by balancing it on the back of one hand.

For your reference, these are the brainteasers:

1. [What is yours but mostly used by others?](#) (*your name*)
2. [What goes up but never comes down?](#) (*your age*)
3. [What's bright and orange with green on top and sounds like *parrot*?](#) (*a carrot*)
4. [Which question can you never answer yes to?](#) (*Are you asleep?*)
5. [I'm light as a feather, yet the strongest person can't hold me for five minutes. What am I?](#) (*your breath*)
6. [We went through a river, but our feet walked on dry ground. Who are we?](#) (*the Israelites*)

Wow! Those questions were challenging, and at first, a solution didn't seem possible.

It can be difficult for our brains to imagine solutions to different problems. We're limited by what we think we know or have already accomplished. Fortunately, God knows no limits, and He can solve any challenge. Display the [Jordan Wonder Truth Slide](#). Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CAN MAKE A WAY THROUGH ANYTHING**.

Declaring God's Wonder

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

No matter what hard thing I face, (Kids repeat.)

You can make a way through it. (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Belief

Large Group

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

Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **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

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Explain that today's story picks up in the third chapter of the book of Joshua as the Israelites are preparing to cross the Jordan River and enter the good land God had promised them. Invite kids to find Joshua chapter 3 in their Bibles.

Invite kids to put one finger on the big chapter number "3" in their Bibles as you read [Joshua 3:5, 7–8, 11–17](#) and [4:1–3, 5–7](#) aloud.

In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

Is there any part of this story that made you think, "That's not possible"? Help your group to recall the various details of the story and spot God's hand in the details.

Imagine that you're one of the priests selected to carry the ark. How would you feel about being asked to go first and stand in the middle of the river? Allow kids time to imagine standing at the edge of the river. Reassure kids that there is no right or wrong answer. Encourage them to share their initial responses.



Faith

Small Group

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

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations.

—1 Chronicles 16:15 (NIV)

SUPPLIES: Bible

Our Word of Wonder for the Problems and Promises series reminds us that God remembers His promises and is faithful to keep them! Let's say the verse together now. Open your Bible to [1 Chronicles 16:15](#). Read [1 Chronicles 16:15](#) several times together.

Gather your group in a circle. **Setting Scripture to a familiar tune can help us memorize it, so let's do that with our Word of Wonder!** Invite kids to sing [1 Chronicles 16:15](#) together to the tune of "Frère Jacques" (also known as "Are You Sleeping?"). Start by inviting kids to repeat after you. Once they have it down, see if they can take the lead with you repeating after them. Replace the traditional lines with Scripture as follows:

[1 Chronicles 16:15 Song NIV:](#)

He remembers (Are you sleeping?)

He remembers (Are you sleeping?)

His covenant forever (Brother John)

His covenant forever (Brother John)

The promise he made (Morning bells are ringing)

The promise he made (Morning bells are ringing)

For a thousand generations (Ding dong ding)

For a thousand generations (Ding dong ding)

Leader Tip: For Preteens. Once your kids have mastered this verse, consider having them sing it in a round for an extra challenge. Or, as another challenge, invite them to put the verse to a different familiar tune.

Elementary Questions

Notice (allow the kids to process what they heard):

- **What do you see in the passage? What stands out?**
- **When the Israelites came to the Jordan River, what was on the other side?** *(the land God had promised—Canaan and the city of Jericho)*
- **What happened as soon as the priests put their feet into the water?** *(The water piled up in a heap far down the river; the river stopped flowing.)*

Wonder (FIRST allow kids to ask questions of the passage):

- **The river that separated the Israelites from their new home was over 120 miles long and very deep. How do you imagine the Israelites felt when they first saw the river? How would you have reacted?**
- **How many stones did God ask the Israelites to gather from the riverbed? (12) Why this number?** *(one stone for each of the 12 tribes, or families, of Israel)*

Connecting (kids need to make connection)

- **What does this show us about God or faith?**
- **What is something hard you've experienced? How has God helped you get through that hard thing?**

God's people wanted to enter the land God had promised as their new home! But the sight of the deep, overflowing river in their way was probably quite scary! We aren't trying to cross the Jordan River, but all of us experience hard things in life. Let's talk with God in prayer and ask Him to remind us that He can make a way through anything.

Leader Tip: Sadly, some kids may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or other trauma. While God can make a way through hard situations, what matters most is that kids know God loves them and is with them in the hard things—and that God is not OK with anyone hurting them. If you suspect abuse, share your concerns with your ministry leader right away.

Preteen Questions

Notice (allow the kids to process what they heard):

- **What do you see in the passage? What stands out?**

- **When the Israelites came to the Jordan River, what was on the other side?** *(the land God had promised—Canaan and the city of Jericho)*
- **What did God ask the priests to carry into the river? What was significant about what they carried?** *(the ark of the covenant, which was a wooden box covered in gold that represented the presence of God on the earth)*
- **What happened when the priests' feet touched the water?** *(The water piled up in a heap far down the river; the river stopped flowing.)* **Do you think the priests' feet caused this to happen or something else? Explain.**

Wonder (FIRST allow kids to ask questions of the passage):

- **The river that separated the Israelites from their new home was over 120 miles long and very deep. How do you imagine the Israelites felt when they first saw the river? How would you have reacted?**
- **How many stones did God ask the Israelites to gather from the riverbed? (12) Why this number?** *(one stone for each of the 12 tribes, or families, of Israel)*

Connecting (kids need to make connection)

- **What does this show us about God or faith?**
- **How has God made a way through something difficult in your life? What is something you can do to help remember what God did?**
- **What's a challenge you're facing now?**

All of us face challenges in life! As Jesus-followers, we also know that God will never leave us. He will always be with us in the challenges and will make us stronger through them! Let's talk with God in prayer and ask Him to remind us that He can make a way through anything.

