

Remembering God's Mercy



SABBATH—OCTOBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 3:1–5; Numbers 14:41–44; Joshua 3:6–17; Joshua 4; Judges 3:7; Matthew 3:16, 17.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Lord your God caused the water to stop flowing. The river was dry until the people finished crossing it. The Lord did the same thing for us at the Jordan that he did for the people at the Red Sea. Remember that he stopped the water at the Red Sea so we could cross. The Lord did this [miracle] so all people would know he has great [amazing] power. Then they will always respect the Lord your God’ ” (Joshua 4:23, 24, ICB).



A policeman turned his lights on behind John's car. John pulled his car over to the side of the road.

A POLICEMAN turned his lights on behind John's car. John pulled his car over to the side of the road. Then John remembered he left his driver's license at work. John explained to the policeman what happened. The policeman asked John about his job. John said he was a professor. Then the policeman gave John a ticket. The policeman told John not to think of the ticket as punishment.

The policeman said, “When people want to learn something, they pay money for school. This ticket is the money you must pay to learn to remember your license when you drive. Have a good day, professor!”

As humans, we often forget things. We forget to water the plants or to wish someone happy birthday. But if we forget our spiritual needs, we can get in worse trouble than getting a ticket. Our everlasting life is in danger.

This week, let's study about the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. What can we learn from their experiences?

CROSSING THE JORDAN
(Joshua 3:1–5 and Numbers 14:41–44)

Why did God ask the Israelites to prepare for the things that were about to happen? Read Joshua 3:1–5 and Numbers 14:41–44 for the answer.

In Joshua 3:1–5, we read about the ark of God’s promise for the first time in the book of Joshua. Before this time, where else does the Bible talk about the ark? Moses talks about the ark, together with God’s holy tent (Exodus 40:21). Moses also talks about the ark and Israel’s journey from Sinai (Numbers 10:33–36). We read about the ark when the Israelites try to start winning the Promised Land and fail (Numbers 14:44). The ark was the most holy object in the Israelite holy tent. Three things were kept inside the ark. Each of these things showed Israel’s special relationship with God: (1) The Ten Commandments; (2) Aaron’s special stick; and (3) a jar of manna or bread from heaven (Exodus 16:33; Hebrews 9:4).

Israel did special things to get ready to cross the Jordan. The people also took the ark with them. These things helped the Israelites remember that God was leading them. They would win only if they followed God’s plan and schedule. The Bible says that God sits on His throne above the angels that cover the ark of God’s promise (Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89). The ark follows God. When God moves, the ark moves with Him. God enters Canaan in front of the Israelites. God leads His people in the fight to win the Promised Land.

Do you see the word or words in Joshua 3:5 written as “pure [clean]” (ERV), “holy” (ICB, NLV), “set yourselves apart [separate]” (NirV), or “make yourselves ready” (EASY)? In the Hebrew language, this command means the things the priests or holy leaders did to become clean before they served God in His holy tent (Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:1). The Israelites got clean before they met with God at Sinai (Exodus 19:10, 14). The people also needed to become clean before they fought in a war (Deuteronomy 23:14). What things did the people do to get clean? They stopped sinning. In Numbers 11:18, we see this same command to become clean. The people must become clean first. Then God can do a miracle for them.

When Israel crosses the Jordan River, God will prove to His people that they can trust His promise. He will give them the Promised Land.



Each of these things showed Israel’s special relationship with God:

- (1) The Ten Commandments;**
(2) Aaron’s special stick;
and (3) a jar of manna or bread from heaven
(Exodus 16:33; Hebrews 9:4).

THE LIVING GOD OF WONDERS (Joshua 3:6–17)

With God’s help, the Israelites cross the Jordan River. Their crossing is a miracle. What does this miracle tell us about the God we serve? Read Joshua 3:6–17 for the answer.

