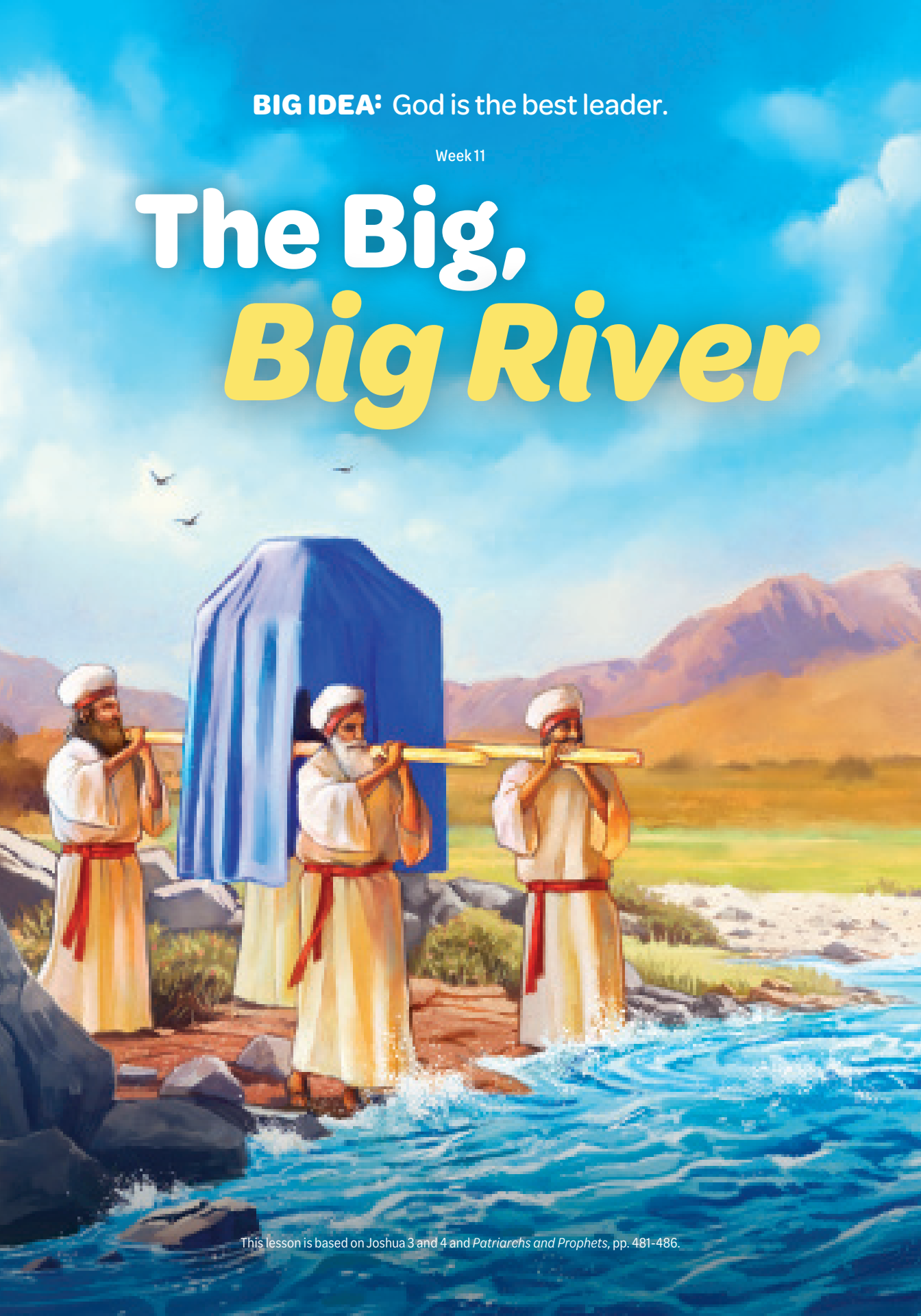
