

Session 12

Across obstacles

Our 5 to 8s may not have to face the River Jordan, but the challenges they face in their lives can seem, to them, daunting. It is important to take seriously the issues they share during these sessions, even if from an adult perspective they seem trivial. Help them to realise that they can face these challenges with God's help!

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Opening, Into the Bible* and *Living the life* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Options to open your session...

Remember and praise

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to praise our amazing God

You will need: music

- 1 Ask the children if they can remember something amazing God has done. This could be from the Bible or a story from their own lives.
- 2 Invite one child to share their idea and then sing together a verse from a praise song, such as 'So amazing God' from the *Light for Everyone* CD. Explain that they can praise God with the song for the things they've remembered.
- 3 When you have sung one verse, encourage someone else to share their idea, then sing again. Repeat the song if necessary so all the children who want to can share.

An MP3 for use with this activity is available in the zip folder.

Water challenge

Activity time: 10-20 minutes

Aim: to think about the River Jordan as a challenge

You will need: a large roasting pan, a plastic sheet, water, toy plastic people or animals

- 1 Spread out the plastic sheet over the area you are using. Fill the pan with water and set up the toys on one side of the pan.
- 2 Challenge the children to find a way to get all the toys to the other side safely. Depending on your group size, you could play this in teams with appropriate 'countdown' music.
- 3 Explain that they will find out today how God faced this challenge, and did it with real people – thousands of them!

Aim

To discover that God wants his people to remember the amazing things he does

Bible passage

Joshua 3:1 – 4:9

Ready to use activity

Drawing

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to think about something that is impossible

- 1 Ask the children what the widest, deepest river they have ever seen is. Explain that Joshua and the Israelites needed to get across the wide, deep River Jordan.
- 2 Challenge the children to work out what they think God will do to solve the problem. Encourage them to draw their solution on a sheet of paper.
- 3 Invite anyone who wants to explain their picture to the rest of the group.
- 4 Say that you will all look at their drawings again at the end of the Bible story, and see whether or not their ideas were correct.

Tip for Leaders: Think carefully about the right songs for your group. Include quieter songs as well as lively ones and try using song in prayer times to encourage the children to listen to God. Avoid songs that include words and concepts the children are unlikely to understand or relate to.

Into the Bible – options based on the Bible passage...

Ready to use activity

Bible story with mini drama

Activity time: 15 minutes

Aim: to discover that God wants his people to remember the amazing things he does

You will need: an object covered with a cloth (optional), 12 stones or balls of paper

1 Remember

Tell the children that in today's Bible story God helps his people; he also helps them remember what he has done. Ask if they can remember anything that God has done, in the Bible. Give points or stickers for each story they remember. For a large group, you may want to do this in smaller groups, then share answers all together.

2 Set the scene

Explain that each child can be part of the story. Give out parts according to how many are in your group. With a large group, it might be easier to have children split into groups of eight. For eight children, assign two each to represent the river, priests, people and animals. If you have fewer than eight children, you need at least the river and the priests.

Children being the river should be lying down. Whenever you say 'river', they need to wiggle to be like moving water.

On one side of these children are the priests, preferably holding something covered with a cloth to represent the Covenant Box (or 'sacred chest'). Explain to them that this was the sacred box the Israelites always took with them. It represented God being with them and so it was very special. When you say 'priests', they need to say, 'Carrying the Covenant Box'.

The people stand behind the priests. When you say 'people' or 'Israelites', they must say, 'We're going to the land God promised us!'

Behind them, the children representing the animals should be on their hands and knees. Encourage the children to choose which farm animals to be, and when you say 'people' or 'Israelites' they can make the appropriate noise! Practise saying 'river', 'priests', 'people' and 'Israelites' so the children can practise their parts. Place the 12 stones or balls of paper with the 'river' children.

3 Story

Read the following verses from the Good News Bible (GNB) or Contemporary English Version (CEV), pausing after the words 'river', 'priests', 'people' and 'Israelites' so the children can join in. (The CEV is particularly good for reading out loud. If you do not have this version, you could print the text from www.biblegateway.com. If you use the GNB, note that the term 'people of Israel' rather than 'Israelites' is used and 'Jordan' rather than 'Jordan River'; you may need to adjust your instructions to the children accordingly.)

Joshua 3:1-6: Ask the 'priests' to move ahead of the 'people' towards the river.

Joshua 3:7-16: Get the 'river' to stop wiggling and sit up, to be like the water piling up.

Joshua 3:16; 17: Encourage the 'priests', 'people' and 'animals' to walk through the 'river' to the other side.

Joshua 4:1-9: Invite the 'priests' and 'people' to collect a stone or paper ball from the 'river' and make them into a pile.

4 Remember

Tell the children to come out of their roles. Gather them in a circle so that you can think about the story that was just acted out. Ask: What do you remember about it? What did God do? What did the people do? What does it tell us about our powerful God?

5 Opening activities revisited

If you did 'Drawing' in *Opening activities*, invite the children to look at their pictures and draw a tick or a cross, depending on whether or not their solution for crossing the river was correct.

Bible story with memory challenge

Activity time: 15–20 minutes

Aim: to discover that God wants his people to remember the amazing things he does

You will need: a long coat, a baseboard for plastic building blocks, a clear plastic bottle filled with water, a box covered in gold paper, a toy doll, 12 stones.

1 Quick game

Write the following names on sheets of paper, then place them on the floor: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua. Challenge the children to see how quickly they can get these in the correct order. Older children might like to be timed and see who is quickest, or you could have multiple sets and do this in teams.