Joshua 3:5 says that Israel’s crossing is a miracle. The word “miracle” comes from the Hebrew word “niphla’ot.” “Niphla’ot” are the “mighty acts of God” that show His power (Psalm 72:18; Psalm 86:10). Later, the Israelites think about these mighty acts. Then they praise the Lord (Psalm 9:1) and tell other people about Him (Psalm 96:3). Some of God’s miracles include the punishments in Egypt (Exodus 3:20; Micah 7:15), the crossing of the Red Sea, and God’s leading Israel in the desert (Psalm 78:12–16).

Bible writers tell us that God made the skies and the earth. So, God is very powerful. The things He makes cannot limit His actions. So, God can do anything (Jeremiah 32:17). God’s name is wonderful (Judges 13:18). We cannot fully understand Him.

When we compare God with the other gods, we see that they can’t save (Psalm 96:5; Isaiah 44:8). But the God of the Bible is a living God. His followers can trust Him to help them.

God’s special messenger, Zechariah, also used the word “miracle.” Zechariah used this word to discuss Israel’s future after the people came back from Babylon. God showed Zechariah that Jerusalem would be fully rebuilt. Then old people would sit in the streets of the city again. Boys and girls would play there. The people of Jerusalem could hardly believe Zechariah’s promise. The city was ruined. So, how could this miracle happen? Zechariah announced: “This is what the Lord of heaven’s armies says: ‘Those who are left alive then may think it is too difficult to happen. But it is not too difficult for me,’ says the Lord of heaven’s armies. This is what the Lord of heaven’s armies says: ‘I will save my people from countries in the east and west. I will bring them back. And they will live in Jerusalem. They will be my people. And I will be their good and loyal God’ ” (Zechariah 8:6–8, ICB).

Read what Jesus says in Luke 18:18–27. How does Jesus’ answer to His followers help you trust that God is powerful enough to save His people?



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would sit in the streets
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REMEMBER (Joshua 4)

Why did God tell Joshua to put 12 stones in the Jordan River and another 12 stones in Gilgal? What did God want the Israelites to remember when they saw the stones? Read Joshua 4 for the answers.

The stones shall be a “sign.” The Hebrew word “’ot” is often written as “wonder.” The word “’ot” can mean the miracles God does (read yesterday’s study). These miracles include God’s ten punishments against Egypt. The word “’ot” also can mean a “symbol” or “sign.” This symbol or sign shows us Bible truth. A rainbow is a “sign” of God’s promise (Genesis 9:12, 13). The Israelites put blood on the tops and sides of the doors of their houses in Egypt. The blood was a sign (Exodus 12:13) of their faith in God to save them. Most important, the Sabbath is a sign. The Sabbath shows that God made the skies and the earth. The Sabbath also shows us that God is with His people and makes them holy (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12).

In Joshua 4, the stones together make a sign. The stones will help future Israelites remember the miracle at the Jordan River. God parted the waters so that Israel could walk across on dry land. God’s followers often put stones in different places (Genesis 28:18–22). These stones, and other signs, caused people to ask questions about the Lord (Exodus 12:26, 27; Deuteronomy 6:20–25). For sure, the stones in the Jordan River and at Gilgal are powerful signs. They help the Israelites remember their past. At the same time, when the Israelites see the stones, or other signs, they must do more than remember. They must obey (Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 8:2).

Now we understand why God commanded His people to set up the stones. The stones will help the Israelites remember forever the Lord’s miracles for them. Future Israelites also must understand the meaning of these stones. They can keep their faith alive only if they understand the mighty acts of the Lord in the past. Then they will have a living faith, not a dead religion. The same is true for us today. In the end, we need to make our faith our own. No one can believe for us.

What are some of the signs from your own experience? How do they help you remember the wonderful things God did for you?



The stones will help Israelites remember forever the Lord’s miracles for them.

ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW THE LORD LED YOU (Judges 3:7)

Read Joshua 4:20–24, along with Judges 3:7; Judges 8:34; Psalm 78:11; Deuteronomy 8:2, 18; and Psalm 45:17. Why must we remember the mighty things the Lord did for us in the past?

Notice the change from “you” to “us” in Joshua 4:23. The verse says that God dried up the Jordan River for “you.” Who is the “you” being talked about in this verse? The “you” is all the Israelites who just crossed the Jordan River. Compare how this same verse talks about Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea. The verse says that God dried up the Red Sea for “us.” The word “us” means the few people who are alive from the time when God led Israel out of Egypt. When we compare the two crossings, we see that many things are the same. The Israelites who crossed the Red Sea told their story to their children. Their story helped the children understand better their own crossing of the Jordan River.

When we tell our stories to our children, we help them remember the wonderful things God did. Sad to say, when we grow old, we may start to forget things. That is often a part of growing old. But sometimes our problem with remembering is not because we get old. Sometimes we stop thinking or caring about the things God did for us. When we stop, we may put ourselves in danger. So, we must do our best to remember the things God does for us.

We also must remember who we are. We must remember why we are here and the work God gave us to do. So, be sure to take time each day to remember these important things.

Why must we always remember what Jesus did for us? Does anything really matter if we don’t remember? Read 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 and John 14:26 for the answers.

Ellen G. White understood that we must remember the things God did for us in the past. If we don’t, then we may stop serving God in the future: “Do we need to be afraid about the future and the things that will happen? Not if we always remember the way that the Lord led us in the past. We must remember the things He taught us, too.”—*Life Sketches*, page 196, adapted.

How does remembering the things the Lord has done for us make our relationship with Him stronger each day?



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THE JORDAN RIVER AS A SYMBOL (Matthew 3:16, 17)

**“He caused the Red Sea to become dry land.
Then his people walked across the Jordan River!
So we praise him for what he did there!” (Psalm
66:6, EASY).**

When Israel crosses the Red Sea and the Jordan River, a new age in Bible history starts. Both the Red Sea and the Jordan River are symbols. These symbols teach us Bible truth (read Psalm 66:6; Psalm 114:1–7; and 2 Kings 2:6–15). Old Testament verses compare the Israelite’s crossing of the Red Sea with their crossing of the Jordan River. In Psalm 66, the writer of the poem celebrates God’s saving mercy in his life (Psalm 66:16–19). The poet uses the crossings of the Red Sea and the Jordan River to teach us about God’s mercy.

Psalm 114 also compares Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea with their crossing of the Jordan River. Both crossings teach the same Bible truth about God. The Lord led Israel out of slavery and made them free. The Lord led them from the desert into the Promised Land. In Psalm 114 and Psalm 66, the poet uses the two crossings to show change. The poet’s life changed from feeling helpless and poor to feeling healed, safe, happy, and saved.

When God carries Elijah to heaven, that story also happens at the Jordan River. The life of Elijah’s helper, Elisha, also is changed (1 Kings 19:21). When God takes Elijah to heaven, Elisha becomes God’s special messenger to Israel.

Read Matthew 3:16, 17 and Mark 1:9. How do the New Testament writers talk about the Jordan River? What do they suggest that the Jordan River is a symbol of?

Jesus’ work on earth follows the pattern of Israel’s ancient history in the Old Testament. Jesus has experiences that help us remember Israel’s experience at the Red Sea and the Jordan River. God leads Jesus out of Egypt (Matthew 2:14–16). Jesus spends 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1, 2). In the same way, Israel spent 40 years in the desert. Before Jesus starts His public work for God, He is baptized in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9). Later, the book of Hebrews talks about Israel’s crossing of the Jordan. The crossing into Canaan is a symbol for the rest that Christians “enter” into with faith.



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to heaven, Elisha becomes
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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Crossing the Jordan,” pages 483, 484, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Study carefully the experiences of Israel in their travels to Canaan. Also, study Joshua 3 and 4. These chapters talk about how Israel got ready and then crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. We always need to remember the lessons that the Lord taught His people in ancient times. Then Bible teachings always will be interesting and important to us, just as they were to Israel in Bible times.” —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 994, adapted.