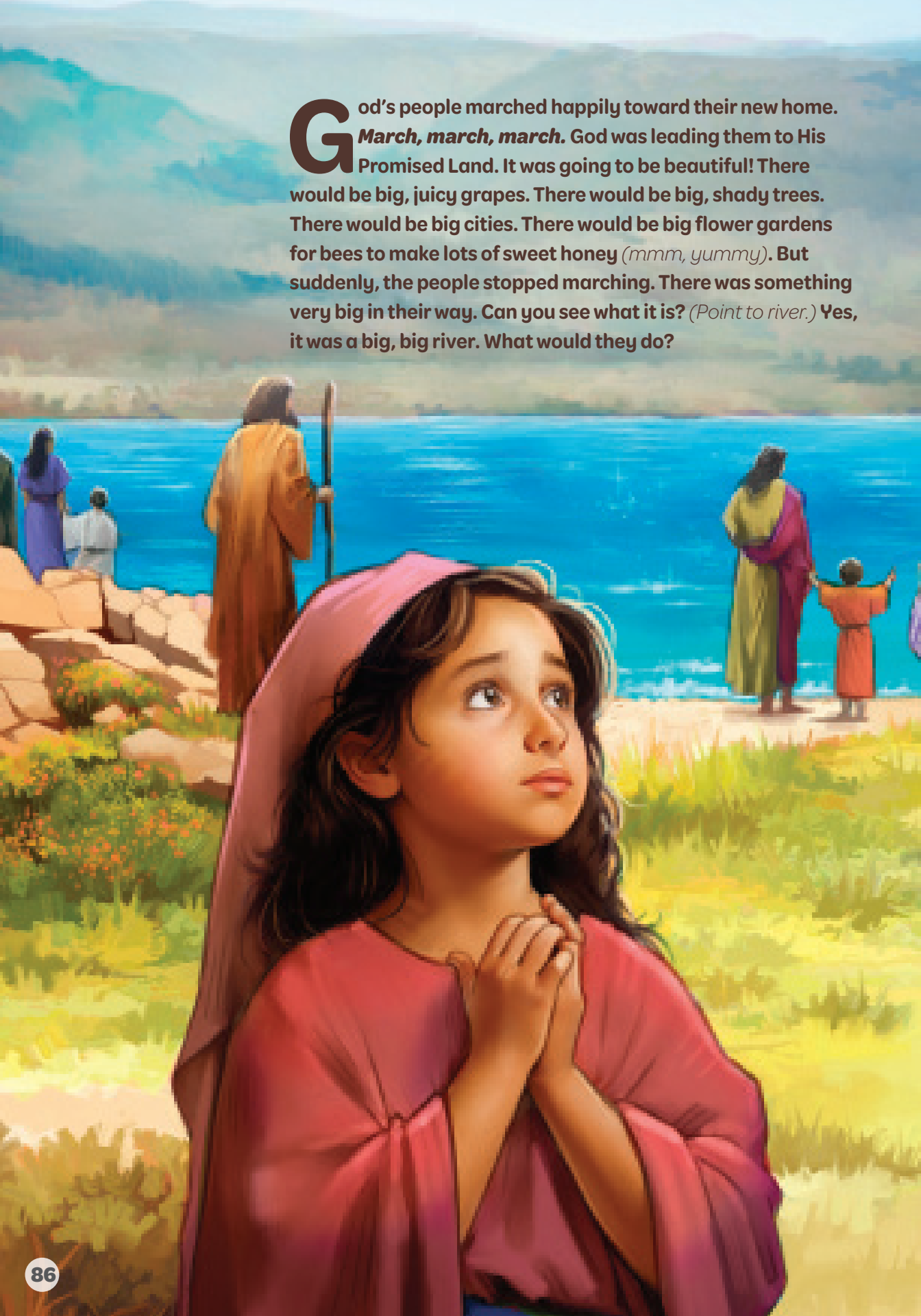
BIG IDEA: God is the best leader.

