**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# Crossing the river

### MEETING AIM

To explore how God reminds the Israelites of his faithfulness and to reflect on and remember times when we have seen God keep his promises and do amazing things.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 3-4

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

In this passage, God holds back the water so that his people can cross through the river on dry land. Not only did they need this miracle to get to their destination, it would have also reminded them of the time when God parted the Red Sea to rescue the Israelites from Egypt. In this passage we see God instruct his people to build a memorial to help them, and their ancestors remember the amazing way he had guided them; he knew how quickly they would forget his goodness. We so easily forget the ways God has provided for us, looked after us and answered our prayers. Today’s session provides the opportunity to think about how important it is to remind ourselves of God’s faithfulness.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Gather the children together for a time to catch up, build relationships and reflect on the week just gone. Have people share exciting news such as birthdays, trips or events. You might like to use the following question to start conversation as a light-hearted way into today’s theme: “If there was one thing you never wanted to forget, what would it be?”

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** masking tape or chalk; paper, such as newspaper

Use chalk or tape to mark on the floor: two ‘sides of the river’ with a large distance between them. Split the children into teams and position them on one side of the ‘river’. Provide the groups with pieces of paper to act as ‘stones’ and challenge them to get their whole team across the river as quickly as possible without touching the floor. Make sure to give them fewer pieces of paper than the number of people in their team so they have to work together and problem-solve to get across the gap. Note that the fewer pieces of paper you give them, the harder it will be. If anyone’s feet touch the ‘river’ when crossing, that person must go back to the riverbank and start again.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; large sheets of paper; collage materials

Split the children into smaller groups and allocate each one a passage from the following list. The children should use Bibles to look up and read the passage in order to find out what is happening in their part of the story. Provide the groups with large sheets of paper and collage materials and ask them to create a picture which depicts their passage. If you have a smaller group, you could allocate multiple passages per small group, and conversely if you have a larger group you may need to ask each group to create multiple pictures of one passage.

Joshua 3:1-5 – Camping by the river

Joshua 1:7-16 – The ark in the river, the water stops flowing (not including the part where the people cross)

Joshua 3:16-17 – People cross the dry land

Joshua 4:1-9 – Twelve rocks are collected

Joshua 4:10-19 – River flowing again

Joshua 4:20-24 – Rocks are set up at Gilgal

Gather the smaller teams back together in a large group. In the correct order they should show their picture to the rest of the children and explain what is happening in their part of the story. In doing this you are able to cover the whole passage with the group in an interactive way.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Use the following questions as prompts for discussion. Encourage the children to think about what the passage might be saying to us and how it could be applied to our everyday lives. Try to encourage wondering, reminding them that there is not necessarily one right answer.

* How do you think the Israelites felt crossing the river?
* Are there other stories in the Bible this reminds you of?
* What might God be teaching us in this story?
* What kind of things would you like to remember about what God has done for you?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** rocks (or printed templates); marker pens or paints; worship music and the means to play it

Explain to the group that crossing the river in this way would have probably reminded the people of the time God used Moses to part the Red Sea and helped the Israelites escape Egypt. In today’s passage God asked the Israelites to build a memorial of rocks from the river to remind themselves and future generations of the wonderful thing God had done.

Provide the children with rocks to decorate using paints or marker pens. Encourage the children to reflect on ways that God has been faithful to them in the past, and use this rock as reminder of that when they find themselves facing something difficult. You might like to gently play worship music in the background which speaks of God’s faithfulness, for example ‘Do it again’ by Elevation Worship. As you work, think more about the last question in ‘Chatting together’.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** a large sheet of paper (lining paper is ideal); Post-it notes; pens

Before the session write the word ‘Faithful’ on a large piece of paper or a length of lining paper. Give the children Post-it notes and encourage them to draw or write prayers that thank God for his faithfulness. They might like to think about times when they have felt God close, seen him answer prayer or keep a promise he makes in the Bible. If the children cannot think of an example from their own life, they may choose to draw a story they know from the Bible where God did something wonderful. Ask the children to stick their Post-it notes on the large sheet of paper as a way of saying thank you to God for these things.

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