



What Do the Stones Mean?

Goal: To remember God's actions 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

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 7, 15, 16

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

blue and brown blankets
or sheets

Ark of the Covenant and
Ten Commandments
from previous session

12 paper lunch bags

lots of newspaper

Responding

Claiming

boulder shapes cut from
tan or gray construction
paper

Offering

12" x 12" concrete paver
stone, acrylic paints and
small paintbrushes or
paint pens, clear sealer,
river rock for each child,
paint pens

Extra

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

If you did “Offering God’s
Grace” in the previous
session, collect the
bags of food and make
arrangements for delivery.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

A **LG** **B**

Play “To the Promised Land” as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set the scene by creating a riverbank scene with blue and brown blankets or sheets. Place the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments inside of it on one side of the riverbank. Have the children fashion twelve stones to place in the river by filling twelve paper lunch bags with crumpled newspaper and taping them closed with duct tape or packing tape.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

LG *Look for opportunities for children to practice leadership and generosity, such as helping set up the space, passing out papers, holding visual aids, or leading the other children in line.*

Singing

MS

Play and sing “To the Promised Land”—**SCM 15**. Invite the children to march around the room while they sing. Make sure that their journey ends on the same side of the river as the Ark.

Praying

F **LG**

Making sure you are on the side of the riverbank with the Ark of the Covenant, ask for two volunteers to carry the Ark across the river. After the volunteers carry the Ark across the river, have the rest of the group follow and sit on the other river bank in a circle. Place a Bible and a candle in front of you. Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Pray the following prayer.

Dear God, thank you for being with us, guiding us even when we may not see it. Thank you for (*say each child’s name*). Thank you for your story in each one of us. May we share those stories of your love and care with others. Amen.



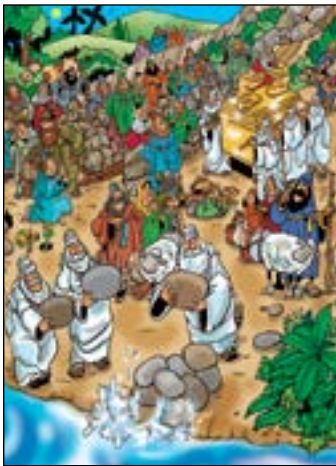
Preparing to Hear the Story

L M

Recall with the children all that God has done for the Hebrew people.

- ▼ They had been enslaved in Egypt.
- ▼ God heard their cry and sent Moses to help them and free them from slavery in Egypt.
- ▼ God gave them the Ten Commandments to help them know how to love God and to love others as they live together in community.
- ▼ After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they are at the Jordan River, ready to cross into the Promised Land.

Explain that water was part of important stories in the lives of the people of God. Wonder aloud what Bible stories in the Old Testament are about God, water, and the people of God (*for example, the first creation story, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea*). Crossing from one thing to another is also an important story in their lives. The Hebrews were crossing from the wilderness into the land God had promised them. As was their custom, they would mark important moments with a physical reminder and by telling the stories of God and God's actions in their lives.



Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Joshua 3 in the Bible so that they know the story comes from the Bible. Place the open Bible in the worship space. Read **SCM 7** or listen to the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

In the story, the people build a stone marker. Invite the children to build a stone monument to recall the story. Have them take turns bringing a stone from the river to build the monument and tell the story in order of its events (*first this happened, then this, and so on*). Record these major events of the story on newsprint.

Ask the group to come up with a simple movement to go with each step in the story. For example, camping (arms form an arch to represent a tent), priests going through the camp with instructions to watch the Ark of the Covenant (pointing motion), and so on.

Read the story again as the children participate by making the motions they created.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C

Ask the children what remembering a story together does for the event, for the people involved in the event, and for those who hear the story later when it is retold. Wonder together why Joshua told the people to build a memorial of stones.



Tell the children that the Hebrew people often used stones or other objects to tell the story of God’s action in their lives. Ask them if they know of any objects we use today to remember and tell stories of God’s action in our lives. Suggest that water in baptism and bread and juice in Communion are ways that we, as a community, tell the story of God’s action in our lives with physical elements.

