



JOSHUA & THE JORDAN RIVER

JOSHUA 3 & 4

GOAL

- ▶ **To teach the children to see things through the eyes of faith. We can only see so much with our physical eyes, but through the eyes of faith, we can see things the way that God sees them.** We see the physical world by opening our eyes and looking around, but to see beyond the physical realm, we must hear from God. For Joshua and the people of Israel, it was easy to see a raging river and a land full of enemies on the other side, but the people believed God's promises and His word more than what they saw. They believed God would do what He said He would do, and because of their belief, the promises of God became reality; they entered into a land of hope and promise. Show children that developing these eyes of faith comes by hearing God's Word, believing God's Word, remembering what God has done in the past, and placing our full confidence in God.
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CHARACTERS

- ▶ **Joshua:** After the death of Moses, God called Joshua to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. At birth, his name was Hosea, but it was later changed to Joshua, which means "The Lord is Salvation"; in Hebrew, the name Joshua is "Yeshua," which is the name Jesus. His obedience and dependence on God made Joshua one of Israel's strongest leaders.
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MEMORY VERSE

- ▶ **Joshua 3:5:** Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."



OVERVIEW

▶ **Read Joshua 3 and 4:** Forty years had passed since God miraculously brought Israel out from under the slavery of Egypt—years of unbelief, rebellion and wandering. But the moment of truth was finally at hand, and the people of God were about to realize the promise they had once refused to believe. God called Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the land, but there were obstacles to overcome first. One was directly in front of them: the Jordan River. During the harvest time, the river was at its fullest and strongest, but just like God had done before when he parted the Red Sea, He held back the raging river so that the people of Israel could safely pass to the other side. Twelve large stones were collected from the riverbed, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and used to memorialize the great event! God had done this amazing work so that everyone in the world would know of His power, and so that His people would fear and respect Him as their God forever.

SUGGESTIONS

▶ **Review how seeing with eyes of faith made the promises of God a reality for Joshua and the people of Israel:**

1. They Heard God's Word: Joshua called the people together to share what God had spoken to him—"Come here, and hear the words of the Lord your God." He reminded them that God had promised them victory over their enemies, and God would stop the waters of the Jordan River from flowing as He had when He parted the Red Sea. The more they heard God's promises, the more their confidence grew.

2. They Believed God's Word: The people could physically see a raging river in their way with enemies waiting for them on the other side; but they chose to believe the words and promises of God. He would deliver them as He promised.

3. They remembered what God had done: Faith is built by remembering that the entire universe was created by God's spoken word, and faith is strengthened by remembering all His mighty deeds. Joshua reminded the people that God had parted the Red Sea and would once again deliver them safely across.

4. They placed full confidence in God: Faith places hope and confidence in the promises of God and is willing to forsake everything else to obtain it. The Israelites were willing to separate themselves from the world they knew in order to obtain something far better.



PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

▶ **Blindfold | Supplies:** Blindfolds

Blindfold a couple of kids at the same time and ask them questions about the room: What color are the curtains? How many chairs are around each table? Are there plants in the room? etc. See how many questions they answer correctly. Now have those children answer the same questions without the blindfolds. How many questions do they get right?

Eyes of faith cannot see through blindfolds or in darkness. God's word illuminates darkness. Recounting God's goodness clears out the clutter that fear and anxiety create. Getting rid of anything that stands in the way of God and His commands puts Him back in full view.

MEMORY VERSES MEANING

▶ **Joshua 3:5:** The word "consecrate" means to separate—to get rid of anything that gets in the way of a relationship with the one perfect God. The promise God made to Joshua and the people of Israel "to do amazing things" required consecration. It required that they be willing to leave everything behind and place nothing ahead of God.

POST-LESSON ACTIVITY

▶ **Stones of Remembrance | Supplies:** small, smooth stones like river rocks, about the size of a child's palm; permanent, fine-tip markers; paint; paintbrushes.

Give each student a stone. Tell them to paint any way they want; suggest that they paint something that can be a reminder of how God takes care of them. After the stones are dry, or before you hand them out, write the day's on the back of each. Older students can write the verse on their own.



**TAKE
HOME**

The people of Israel saw beyond the obvious obstacles that lay between them and the Promised Land, but they saw through the eyes of faith, and believed that God would do what He said. How can we develop eyes of faith?

- 1. Hear from God:** Hear from God by reading His Word and by spending time with Him in prayer.
- 2. Believe God's Word:** Do all the things that God tells you to do.
- 3. Remember God's mighty works:** Remember the Scriptures—how He delivered Israel from slavery and how He parted the Red Sea and the Jordan. Remember what God has done for you—how He died for you to save you from eternal death and to provide a way to have a meaningful relationship with Himself; how He provides you with a home, food, and clothing; and how He gave you family and friends.
- 4. Put God first in all things:** Put complete hope and confidence in the promises of God, because all that He offers is beyond anything we can even imagine; then be willing to forsake everything to obtain them.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: What stood between the Israelites and their promised land?

A1: The Jordan River

Q1b: Have you ever faced an obstacle to getting something you wanted?

TN: Ask the students what the obstacle was and if they were able to overcome the obstacle. Did they pray and ask God for help?

