



STEPPING OUT IN FAITH.

SUNDAY MAY 1st 2022.

**Scripture: Joshua 3:1-4 and
4:18-24**

The book of Joshua was written to show the value of obedience.

Imagine you had been born in the wilderness or had been a toddler when that journey began. Now you had grown and camping at the edge of the Jordan river. Those of the generation before you had all died but they had told you of the wondrous things God had done – including parting of the Red Sea.

You are looking at the Jordan – this was no small river. It was 30 metres wide and up to 3 metres deep. The winter rains and the melting snow had caused the river to overflow its banks – so the water was turbulent, fast flowing and deep.

On the other side was the land God had promised to Abraham – Canaan – a land flowing with milk and honey and the Jordan was between you and your new future.

You may have been both excited and fearful as this was a serious challenge. If you made it across you then had to drive out the people who lived in Canaan's well-fortified cities.

This was the beginning of a new era – Moses had died and Joshua had assumed leadership. Joshua needed to focus on the task before him which was to lead God’s people into the land and remember God’s faithful promises to your people.

What would you have thought – standing by the banks of the river, looking across to the other side and then hearing Joshua say – this is where we will cross?

What, here. You must be kidding. We’ll drown – it is too rough and deep. We’ll never make it. Why can’t we cross from the south on dry land and avoid the river?

But Joshua obeyed God. God had other plans.

Sometimes God chooses a different path for us to follow in order to display His glory.

When we face times of crisis or when we need direction in life, we need to learn to be sensitive to the movement of the Lord in and around us. When God is at work among us and around us, we cannot help but expect to hear the call to go forward. When God is at work, we are sometimes moved right out of our comfort zones into the path of new opportunities.

If you are facing a raging Jordan today, it may be your river of opportunity. It may be some habit or passion or sin or critical spirit or sensitiveness. How many times has God called then

waited for us to step out in faith? He waits for us to be willing to get our feet wet.

Joshua assured the people that God was with them and tells them prepare themselves. Joshua probably did not know specifically how God was going to get them across, but he believed the Lord would make it possible and would give him the specifics when needed.

God asks us to step out and leave our old ways.

God's promises are contingent on people's willingness to dedicate or consecrate themselves before Him.

God has never asked a person to believe in something that is not based on reality or unsubstantial facts. Some people however think that faith is a "leap into the darkness." But that is not true. The Christian faith is based on a reliable and trustworthy message. There is more historical proof to trust the Bible and what it says than most other historical records.

Sometimes we just want to stay where we are, in our comfort zone.

The previous Israelite generation disobeyed God, which resulted in them "journeying" to nowhere in the wilderness.

The Hebrew verb NASA is translated "journeyed" and is used 89 times in the book of Numbers, but in Joshua there is a new word ABAR which means to "crossover" and it is used 21 times.

This emphasises a change in the movement of the Jewish people.

God looks for opportunities to demonstrate His power.

Joshua didn't take advantage of the situation to exalt himself. His total focus was on what God had promised. He did not have to pump himself up, because he was convinced that God would do that.

When the Jordan waters were rolled back, God was demonstrating once again His power, strength and majesty to the pagan lost world, to the men, women and children who He loved and who He wanted to turn back to Him in faith and obedience. Their lack of faith was not because of lack of evidence but in spite of overwhelming evidence.

When the people crossed the Jordan River, it was not the obedient arm of the leader that brought the miracle but the obedient feet of the people.

God helps to grow our faith so we can step out and crossover

Most of us are not risk takers, we are people that are comfortable with our comfy seats and predictability in serving the Lord. We don't like it much when we are facing defining moments in our life – when God asks us to crossover. We like

to hold onto what is familiar. But God calls us to be willing to grow and expand and claim new territory.

There are a lot of crossover times in life. Along with hope and joy we face problems that we may not have the strength or wisdom to meet. Disease and sickness can be dramatic crossover times, it can be a new frightening pathway but nothing is new to God. God has promised never to abandon us, as David says in Psalm 23 – when I walk through the valley of deep shadows my Shepherd is with me.

The most life-changing crossover is the moment we make the spiritual decision to open our hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, to turn to Him and receive His forgiveness.

Death is the final crossover moment but Christ has taken the “sting” out of death.

Remember as we stand to face our crossover moments and challenged with what is frightening, there can also be the thrill of a new opportunity and a miraculous crossing over.

Following the miraculous crossover, Joshua built two altars of 12 stones each. One altar was on the Canaan side of the Jordan, to be a constant memorial and a teaching aid for the next generation. A 2nd memorial of 12 stones was built in the middle of the Jordan river, where the Ark of the Covenant had stood as the people crossed. It was submerged when the

waters resumed their flow. This monument is still visible today during the dry summer seasons, as it stands for all generations.

To conclude I would like to ask: do you take the time to tell your family what God has done for you.

Retelling your story will help keep memories of God's faithfulness alive in your family.

I am handing out an A4 sheet with 12 stones on them.

I encourage you to fill in the stones with 12 important facts about your journey with God that you can share with your family.

You obviously will need more stones but this is a great start. And take your time – you may wish to expand on what each statement means to you.