



LESSON 4 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Leads Us

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 1; 3–4

WORD OF WONDER: From Jeremiah 32:17

Almost four years ago, God had a new direction for me in my ministry. I had been settled and comfortable where I was, but He told me it was time to move. It wasn't easy or comfortable to be uprooted from a place I had been for so long. And I wasn't even sure where He was taking me.

Just like the Israelites, I had to trust God. I didn't understand, and I didn't know what was next. So, I wandered, and I wondered, "What are you doing, Lord?"

Read Joshua 3–4 and notice God's very specific and clear directions for the Israelites. They were to put God first as they made their way to their new home. I'm sure they wondered, "What are you doing, Lord?"

Have you asked God that same question? Maybe you're asking it right now. Maybe you are wandering and wondering what is next.

Now read Joshua 1:9. God is faithful. He was faithful to His people and brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. God was faithful to me and brought me to a place better (and different!) than I had expected. God is faithful to you.

God leads us where we may never have expected to go, and when we follow Him, He takes us to places and through seasons that are better (and different!) than any we could have planned for ourselves.

—Kristi McElheney

Children's and Parenting Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

LESSON 4 FOR LEADERS

ISRAELITES ENTER THE PROMISED LAND

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Before Moses died, he commissioned Joshua as the next leader of Israel. Joshua had been serving alongside Moses, and Joshua's faith was strong. He was one of the only two spies who believed the Israelites could conquer the promised land with God's help.

WHAT?

The miracle at the Jordan River was very similar to the miracle God performed when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Crossing the Red Sea was a path from slavery to freedom, and now crossing the Jordan was a path from homelessness to home.

WHERE?

The promised land, Canaan, was bordered by the Mediterranean Sea on the west. The Jordan River was part of the boundary to the east. The Israelites were at Mount Nebo, where Moses had directed them, and they crossed the Jordan into Canaan from there.

WHEN?

Approximately 40 years after the Israelites left Egypt, after an entire generation had died due to the consequence of not trusting God, a new generation was ready to enter the land that God had promised them.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

God is faithful to keep His promises. It was time to take the Israelites into the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God would show a new generation that when they trust Him to lead, He will do amazing things for them.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 4 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Curiosity Activity: Jump over the River

SUPPLIES: long rope or yarn (2), blue disposable tablecloths (1–2), gray paper (several sheets, optional)

Ahead of time, lay two long pieces of rope or yarn on the floor in parallel lines, a few feet apart (like a river). Put the blue disposable tablecloths inside the lines to be the water. You can also set out several sheets of gray paper on the pretend water to be pretend rocks.

Let's play a game to help us think about the part of God's big story that we're going to hear today. In today's story, God's people—the Israelites—were on a long journey when they came to a river and had to get across it. Let's pretend this is a river and try to get across it! First, we'll try to step across it.

Encourage the kids to stand on one side of the river and step to the other side without touching the water. Then encourage them to jump across the river. If you have gray paper stones, you can invite the kids to step on the gray papers and not touch the blue part of the river. Keep your pretend river set up for the God's Big Story.



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Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, we thank You that You are a good, wise, and perfect leader. As we explore Your big story today, help us listen well and learn what You have for us. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will make us more like You as You lead us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible

Ask: What is this called? ***The Bible***

Ask: Why is the Bible special? ***Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.***

Tell the Bible Story

The Big Picture Bible, page 48

The Israelites Crossed the Jordan River

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Who did God make the leader of the Israelites after Moses?** (*Joshua*)
- **What river did the Israelites cross to get to the promise land?** (*Jordan River*)
- **What did the Israelites carry into the river first?** (*ark of the covenant*)
- **Do you think Joshua was a good leader? Do you think God was a good leader for His people? Why?**
- **What did the people do to help them (and their children) remember the great things God did for them?** (*They gathered stones from the river and put them in a pile.*)
- **Why is it important to remember the great things God has done?**
- **What great things has God done in your life?**
- **How does God lead you?**

In God's big story today, we saw how God led Joshua and all the Israelites to the land He promised them. God does what He says He will do. Through this true story, we learn that we can trust God. God leads us like He led His people long ago, and we can follow Him! Let's talk to God now in prayer.

