

The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

“Thank you” is an important tool that 5- and 6-year-olds have begun to use and understand. Having a thankful heart is something taught through your example and the example of significant people in your children’s lives. Use this lesson to help kids realize some of the things they can be thankful for every day.



► **Bible Point**
Remember to thank God.

Key Verse
“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Weaving Faith Into Life
Children will thank God for all the things he gives them.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started <i>about 10 min.</i>	Welcoming Song Sing or listen to songs to welcome everyone to church.	CD player Teacher Pack: CD	
2 Key Verse Activity <i>about 10 min.</i>	Hand of God Do an activity to consider how big and mighty God’s hands are.	Bible, pair of adult gloves	
3 Bible Exploration <i>about 15 min.</i>	Theo’s News Find out what corn has to do with the Bible.	Surprise Box (any box will do), Theo puppet, CD player, ear of corn or candy corn Teacher Pack: CD	Place the corn in the Surprise Box, and hide the box where it’s easily accessible.
	Bible Time: Crossing Time Pretend to cross the Jordan River and thank God.	Bible, two 5-foot pieces of blue bulletin board paper or blue fabric, empty box	Lay the blue paper or fabric on the floor. This will be the river.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<p>4</p> <p>Weaving Faith Into Life <i>about 20 min.</i> <i>(Choose 2 centers.)</i></p>	<p>Center 1: Crossing the River Use stamp pads to make rocks and an altar to thank God.</p>	My Bible Playground, pencils, stamp pads	Remove the Lesson 12 pages from each My Bible Playground student book.
	<p>Center 2: Fish From the River Snacks Thank God as they eat crackers.</p>	fish crackers, paper towels, antibacterial gel (optional)	
	<p>Center 3: Celebrate God's Blessings Play a game of thanks.</p>	Teacher Pack: "God Lives" game board, game spinner, interlocking people	
	<p>Center 4: Freezing Thankfulness Play a Freeze-Tag game of thankfulness.</p>		
<p>5</p> <p>Lasting Impressions <i>about 10 min.</i></p>	<p>Daily Challenges Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.</p>	My Bible Playground, washable markers	
	<p>"Thank You" Prayer Jump for each thing they're thankful for as they pray.</p>		
	<p>Weaving Faith at Home Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.</p>		

***Bold text** within the lesson is spoken text.*

The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

God Guides a Nation at the Jordan River

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Parts of this event may 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.

Israel Memorializes God's Miracle

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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.

The Jesus Connection

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

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's 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. Write a prayer of thanks for the ways God has been present in your life. When you talk to God this week, start by thanking him for these great things, and add to the list as God continues to work in your life. You can write your prayer in the lines below.



Welcoming Song Supplies


CD player

Teacher Pack

CD: "Believing in Him"
(track 22), "Thankful"
(track 15)


1 GETTING STARTED

Welcoming Song

 **Tip** Consistently use the same signal to announce a transition to the next activity. You could flip the lights off and on, use a train whistle, have a puppet rustling inside a bag, or sing cleanup songs. Keep it simple, consistent, and fun.

What You'll Do

As the children arrive, greet each child and welcome him or her with a smile. When it's time to begin, use your signal to bring the children together in a circle. Lead kids in doing the motions and singing "Believing in Him" (track 22 on the CD) to the tune of "Skip to My Lou."

 **Please God** (*point to your happy smile*)

By believing in him. (*point up*)

Please God (*point to your happy smile*)

By believing in him. (*point up*)

Please God (*point to your happy smile*)

By believing in him. (*point up*)

That's what the Bible tells us. (*hold hands together like an open book*)

(Repeat 2 times.)

Say: **Let's get ready to learn about the Bible. It's wonderful to see you all here.**

Today we'll learn about a miracle God did for his people and that we can

► **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD. Let's sing a song about thankfulness.** Lead children in doing the motions and singing "Thankful" (track 15 on the CD).