SLIDE 2



Q2a: What did Joshua tell the people to do?

A2: To follow the Ark of the Covenant being carried by the priests.

Q2b: Have you ever started something that seemed easy but became very difficult?

TN: Simply following the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant doesn't seem too hard, but as we'll see in a bit, doing so will require faith. The Israelites followed Joshua because they knew he was the chosen leader who heard directly from God. When he gave instructions, they were instructions given by God.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: What did the Ark of the Covenant contain?

A3: The two stone tablets on which God wrote His law and the promise of mercy and forgiveness

Q3b: Who was more than a physical representation of our living God?

TN: Jesus! He was more than a representation of our living God because He was both fully God and fully man while He lived on earth. He was the promise of mercy and forgiveness carried in the Ark of the Covenant.

SLIDE 4



Q4a: Why were the priests carrying the Ark not afraid as they stepped into the raging Jordan River?

A4: Because they were focused on the promise God had made to them

Q4b: Have you ever done something that required you to have courage?

TN: While following God may not always require us to have courage to cross a raging river, we should know that the courage we have to do what is right comes from the same faith the Israelites had. They recognized that God is all-powerful, He loves them, and above all, He is faithful; we can do the same thing.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What happened when the priests stepped into the Jordan River?

A5: The river stopped flowing.

Q5b: Have you ever walked across a river, creek, or stream?

TN: What was the bottom of the river like? Was it covered in stones or mud? Was it easy to cross? The purpose of these questions is point out the secondary miracle: the riverbed was dry. Not only did God stop the river from flowing, He made it so the Israelites wouldn't have difficulty walking through the mud. God removed all obstacles to Israel entering into the promised land.

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What did God ask a representative from each tribe to collect?

A6: Stones from the riverbed

Q6b: Have you ever tried to bake a cake without a recipe?

TN: Would you even know how to start? Thank goodness someone wrote down successful combinations of ingredients such as eggs, flour, butter, and sugar! The pile of stones in this story is like a recipe for faith. The ingredients: Know who our God is. Know what amazing things He has done for His people. Know that He is faithful. Know that everything He promises, He will make happen. Combine into a monument on the side of the obstacle that was insurmountable without God's power. To those passing by, this pile of stones tells a story of a people who had faith in God and witnessed Him stop a river from flowing because He loved and cared for them.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 7



Q7a: What was the pile of stones supposed to be?

A7: A memorial to this great event

Q7b: Have you ever seen a movie or read a book based on a true story?

TN: Accounts of real-life experiences are powerful stories. God had the Israelites set up this memorial in the hope that it would inspire faith in those who came across it. Knowing that God has done such wonderful miracles for His people in the past means He is capable of helping us.



**MEMORY
VERSE**

- ▷ **Joshua 3:5:** Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."
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BIG IDEA

- ▷ There is no obstacle too big when we see the world through the eyes of faith.
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**CLOSING
PRAYER**

- ▷ Dear Lord Jesus, help us to develop eyes that see what You see, by reading Your Word, talking with You, and reminding ourselves of Your goodness. Help us to be willing to give up everything to follow after Your promises. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



The Jordan river stood between the Israelites and their promised land, but the same God who miraculously delivered them from the slavery of Egypt would once again make a way where there was no way. "It is time for you to separate yourselves from the things of the world that hold you back from God," Joshua declared to the people of Israel. "For tomorrow, the Lord will do amazing wonders before your eyes!"

SLIDE 2



As God had been with Moses when He parted the Red Sea 40 years earlier, the Lord promised He would also be with Joshua. Inspired by this promise, Joshua explained the plan that God had given him. "Here's what we will do," Joshua announced. "As soon as you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the priests, follow after it."

SLIDE 3



The Ark of the Covenant was important because it held the two stone tablets on which God had written His law, which showed His people how to live. It also held the promise of mercy and forgiveness when they failed to do what He commanded. This special golden box was the physical representation of the living God; it held the mystery and promise of a Savior. On this day, the people of God placed all of their confidence and trust in Him to deliver them, and God lead them to the land He promised.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



When the priests carrying the Ark approached the raging waters of the river Jordan, they did not hesitate to step in. They were not afraid of what they saw with their eyes because their focus was on the promise God had made to them. With courage and determination, they stepped in, and God performed an amazing miracle.

SLIDE 5



God held back the waters of the Jordan River! From the moment the priests took the first steps into the troubled waters, the river miraculously stopped flowing. Far up the river, at the city of Adam, the water piled high as though it were splashing up against an invisible wall. As planned, the priests stood on dry ground in the middle of the river and waited until all the people of Israel passed by.

SLIDE 6



God proved to Israel that there was no sea deep enough to hold them back from His promises. It was important that His people always remember how mighty and powerful their God was so that they would have the strength and courage to trust Him in the future. God had one representative from each of the twelve tribes of Israel collect stones from the riverbed, to memorialize the great event.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 7



One by one, Joshua placed each stone in a pile as he acknowledged God's power and goodness. In the future, when their children and their children's children looked at these stones, they would remember how God separated them from a painful past; how He built their faith and trust in His strength; how He brought terror and confusion to their enemies; and most importantly of all, how this event held the promise of their final deliverance that would come through Jesus the Messiah.