




# The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

Fifth- and sixth-graders are beginning to focus more on others than on themselves. Expressing thanks is something they've been taught from a young age, and now they're beginning to understand why. They're realizing, too, that their attitude of thankfulness affects the feelings of others. Many fifth- and sixth-graders haven't fully internalized what might change about their lives if they showed thankfulness to God. Use this lesson to help them understand that God calls them to be thankful.



► **Bible Point**  
Remember what God has done.

LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>1</b> Getting Started	<b>Thanks, But No Thanks...</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Do something kind for one another, and then forget about what was done for them.		
<b>2</b> Bible Exploration	<b>Prayers and Praise</b> <i>(about 30 min.)</i> Write prayers and create praise ideas based on the Israelites' perspective.	Bibles, Bible Buzz, washable markers, pens, gray paper, tape, several pairs of scissors <b>Teacher Pack:</b> "Jordan River" poster 	Tear out the Lesson 12 pages from each Bible Buzz student book.

**Key Verse**  
"Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done" (1 Chronicles 16:8).

**Weaving Faith Into Life**  
Kids will find a creative way to remember what God has done.

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*





LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>3</b> Weaving Faith Into Life	<b>Our Altar of Remembrance</b> <i>(about 20 min.)</i> Build an altar out of paper-bag stones, and write things they're thankful for on the stones.	Bible Buzz, CD player, 2 paper lunch bags per preteen, newspapers, masking tape, markers, pens <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD	
<b>4</b> Lasting Impressions	<b>Daily Challenges</b> <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Buzz	
	<b>Weaving Faith at Home</b> <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

**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

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

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

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.

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## 1 GETTING STARTED

### Thanks, But No Thanks...

#### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Form two groups of equal size. Participate in one group if you have an uneven number of kids. Have groups sit on opposite sides of the room. Have each group number off so it has only one of each number—each will have one 1, one 2, and so on. Go to one group and quietly say: **Spend the next minute or two thinking of something kind to do for someone. When time's up, you'll each go to the person from the other group with your number and do that kind thing for that person.**

Go to the other group and quietly say: **The other group is going to do something kind for you. When they do that, make it as difficult for them as possible. Then pretend to forget what they've done. Tell them things like, "I really wish someone would do something nice for me."**

After about a minute, tell the first group to go do their acts of kindness for the people with the same number. Allow about four minutes for kids to perform their acts of kindness and for the other group to react.

#### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Is it realistic to believe someone could forget something kind that was done for them just a second before? Explain.**
- **Why is it important to remember the good things that happen?**
- **How does that relate to the things God has done? Why does it matter whether we remember the things God has done?**

Say: **God has done amazing things for each of us. Just the fact that the sun comes up in the morning and we're able to continue living each day is a great thing, and then if you add the other things on top of that, we have a lot of amazing things to remember. God did something amazing for a man named Joshua and the Israelites in the Bible. Then the Israelites made special memorials to help them remember the things God had done for them. We can do things to help us ► REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE, too.**





## 2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

# Prayers and Praise

### What You'll Do

Say: **God promised the Israelites that they would enter a new land. The only thing standing between them and the new land was the humongous Jordan River—at flood stage. Joshua was confident God would lead Israel to the new land. But what about the Israelites? Imagine you're an Israelite during this time. Let's explore what happened.**

Distribute Bibles, pens, and this week's Bible Buzz pages, and have kids turn to "The People's Prayer" section. Form groups of three, and have kids in each group number off from 1 to 3. Have them read the corresponding sections of the Bible passage and fill out the prayer activity there. Say: **Follow the instructions on your Bible Buzz page, but when you write, leave out every fifth word.** Allow about five minutes.

Ask:

- **Looking at your writing, explain what difference it made to forget some of the words.**
- **What does that show you about the problem with forgetting things?**

When kids are done, have them share what they learned with their group and (if they want to) how they related the passage to their own lives.

Say: **No doubt the Israelites had heard about how God parted the Red Sea when Israel escaped from Egypt. Now God had parted the Jordan River for them. Let's read about what happened next.**

Have kids form new groups of three and find "The People's Praise" on the Bible Buzz pages. Have kids follow the instructions there. Each person in a group will have a different passage. Give one washable marker to person 3 in each group. Allow about five minutes.

When they finish, have kids show their group what they came up with and then decide together how they can praise God for what he did for the Israelites in each section. Have kids act on their decisions. If they choose to praise God by singing and shouting, have them do that. Allow about five minutes. As they work, display the "Jordan River" poster, and set markers and tape near it.

When groups finish demonstrating their three ways of showing praise, have them each cut out rock shapes from gray paper and write a word of praise on each rock. Kids can make as many rocks as the number of words of praise they can think of. Allow a couple of minutes. Then have kids go to the "Jordan River" poster and stick their words of praise to the poster.