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play, listen to, clap, and sing “Bim Bam”—SCM 16. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace



Before the session, cut large boulder shapes from sheets of tan and gray construction paper. The shapes should not be identical. Make one boulder for each child.

Remind children that the stone monument would help teach future generations the story of God’s good gifts in the lives of Joshua and the people.

Tell the children they are going to make a stone monument so that others may see it and know about God’s actions.

Give each child a tan or gray construction paper boulder shape and invite them to draw a picture of a time God was with them (such as during a scary storm, a happy time, in a special place, or while they were praying). They might think about something God has done for them (such as giving them a loving family, good friends, or Jesus). As an example, name something God has done for you.

After the children have finished drawing, have each child tape or glue their boulder to the side of one of the paper bag stones you used in the river. Make more paper bag stones as needed. Stack the stones in a hallway or other public space in the church. Make a sign for your monument saying, “We remember God in our lives.”

Praying God’s Grace



Use a motion prayer to guide the children in remembering God’s activity in their lives. Invite the children to follow your movements and repeat your words.

Loving God, / (place hands over heart, move arms outward)
 you were with me when I was born / (raise arms up)
 and took my first breath. / (take a deep breath)
 Thank you, God. / (clap hands, move arms outward)
 You were with me when I began to move / (wiggle body)



and discovered my world. / (place hand like a salute and look around)

Thank you, God. / (clap hands, move arms outward)

You are with me when I'm afraid / (hold self and shake)

and when I'm happy. / (jump and wave arms)

Thank you, God. / (clap hands, move arms outward)

You are always with me / (arms out wide, move arms and cross hands over heart)

Thank you, God. / (clap hands, move arms outward)

Encourage the children to add lines and actions to the prayer representing times God is with them.

- L** Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty with listening activities. Help with focus by using verbal and action prompts.



Offering God's Grace

TD F LG M A T

Before the session, prepare a surface for painting on the paver stone by painting a layer of a light color acrylic paint or clear sealer. Talk with the appropriate committee to see where you may place the stone—in a garden area, along a pathway or sidewalk, inside in a gathering area, and so forth. Obtain river rocks, one per child.

Tell the children that each of us is like a memorial stone, a story of God's love and care in the world. Invite the children to create a memorial for the church with their names on it as a remembrance of their lives and stories in this place. Explain that they will also create a memory stone to take home.

Have each child choose a river rock to decorate. Suggest to the children that the stones can serve as reminders of God's grace. Encourage them to incorporate their name and other designs representing God's activity in their lives. This may be a communal action like baptism or Communion, or it could be a personal story. Wonder together what symbols or designs could be used to remember baptism, Communion, or their story.

While the children are working on their personal memory stones, have each child write his or her name on the concrete stone using a paint pen or a small paintbrush and acrylic paint. Invite them to add a simple symbol or design by their name. When everyone has added their name and symbol, write "We are part of God's story" on the stone. When the paint is completely dry, seal it with clear sealer.

If there is time, place the stone in a designated spot. If it is not dry yet, show the children where it will be placed. Encourage them to invite family and friends to view the memorial. Suggest they recount the Joshua story to explain the reason for making the memorial.



Encourage them to place their stones in a place in their homes to remember God's love.

Extra Activity

F M VI

Tell the children that they will play a memory game. Have the children form pairs. Hand each pair of children two copies of GN 1 and two sheets of the same color construction paper. Have them glue the sheet of cards to the construction paper then cut the cards apart.

While the children work, ask them to describe each of the pictures.

Have each pair shuffle their set of cards and lay them face down in a grid, six columns across, and four rows down.

Tell the children to take turns turning two cards over, trying to find pairs. If a pair is found, the child takes another turn. If no pair is found, the cards are returned and the next player takes a turn. Continue playing until all pairs are found. To make the game more difficult, have four children play together with four sets of cards and a larger grid.

Keep the Ark of the Covenant for the session in Fall 9.



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

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

C B

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather in a circle and invite the children to tell one thing they will remember from today's session about remembering. Wonder together how God was a part of this session today.

Close by saying to everyone, "Go and pay attention to God's activity in your lives, and tell these stories." Then send each child with a blessing, "(Name), rejoice! God is always with you."

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.

