

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1** Can you recall a time when you found it difficult to let go of control and trust in God's plan for your life? What were the specific fears or doubts that made it challenging for you to surrender?
- 2** How do you relate to the experiences of the Israelites as they journeyed to the Promised Land, facing unknown circumstances and relying on God's provision? In what ways do their experiences relate to your own journey of faith?
- 3** When things are unsure or new to you, do you usually trust your own thoughts and what you like, or do you ask God for help? How does your choice affect how well you handle difficult situations?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.



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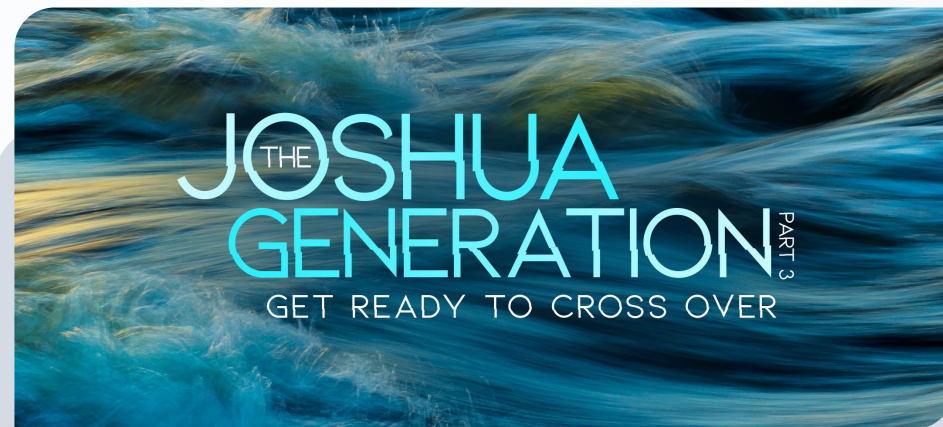
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SUNDAY WORD

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Joshua 3 talks about how the Israelites crossed the Jordan River. Why is this river so important? The Jordan River marks the boundary. To get to the Promised Land, God's people had to cross the Jordan River. That's the first thing God told Joshua in Joshua 1:2 - "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites." (NIV)

Joshua 3 teaches us an important lesson: To receive God's blessing, we must do things God's way. It's not just about crossing the river; we need to do it in a way that gives glory to God. Anyone who follows God's instructions will be blessed, but those who try to do things differently won't receive the same blessing.

THE MIRACLES OF THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN RIVER:

1. They waited three days.

Joshua 3:1-2 - "1 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp." (NIV)

Waiting may be the hardest part of being a Christian. We would rather do anything else than wait. Some of us would rather do the wrong thing than wait. God makes His people wait to show them that they can't make it on their own without Him. We need to remember this truth. What would have happened if Joshua had gone ahead on his own on Day 1 or Day 2? It would have been a disaster. Time spent waiting is never wasted if you're waiting on the Lord.

2. Joshua placed the ark in front of the people.

Joshua 3:3-4 - "3 "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it." (NIV)

In Joshua 3, the Ark of the Covenant is mentioned nine times, showing how important it is in the story. The ark was a special chest with a gold top called the Mercy Seat. Inside, it held the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod or staff that budded, and a pot of manna. It symbolized God's loving presence with His people.

God told Joshua to keep a distance of about 2,000 cubits, that's 800 meters between the people and the ark, showing how holy God is. If the Israelites wanted God's guidance, the people must learn to treat the Lord with respect. The reason given in the text is in verse 4, Joshua 3:4b - "...since you have not been this way before...(NIV)" Let's understand this: Only God truly knows where we should go. We might have our plans and dreams, but ultimately, God decides our path. Just like the Israelites, we are on a journey we've never taken before. It's spiritually mature to admit how little we know about the future. We are not as wise as we think. But that's okay because Jesus knows where we are and where we need to be in the days to come.

3. The people consecrated themselves.

Joshua 3:5 - "Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you (NIV)."" To consecrate means to set apart as holy. In the Old Testament, it often involved cleaning on the outside. The Jews had to take off their dirty clothes and put on clean ones. But why did this matter? Why should God care about what they wore? Outward consecration showed the need for inner cleaning. You clean up outside because you need to clean up inside.