### Prayers and Praise Supplies

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- Bibles
  - Bible Buzz
  - washable markers
  - pens
  - gray paper
  - tape
  - several pairs of scissors
  - Teacher Pack**
  - "Jordan River" poster

### Prayers and Praise Easy Prep

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- Tear out the Lesson 12 pages from each Bible Buzz student book.





When they're done, direct kids' attention to the poster, and read some of the praise words.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- Explain how you think prayer and praise work together when you're facing something you need help with.
- When we praise God, how does that help us remember what he's done?
- How does prayer help us remember to thank God?

Say: **Look at all these ways we can ► REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE! God loves to hear our praises. Let's think about how we can remember the great things God has done in our lives. Just like it's important for you to remember the good things you've done, it's even more important for us to remember the amazing things God has done. God did some incredible things for the Israelites at the Jordan River, and that same amazing God is with us today.**

## 3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

# Our Altar of Remembrance

### What You'll Do ■■■■

Have kids find the "My Thanks" section on their Bible Buzz pages. Provide pens, and have kids each find a place they can work alone.

Say: **Let's take some time to remember what God has done for each of us. You'll have six minutes to fill in the lines on the "My Thanks" section. Don't stop to think; just fill in the lines as quickly as you can. You'll see a letter at the beginning of each line. Think of something that begins with that letter for each line. Ready? Go!**

Allow about six minutes. As kids work, play "Give Thanks" (1 Chronicles 16:8) (track 15 on the CD). You may want to play it twice so that it takes up the whole time kids are working.

Once everyone's finished, provide paper bags and newspapers. Show kids how to make paper-bag stones by stuffing newspaper inside one bag and placing another bag over the first, closing off the open end. Then have kids use markers to write on their paper stones one thing God's done that they want to remember and be thankful for. You can encourage kids to list one item from the "My Thanks" section.

As kids work, say: **The Lord had Joshua build an altar with stones from each of the 12 tribes as a way for Israel to remember what God had done for them. Let's build**

### Our Altar of Remembrance Supplies

Bible Buzz  
CD player  
2 paper lunch bags per  
preteen  
newspapers  
masking tape  
markers  
pens  
**Teacher Pack**  
CD: "Give Thanks"  
(1 Chronicles 16:8)  
(track 15)





**an altar with these “stones” to help us remember what God has done and is doing in our lives.**

Have kids build the altar by stacking up the bags and taping them together with masking tape. After the altar is completed, stand around the altar and encourage willing kids to pray about ways they want to remember the things God has done, whether in the Bible or in their own lives.

When you finish praying, sit around the altar together.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What was it like to think of things you might’ve previously overlooked and forgotten to thank God for?**
- **What is it like to realize you’ve forgotten to be thankful for something?**
- **What difference might it make for you to focus on remembering the things God has done?**

Say: **Thankfulness can change our lives from the inside out. When we replace our concern about ourselves with thankfulness, things begin to look different. Joshua and the Israelites knew that thankfulness depends on being able to remember what God has done, so they built an altar. We can start off our thankfulness by focusing our attention on remembering what God has done. It’s important that we ► REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE, too.**

## 4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

### Daily Challenges

#### What You’ll Do ■■■■

Say: **Let’s think this week about how we can ► REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE.**

Have kids find this week’s Daily Challenges on their Bible Buzz pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Make a collage of the things you can remember and thank God for. Keep creating the collage as long as you can remember things God has done. When you’re done, sit down with a parent and thank God together for the things he’s done.**
- **Write sticky notes of things God has done that you want to remember. Place the sticky notes on your bathroom mirror. When you see them, thank God for those things and ask him to help you keep your focus on his goodness.**



Daily Challenges  
Supplies

Bible Buzz





- **Create a special place to sit and study God's Word. You could make a blanket fort or some other special place to meet with God. In your quiet place, ask God to help you remember the great things he's done, and then trust God to help you.**

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

### **Talk With Kids** ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, place, and other ideas.**

Say: **Joshua and the Israelites saw some pretty amazing things that God did and they took steps to make sure they'd remember what they saw. Let's ► REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE by following through with our Daily Challenges.**

## **Weaving Faith at Home**

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about remembering God's goodness. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Buzz pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church's families! Available at [group.com/digital](http://group.com/digital).

Have kids form groups of three or four. Have them stand in a circle and place their hands inside the circle like a huddle in sports. Ask them to pray for one another to remember the things God has done in their lives. When they finish, encourage them to come up with a short phrase to shout as they raise their hands and cheer for God to break the huddle.

