

# The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

## Bible Point:



Remember what God has done.

## 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:



Students will thank God for what he’s done in their lives.



Study Sequence	What Students Will Do	Supplies
1 Faith Connection	<b>Goodbye</b> (about 10 min.) Think of things about life on earth for which they’re thankful.	Paper, pencils
	<b>Option: Media Connection</b> (about 10 min.) Try to guess jingles for commercials.	TV
2 Bible Story Exploration	<b>Recollections of God</b> (about 15 min.) Participate in a skit that talks about the things God did to take the Israelites to the Promised Land.	Bibles, “Cool Stuff God Has Done” handout (pp. 126–128) for all students, photocopy of “Scripture List” box (p. 123), pens
	<b>Researching Thanks</b> (about 15 min.) Explore verses of thanks, including the Key Verse.	Bibles, paper, pens, 4 or 5 concordances, small stones (1 for each student), markers
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	<b>Locating My Jordans</b> (about 20 min.) Review their lives for evidence of God at work, and then share their God-stories.	Bibles, one 8½x14-inch sheet of paper and a pen for each student, “Taking It Home” handout (p. 129) for all students

# The Israelites Cross the Jordan River

Joshua 3:1–4:24

Parts of this story 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.

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.



## Devotion for Teachers

**The 1 Thing:** 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.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Look closely at 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 is 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. Sharing these experiences with others can give hope to the hopeless and bring glory to the work God has done in you. Identify five people to whom you will testify of God's power in your life this week. After you share, watch how God's power in you affects the people you share with.

*For more about The 1 Thing, see page 4.*

# Understanding Senior Highers for Teachers

Thankfulness doesn't come easily to many students in our society. Senior highers need to be regularly reminded and challenged to be thankful for the good things God has provided. Throughout this study, challenge your students to remember what God has done—both in history and in their own lives—and to discover for themselves the special joy that comes from developing a thankful heart.

## Easy Prep for Teachers

**Recollections of God**—Copy the “Cool Stuff God Has Done” handout (pp. 126-128) for all students and make one copy of the “Scripture List” box (p. 123).

**Locating My Jordans**—Copy the “Taking It Home” handout (p. 129) for all students.

**Web help**—Get bonus teacher tips and ideas at [www.faithweaver.com](http://www.faithweaver.com). Also check out the Ministry and Media Web site at [www.ministryandmedia.com](http://www.ministryandmedia.com) for timely ideas on connecting today's Bible study with what's happening in our culture.



## 1 Faith Connection

### Goodbye

**Say** ▶ If your parents suddenly announced that your family was moving and you could take only one small suitcase, what would you take in it? When I say “go,” you'll have three minutes to pack.

Give students a few minutes to talk about this with a partner. Then ask them to share the one or two most important things that they could not live without.

Give everyone a pencil and paper.

**Say** ▶ You'll notice that your parents didn't tell you where you were moving. They didn't want to shake up your world all at once. But tonight at dinner, after you've already packed your one allotted suitcase, they announce that you're moving to Africa because one of them has a job that's transferred them to the company's Nairobi office in Kenya. You probably won't be able to see your extended family or your friends for a few years because it's so expensive to fly back and forth. You have one day to say goodbye. Make a list of the three things that you'll miss the most.

Again, give the students a few minutes, and then have them share their responses with the group.

**Ask** ▶

- **What was it like choosing only three things?** (It was hard; it's totally unrealistic; I had no idea what to take; it was easy.)
- **Why are these things most important to you?** (They mean the most to me; they're pictures of all my friends; it's my personal stuff; it's the stuff that I like the most.)
- **What would they help you remember? Who would they help you remember?** (My cousins; my best friends; the people who mean the most to me; the things that I like to do the most.)



**Say** Remember what's important. When we take time to do this, we notice the things and people that have made a difference in our lives. We should remember what God has done for us, as well.

## Media Connection (Option)

*The Media Connection is a brief optional idea that uses some type of electronic media—film, music, TV, or the Internet. It's not required, so don't feel you have to use it every week. Use this optional idea in place of another activity only if it's appropriate, appealing, and practical for your group. Students today are media savvy, so this feature uses elements of youth culture to teach biblical truth and show students how the Bible can be relevant to their daily lives.*

Instead of the "Goodbye" activity, try this challenge with your students. Turn on the TV and flip through the channels with the sound down. Stop on the channels that are showing commercials for popular products or upcoming TV shows. Make sure these commercials are ones that your students will recognize within the first few moments. Let the students yell out the key advertising phrase or sing the commercial's jingle, and then turn up the volume and see who was correct. When you've finished flipping through the channels, have the students come up with other songs or catchphrases for commercials you didn't see.