“Modern Israel is in danger of forgetting God. When we forget God, we will worship false gods, the same as Israel did in Bible times. Today, Christians worship many false gods. Sabbath keepers worship false gods, too. In Old Testament times, God told Israel to be careful. They must not worship false gods. False gods lead us away from serving the living God. If false gods led Israel away from serving God, they would be under God’s curse. So, Israel must always remember to love God with all their heart, spirit, and might. Then God would bless them in every way. God would remove all disease from them.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 609, adapted.



Study Joshua 3 and 4.
These chapters talk about how Israel got ready and then crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk about the miracle of Israel’s crossing at the Jordan River. What is a miracle? Does it seem to you that God isn’t doing miracles today? Explain.
- ② What can you do to remember the important spiritual truths about God that the Bible teaches? Why is our having a relationship with God so important to our remembering? Also, why must we be careful NOT to build our whole Christian experience on powerful past experiences? At the same time, how can we use our past experiences to help us remember the wonderful ways God worked in our lives?
- ③ How can the Sabbath help us to remember how God helped us in the past? How does the Sabbath also help us understand the promised rest that we will enjoy in God’s kingdom in the future?

SWEATSHIRTS AND TEARS

Tsitsi Zondo didn't want to believe what she saw. It was a dark night in Zimbabwe. But her precious cargo of sweatshirts lay across the highway. She saw people in the road in the dark. They picked up the sweatshirts and then ran off with them.

Tears filled Tsitsi's eyes. Tsitsi borrowed money to buy the sweatshirts in South Africa. Now there was no way she could pay back the loan. Tsitsi had nothing. How would she take care of her children?

Tsitsi prayed. "Lord, You know that I've worked so hard to make my business a success. Now this awful thing happened. Of all the bags on the bus, my bag is the only one that fell open."

Earlier, Tsitsi packed 60 sweatshirts into a large bag. Then Tsitsi stored the bag on the roof of a bus for the trip home. The bus drove from Zimbabwe's border with South Africa to Tsitsi's home in Bulawayo. Halfway during the trip, a passenger got off the bus. The bus driver searched for the passenger's bag on the roof of the bus. The bus driver opened and closed many bags on the roof of the bus. Somehow, Tsitsi's bag didn't close.

The bus started its journey again. After the bus traveled for some time, the driver of the bus stopped when he saw the lights of a car flashing in his side mirror. The driver of the car said the bus was dropping sweatshirts ever since the last passenger got off.

Tsitsi checked her bag on the roof of the bus. She saw that she had only 10 sweatshirts left.

The bus driver knew that he was responsible for Tsitsi's loss. But the driver told Tsitsi, "I'm so sorry. I don't have the money to pay you back."

After Tsitsi prayed, she wiped away her tears. Tsitsi always paid tithe and offerings on the goods she bought from South Africa. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. This money belongs to God. Tsitsi was sure God would take care of her.

In Bulawayo, Tsitsi's friends heard about what happened. Her friends prayed with her at her home. One friend gave her a loan to go back to South Africa and buy more sweatshirts.

Tsitsi accepted the money as an answer to prayer. She went back to South Africa. With the new sweatshirts she bought and sold, she delivered all the sweatshirts to her first customers. Tsitsi made a total of four trips to South Africa to pay back the two loans. But during that time, Tsitsi always had enough money for food and family expenses. She also kept paying tithe and offerings to the Lord.

Tsitsi doesn't understand how God works. But she knows that He always takes care of our needs. Watch a short YouTube video of Tsitsi Zondo at: <https://bit.ly/Tsitsi>.

INSIDE *Story*



Tsitsi's precious cargo of sweatshirts lay across the highway.



Tsitsi Zondo