Before God can perform a miracle, we need to consecrate ourselves to Him. He's telling the Jews they aren't ready for the miracle yet, because He has work to do inside them first. Maybe that's why we don't see more amazing things from God. Are you ready for God to do amazing things in your life? Consecrate yourself by admitting your sins and dedicating your life to the Lord.

4. They crossed when the Jordan River was at flood stage.

Joshua 3:14-16 - "14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. 15 Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge,16 the water from upstream stopped flowing." (NIV)

This was the situation Joshua faced when he thought about crossing the river. It was during the harvest that God told them to cross over. There was no human plan that could get the people to the other side. But if they didn't cross somehow, they would never reach the Promised Land. Joshua didn't have a secret plan. The Israelites didn't know how to navigate the dangerous waters of the Jordan. They only had God's promise and the memory of what He did at the Red Sea 40 years earlier. Could they trust God in this situation, just as their ancestors did when the Egyptian army had them trapped, and the Red Sea blocked their path to freedom?

What does faith look like when we can't see a way forward? Having faith means trusting God even when your circumstances don't make sense. We all face a crisis at some point. How it will happen isn't our concern. God doesn't have to explain Himself to us; He plans life this way for a reason. What do you do when God seems to close off your options? Keep your focus on Him!

5. The priests entered the water before the miracle took place.

Joshua 3:8 - "Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river (NIV).'" Imagine you're one of the priests chosen to carry the ark of the covenant. It's a great privilege and the highest honor you can get.

You're feeling good about it until you hear that the Lord wants you to go and stand in the river. But why stand in the river? There won't be a miracle until the priests enter the water with the ark of the covenant. God set it up this way to test their faith. "It's easy to trust me on dry ground," God says. "But will you trust me enough to stand in the water?"

It's the same for us today. Sometimes, there won't be a miracle until we take a step of faith. Faith is believing even when we have doubts and acting on that belief. We all have doubts, but if we wait for everything to be sure, we will wait forever. So how does faith work? God responds to those who believe and act, even when they're not sure.

God often asks us to do things that seem impossible, so when they happen, only He gets the credit. That's what's happening here. "You want a miracle? Go stand in the water!" Remember, they don't know what's going to happen next. We know the end of the story when we read it, so it might not seem like a big deal to us. But it's impressive that the priests didn't even think twice about obeying the Lord.

6. The water piled up.

Joshua 3:16 - "The water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho." (NIV)

When the Israelites reached the Jordan River, it was early morning, and the sky was getting brighter from the east. The Jordan River was flowing, blocking the two million Jews from reaching the Promised Land. They were unsure how they would cross it. A small group stepped forward and started walking toward the river. The priests, dressed in white, carried the Ark of the Covenant on poles resting on their shoulders. Everyone watched as they got closer to the water. As their feet touched the water, the river stopped flowing from the north. It's like the Lord turned off a faucet. It's a pure miracle from God.

This miracle happened after they obeyed, not before. If the priests hadn't stepped into the rushing river, no one would have crossed that day. The water only stopped after they obeyed. How did this happen? Joshua called God "the Lord of all the earth" in Joshua 3:11. It's the first time this phrase is used in the Bible. It shows God's complete control over everything. When the Creator speaks, the Jordan River obediently piles up. It's as simple as that.

7. All Israel crossed on dry ground.

Joshua 3:17b - "... all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground (NIV)." Even if there were more than 2 million people, it would take hours to get everyone across. But it didn't matter. The miracle lasted until every single Jew crossed the river. No one was left behind.

Joshua 4:17-18 - "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." (NIV)

The miracle only lasted as long as it was needed, not a minute longer. If someone passed by the next day, they'd see footprints leading to the river, but the river would be wide again. They wouldn't know what happened the day before. God had two reasons for this miracle. First, He wanted to show that Joshua was the chosen leader (Joshua 3:7). Just like Moses led the people across the Red Sea, Joshua would lead their descendants across the Jordan. God was with Moses, and now He would be with Joshua. The second reason was to prepare the Jews for the upcoming battles. They were about to spend seven years fighting to take over the Promised Land. When Joshua explained the miracle to the people, he told them this reason: Joshua 3:10 - "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites." (NIV)