- Ask**
- **Why did you remember these commercial jingles?** (I've heard them like a million times; everyone knows them; they're on all the time.)
  - **What other kinds of things do you find easy to remember?** (Plans with friends; baseball stats; not homework.)



**Say** You know, God wants us to know his Word even better than we know commercial songs. He uses a lot of creative ways to get our attention. What God does in our lives should be our number one priority. Our relationship with him is more important than all other people. It's easy, however, to get distracted, so sometimes we have to make an effort to think about it. We should remember what God has done for us.

## 2 Bible Story Exploration

### Recollections of God

Distribute the "Cool Stuff God Has Done" skit to all students. Designate one part of the room to be the Israelites' camp and another part to be the Promised Land, with the Jordan River in between. Assign volunteers to the following roles: Jobi (guy), Mary (girl), Priests, Israelites, Israelite leaders, Moses, and Joshua. Have Jobi and Mary sit in chairs.

**Say** Most of you will need your Bibles for this skit. When Jobi and Mary talk about you, stand up and move to the designated place: the

**Jordan River, the Promised Land. I'll be the director, and I'll point to you or tell you when it's your turn to move or to speak.**

Distribute the reference slips from the "Scripture List" box in the margin. It's OK if some students receive more than one slip. Ask students to go ahead and look up their verses and have their Bibles ready. The skit calls for a few props: a musical instrument, the Ark of the Covenant, and rocks. You can use objects in your room to represent these items, or you can let students use their imaginations. (By the way, wadded-up newspapers make great rocks.)

**Say** **Moses has just died, and it's the Israelites' first day in the Promised Land. Jobi has a new musical instrument, and he's learning to play it. Oh, here comes Mary.**

Look at Jobi and indicate that he's to begin. Then guide students through the skit, giving directions when appropriate. Gather everyone back together, and thank them for participating.

**Say** **Great job—it's important to remember what God has done for us because it makes us thankful for the good things and helps us learn from the hard times.**



**Ask** • **How can you remember, on a regular basis, what God has done for you?** (Go to Bible study more; talk to my friends about it; wear my bracelet from camp this summer; put up pictures from our mission trip in my locker.)

## Researching Thanks

**Say** **The Bible has a lot to say about giving thanks to God. Let's explore God's Word and see what we can discover about the value of being thankful.**

Distribute Bibles, paper, pens, and concordances to students. If you have a limited number of concordances, have students form groups, and give each group a concordance to share. Ask students to look up the word *thanks* or *thankful* to see how it's used in the Bible. Have them look up the verses and write on their papers the one or two Scripture references that stand out to them.

After students have read several verses, ask each person to share the verses that stood out to him or her.

**Ask** • **Why do these verses stand out to you?** (It's hard to be thankful when things aren't going your way, so the verse about being thankful in hard times stands out to me; always having a thankful heart is important, so the verse about that stands out to me.)

• **When have you felt especially thankful for what God has done for you or someone you love?** (I was thankful when God helped my sister get better and put her leukemia into remission; I was thankful when I made the football team; I was thankful my parents decided not to get divorced; I was thankful that I got into the college where I want to go.)

## Scripture List

Photocopy, cut apart, and distribute the following references:

Israelite 1: Deuteronomy 8:7b  
Israelite 2: Deuteronomy 8:8  
Israelite 3: Deuteronomy 8:9a  
Israelite 4: Deuteronomy 8:9b  
Israelite 5: Deuteronomy 8:12a  
Israelite 6: Deuteronomy 8:12b  
Israelite 7: Deuteronomy 8:13a  
Israelite 8: Deuteronomy 8:13b  
Israelite 9: Deuteronomy 8:15a  
Israelite 10: Deuteronomy 8:15b  
Israelite 11: Deuteronomy 8:16a  
Priest 1: Joshua 3:14  
Priest 2: Joshua 3:15  
Priest 3: Joshua 3:16  
Priest 4: Joshua 3:17  
Joshua: Joshua 4:4-7  
Israelite Leader 1: Joshua 4:8  
Israelite Leader 2: Joshua 4:9  
Israelite Leader 3: Joshua 4:17-18

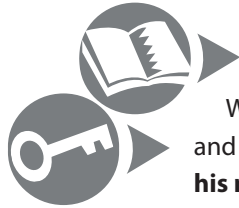
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• **Why is it important to always remember what God has done?**

(Because then you can be thankful; so you can learn from your mistakes; so you remember God.)

Distribute markers and small stones. Have students sit in a circle or form several circles if your class is large.

**Say** Think about something that God has done for you, and write it on the stone I have given you. Then read the verses about thankfulness again, and see if you can find a verse that expresses how you can remember what God has done for you.