Word of Wonder

WORD OF WONDER

Nothing is too hard for God.

—from Jeremiah 32:17



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LESSON 4 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Game: River Limbo

SUPPLIES: ropes or blue disposable tablecloths (2); long stick such as yardstick, broomstick, or pool noodle

Set up two parallel ropes or blue plastic tablecloth in the middle of the room and choose two people to hold a long stick, such as a yardstick or broomstick, in the middle of the “river,” parallel to the river.

In today’s story, God led His people across a river to get to the promised land. Let’s play a game where we’ll try to get to the other side of the river, as we remember the story of the Israelites entering the promised land through the Jordan River.

Play upbeat music. Have two volunteers stand inside the “river” and hold up the stick waist-level. Have the kids line up on one side of the “river” and take turns walking or dancing under the stick (limbo-style) to cross the river, without touching the stick.

Each time the whole group gets through the river, lower the stick slightly and the kids will walk through again at a lower level. Keep playing until the stick is too low for the kids to go under.

It may have been challenging to get through our pretend river. No matter what we go through in life, we can always trust God to lead us, like He led the Israelites through the river into the promised land!

Younger kids may not be able to go under the stick. Invite them to dance and march across the river while you play music.

LESSON 4 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Responding in Worship: I Can Follow God

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Follow the Stones Sheets

Before kids arrive, print the Follow the Stones Sheets. Lay the pictures on the floor making a path across your room. You can also use the pretend river from the Curiosity and God's Big Story sections, if you made it. If you didn't make it, you can make a pretend river by laying blue disposable tablecloths on the floor. Put the stone pictures in a path next to (or on top of) the river.

Today we learned how God led the Israelites into the promised land. He promised long ago to give His people a special home, and it wasn't quick. They had to wait a long time for that promise. But God kept His promise and led them the entire time. God helped His people and made a way for them to get to the promised land by going through the river. Then God told them to gather stones to remember the good things God did for them. We're going to walk on this path by the river and stop at the stone pictures to pray and thank God for what He has done for us. We'll walk together as a group and stop at each stone to remember, then pray and thank God.

Play music from the Early Childhood flash drive as the kids walk the path. Lead them as a group down the path, stopping at each stone picture. Read aloud the prompt from the stone and encourage the kids to think about what the prompt says, then pray and thank God.



- Stone 1—Psalm 6:4: “Lord, turn to me and help me. Save me. Your love never fails.” **God leads us by saving us and helping us. Think of a time when God helped you.**
- Stone 2—Psalm 23:1–3: “The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need. He lets me lie down in fields of green grass. He leads me beside quiet waters. He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths for the honor of his name.” **God guides us and gives us everything we need. Think of a time when God guided you and provided for you.**
- Stone 3—Joshua 1:9: “...Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the Lord your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.” **God leads us by helping us be brave and strong. Think of a time when God helped you be brave and strong.**
- Stone 4—Psalm 143:10: “Teach me to do what you want, because you are my God. May your good Spirit lead me on a level path.” **God teaches us how to live and do what He wants. Think of a time when God taught you something.**
- Stone 5—Isaiah 52:12c: “The Lord will go ahead of you and lead you. The God of Israel will follow behind you and guard you.” **God goes before you and behind you. He guards you, guides you, and watches over you. Thank Him for leading and guiding you.**

The same God who led His people through the wilderness to the promised land is also leading us. We can thank Him, and we can follow Him. He is the best leader!

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish the activity, pray with them and thank God for leading us.

God, You are the best leader! Thank You for leading and guiding us. Help us trust You and follow You. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: God rescued His people and brought them safely into the land He promised them. God will always keep His promises to you as you follow Him and let Him lead you. May God bless you and draw near to you as He leads you this week!