



## LESSON 6

*God reveals His might at the Jordan*

JOSHUA 3:1-5:1



**God reminds us He is powerful and able to keep His promises.**



***“So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever” (Josh 4:24).***

## Supporting Truths

1. God is powerful.
2. God uses His power to help His people.
3. God’s power should cause us to fear Him.
4. We must remember God’s power.
5. Godly leaders obey God’s instructions.

## Objectives

1. Describe how God stopped the Jordan River.
2. Explain how hard it would have been for Israel to cross the Jordan on their own.
3. Recite the key verse (Josh 4:24).
4. Describe the memorial and its purpose.
5. Describe Joshua’s obedience.



# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

*God reveals His might at the Jordan • Joshua 3:1–5:1*



## Lesson Summary

God could have provided a normal crossing of the Jordan, but He chose to lead Israel across the tangled flood plain during the middle of flood season so that they could clearly see God's power at work. By damming up the Jordan and bringing His people across, God also struck fear into the hearts of the Canaanites. After the crossing, Israel followed God's instructions and built a memorial to remember His mighty power.

## Spotlight on the Gospel

The God who brought the people across the Red Sea is the same God who led them across the Jordan River. We can trust the gospel because God keeps His promises. Just as God displayed great power when He led Israel into their promised land, so Christ displays great power when He leads believers into the kingdom of God (Col 1:13). In response, Christians, like the Israelites, should remember Christ's matchless power, and thus they should fear Him and obey Him.

LAST WEEK



**God approves  
Rahab's faith**  
*Joshua 2:1–24*

THIS WEEK



**God reveals His might  
at the Jordan**  
*Joshua 3:1–5:1*

NEXT WEEK



**God gives Jericho  
to Israel**  
*Joshua 5:13–6:27*

POSSESSION

## Lesson Commentary

### *God reminds us He is powerful and able to keep His promises.*

God had called Joshua to be Israel's new leader and provided His promises, presence, and law as the foundation for Joshua's leadership (Josh 1:1–9). Then by the words and example of Rahab, God had strengthened Joshua to lead with courageous faith (Josh 2). Now, the time had come to cross the Jordan River and enter the land. God chose to make this crossing a miracle for all Israel to see and remember forever.

This story utilizes lots of repetition. However, there is purpose in the way the story is told. The repetition emphasizes the role of the ark and the importance of the memorial. The ark, a symbol of God's presence, was evidence that God would accompany His people into the land. The memorial, a testament to God's power, would instruct future generations to fear Israel's great God. Also, the story jumps back and forth between various characters involved—God, Joshua, the priests, the 12 men, and the whole nation—adding more of the story each time. Together, it paints a picture of a spectacular miracle designed to cause Israel to fear the LORD and trust in His *omnipotence*, that is, His *power over all things*.

### God prepared Israel to learn from the miracle at the Jordan River (3:1–13)

Before performing the miracle of the Jordan, God made sure that Israel would have the right perspective. The ark of the covenant was to lead the way (3:3). But the people were to follow at a distance. This was appropriate in light of God's holiness (Exod 19:10–25). But the main purpose for the distance in this case was so that the people could see the way (Josh 3:4). God wanted them to have a good view of what He was about to do. Also, as at Mt Sinai (Exod 19:10–15), the people were to consecrate themselves, so that they would be ready to see the great wonder God was about to do (Josh 3:5). This is an important principle: if we are to see God's hand at work in our lives, we must be prepared to see it.

One of God's purposes in displaying His power at the

Jordan was to confirm Joshua's leadership (3:7). When the people saw God working through Joshua as He had worked through Moses, they had confidence in Joshua's leadership (4:14). This confidence would be crucial in the battles to come. Also, when Joshua gained that respect, he knew it was not because of himself, but because God was with him.

A second reason God displayed His power at the Jordan was so that Israel would know that the "living God" was present with them (3:10). If He could defeat the raging river, He could also defeat their enemies in the land. Like the parting of the Red Sea, drying up the Jordan was proof that God was not like the local idols (3:13; Exod 15:8; Ps 78:13). He was "Lord of all the earth" (Josh 3:11; Ps 24:1–2). The God who had brought them safely out of Egypt was the same God who would lead them safely across the Jordan. This extraordinary display of God's power would fortify God's people as they crossed the Jordan and began to wage war with the many nations that inhabited the land.

### God miraculously stopped the Jordan River (3:14–17; 4:10–18)

The plan was now put in motion. The priests approached the river until their feet touched the edge of the water (Josh 3:14–15). Just then, as we anticipate what will happen, a detail interrupts the story: it was harvest time, the time when the Jordan floods its banks (3:15).