When students have finished, have them open their Bibles to 1 Chronicles 16:8, and ask a volunteer to read the Key Verse aloud: **“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.”**

Then ask another volunteer to read just the first phrase (“Give thanks to the Lord”) out loud repeatedly, pausing each time as another student, after thanking God for the experience he or she has noted, places his or her stone in the center of the circle.

After a few students have shared their thanks and placed their stones in the circle, ask the reader to begin repeating the second phrase of 1 Chronicles 16:8: “Call on his name.” Again, have the reader pause between each repetition to allow other students to thank God for the experiences they have noted and place their stones.

Finally, repeat the process with the last phrase: “Make known among the nations what he has done.” Continue until everyone has thanked God and all the stones are in the center of the circle.

### 3 Weaving Faith Into Life

#### *Locating My Jordans*

Give everyone an 8½x14-inch sheet of paper and a pen. Ask students to create five sections and label them as follows: birth to preschool, kindergarten to 3rd grade, 4th to 6th grade, junior high, high school. Note: Adjust these sections to reflect the school district with which your students are most familiar.

Instruct them to write or draw at least one thing in each section to reflect something that God did for them during that season of life. For example, God gave them life, a family, friends; maybe God helped them get into a certain school or learn a sport or hobby that had been difficult. When everyone has finished, read 1 Chronicles 16:8 again in unison.

**Say** If you haven't yet, you *will* someday go through a difficult time. Like the Israelites—after crossing the Jordan and before entering the Promised Land—it will help you in the future to remember what God has done for you in the past. Remembering and giving thanks for God's faithfulness to you will help you be strong and courageous, and it will spread the good news of our good and loving God to the world.



Ask students to stand up with their “timelines” in hand and turn to a partner. Tell them each to share one thing God has done in their lives. When the first person has finished, the partner should respond by saying, “Thanks be to God” before telling his or her story. When both partners have shared, ask students to find a new partner. Do this at least three times, and encourage students to share a different story each time.

### **Ask**

- **How did it feel to focus your story on God? How is that different from the stories we often tell?** (I hadn’t realized how much God has done for me; it felt funny to share my story but really to be talking about God.)
- **How do you think your attitude toward life might change if you remembered to give God thanks more often?** (I’d be more grateful; I’d probably tell more people about God; I think I’d be happier.)
- **Why do you think God asks us to tell “the nations” about what he has done? How can you do that?** (God wants us to be thankful for all he has done; if we’re really thankful, we will want to tell others about the cool stuff God does; it’s scary sometimes, but we can give God credit when we tell others about stuff in our lives.)

Distribute “Taking It Home” handouts (p. 129) to all students, and ask them to each choose one Daily Challenge they will commit to working on this week. Also have them talk for two minutes with someone nearby about their challenge from the previous week. The new Daily Challenges are as follows:

- Before you eat any meal, add one thing to a list of things you’re thankful for. At the end of the week, you’ll be amazed at the little ways God has worked in your life.
- Write an e-mail to someone different each night, telling that person how thankful you are for him or her and his or her role in your life.
- Look through all the family pictures your parents have (this might take a while!). Think about how much you’ve grown. Thank your parents for their role in your life.

Ask students to close by saying together, “Thanks be to God!”

# Cool Stuff God Has Done

Follow your leader's instructions to act out this skit based on the truths found in Joshua 3:1–4:24.

**Jobi:** Hey—come see the new instrument my dad made for me!

**Mary:** *(Comes out of a tent. Seems unenthusiastic.)* That's nice, Jobi.

**Jobi:** You don't sound excited. What's wrong?

**Mary:** I was just remembering Moses.

*(Moses stands up.)*

**Jobi:** Moses was cool. I'm gonna miss him.

*(Moses sits down.)*

**Mary:** Me too. We can't let ourselves ever forget him or the things he led us through.

**Jobi:** You're right. We can't forget Moses.

*(Moses stands up, walks behind Mary and Jobi, and stays there.)*

**Mary:** I've got an idea.

**Jobi:** Uh-oh. The last time you had an idea, I got banished from the camp for a week.

**Mary:** No, really. This is a great idea. It's a way to remember Moses.

**Jobi:** I'm not gonna get in trouble again. I've got chores to do. I've gotta go.

**Mary:** My idea involves your new instrument.

**Jobi:** Really? OK. Let's hear your idea.

**Mary:** Let's write a song.

**Jobi:** I don't know if I can do that.

**Mary:** Just try. We could start by writing down the things Moses said.

**Jobi:** Like what?

**Mary:** Well, he said to remember how God led the people and why he led them.

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:1-2.)*

**Jobi:** I remember. I was just a little kid, but God took care of us—even fed us every day.

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:3-4.)*

**Mary:** And then Moses told the people about the land God was preparing for them.

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:6-7a.)*

**Israelites:** *(Stand up and move toward the part of the room designated as the Promised Land.)*

**Israelite 1:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:7b and points.)*

**Mary:** Wow! Look at all that water!

**Israelite 2:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:8.)*

**Israelite 3:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:9a.)*

**Israelite 4:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:9b.)*

**Jobi:** Yeah, it's an awesome land, all right.

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:10.)*

**Mary:** Hey! This song isn't about Moses at all. It's really about the things Moses told us about God and the things God did!