 **I like to think about** (*point to head*)

The goodness of the Lord.

He gives me everything I need and so much more, (*point to things around the room*)

So I just wanna lift my hands (*lift hands*)

And say that I love him! (*cross arms over chest*)

I just wanna lift my heart in praise! (*lift hands*)

And I wanna be thankful! (*clap*)

I wanna be grateful! (*jump*)

I wanna remember everything that the Lord has done!

I wanna be thankful! (*clap*)

I wanna be grateful! (*jump*)

I wanna be! I wanna be! I wanna be!

(Repeat from the beginning.)



And I wanna be thankful! (*clap*)
 I wanna be grateful! (*jump*)
 I wanna remember everything that the Lord has done!
 I wanna be thankful! (*clap*)
 I wanna be grateful! (*jump*)
 I wanna be! I wanna be!
 I wanna be! I wanna be!
 I wanna be! I wanna be!
 I wanna be!

"Thankful" by Jay Stocker. © 2008 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

Say: **Our thankfulness is so important. We're going to learn about something great that God did for the Israelites. The Israelites thanked God for what he did. We can pay attention to notice the things God does for us and ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD.**

2 KEY VERSE
ACTIVITY

Hand of God

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids sit in a circle. Open your Bible to 1 Peter 5:6-7, and show children the words. Tell kids that the Bible is God's special book.

Say: **Our Key Verse from the Bible, 1 Peter 5:6-7, says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." That means God cares for you. We can be thankful for God's wonderful love and care for us. Let's practice our simplified Key Verse together.** Lead kids in repeating the simplified Key Verse with you: **God's mighty hand cares for you (1 Peter 5:6-7).**

We can only guess or imagine just how big and mighty God's hands are. Let's do an activity to help us think about God's mighty hands that care for us.

Have two children each put on one of the adult gloves. Have the other children form a single-file line in front of each of the gloved people. Let each child shake a gloved person's hand. The gloved person will say the simplified Key Verse to each person as he or she passes by.

If you have time, repeat the activity until everyone has had a chance to wear the gloves.



Hand of God Supplies

Bible
pair of adult gloves





Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- What was it like to try to use these gloves, even though they're meant for much bigger hands?
- How do you think God uses his mighty hands to care for you?
- What can you do to thank God for his mighty hands?

Say: **We wore gloves so we could pretend to have big hands. God's hands are really big and mighty, and they take care of us. Let's ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD for that.**

3 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Theo's News

Theo's News Supplies

Surprise Box (any box will do)
Theo puppet
CD player
ear of corn or candy corn

Teacher Pack
CD: "Here, Theo"
(track 3)

Theo's News Easy Prep

Place the corn in the Surprise Box, and hide the box where it's easily accessible.

What You'll Do ■■■■

Say: **Friends, it's time for Theo's News!** Have the children sit in a circle. Then begin "Here, Theo" (track 3 on the CD). When the CD segment ends, bring out the Surprise Box, and put the Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet on your hand. Then follow along with the script.

Theo: Hi, everybody!

Teacher: Hello, Theo! What have you been up to?

Theo: I've been getting ready to be thankful on Thanksgiving. It's coming up soon! My mom told me to get some food for our dinner, so I put it in our Surprise Box.

Teacher: Let's look inside to see what Theo dug up for us today.

(Invite a child to open the Surprise Box, and have kids pass the corn around the circle so everyone can see it up close. Give kids time to guess what they'll learn from the Bible today.)

Teacher: Oh, corn is a great thing to have at Thanksgiving. What's your favorite Thanksgiving food, kids?

(Pause for kids to answer your question.)

Theo: Mmm, those all sound delicious. You're making me drool. I love all the food at Thanksgiving. I wish I didn't have to wait for it!

Teacher: There's something more important than food when we think about Thanksgiving. We can ► **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD** on Thanksgiving and all year. The Israelites showed God they were thankful after he helped them cross a big river.