Leader Tip: Sadly, some kids may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or other trauma. While God can make a way through hard situations, what matters most is that kids know God loves them and is with them in the hard things—and that God is not OK with anyone hurting them. If you suspect abuse, share your concerns with your ministry leader right away.

Small Group Prayer Time

Remind the kids in your group that, just like God was with the Israelites when they crossed the river, God is with them, and He is always listening. Invite them to share any prayer requests and challenges they're facing. Ask if anyone would like to pray aloud for the group. Close this prayer time by thanking God that He can make a way through anything.



Identity

Small Group

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

Responding in Worship: "Remember When" Rocks

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Problems and Promises Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, prepare the supplies. You'll need one river rock for each kid and paint markers. Consider covering a table with disposable tablecloths. Include paint markers and paper towels at the station. During this worship response, kids will add pictures, words, or symbols over the base layer using acrylic paint. If it's not possible for kids to paint their rocks at the start of the lesson, they'll simply paint pictures, words, or symbols directly onto the rock during this activity.

Display the [Remember When Rocks Slide](#) and gather kids. **Today in God's big story, God asked the Israelites to gather 12 stones from the middle of the river. When they reached the other side of the river, they set up the 12 stones at the place they camped. Why do you think they did this?** Pause for responses. **Yes! God wanted the Israelites and their future children to remember how God made a way for His people through the Jordan River. Every time the people saw the 12 stones, they would say, "Remember when ..." and tell the story of how God brought them through the river on dry ground! Let's create our own "Remember When" rocks to help us remember what God has done in our lives and that He can make a way through anything.**

Set out painting supplies and river rocks (if they're not already out) and invite kids to paint a picture, words, or symbols to represent a time in their lives when God led them through a difficult situation. They they can paint directly onto the rock's surface.

To help kids get started, encourage them to think quietly about the following questions. You might also share an age-appropriate example from your own life of when God helped you through something difficult:

- **What is something difficult you've experienced?**
- **How did God help you get through this time? Or if you're currently in a hard situation, how is God helping you?**
- **What is a picture, word, or symbol that could represent what God has done for you?**

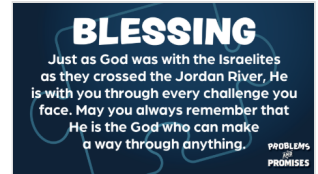
Invite kids to paint their rocks as a reminder of what God has done. Consider playing the song "All Through History" or "Way Maker" from the [Problems and Promises Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids paint.

Once finished, invite kids to take turns sharing their rocks with the group. They can start by saying, "Remember when ..." and then tell about what God has done for them. Encourage them to take their rocks home and to share them with friends and family. When talking with others, kids can start with the words "Remember when ..." and tell about what God has done!

Blessing Your Kids

Wonder Ink **RESOURCES:** [Jordan Blessing Slide](#)

Display the [Jordan Blessing Slide](#). Speak this blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. If you bless kids individually, insert each name into the blessing.



Blessing: Just as God was with the Israelites as they crossed the Jordan River, He is with you through every challenge you face. May you always remember that He is the God who can make a way through anything.

GAME 2: STONES ACROSS THE RIVER

SUPPLIES: painter's tape, paper wads (12 per team), baskets or bowls (2 per team)

Ahead of time, use painter's tape to mark parallel lines on the floor as far apart as you can get them (to make a big "river" in the middle). Set out a basket or bowl on each side of the river for every team of 4–6 kids.

**Works well with the
Crossing the Jordan
River lesson!**

In this game, kids will compete in a relay race to get 12 stones across a pretend river. Create equal teams. Put 12 paper wads (pretend stones) in each team's basket or bowl on the side of the river that the kids will start on. Have the teams line up behind their basket or bowl.

You're going to work together as a team to get all 12 stones to the other side of the river. You can only take one stone at a time across the river. When you get to the other side, drop it into your team's basket (or bowl) and run back to tag the next person in line, who will do the same thing. Keep going until all 12 stones are on the other side of the river. It sounds easy ... but I'll be calling out instructions with different ways to move through the river to get across it, so listen carefully and do what I say! When the teams are ready, say, "Go," and let them start moving the stones across the river. As they play, call out the following instructions for ways to move across the river, changing it up as frequently as you want:

- Jumping
- Skipping
- Slow motion
- Marching
- High knees
- Jumping jacks
- Crawling
- Wheelbarrow (2 people working together; one on hands while the partner holds his feet)
- Linking elbows with a partner
- Walking backwards
- Dancing
- Spinning
- Tiptoeing

Was it more challenging to get the stones across the river when you had to move in different ways? No matter what challenges we come up against, we can trust God to be with us. We're learning today about how God was with His people when they crossed a river and how He made a way for them. They used stones from the river to help them always remember what God did for them and how God made a way through anything.