

MEMORIALS

ILLUSTRATION / DEMONSTRATION

PREPARATION:

Select an object you've kept to remind you of something great God has done for you or of a special occasion in your life (for example, a journal in which you've recorded God's answers to your prayers, a plaque with a Scripture verse reminding you of how God has worked in your life, or a gift that commemorates some significant event in your life, such as your graduation, your wedding, or the birth of your child).

DURING THE CHILDREN'S SERMON:

Show the kids the object you brought and briefly explain its significance to you.

Then say to the children, "People keep all kinds of things to remind them of the wonderful things God has done for them. For example, listen to this excerpt from the *NIV Adventure Bible Book of Devotions*."

As she helped her mom dust the bookshelf, Corinne picked up an odd-shaped object with strange markings. "What is this?" she asked.

Her mother turned. "Oh, that's my souvenir from Africa. It's a water bottle made from a gourd."

Corinne blinked. "You were in Africa?"

Laughing, her mom said, "Don't look so shocked! Yes, I was. I spent a summer in Kenya while I was in college. I stayed with a missionary and his family. We visited people in remote places, telling them about Jesus. This souvenir is my little memorial, reminding me of how God watched over me then."

Staring at the water bottle, Corinne said, "Wow, Mom. I never knew you did anything so exciting!"

SCRIPTURE READING

Open the *NIV Adventure Bible* to Joshua 4, telling the children, "God wants people to remember the great things he does for them, so their faith in him will stay strong. When God performed a miracle so the Israelites could cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land, he told them to set up a special reminder so they'd never forget what he did. Listen to this passage from the book of Joshua, chapter 4, verses 1-7."

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

FEATURE READING / MESSAGE

Turning to page 240 in the *NIV Adventure Bible*, tell the children, "Listen to this 'Life in Bible Times' article from the *Adventure Bible*, called 'Memorials.'"

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, God parted the water of the river so the people could walk safely across. Joshua told one man from each of the 12 tribes of Israel to pick up a stone and carry it to the other side. There Joshua piled the stones for a "memorial," or special reminder. The stones reminded God's people of how God had parted the waters and let the Israelites cross the river on dry ground.

Say to the children, "Isn't that a great way to remember God's miracle? Twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan River, picked up off the bottom of the dry riverbed, to remind God's people of the time he stopped the water from flowing. And did you notice that God had children in mind when he told his people to make this memorial? God wanted it to be there not only for the people who crossed the river but also for the generations who would be born later! He wanted those kids to see that pile of stones and ask their parents what it meant, so they'd learn about the mighty miracle God had performed. Memorials are important. They help people recall great things God has done for them, and they help people pass along those stories to their children. That way, God's people remember how powerful and good he is, and their faith in him remains strong. Then the next time trouble comes, they can face it knowing that God is able to help them through it."

APPLICATION

Say to the children, "What about all of you? How do memorials relate to your lives? Listen to this excerpt from the *NIV Adventure Bible Book of Devotions*."

The pile of stones beside the Jordan River was a memorial. God wanted children to ask about it. Then they'd learn about how he helped their parents cross the river to enter the Promised Land. Start asking about memorials you see. This includes symbols and ceremonies at home and at church. You'll hear great stories about God, his people, and your own parents' journey of faith.

Tell the children, "You kids can also create your own memorials, to help you remember what God has done for you. For example, every time God blesses you in a special way, mark a stone with a word or two reminding you of what he did, and add it to a jar or basket on your dresser. Then, whenever your faith needs a boost, you can pull out a stone and read it and recall how great God is. Another good idea is to start keeping a journal to record all the times God has answered your prayers. Then, at times when you don't feel much like praying and trusting God, reading your journal will encourage you to keep doing it. One last thought: The Bible is a great memorial to help Christians remember all the wonderful things God has done. So keep reading it to build up your faith!"