Theo: Wow, that sounds really cool. Sometimes I forget about being thankful and all I think about is the delicious food. I should get home and take this corn to my mom. I'll remember to be thankful. 'Bye, guys!

Teacher: Let's say goodbye to Theo.

Encourage the children to wave or say goodbye to Theo. Then put Theo away in a safe place for next week's use.

Talk With Kids

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- What are some traditions your family has at Thanksgiving?
- What can you thank God for today?

Say: **We don't have to wait for Thanksgiving to be thankful. God did something amazing to help the Israelites in a time of need, and they showed him their thankfulness. We can ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD anytime and anywhere.**

Bible Time: Crossing Time

What You'll Do

Open your Bible to Joshua 3:1–4:24, and show kids the words. Tell kids that the Bible is God's special book.

Say: **Let's pretend we're traveling with Joshua today. Let's see how many things the Israelites could have thanked God for in the Bible today. It all began early in the morning.** Have the children lie down and pretend to be sleeping. Say: **Wake up, wake up! We can give thanks for this day.**

Have the children suggest things to be thankful for such as a restful night, the warmth of the sun, the trees and flowers, or the birds in the sky.

Say: **Before we can start our journey, we need to know a few rules for how we can travel.** Ask for four willing kids to carry the "Ark." Say: **You are Priests for God, and the other people will follow behind you but not too close. Now, everyone get ready to leave.**

Encourage the children to pretend to get dressed and eat breakfast. Have the kids suggest things to give thanks for such as eyes to see, ears to hear, noses to smell, fingers to touch, mouths to taste, or food to eat. Give the box to the Priests, and tell them this "Ark of the Covenant" is special for God. Have the Priests stand at least 5 feet in front of the rest of the group.

Say: **Let's begin our journey. Find a friend to hug, and then hold his or her hand during our long journey. On our way, we can thank God for friends and family.** Direct kids where to walk, having them follow the Priests. Have kids walk a few steps, and then stop and allow each child to give thanks for the person whose hand he or she is holding.

Say: **Now we must cross the river. There aren't bridges for us to use, so we have to trust God to help us. This river is too strong for us to swim across. Don't be afraid, because God will be with us.**



Bible Time: Crossing Time Supplies

Bible
two 5-foot pieces of
blue bulletin board
paper or blue fabric
empty box

Bible Time: Crossing Time Easy Prep

Lay the blue paper or fabric on the floor. This will be the river.



Lead the children toward the “river.” Say: **Look, there’s so much water in the Jordan River. We can’t cross this river alone. God will make it possible for us to cross.**

Ask for two willing kids to help you. When the Priests touch the blue paper or fabric, have your helpers grab the corners of the paper or fabric and pull them back, holding them as high in the air as they can. Say: **Look what God did!** Fold the edges up and pull the papers or fabric apart to reveal the “dry land” (the floor of your room) underneath.

Say: **God gave us dry ground to walk on! Come on, friends.** Have all the children walk across the river on the dry land. Say: **God has brought us safely across the river.**

We must remember to thank God for helping us cross the river. Let’s build an altar out of 12 rocks to worship God. Have the children pretend to build an altar out of rocks, counting together to 12. Encourage kids to pretend the rocks are heavy.

Say: **And let’s worship him in prayer.** Have all the children kneel, bow their heads, and fold their hands in prayer. Pray: **Thank you, God, for this miracle. Thank you for parting the water of the Jordan River so that we might cross safely. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **When we pretended to be the Israelites, what could we be thankful for?**
- **What difference does it make for you and other people when you’re thankful?**
- **What does it mean to you to be thankful?**

Say: **There are so many things God does for us each and every day. His mighty hands care for us. We can ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD. God did great big things for the Israelites to show them that he is God, and they showed him thankfulness in return. Let’s be like the Israelites and thank God for the things he does all the time.**

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4 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Choose at least two of the learning centers to help reinforce today’s Bible lesson. Gather the needed materials, and put the supplies in an out-of-sight area until you’re ready for them. Allow the children to choose which center they’d like to explore first. Then circulate among the children as they create and explore. Encourage them to make connections between their activities and the Bible by asking them the questions included with each center’s description.

