

# Remembering God's Works

GOD INSTRUCTED THE PEOPLE TO SET UP A MEMORIAL  
AS A REMINDER OF HIS POWER.

## Joshua 3:14–4:9

**3:14** When **the people** **A** broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carried the **ark of the covenant** **B** ahead of the people. **15** Now the Jordan **overflows its banks** **C** throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached the Jordan, their feet touched the water at its edge **16** and the water flowing downstream stood still, rising up in a mass that extended as far as **Adam**, **D** a city next to Zarethan. The water flowing downstream into the Sea of the Arabah—the Dead Sea—was completely cut off, and the people crossed opposite Jericho. **17** The priests carrying the ark of the LORD's covenant stood firmly **on dry ground** **E** in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed on dry ground until the **entire nation** **F** had finished crossing the Jordan.

**4:1** After the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, **the LORD spoke** **G** to Joshua: **2** “Choose twelve men from the people, one man for each tribe, **3** and command them: Take **twelve stones** **H** from this place in the middle of the Jordan where the priests are standing, carry them with you, and set them down at the place **where you spend the night.**” **4** So Joshua summoned the twelve men he had selected from the Israelites, one man for each tribe, **5** and said to them, “Go across to the ark of the LORD your God in the middle of the Jordan. Each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder, one for each of the Israelite tribes, **6** so that this will be **a sign** **I** among you. In the future, **when your children ask** **J** you, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ **7** you should tell them, ‘The water of the Jordan was cut off in front of the ark of the LORD's covenant. When it crossed the Jordan, the Jordan's water was cut off.’ Therefore these stones will always be **a memorial** **K** for the Israelites.” **8** The Israelites did just as Joshua had commanded them. The twelve men took stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each of the Israelite tribes, just as the LORD had told Joshua. They carried them to the camp and set them down there. **9** Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing. The stones are **still there** **L** today.

### Exploring Key Words

- A** The Israelites who had come out of the wilderness and were being prepared to enter the promised land.
- B** Built according to God's design, the ark served as a reminder of His presence with His people (Ex. 25:10-22).
- C** Rainfall and melting snow fed additional water into the river, creating flood conditions.
- D** A city located approximately fifteen miles up the Jordan River.
- E** God had led a previous generation across the Red Sea with a similar miracle (Ex. 14:15-29).
- F** More than 600,000 men, with their families, livestock, and possessions (Num. 26:51).
- G** God had spoken to Joshua before the people crossed the river. He continued to speak once they reached the promised land.
- H** Moses and, later, Elijah used twelve stones to commemorate God's work among His people. See Exodus 28:21; 39:14; 1 Kings 18:31.
- I** The Israelites' first camp in the promised land was at Gilgal (see Josh. 4:19).
- J** The Hebrew word (*'ot*) highlighted a particular event. In this case, the memorial was a reminder of God's miracle.
- K** The Lord highlighted the priority of teaching future generations about Him. (See Ex. 13:14; Deut. 6:7-20; Ps. 78:3-8; Isa. 38:19; Acts 2:39.)
- L** The stones would serve as a lasting physical illustration of God's power and His covenant among the Israelites.
- M** “There to this day” (NIV; ESV). While the book's date is uncertain, the stones were serving their purpose still at the time it was composed.



NOTES

### **Dry Ground** (Josh. 3:14-17)

- God led the Israelites to cross the Jordan River during flood season.
- When the priests carrying the ark of the covenant touched the water's edge, the Lord stopped the river in its tracks. This allowed the entire nation of Israel to cross into the promised land on dry ground.

### **Memorial Stones** (Josh. 4:1-7)

- Once the Israelites crossed the Jordan, God commanded Joshua to send a man from each tribe to gather a stone from the dry riverbed. These stones were used to build a memorial to God's provision and protection for His people.
- The memorial was intended to point future generations toward a deeper faith in God's trustworthiness.

### **Lasting Reminders** (Josh. 4:8-9)

- Joshua and the people obeyed God's command to establish a memorial using the stones removed from the Jordan River.
- The biblical writer affirmed that those stones still testified to God's power when the book of Joshua was written.

### **Summary Statements**

*God instructed the people to set up a memorial as a reminder of His power.*

- We can be sure that God never fails to provide perfectly for His people during their time of need.
- We should establish memorials in our lives that consistently remind us of God's work on our behalf.
- God expects believers to remember and testify to what He has done for them.

### **Memory Verse**

*Psalm 77:11-12*

### **Key Doctrine**

*God*

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.  
(See Exodus 20:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:17.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](http://goExploreTheBible.com).

## ENGAGE

**What are some prominent memorials you can think of? Why are they significant, and what impact do they have on people today? (PSG, p. 28)**

- Archaeologists have found that ancient cultures erected statues and monuments to memorialize significant people and events. These memorials helped future generations understand their identity.
- In the Bible, God often instructed His people to erect memorials. This was so they would never forget Him or that they belonged to Him.
- God always wants His people to remember that they can trust Him in the present and for the future.

**Bonus: What moments in your life deserve a monument because of God’s presence and work?**

## EXPLORE

### DRY GROUND (JOSH. 3:14-17)

**Bonus: When have you encountered a flood? What concerned you the most about the water?**

- Joshua 3:1-13 highlights the ark of the covenant. Israel had built this sacred box in the wilderness following God’s blueprints. Now, Joshua told the priests to carry it “ahead of the people” as they began crossing the Jordan River.
- God was commanding His people to cross a flooded river. Usually, the Jordan was anywhere from three to ten feet deep and ninety to a hundred feet wide. At flood stage, though, the water was significantly deeper and wider.
- When the priest’s feet touched the water’s edge, the river’s flow stopped. The waters rose up just like the Red Sea. As a result, the entire nation crossed into the promised land on dry ground. No one was left behind.

