



# What Do the Stones Mean?

Goal: To mark times of God's activity in our lives.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Joshua 3:14-17; 4:1-8, 19-24

The people of Israel could not enter the Promised Land without crossing the Jordan River. Joshua told the people to select twelve men from the tribes to carry the Ark of the Covenant across the river.

As the men stepped into the water, the waters parted while "all Israel [was] crossing over on dry ground" (3:17). Then God commanded Joshua to take twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan. These were to be signs, so that when "your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?'" they would be told the story of when "the waters of the Jordan were cut off" and the people crossed the river in safety. So these stones were to be for the Israelites "a memorial forever" (4:6-7).

We need symbols to remind us of important events of faith in our lives. The church has the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These represent God's grace given to us in Jesus Christ. We gratefully receive these symbols of our faith. They assure us of God's love and guidance. When we see stones, we, too, can remember the story of the crossing of the Jordan.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

The Israelites had been traveling for so long, always knowing God was with them. Each generation told the next the story of the Exodus so they would never forget their past as they headed to their future in the Promised Land. In this story, stones to mark the crossing of the Jordan would be a visual symbol.

Children experience acts of remembering daily. When a dad or a mom sends them off to school with a hug, a kiss, or a blessing of "have a good day, give a good day," a child remembers that and how much she or he is loved. Rituals at bedtime, of stories and prayers, help children remember God's love and the love of family.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you look around your home, you see objects that are full of memories. Perhaps it is something given to you by a friend or a piece of art that belonged to a family member. You see it, and you pause and remember, just like God asked the Israelites to do with the stones at the Jordan River.

This story provides a great opportunity to invite children to share the things that help them remember God. Be aware of the children who are quieter and more reflective thinkers and need time to respond. Provide space for them to be able to respond.

*O God, help me remember your faithfulness to all your people.  
Help me be faithful to your desire for my life. Amen.*

## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 7, 15, 18

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

blanket or mats

blue sheet or plastic  
tablecloth

Ten Commandments  
and Ark of the Covenant  
from previous session

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace  
Notes (GN) 1**

choice 2: stones  
of various sizes,  
magnifying glass

## Exploring

choice 1: Ark of the  
Covenant, paper bag  
stones from “Guided  
Play” choice 3

choice 2: assorted river  
stones (about the size  
of a child’s fist or palm),  
acrylic paints

choice 3: Ark of the  
Covenant

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

## GN 1 solution:





## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner, and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, obtain the Ten Commandments tablets and Ark of the Covenant used in the previous session. You will use them again in two weeks.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play

Greet children as they arrive, and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain that the children will hear a story about how the Israelites remembered and marked God’s activity in their lives.


Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

**1. Puzzling**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons for the children.

See if they can circle all the items at the bottom of the page in the picture (see answer in sidebar illustration).

**2. Examining Stones**—Encourage the children to examine and talk about the stones. Wonder with the children about where the stones came from and how the stones might be used. The children may enjoy sorting and arranging stones by categories they choose: size, color, shape, texture, or weight. Mention that, in the Bible story, they will hear about a special use for stones.

**3. Making Stones**—Provide paper lunch bags and newspapers. Show the children how to crunch up newspapers and stuff the lunch bags with them. Help them tape the bags closed to make paper bag stones. Make at least twelve stones. Set the stones aside for use in “Hearing the Story.”

 *If transition times have been difficult, consider introducing an object such as a stuffed lamb. Show the children where the object will be next and allow them to follow. Assure them that the object will travel with them throughout the session and that they will see it when they return.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “To the Promised Land”—**SCM 15**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

### Following the Leader

MS L

Stand in a circle, allowing enough room between persons for easy movement. Ask the children to repeat what you do or say. Begin slowly. For example, clap your hands, then wait for the children to copy your movement. Do other easy-to-imitate movements.

Occasionally insert a short sentence or phrase for the children to repeat: “God is love,” “Love one another,” or “God loves me.” If the group follows your directions easily, try a few more complicated movements or phrases.

### Loving God

MS L

While still standing, encourage the children to repeat your words and motions. If children feel confident in the words and actions, invite volunteers to take turns leading the verse.