CENTER 1:

Crossing the River

What You'll Do

Say: **God helped the Israelites cross a river, and then the Israelites thanked God for what he'd done.**

Distribute the My Bible Playground pages, and have kids write their names on their papers. Give kids stamp pads with washable ink, and show them how to make fingerprint "rocks" in the Jordan River. While kids make rocks in the river, say: **These rocks helped the Israelites remember to thank God for the ways he cared for them. As you make rocks, talk about ways God cares for you.**

Then have kids make an "altar" of 12 fingerprint rocks next to the river. Have children each tell one thing they're thankful for.

Have kids bring their My Bible Playground pages with them and sit in a circle. Have kids pass their pages around the circle. Say: **When you get someone's My Bible Playground page, look around this room and tell that person one thing you're thankful for.** When time runs out, have kids return the My Bible Playground pages to their owners.

Talk With Kids

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What things in this room did you not realize you could be thankful for before?**
- **Explain whether you think it's possible to be thankful when things are difficult in life.**
- **What are some ways you can thank God for always being with you?**

Say: **God cares for us, just as he cared for the Israelites. There are things just in this room that we can be thankful for. Let's ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD often during the day. When we thank God, it pleases him and helps us know him better.**

CENTER 2:

Fish From the River Snacks

What You'll Do

Say: **The Jordan River was flowing. It had fish and other things living in it, but God made sure the ground was dry when the Israelites walked across. Let's have snacks to help us remember.**



Center 1: Crossing the River Supplies

My Bible Playground pencils
stamp pads

Center 1: Crossing the River Easy Prep

Remove the Lesson 12 pages from each My Bible Playground student book.

Center 2: Fish From the River Snacks Supplies

fish crackers
paper towels
antibacterial gel (optional)

! ALLERGY ALERT



Have children clean their hands. Then gather everyone around the table.

Set fish-shaped crackers nearby, and have paper towels or napkins available for kids to put the crackers on.

Say: **Instead of getting your snacks for yourselves, you'll get them for a friend.**

Have several kids get crackers and each bring them to someone else. When each child receives crackers, he or she will go get some crackers for someone else until everyone has a snack.

Say: **We have lots of things we can thank God for today just like the Israelites did. One thing we can thank God for is people who help take care of us. Let's all think of one person we're thankful for and then thank God for our snack, too.** As kids thank God, have them make the fish-shaped crackers jump around on their napkins. Have the children each thank God for one person they love. Then close the prayer by thanking God for the snacks that God provided for the children.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- What makes you thankful for the people you love?
- Tell about the last time someone thanked you for doing something.
- What does it take to thank God for caring for you?

Say: **We can thank God for the ways he loves us and cares for us. Let's**

► **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD** as often as we can. God did great big things for the Israelites when he helped them cross the river, and God is doing amazing things in our lives, too.

■ CENTER 3:

Celebrate God's Blessings

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Let's play a game to help us remember the things we can be thankful for.**

Place the "God Lives" game board, game spinner, and interlocking people on a table. Have children take turns flicking the spinner and moving their people along the path to the end. As they make each move, say: **Thank God for something that is the same color as the color shown on the spinner.** (For example, kids might say, "Thank you, God, for the yellow sun.") The game ends when all the interlocking people have completed their mission—to ► **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD** for all things. When the game ends, say: **Let's celebrate by shouting, "Thank you, God!" and giving high fives to one another.**

Center 3: Celebrate
God's Blessings
Supplies

Teacher Pack
"God Lives" game
board
game spinner
interlocking people



Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How would you describe this game to someone else?
- How does this game help you think of thankfulness in a new way?
- What can you do to keep thankfulness first in your life?