Week 11

The Big, Big River



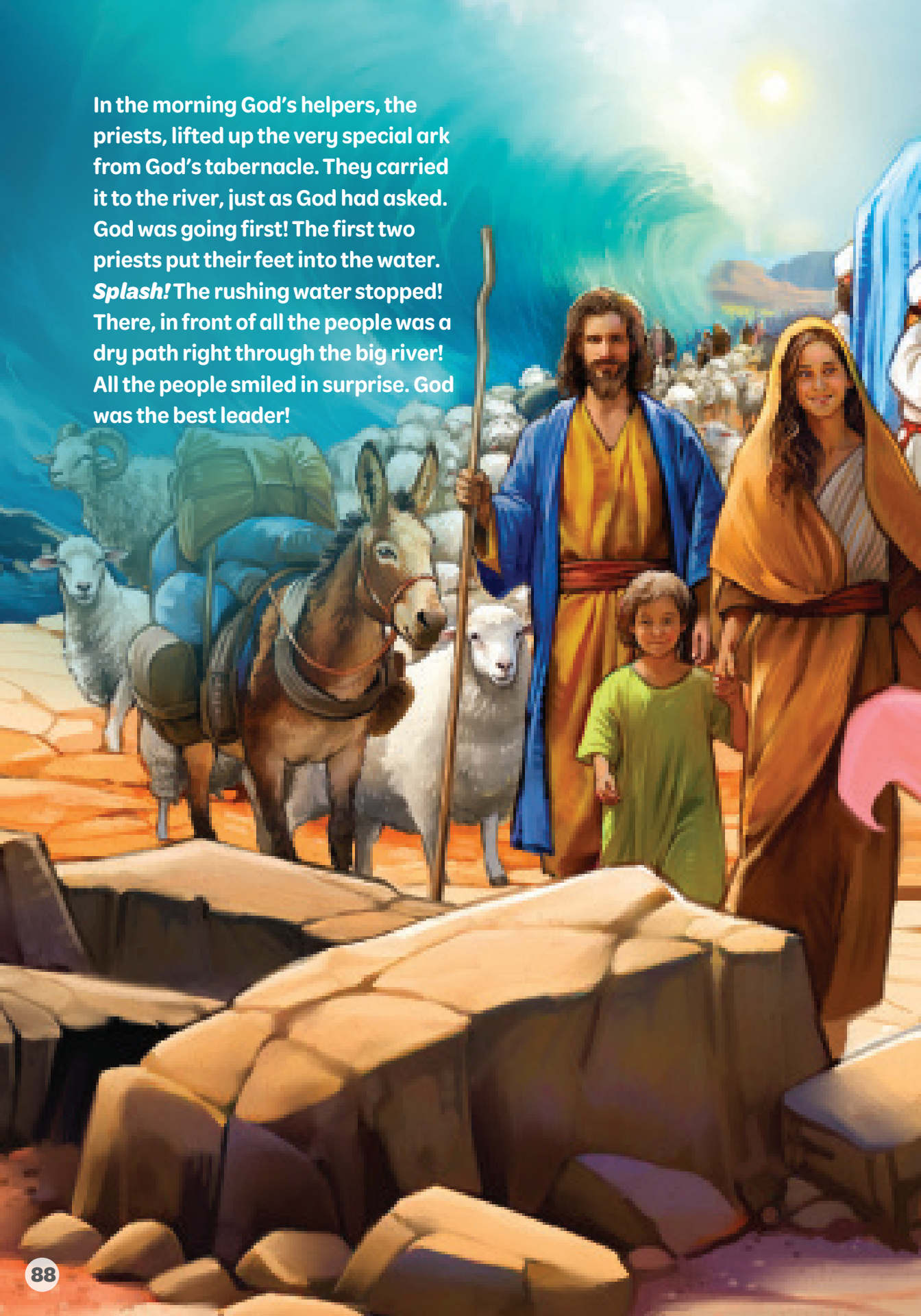
This lesson is based on Joshua 3 and 4 and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 481-486.