2 The story

Story: All the people of God were getting ready to go into the land God had promised Abraham. (*Take out the baseboard and explain that it reminds us of the Promised Land. Invite one child to hold it so everyone can see.*) They were really near the land God promised them, but in front of them stretched the River Jordan – a huge amount of water! (*Take out the plastic bottle of water and give it to another child to hold.*)

The night before crossing the river, Joshua told the people to get ready, saying, 'Tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.' Then God said to Joshua, 'I'm going to show all the people that I am with you just as I was with Moses!'

Joshua knew that God was going to do a miracle to show that he was leading them. He told the people, 'Come and listen to the words of the Lord. This is how you will know that the living God is with you and will save you from all your enemies. The priests who carry the Covenant Box will go ahead of you. Then see what will happen.' (*Take out the box to remind everyone of the Covenant Box.*)

So the priests marched ahead with the Covenant Box. This was to show that God was leading the way! The Covenant Box was so holy that only the priests could touch it, and the others had to stay far away. (*Take out the coat to remind everyone of the priests.*)

The River Jordan was in flood. But as soon as the priests put their feet in the river, the water from upstream stopped flowing! It piled up in a heap far away, so everyone, including the animals, could walk over.

The priests carrying the Covenant Box stood on dry ground in the middle of the river while everyone walked across. (*Take out the doll to remind you of the people.*)

As soon as everyone else was safely across, the Lord told Joshua that one man from each of the 12 tribes must pick up a big stone from the middle of the Jordan and carry it on his shoulder. They set up the 12 stones together to be a sign of the great miracle the Lord had done. That way they would always remember it. (*Take out the 12 stones to remind everyone of the rocks.*) Then the priests came up out of the river carrying the Covenant Box. As soon as they set their feet on dry land the waters of the Jordan came flowing back again!

3 Talk

Ask the children what they thought of the story. What did it tell them about God? Encourage their answers to be based around God wanting his people to remember the amazing things he has done.

4 Remember

Put all of the things away and see if the children can remember them in order, and remember what God was doing at that part of the story.

5 Opening activities revisited

If you did 'Drawing' in *Opening activities*, invite the children to look at their pictures and draw a tick or a cross, depending on whether or not their solution for crossing the river was correct.

More on this theme

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

- **Session 10** Power with you, Joshua 1
- **Session 11** Help for the spies, Joshua 2
- **Session 13** Breaking the walls, Joshua 6

Living the life – options to help live God’s way...

Remember and thank

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to remember and thank God for what he has done for us

You will need: a stone (optional)

- 1 Invite the children to lie in a star formation – on their tummies with their heads in the middle of the circle so they can hear each other. (If you have a big group, make a few stars.)
- 2 Ask the children if they can think of something God has done in their lives. It may be an answered prayer, or something simple like giving their family a home to live in.
- 3 Encourage them to take it in turns to hold the stone (or any other item – perhaps a Bible) and say a short prayer thanking God for the specific thing they’ve thought of. If they would rather not pray out loud they can pray silently, finishing by saying ‘Amen’ out loud so everyone can join in.

Make a reminder

Activity time: 10–15 minutes

Aim: to remember what God has done (optional)
You will need: stone-coloured paper

- 1 Ask the children what happened to the stones or rocks in today’s story. Explain that every time the people saw the pile of rocks they remembered what God did.
- 2 Give each child a sheet of stone-coloured paper, and invite them to cut out 12 stone shapes. Help them to stick these in a pile on another sheet of paper.
- 3 Challenge the children to remember something about God and to write or draw it on one of the stones. It could be something amazing or just something they know.
- 4 Encourage the children to ask other people in their group or in their church to fill in one of the other stones, and sign it, until they have all 12 stones filled in. Invite them to put their stones somewhere where they will see them this week, to help them remember all that God has done.

Ready to use activity

Game

Activity time: 5–15 minutes

Aim: to remember some things God has done

You will need: statements from page 91

- 1 Explain to the children that God wants us to remember the things he has done. Say that you will read to them some things that God has done, and they must decide if they are true or false.
- 2 Read out the ‘true or false’ statements from page 91, adding more of your own, if you wish. If they think the statement is true, challenge the children to stand up on one leg. If they think it is false, invite them to sit down. (For older children, you may like to have those children who get a question wrong sit to one side, until only one child is left.)

Extra ideas for the session, and beyond...

Invite the children to choose something God has done and write or draw it on a stone. Encourage them to keep the stone in their pocket to help them remember God every time they touch it.

Explain that every time the Israelites saw the pile of rocks, they would remember what God had done. Ask the children if they can think of some things we see every day that can remind us of something God has done for us.

True or false statements

God was friends with Abraham. (T)

God promised Abraham lots of stars. (F)

God made Jacob very good at being a shepherd. (T)

God gave Jacob a wife called Rosanna. (F)

God kept Joseph safe in Egypt. (T)

God kept Moses safe as a baby. (T)

God made Moses' stick turn into a rat in front of Pharaoh. (F)

God made the Red Sea drown the Israelites. (F)

God gave Moses 15 rules for living. (F)

God sent the Israelites little birds called quail to eat. (T)

God made Joshua the leader after Abraham. (F)

God said he would be with Joshua. (T)

God told the people to walk through the river before the priests. (F)

God made the River Jordan pile up. (T)

God told them to take stones from the river to build their houses. (F)