Say: **God gives us many blessings. It's important that we ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD for those blessings and for his presence with us. The Israelites saw that God was with them, and that made all the difference as they crossed the river. We can thank God for being with us, too.**

■ **CENTER 4:**

Freezing Thankfulness

What You'll Do ■■■■

Say: **In the Bible, we learned that God helped the Israelites cross the Jordan River by parting the waters of the river. The people were able to walk across dry ground because God moved the waters of the river away. The Israelites remembered to thank God for this special miracle. We can ► REMEMBER TO THANK GOD, too, especially at Thanksgiving time.**

Let's play a game of Tag. Some of you will be the Jordan River. Others will be Israelites. Those of you who are the Jordan River will try to catch the Israelites. Choose about a fourth of your group to be the "Jordan River," and identify the others as Israelites.

Say: **If you're an Israelite and you're tagged by the Jordan River, you must immediately say something you're thankful for. While you say what you're thankful for, the Jordan River who caught you will begin counting to five. If the Jordan River reaches "five" before you say what you're thankful for, then you'll switch roles.** Check for understanding, and then have kids begin playing. Allow time.

After a few minutes, swap out any kids who have been the Jordan River the entire time, and continue playing. Keep rotating so everyone gets a chance to be an Israelite and the Jordan River.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How did thankfulness set you free in this game?
- Tell about a time thankfulness changed a bad situation to a good one.
- How can you show your thankfulness to God?





Daily Challenges Supplies

My Bible Playground
washable markers

Say: **Like in our game, thankfulness is one of the best and quickest ways to turn our bad moods around. The Israelites were thankful for God's help, and we can**
▶ **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD this week.**

5 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

After the children have cleaned up the centers, sit with kids in a circle on the floor. Review the lesson activities and the Bible Point, and then encourage the children to share what they enjoyed learning from the Bible today.

Also use this time to challenge kids in their faith. Encourage them to choose a Daily Challenge for applying today's lesson to their lives throughout the week. Use this challenge to encourage your children's growing relationships with Jesus.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Say: **Today we learned that we** ▶ **REMEMBER TO THANK GOD. I'd like each of you to choose one of these Daily Challenges to practice thankfulness.**

Give kids these three Daily Challenge ideas to choose from:

1. **Cut a heart out of paper, and put it in your pocket. Every time you take it out, thank God for loving you and taking care of you.**
2. **Help your mom or dad clean your toys. As you do, thank God for each toy he's given you.**
3. **Say a prayer with your family when you sit down for dinner. Thank God for giving you family, food, and a home.**

Say: **If you want to carry a paper heart in your pocket, circle choice number 1. If you want to clean your toys, circle choice number 2. If you want to pray with your family, circle choice number 3.** Check that each child circled a choice on his or her My Bible Playground page. Make sure you tell kids the challenge you choose. Your commitment will inspire children and will give them an opportunity to see God at work in your life as well as in theirs!



“Thank You” Prayer

What You’ll Do

Have kids form a line. Ask them to think of something they like, whether it’s puppies, a favorite snack, or anything else that comes to mind. Have kids crouch down. Say: **God gave us each of the things you thought of. I’m going to thank God for what he gives us. When I pause, you’ll start at the front of the line and jump up one at a time as you say the thing you thought of.**

Pray: **Dear God, thank you for giving us Jesus and for caring for us. We’re so thankful for all the ways you show us you love us, such as...** (pause and allow kids to jump up and say the thing they really like). **In Jesus’ name, amen.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Have children take home their My Bible Playground pages whether they worked on them or not. Have the children tell their parents the challenge they committed to in the “Daily Challenges” activity. Encourage parents to help their kids fulfill this commitment throughout the week. By working together and focusing on the same goals, you and parents can help children weave faith into their lives!

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church’s families. Available at group.com/digital.