Normally the Jordan River is about 90 to 100 feet wide and 3 to 10 feet deep, but during the flood stage it can be a mile wide and flowing swiftly. In addition, the flood zone of the Jordan was overgrown with a dense thicket that was difficult to travel through. While this was not impossible for a couple warriors like the spies to cross, a nation of people—men, women, children, animals, and possessions—would have had a very difficult time crossing at such a place during the flood season.

So it was all the more remarkable when, at exactly the moment the priests' feet met the edge of the

#### THINK ABOUT IT

If we are to worship God, we must come to Him prepared to worship.



# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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## THINK ABOUT IT

Why interrupt the story for this detail? To highlight the incredible nature of the miracle God was about to perform.

flooded river, the river was held back in a heap near the town of Adam, about 15 miles to the north (3:16). By piling up the water in a heap and allowing Israel to cross on dry ground, God was intending to recall the miracle of the Red Sea

(Exod 14:16; 15:8). As soon as the priests came out of the riverbed, the Jordan rushed back and overflowed its banks as before (Josh 4:14–18).

## God instructed Israel to remember the lessons from the Jordan River (4:1–9, 19–24; 5:1)

Before the story of the crossing ends, it seems like it is interrupted again, this time by a long description of 12 men, one from each tribe, gathering 12 stones from the place in the Jordan where the priests were standing (4:1–9). But this description is placed here to give it central importance. God's display of power at the Jordan was not just a way to get Israel across the river; it was to be remembered by Israel for all generations as an example of what God can do for His people (4:6–7).

Joshua's obedience is carefully recorded (4:8–9), showing that obedience to God's word is essential for spiritual leadership (1 Cor 4:1–2). He actually built two memorials; one in the river and one at their camp after crossing.

The building of the memorial is

brought up again in the conclusion of the story, highlighting the importance of remembering what God had done. The Israelites who had crossed the Jordan did not experience the crossing of the Red Sea; or if they did, it was just a faint childhood memory. Now they had their own experience of God's great power (Josh 4:23), and by building a memorial in the land they would live in, their descendants for generations to come could return to the memorial and hear of this great demonstration of God's miraculous power (4:19–22).

As Israel remembered the powerful way God brought them into their inheritance, they were to respond by fearing the LORD—respecting, worshiping, and standing in awe of God (4:24). In the same way, Christians are to fear God when they remember the great power of God in redeeming them from sin and welcoming them into God's kingdom (Col 1:13).

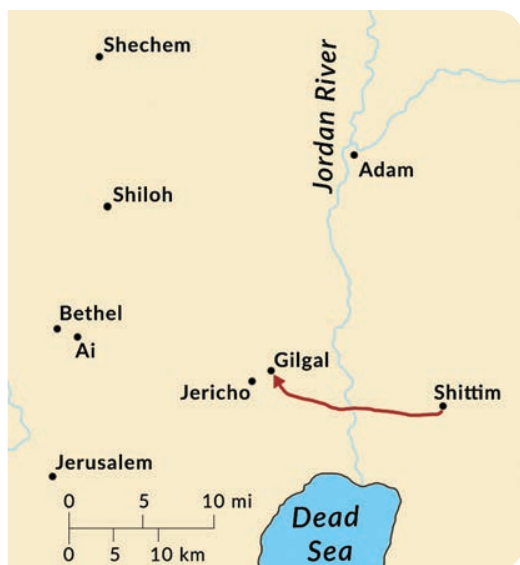
God has freed Christians from Satan's kingdom, "the domain of darkness," and transferred them to "the kingdom of his beloved Son." He has accomplished this through Jesus Christ, who has freed Christians from slavery to sin through His payment for sin on the cross.

God achieved one final purpose by bringing Israel across the Jordan on dry ground. He caused the Canaanites to lose their courage (Josh 5:1). Even a large, well-equipped army cannot fight well if they do not think they can win. As Rahab had reported earlier (2:9), God was already winning the battle in the hearts of the Canaanite warriors.

This should give all believers courage. When we face foes, whether physical or spiritual, who tempt us or oppose our desire to carry out God's will, we need not fear (Rom 8:38–39). We need not despair or think that we will fail. If God is for us, who can be against us (Rom 8:31)? Nothing—not even our own flesh and weakness—can separate us from God's powerful love.

## THINK ABOUT IT

Israel's memorial reminds us that God is still faithful to save those who trust in Him.



# Lesson Outline

*God reminds us He is powerful and able to keep His promises.*

## AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God wanted to show Israel His great power (3:1–13).
2. God stopped the Jordan River (3:14–17; 4:10–18).
3. God wanted Israel to remember His power forever (4:1–9, 19–24).
4. Israel's enemies were afraid of God's power (5:1).

## AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God prepared Israel to learn important lessons at the Jordan River (3:1–13).
  - God prepared Israel to see His work (3:1–6).
  - God prepared Joshua to see how God would strengthen his leadership (3:7–9; 4:14).
  - God prepared Israel to see proof of God's power (3:10–13).
2. God miraculously stopped the Jordan River (3:14–17; 4:10–18).
  - The priests came to the river and their feet touched the edge (3:14–15).
  - It was the most difficult time to cross the river (3:15).
  - The waters rose up in one heap (3:16).
  - The priests stood in the middle on dry ground (3:17).
  - The whole nation of Israel crossed over (3:17; 4:10–13).
  - As soon as the priests came out of the river, it overflowed again (4:14–18).
3. God instructed Israel to remember the lessons from the Jordan River (4:1–9, 19–24; 5:1).
  - God told Joshua to build a memorial out of 12 stones from the Jordan (4:1–5).
  - The memorial was to be a reminder of how God dried up the Jordan (4:6–7).
  - Joshua obeyed and built the memorial (4:8–9, 19–22).
  - The memorial reminded Israel to fear the LORD because He is mighty (4:23–24).
  - The Canaanites were afraid when they heard of the crossing (5:1).



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

*God reveals His might at the Jordan • Joshua 3:1–5:1*



## Lesson Questions

*Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.*



### Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Who went into the Jordan River first?**  
The priests, carrying the ark of the covenant.
- 2. What happened when the priests' feet touched the edge of the river?**  
The river stood up in a heap near Adam.
- 3. What did the people do after they crossed the river?**  
They built a memorial out of 12 stones.
- 4. What were the people supposed to remember?**  
God's great power.



### Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the priests carry in front of all the people?**  
The priests carried the ark of the covenant, which represented God's presence.
- 2. What did God want Israel to see?**  
He wanted them to see that the God of heaven and earth was with them.
- 3. What did God plan to do for Joshua?**  
God planned to give Joshua the trust and respect of the people.
- 4. What was unusual about the Jordan River at this time of year?**  
It was harvest time, which was the time when the Jordan River flooded its banks.
- 5. As Israel was crossing the river, what did they take from the middle of the river?**  
Twelve men (one from each tribe) took twelve stones to build a memorial.
- 6. Did Joshua obey God's instructions?**  
Yes. He built not just one memorial, but two.
- 7. What happened as soon as the priests came out of the river?**  
As soon as they stepped out of the river, the water returned and flooded the banks as before.
- 8. What did God's power cause Israel and the Canaanites to think?**  
It caused Israel to fear Him, and it caused the Canaanites to lose their confidence.



# Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

## MEMORIALS

Bring in birthday related items and show them to the class (a wrapped present, candles, party favors, etc.). Explain that on your birthday each year, you probably have a party with a birthday cake and candles in memory of the day of your birth. This celebration is a “memorial”. A memorial reminds people of an important event, person, or belief. In our lesson today, Israel will build a memorial remembering God bringing them through the Jordan River to the promised land.

## CROSS OVER

Near the entrance to the classroom, make a river for the children to cross as they come to class. You can make the river using long strips of blue cellophane or plastic wrap and the river banks by using brown wrapping paper or wadded up paper bags. Tell the children that in today's lesson, they will learn how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to enter the promised land. During the lesson, refer to the children's crossing. Did they jump over or walk across? God had a special way for the Israelites to cross that would demonstrate His power.



ILLUSTRATE

## RIVER SCENE

**Materials:** brown paper bags, newspaper, materials for river (see below), cardboard box, broom handles or wrapping-paper tubes, paint, cardboard, tape or glue.

**Directions:** Act out the crossing of the Jordan River with the class. To prepare, build an ark using a cardboard box and two long wrapping-paper tubes or broom handles. This can be painted. Turning brown grocery bags inside out and stuffing crushed newspaper inside can create the rocks for the memorial. The ends can be closed with staples. The Jordan River can be made using blue painted cardboard, plastic wrap, crepe paper, or a variety of other materials.

## REMEMBERING PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Bring a trophy or medal to class and explain why it was awarded to you. Explain that this trophy is a “memorial” or something to help us remember what happened in the past. Tell the class that God instructed the Israelites to make two memorials out of stones to help them remember His incredible power in allowing them to cross the Jordan River on dry ground.



APPLY

## BUILDING A MEMORIAL

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, construction paper, crayons, and glue.

**Directions:** Pre-cut pictures from craft sheet. Have students color and glue the pictures to a piece of construction paper. Assist them in using the individual stones to build an altar. Talk to them about the purpose of a memorial.

Building a Memorial  
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



"For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over... so that all who see it will say, 'The LORD is great!'"