*Love God (fold arms over chest, then open arms to make a circle) /  
with all your heart; (cross hands over heart) /  
with all your soul; (put arms over head, reaching for the ceiling) /  
and with all your strength. (clap hands twice, stomp feet twice,  
then put arms up as if showing off biceps) /*



### Hearing the Story

LG A L

Open the Bible to Joshua 4 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children they are going to hear a story about how God’s people remembered and marked God’s activity in their lives.

Read **SCM 7**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Invite volunteers to make a river in your space using a blue sheet or plastic tablecloth. Have children place the paper bag stones, made in “Guided Play” choice 3, in the river.

Read the story again. Stop after the sentence that introduces the Ark of the Covenant. Open the Ark and remind the children what is inside it (the tablets with the Ten Commandments). Invite several children to carry the Ark across the river, with the rest of the children following the procession to the other side.



Remind the children that Joshua told the people that, one day, their children would ask, “What do these stones mean?” Invite the children to take turns choosing a paper bag stone from the river. As a child picks a stone, ask what she or he remembers about the story. Encourage them to remember different parts of the story. As the activity continues, children may wish to tell what they remember from any Bible story or anything they remember about God.

## EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

### 1. Acting Out the Story



Listen to children with undivided attention so they will know their thoughts and questions are important to you. This will affirm the children’s desire to learn and encourage them to ask other questions.

Have the children take turns acting out the story. Some children could be the priests holding the Ark of the Covenant in the riverbed. Others could be Joshua and the people who carried the stones from the river. Others could be people who had crossed the river safely. You might need to ask questions to move the play along, such as “What did Joshua ask the people to do? What happened next?”

After the children have played out carrying the stones, guide them to place the stones carefully in one place. Explain that Joshua and the other people used stones to build a special place where they could talk to and thank God. Comment that the people could talk to God wherever they were or whatever they were doing. They could talk to God when they were working in the fields, cleaning their homes, or playing with friends. But the stones helped them remember God’s grace in a special way.

Wonder what the people said to God when they came to the stones. Wonder if they were ever afraid and told God about that. Wonder what they thanked God for.



### 2. Making Memory Stones



Cover a table with newspaper. Put smocks or old shirts on the children to protect their clothes.

Comment that people in Joshua’s day used the stones to help them remember God and thank God. Ask the children how they think they could use the stones. Tell the children that they can paint their stones to make them special. When they see their special stone, maybe they will remember God and thank God.

Invite the children to paint the stones as they choose. They probably will not paint recognizable pictures; don’t worry about that. While they are painting, you might say, “Give thanks to God,” and encourage the children to talk about things for which they want to thank God. Invite the children to tell you where they could put their stone at home to remind them to thank God.

Set the stones aside to dry, and give them to the children at the end of the session to take home. You may want to use a hairdryer to speed up the drying process.



**T** *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*

### 3. Following the Leader

LG MS

Invite the children to use the Ark of the Covenant to play “Follow the Leader.” Ask for volunteers to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Other children will walk along behind the box. Play “To the Promised Land.”

You may want to start as the leader. Give instructions such as: Carry the box up high near your shoulders. Carry the box down low near your knees. Carry the box about halfway up near your waist. Walk on your tiptoes. Walk like a band marching. Walk very slowly. Walk faster.

Give every child who wants to an opportunity to help carry the box and to be the leader. Children can learn that they need to work to carry the box, they can take turns being the leader and the followers, they can follow instructions, and they can have fun.

### 4. Coloring Page

C

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “How heavy were the stones?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What are stories about God you remember?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What do you give thanks to God for?”

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Have the children help clean up the space.

Call the children to snack time, singing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor.

If you have a snack together, now would be a good time to have it. Invite the children to repeat your words as you pray.

Thank you, God, for the food before us. /  
Thank you, God, for the friends beside us. /  
Thank you, God, for the love between us. /  
Amen. /

Enjoy the snack.

As the children leave, give each their painted stone and bless them, saying, “Remember and thank God. The grace of God be with you.”

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

Save the Ark of the Covenant with the tablets for use in future sessions.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).











## What Do the Stones Mean?



**God's people remember and give thanks for God's mighty acts.**

