

Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

Family Legacies

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 8:35-39

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Joshua 4

PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 4:14-24

KEY VERSE

When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. (Joshua 4: 21-22, KJV)

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“In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’” (Joshua 4:21-22, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Adhere to the instruction to remember God’s saving actions.
- Recognize memorials and rituals established to commemorate God’s goodness.
- Fully understand God’s steadfast love for us.

*Key Terms

Camped (verse 19)—Hebrew: *chânâh* (khaw-naw’): pitched tents, dwelled, rested; “encamped” (KJV).

Command (verse 16)—Hebrew: *tsâvâh* (tsaw-vaw’): to charge, appoint, ordain, give charge over, set in order.

Covenant (verse 18)—Hebrew: *berîyth* (ber-eeth’): a treaty, alliance, league, ordinance, pledge. God’s covenant with the Israelites included making Israel God’s treasured possession.

Stones (verse 20)—Hebrew: *’eben* (eh’-ben): weights; sacred objects (as memorials); plummets. Twelve stones were taken from the Jordan to be used as a reminder to the Israelites of how they crossed the river on dry land.

Waters (verse 18)—Hebrew: *mayim* (mah’-yim): watercourses; streams of water.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Family stories can shape how we see ourselves. Many people remember hearing grandparents talk about the old days and how they had to travel or work through hardship. These stories become like an inheritance, reminding us where we come from and what values matter most. Today, many families keep memories through photographs, keepsakes, recordings, or spoken traditions that are passed down from one generation



The Biblical Context

Joshua 4 records a key moment in the Israelites' journey into the Promised Land. After God held back the Jordan River so the people could cross on dry ground, Joshua chose twelve representatives, one from each tribe, to gather stones from the riverbed. This act preserved the memory of what happened and served as a shared confession that God saved and carried them forward (Wray Beal, 73-75). Joshua set the stones at Gilgal as a memorial, marking God's faithfulness at a turning point. The memorial turned a miracle into a message for all.

In Israel's story, memorials helped the community remember the past in light of God's covenant promises (Brueggemann, 120-122). The stones at Gilgal stood as a public sign that the people's identity and future rested on God's continuing presence and guidance. The story was meant to be told again and again to offer remembrance of God's power and faithfulness. Joshua 4 shows how remembrance, storytelling, and worship practices shape the spiritual life of God's people..

to another. These practices keep us connected to our roots and to those who came before us.

The Israelites relied on similar practices. Standing at the Jordan River, they experienced a monumental act of God, crossing over on dry ground into the Promised Land. This moment was not just a historical event but a spiritual milestone that taught them and future generations about God's power and faithfulness. To help them remember, Joshua instructed twelve men to take stones from the riverbed and set them up at Gilgal.

These stones served as a visible reminder for parents and children alike. When future generations asked, "What do these stones mean?" Families would have an opportunity to share the story of God's deliverance. As you study this lesson, consider how your own stories of faith can inspire and strengthen those who follow.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

God Confirms Joshua's Leadership (Joshua 4:14-18)

KJV

14 On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of

the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

NIV

14 That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him all the days of his life, just as they had stood in awe of Moses.

15 Then the LORD said to Joshua,

16 "Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant law to come up out of the Jordan."

17 So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."

18 And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.

These verses show God confirming Joshua's leadership in a way the whole community can see. On that day, the Lord "magnified" Joshua before the Israelites, and the people stood in awe of him, much as they had stood in awe of Moses. The point is not that Joshua replaces Moses as a celebrity, but that God remains faithful from one season of leadership to the next (Burch & Dozeman, 587-589). Joshua's authority is grounded in God's call and God's presence, not in personal charisma or a title.

The ark is central in this scene. The priests carry the ark out of the Jordan at God's command, and the river returns to its flood stage as soon as their feet touch dry ground. This teaches the people that God's presence makes the crossing possible (Burch & Dozeman, 590). The ark is not a lucky object, and the priests are not performing a magic trick. Instead, God is showing the community that the Lord is active, powerful, and able to lead them forward.

Many of us have watched leadership change in a family, a church, or a workplace, and we know how uncertainty can rise. Joshua 4 reminds believers that God does not abandon God's people when a leader changes. God equips those God calls, and God's work continues through obedience. God's presence provides stability, trust, and direction for the community and through these provisions God calls us to pray for our leaders, to follow with unity, and to keep our focus on the God who leads us all.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How have you seen God affirm a leader in your life or community? What qualities helped you recognize God's presence working through them?