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God reveals His might at the Jordan • Joshua 3:1–5:1



AGES 6–8



## CAN YOU DO THAT?

Ask the children to name some things that people can't do. But God can do anything. Discuss some of the mighty acts that God has done in the past (creation, the flood, the exodus, parting the Red Sea, and Jesus' resurrection). In today's lesson, we are going to learn about another one of God's mighty acts: the crossing of the Jordan River on dry ground. Finally, ask the children what should be their response to God's might.

## THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Ask the children to name some things that they are afraid of. What makes them afraid of these things? Fear can make us too scared to go near something or touch it. But fear also can help us treat things with the proper respect (for example, not playing with fire). Do you know that God wants us to fear Him? God does not want us to run away from Him and cry, but He wants us to remember His great holiness and power and treat Him with proper respect when we come to Him.



## MEMORIAL CALL-AND-RESPONSE

God gave Israel a way to remember the amazing works that He had done for them. He told them to create a memorial out of rocks and place it on the side of the Jordan. Explain to the children that one way to remember something is with a chant, or a call-and-response. Practice this call and-response by using it in the lesson. When you say, "What are these stones?" the children should respond: "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land!" Encourage them to repeat the chant to their parents after church.

## THE DRY JORDAN

**Materials:** fine-grain play sand and silicone spray (you may also want some kind of disposable tray for drying sand. Any surface sprayed with silicone will be very slippery).

**Directions:** To illustrate what it was like when the priests with the ark stepped into the Jordan River, create your own "magic sand" by spraying fine-grain play sand with silicone spray. Pour water over the sand, and then pour off the excess water. The sand will be completely dry (be very careful not to breathe in any silicone vapors when spraying sand).



## MIGHTY BLOCK REMINDER

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, scissors, crayons, glue, and small rocks.

**Directions:** Give each student a copy of the craft page to cut out. Students should fold along the dotted lines to form a small box. Use glue to keep the bottom and sides together. The top should open and close like a lid. After the boxes have dried, the students can place a small rock inside. Talk to them about the rocks that the Israelites gathered to build an altar commemorating their crossing of the Jordan River (Josh 3–4).

*Mighty Block Reminder*  
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

### MEMORIALS

In Arlington, Virginia, there is a tomb with a soldier in it whose name no one knows. This is called the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is a memorial that reminds Americans of the soldiers who died for their country in all the past wars, but who were never identified. A memorial reminds people of an important event, person, or belief. In our lesson today, Israel will build a memorial remembering God bringing them through the Jordan River to the promised land.

### DON'T FORGET!

We all forget things—our lunch for school, to make our bed or brush our teeth, our friend's birthday, our homework assignments, etc. What things do you most often forget? We never seem to forget important things such as our birthdays, the last day of school, or a promised treat! Have you ever forgotten God? Do you forget to pray or have a quiet time? Do you forget to seek forgiveness for your sins? Do you forget to thank God for His provisions and blessings? What are some ways we can remind ourselves to think of God? Remember that God never forgets you!



ILLUSTRATE

### TRIP TO THE MOON

Have you ever wondered why astronauts who have traveled to the moon plant their country's flag on the moon's surface and return to earth with moon rocks? Both the flag and the rocks are memorials; they help the astronauts and their countries remember this amazing accomplishment. The two memorials in today's lesson helped the Israelites to remember God's amazing power and provision for them at the Jordan River.

### A HEALTHY FEAR

Ask the children to imagine that they are alone in sub-Saharan Africa and have stumbled upon a fully grown, African male lion. The lion hasn't seen them, and they use the opportunity to take a closer look at this 500 pound killing machine. Ask the children how they would behave in this situation. Would they be carefree or afraid? Ask them how their fear would help them in this situation (maybe keep them alive!). We must also fear God because of His incredible strength and perfect holiness. However, unlike the lion, a healthy, biblical fear prepares us to safely approach Him in order to seek His mercy and His grace or to offer our heartfelt worship.



APPLY

### A MEMORIAL

There are many memorials that we have all around us. In Washington, D.C., for example, there is a tall, marble monument that memorializes the first U.S. president, George Washington. In New York City, there is a monument, given to us by the French, which reminds us of our freedom. We call it the Statue of Liberty. The Lord's Supper is also a memorial. It reminds us of the substitutionary and atoning death of our Savior. Jesus did not give us a monument made of stone or metal, though. He gave us a memorial of His death in something that we do often. He gave us the memorial in eating and drinking. When He broke the bread, He asked us to remember His body, and when He drank the cup, He reminded us of the blood He shed on believers' behalf for the remission of sins (1 Cor 11:23–26). Discuss with the children other memorials that God has given to us in Scripture. How important is it that we remember Christ's death? How often should we remember what Christ did on the believer's behalf?