**Why are barriers an important part of our spiritual journey? (PSG, p. 32)**

### MEMORIAL STONES (JOSH. 4:1-7)

**Bonus: What is the danger of not remembering important events in our lives?**

- Everything that the biblical writer recorded in Joshua 4 has to be understood in the light of Joshua 3. God’s miracle at the Jordan River sets the tone for what followed.
- God had commanded Joshua to enlist a man from each of Israel’s twelve tribes to take a stone from the dry riverbed. Now, Joshua fulfilled God’s directive. The stones would be a memorial of what God had done that day.
- On the surface, this might seem unremarkable, but it continues to highlight the obedience of Joshua and all twelve tribes of Israel. The obedience of this generation of Israelites stands in stark contrast to their parents.

**What are some milestones that could remind people of God’s work in their lives? (PSG, p. 34)**

### LASTING REMINDERS (JOSH. 4:8-9)

**Bonus: What are some “tricks” people use to avoid forgetting things?**

- The Israelites’ obedience to Joshua demonstrates how God kept His promise of exalting Joshua in the sight of all Israel so they would know God was with Joshua (3:7). Their obedience also demonstrates that the people recognized Joshua’s commands came from God. Though Joshua is never called a prophet, he would be God’s servant and spokesman to Israel.
- Verse 8 indicates the men set the stones in the camp. Based on verse 9, some scholars think Joshua set twelve more stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests stood. However, most commentators indicate this was likely a reference to the same twelve stones carried to the west side of the Jordan.
- Regardless, generations to come would have the opportunity to learn the meaning of the twelve stones. The writer of the book of Joshua indicated that they still stood as a memorial at the time the book was written.

**How can previous experiences with God strengthen a person’s faith? How can we pass on our faith stories to future generations? (PSG, p. 35)**

## CHALLENGE

Lead adults to discuss how God has been at work within the Bible study group.

**What significant things has God done over the years in your church? How could you as a group share these things with others? (PSG, p. 36)**

Challenge adults to think about specific spiritual milestones where God demonstrated His power and faithfulness for them.

**How could you make memorials of these events in your life to help you remember what God has done and give you opportunities to testify to others of God’s faithfulness and goodness? (PSG, p. 36)**

### FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

### BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 35)

Reflect personally on how a biblical passage applies to your own life

Joshua and the Israelites erected a memorial of twelve stones to help them remember and testify to what the Lord had done for them in the past.

***What specific memorials help you recall spiritual mountaintops in your experience with the Lord? What do you want to remember from those events? What tangible object can you use to help you remember God's work in your life at that time?***

Before the session, create a list of famous monuments. During the session, enlist volunteers to draw one of the monuments on the board. Allow the group to guess what the volunteers are drawing. Emphasize the importance of memorials. Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 35 of the PSG. After a few minutes, discuss the questions included in the activity.

### OBJECT LESSON: STONES

Prior to the session, gather enough small, smooth stones for each adult to have one. Provide permanent markers.

During the Bible study, call for a volunteer to read Psalm 77:11-12, the memory verse for this session. Encourage adults to think of a specific incident in which God worked in their lives and to write a one- or two-word description of the event on one side of their stone as a reminder.

Direct the adults to write "Psalm 77:11-12" on the other side of the stone. Challenge them to put their stone in a location where they will see it often and remember God's activity on their behalf. Encourage adults to spend a few minutes in silent prayer, thanking God for His work in their lives and asking Him to help them remember what He has done and is doing around them.

### WORTH REMEMBERING

The Hebrew word for "memorial" (*zeker*) sheds helpful light on the value of remembering. It brings to mind our tendency to overlook important people or events. In turn, it beckons us to take the time to memorialize them. God doesn't forget, but He prompts us to establish memorials.

God established memorials long before He led Israel across the Jordan River. After destroying the earth with a flood, His covenant with Noah included a rainbow as a memorial (Gen. 9:1-17). Afterward, when His people saw a rainbow, they would remember His promise.

When God called Moses, He shared His name (*Yahweh*) along with the command to deliver His people from Egypt. His name helped Moses remember that He existed eternally and had complete authority over all existence. Across the decades, Moses came to see that remembering God's name was worthwhile. In a sense, it served as a memorial (Ex. 3:13-15).

As Moses prepared the Israelites for the exodus, God instructed him to establish the Passover meal. The Lord gave specific details about the meal and how His people should eat it. Also, He instructed them to

take the Passover meal every year at the same time. In fact, He told Moses to make Passover a permanent memorial for generations to come (Ex. 12:24-28). Every time the Israelites shared this meal, they would remember how God delivered them from slavery.

Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover meal mere hours before His arrest. During the meal, He instructed them to remember the bread and the cup in a way that pointed to His death (Mark 14:22-26). Later, the apostle Paul referred to what Jesus did at the Passover meal as the Lord's Supper. Also, he directed believers to take it as a memorial to the crucifixion of Jesus as well as His promise to return (1 Cor. 11:25-26).

As believers, remembering God's works and God's ways is a vital part of our walk with Him.

### BONUS CONTENT



#### Acts of God

Learn more about the powerful acts of God experienced by the Israelites in the books of Joshua and Judges.