God's people marched happily toward their new home. ***March, march, march.*** God was leading them to His Promised Land. It was going to be beautiful! There would be big, juicy grapes. There would be big, shady trees. There would be big cities. There would be big flower gardens for bees to make lots of sweet honey *(mmm, yummy)*. But suddenly, the people stopped marching. There was something very big in their way. Can you see what it is? *(Point to river.)* Yes, it was a big, big river. What would they do?



The people looked at the big River Jordan. They couldn't jump *over* it. It was too wide *(stretch out arms)*. **They couldn't walk *around* it. It was too long** *(stretch out arms)*. **They couldn't walk *through* it. It was too deep** *(stretch arms up and down)*. **They couldn't even float *on* the fast river. They had no boats. They shook their heads** *(shake head)*. **They couldn't cross the big river. But God knew how to get the people to the other side! He told Joshua how, and Joshua smiled at God's words. He told the people that tomorrow God would do "amazing things"** (Joshua 3:5, ICB).



In the morning God's helpers, the priests, lifted up the very special ark from God's tabernacle. They carried it to the river, just as God had asked. God was going first! The first two priests put their feet into the water. ***Splash!*** The rushing water stopped! There, in front of all the people was a dry path right through the big river! All the people smiled in surprise. God was the best leader!



The priests took the ark to the middle of the river and there they stopped. They waited while all the people crossed over to the other side. The girls and boys, mommies and daddies, aunties and uncles, all walked through the river on dry ground! God's tabernacle home didn't get wet. Their tents didn't get wet. Their animals didn't get wet. And all the people stayed nice and dry too. God had helped them cross the big river!

The priests crossed the river too, holding God's beautiful golden ark. Then, *swish, swosh. Splish, splash.* All the water came rushing down the river again. The river was wide *(stretch out arms)***. The river was long** *(stretch out arms)***. The river was deep** *(stretch arms up and down)***. But the river had not been too big for God. He can do anything! He would keep helping His people, always. He is the best leader. They just needed to trust God and follow Him.**

(Say together) **Thank You, Jesus, for leading me! I want to follow You!**



play throughout the day

Explore

During bathtime, remind your child about the story of crossing the Jordan River. Using the water in the bath, try to make a dry space in the water. Can you do it? Can you stop the water in the middle? No! God did an amazing miracle to keep His people safe.

Learn

Trace around your feet and put 10 sheets of paper behind your drawing. Cut them out so that you have lots of feet. Place them on the floor around the house (within a child's step distance). Invite your child to follow your footsteps and jump to each footprint. Share how this was a fun way that you led them. God led His people too! He used His special cloud to guide them. He made a dry path in the middle of the river too. Thank God together.

Create

Share how the Israelites thanked God for helping them cross the big river. Make a little booklet by folding a piece of paper a few times. Draw pictures together of the things you are thankful for. Write "My Thanks Book" on the front. Each day, add something new, and thank God together.



Pray

In worship, take turns leading the family in a game of follow the leader. Give everyone in the family a turn at leading. Share how God is the best leader! Ask God to lead your family. Thank Him for His care.

Extension weekly memory verse: "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

For You, Parents



Imagine you are Joshua, the new leader of Israel. You know these people well—you've spent 40 years in the desert because of the disobedience of their parents. You have seen how they squabble and complain, like tired children on a long car trip. Moses needed great patience to lead them. Now it is your turn to lead. Imagine the huge weight and responsibility this role would bring.

God never leaves us to carry our burdens or responsibility alone. God encouraged Joshua by saying, "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. . . . Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:5, 9).

What a beautiful promise! And how reassuring it would have been as he stepped up to the Jordan River knowing he had God on his side.

This promise is not just for Joshua but for us too! As a parent you have been tasked with the huge responsibility of leading your family. You too bear the brunt of complaining and whining, little people's emotions, and watching children choose to disobey. There may be days you doubt yourself and your abilities as a leader for God. Remember that God is saying to you, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you." Take heart, take comfort, and take joy in knowing that the God of the universe will help you as you guide the children He has given you.