

Twelve Stones from the River

(Joshua 4)

Introduction

How do you remember important things? (Tie a string around your finger. Write yourself a note.) What are things children your age should remember (Brush your teeth. Practice for a ball game, practice the piano.) How could you remind yourself to do these things? (Put a note on your mirror. Keep your baseball mitt by your door.) What kinds of things can be used as a reminder? (Post-it Note, calendar, notebook, answering machine, etc.)

What are some things that remind you of God's love and power? (The sun, a cross, or mountain.) What are some of the amazing things God has done that you want to remember? (Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. God answers prayer.)

Remembering the ways in which God has shown His power and love for us encourages us to worship Him. What can you do to remember these things?

Today we are going to find out about a way people in Bible times made reminders of important events. Listen to today's story to find out ways we can remember God's power.

Opening Prayer

Father, open our spiritual eyes so that we might really see how good You have always been to us. Don't let us ever forget all the wonderful ways in which you have shown Your love and power in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Remember the wonders he has performed, his miracles, and the rulings he has given. (1 Chronicles 16:12)

Lesson

It had been a big day for Joshua and the Israelites – the biggest and most important day they could remember! The Israelites had lived in the desert for 40 years. And now, finally, they had crossed the Jordan River and were headed into the land God had promised to give them!

But this crossing hadn't been just any old river crossing! What do you remember about what happened when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River? The Jordan River was flooded because it was spring. But when the priests' toes touched the water, God made the water stop! Thousands and thousands of Israelites had scrambled across the dry riverbed while the priests, holding the ark of the covenant (the special chest that held God's commandments), stood right in the middle of the dry riverbed.

Now it was late in the day and all the Israelites, with all their belongings and animals, stood safely on the other side of the river. The priests with the ark of the covenant still stood in the middle of the river. The people must have wondered how long the river was going to hold back.

Joshua 4:1-3

When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, "Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, 'Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.'"

Joshua picked a man from each of the 12 family groups of the children of Israel. He told them to pick up a large stone and carry it on their shoulder to the place where they would camp tonight. God had told Joshua to pile the stones together to make a special marker to help the people remember this fabulous miracle the Lord had done that day. How do you think the men must have felt about going back into the riverbed to pick up rocks?

Once the twelve stones had been pulled from the riverbed, Joshua went down to where the priests were standing with the ark of the covenant and built another monument.

Joshua 4:9

Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day.

Finally, Joshua told the priests to come out of the river.

Joshua 4:15-17

The LORD had said to Joshua, "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed." So Joshua gave the command.

And as soon as the priests and the ark came out of the dry river bed the river started to flow again.

Joshua 4:18

As soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant came up out of the riverbed and their feet were on high ground, the water of the Jordan returned and overflowed its banks as before.

But what about the stones? God told Joshua to build a monument to remind the people of the day's events. God wanted the Israelites to always remember the wonderful way He had held back the river for them. The men laid their stones as Joshua directed them.

Joshua 4:20-24

It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River. Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD's hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever."

Why do you think God want the men to collect rocks from the river bed? What was special about those rocks? The rocks that the men

picked up came from the middle of the river. Normally it would be impossible to get to those rocks because they would be under the water. But God had stopped the flow of the river so all the Israelites could cross safely. Joshua took the river rocks and piled them up to mark the place the Israelites crossed the river. Every time God's people looked at that pile of river rocks, they would remember that God had helped them cross the river on dry ground.

Thinking about the many ways God has helped us in the past helps us believe in His love for the future.

Closing Prayer

Father, I never want to forget your kindness. Please, don't let me take your love for granted. Keep my memory fresh of all the wonderful ways you have cared for me. I want to show you my appreciation each and every day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Memorial Stones

Joshua built a special marker with 12 stones as a reminder of God's power. It reminded the Israelites to worship Him. What is something you could make to remind you of God's love and power?

Give each student a rock. Have students use markers to write or draw reminders about God on the rocks. Students may also decorate their rocks. As students work, discuss ways their reminders can help them worship God.

Pet Rock Alternative**Materials:**

- Acrylic craft paint
- Paintbrushes
- Wiggly eyes
- Glue
- One rock for each child

Procedure:

Set out the supplies. Have each child choose a rock. Invite children to decorate the rocks to look like silly creatures. As the children work, encourage them to tell about times when God has taken care of them.

Let's make our own special pet rocks. As you take care of your pet rocks, they can remind you that God takes care of you every day just as he took care of the Israelites.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

Tip: A student's words and actions are clues to needs and comprehension. Watch a student's facial expression and body language. Listen carefully to his or her words. Avoid letting your mind race ahead to what you want to say next. Instead, respond to a student by rephrasing his or her comments to be sure you understood. By carefully listening, you can determine what concepts need clarifying and what Bible truths need reinforcing.

1. What did Joshua do to help the people of Israel remember God's love and power? How do you think the people responded when they saw the memorial Joshua made?

2. What are some things that remind you of God's love? (Songs about God. Caring parents. Jesus' death on the cross.) What reminds you of God's power?
3. When might children your age worship God? Why? How?
4. How do you think remembering God's love and power might help a child your age in a difficult situation?
5. When are some times that you have been reminded of God's love or power? What did you see or do? What did God do?

Sword Drills

1. Read **1 Chronicles 16:12**. What does this verse tell us to do? What are some things you remember that God has done?
2. Read **Daniel 6:16-23**. How did God use His power to help Daniel in this story? When has God helped you in a hard situation? Thank God for using His love and power to care for His people.
3. Read **Psalms 27:1; 46:1-3**. How did the writer of these verses describe God?
4. Read **Romans 1:16**. How does the Gospel – the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection – show God's power and love? What helps you remember what Jesus did for you?

Other Game Questions

1. Why did the Israelites cross the Jordan River? (To enter the Promised Land.)
2. What did Joshua do to help the people remember God's love and power? (He had the priests carry the Ark of the Covenant before them.)

3. What was special about those particular rocks? (They came from the bottom of the raging river and reminded them of God's faithfulness.)
4. Whose idea was it to stack the stones? (God's)
5. What are some things that remind you of God's love and faithfulness? (The cross, the bible)
6. What other time did God do a miracle with water parting? (Red Sea)
7. What was the name of Israel's leader?
8. How do you think remembering God's love and power might help you in a difficult situation?
9. When might you worship God? (Any time, any place!)
10. Who stood on the riverbed while the water was stopped. (The priests with the ark of the covenant.)
11. Why did God have them stack the stones? (To always remind them of God's power and might.)

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