**Jobi:** You're right. But then, Moses' life was really about God.

**Mary:** Yeah. Moses wanted us to understand why it's important to remember what God has done.

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:11.)*

**Jobi:** I don't understand. Why is it important for us to remember?

**Israelite 5:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:12a.)*

**Israelite 6:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:12b.)*

**Israelite 7:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:13a.)*

**Israelite 8:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:13b.)*

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:14.)*

**Jobi:** OK. We need to include some of the things that God did.

**Israelite 9:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:15a.)*

**Israelite 10:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:15b.)*

**Israelite 11:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:16a.)*

**Moses:** *(Reads Deuteronomy 8:16b.)*

**Jobi:** Well, all that stuff was great, but it happened so long ago.

**Mary:** OK, how about what God did yesterday?

**Jobi:** You mean drying up the river just as the priests stepped into it?

**Mary:** Yes, that's what I mean. I thought the river was going to be really muddy.

**Jobi:** I did, too. I figured by the time I finally got to cross, it would be a sea of mud. But it was dry.

**Mary:** I know! You know, everyone always makes such a big fuss about the time God parted the Red Sea, but I think what he did yesterday was even better.

**Jobi:** Well, it was pretty amazing, anyway.

**Mary:** OK, that stuff is pretty good for the verses. Now we need a chorus. What's our theme?

**Jobi:** I think it's about *remembering*.

**Mary:** No, I think it's about *thanks*.

**Jobi:** Maybe it's about both—remembering to say thanks to God.

**Mary:** That'll work. Oh, and we need to be sure to mention what happened yesterday.

**Jobi:** We already did that—remember? We talked about the river drying up just as the priests stepped into it. Wow, you should have seen my uncle the night before. He was really nervous about the river.

**Priests:** (*Stand up and carry the ark over to behind Mary and Jobi.*)

**Priest 1:** (*Reads Joshua 3:14.*)

**Priest 2:** (*Reads Joshua 3:15.*)

**Priest 3:** (*Reads Joshua 3:16.*)

**Priest 4:** (*Reads Joshua 3:17.*)

**Mary:** Actually I was thinking about the altar.

**Jobi:** Oh, yeah. That could be part of the chorus, because the altar was about remembering. Remember what Joshua told the tribe leaders?

**Joshua:** (*Stands up and walks. Reads Joshua 4:4-7.*)

**Israelite Leaders:** (*Stand up and pretend to pick up stones.*)

**Israelite Leader 1:** (*Reads Joshua 4:8.*)

**Israelite Leader 2:** (*Reads Joshua 4:9.*)

**Jobi:** Mary, you know we started out writing a song about Moses. But the song is really about God. Let's make it a song of thanks to God.

**Israelite Leader 3:** (*Reads Joshua 4:17-18.*)

"Do you think the way to tell the story of the Christian journey is to describe its trials and tribulations? It is not. It is to name and to describe God who preserves, accompanies and rules us."

—Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*



## Faith Journal

What has God done for you and around you this week that you should remember?

## Driving Home the Point

"It is a privilege to see God being glorified in our lives. We are to give thanks always, knowing that we have a God who never makes a mistake."

—Evelyn Christenson, *What Happens When Women Pray*

## Talking at Home

Read Deuteronomy 8:18 with your family, and discuss the following questions:

- **What can you remember that God has done for this family?**
- **What was God's role in getting our family started?**
- **How does God help our family stay strong?**
- **How can we show our thanks to God for all that he has done for our family?**

Suggest that your family design and set aside an evening just for the purpose of giving thanks. For example, your family might design and write thank-you cards to one another and to God, or you might compose a family song together, thanking God for all that he has done.



## Daily Challenge®

- Before you eat any meal, add one thing to a list of things you're thankful for. At the end of the week, you'll be amazed at the little ways God has worked in your life.
- Write an e-mail to someone different each night, telling that person how thankful you are for him or her and his or her role in your life.
- Look through all the family pictures your parents have (this might take a while!). Think about how much you've grown. Thank your parents for their role in your life.