Stones That Teach Us to Remember (*Joshua 4:19-22*)

KJV

19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

NIV

19 On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.

20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

21 He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?'

22 "tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'"

After the crossing, the people camp at Gilgal, and Joshua sets up twelve stones taken from the Jordan. Those stones become a memorial, a visible reminder that God made a way when there was no way. Memorial stones were used to help God's people remember what the Lord had done and to reflect on how those acts shaped their life with God (Wray Beal, 76). Joshua also explains the purpose of the memorial. One day, children will notice the stones and ask, "What do these stones mean?" That question opens the door for parents and elders to tell the story. The stones themselves are ordinary, but they point to an extraordinary

moment. They represent God's power and God's faithfulness. Remembrance is not only personal. It is something a community practices together. When people regularly remember God's faithfulness, they are less likely to forget God when life is comfortable and less likely to lose hope when life is hard (Brueggemann, 122-124). Stories of God's help strengthen the next generation before they face their own trials.

As believers in the twenty-first century we are to build simple "memorials" of God's work. It might be a written testimony, a family tradition, a song, a photo, a date circled on a calendar, or a quiet prayer of thanks. The goal is not to collect objects, but to keep God's faithfulness in view and to pass that faith forward with love.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are specific situations in your life that have led you to pause and remember God's faithfulness in your life? Share it with someone as encouragement today.

Remembering God for the Generations to Come

(Joshua 4:23-24)

KJV

23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:
24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

NIV

23 "For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.

24 "He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

Joshua closes the memorial story by explaining why God dried up the Jordan. First, the miracle was meant to reveal God's power to "all the people of the earth." God was not only helping the Israelites; God was also making God's name known to the nations (Chapman & Coogan, 202). The crossing of the Jordan echoes the earlier crossing of the Red Sea, showing a consistent pattern of deliverance in Israel's history.

Second, the event was meant to shape the hearts of God's people "for ever." To "fear the Lord" does not mean to live in panic, but to live with deep reverence, worship, and respect. Joshua is teaching the people that remembering God's mighty acts should lead to lifelong trust and obedience. When communities remember what God has done, they grow in identity, gratitude, and faithful living.

In this sense, remembrance is active. Families retell the story, not to impress one another, but to keep faith alive and to prepare the next generation to trust God in new challenges. The memorial stones turned one day's miracle into a lasting lesson. When we share how God has helped us, we strengthen faith in our homes, encourage the church, and offer hope to those who are searching. Consider choosing one story of God's help and telling it this week. Keep it simple, honest, and God-centered, so others can see the Lord at work.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Who in your life needs to hear how God has worked for you? How could sharing your story strengthen their faith or spark hope?

A Closing Thought

The twelve stones at Gilgal remind us that remembering God's faithfulness is part of living as God's people. Israel learned to tell the story so future generations would trust God's power and love. Today we are invited to preserve and share the ways God has worked in our lives, in our families and churches. Memorials, whether large or small, can anchor gratitude, strengthen faith, and encourage others to seek the Lord with hope and confidence.

Your Life

Think about a moment when you clearly experienced God's help or guidance. Consider writing it down, sharing it with a loved one, or creating a simple reminder that helps you remember God's faithfulness. This week, revisit that memory and thank God for the ways He continues to shape your journey.

Your World!

Share a story of God's faithfulness with someone who feels uncertain or discouraged. Your testimony can offer a glimpse of God's power and presence. Use it to strengthen your own walk with Christ and to invite them to consider the hope and strength found in relationship with Jesus.

Closing Prayer

God of our past and future, help us remember Your faithfulness and tell it to others. Shape our families with gratitude and trust as we follow You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, September 20, 2026, is "Fighting among the Nations." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 108, the Background Scriptures are Joshua 6; 8:26; 10:28-43; 11:1-23; Deuteronomy 7:1-26, and the Printed Passage is Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, September 14	"Live as God's Treasured Possession"	(Deuteronomy 7:1-11)
TUESDAY, September 15	"God Will Love, Bless, and Multiply"	(Deuteronomy 7:12-26)
WEDNESDAY, September 16	"Strengthened in Every Circumstance"	(Philippians 4:10-19)
THURSDAY, September 17	"Armed for Spiritual Warfare"	(2 Corinthians 10:1-5, 15-18)
FRIDAY, September 18	"Christ Has Conquered the World"	(John 16:23-33)
SATURDAY, September 19	"God Fights for God's People"	(Joshua 10:40-11:5)
SUNDAY, September 20	"God Brings Victory"	(Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23)