



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE · JOSHUA LEADS GOD'S PEOPLE ·  
JOSHUA 3-4 · 02/18/2018

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## MAIN POINT

As followers of Christ, we need to reflect often on where God has brought us from and commit to being obedient wherever He leads us in the future.

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## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**When you reflect on your time as a Christ-follower, what stands out as one of the high points?**

**What is one way thing you feel God possibly leading you to do in the future?**

As the body of Christ, it is important that we take the opportunity every once in awhile to both celebrate where God has brought us from and get excited about where He is taking us in the days ahead. This is one of the ways we can worship Him together.

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## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**|** HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 3:9-17.

**What does Joshua reveal about God at the beginning of his speech?**

**In verse 9, Joshua tells the people to stop what they are doing and listen to the words of the Lord. What tends to get in the way of you stopping and listening to God? Why is doing so important?**

Listening to the Lord's words implies more than just hearing His commands; it conveys the ideas of listening attentively and then obeying. The call to listen was a call to obey. Joshua indicated that as a result of their obedience to God, the people would know that the living God was among them. Throughout their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites had continual assurance of the Lord's presence with them through such visible evidence as the cloud by day, the fire by night, and the provision of manna. The Lord would continue to demonstrate that He was among them as they entered the land He had promised them. The people of Israel served the living God in contrast to the dead, false gods of the seven people groups listed in verse 10. God's actions on behalf of His people demonstrate His nature and His power. The living God controls both the natural world and history.

**What detail in verses 14-17 suggests the great faith required to obey the Lord on this occasion?**

**What prepared the people to take the necessary step of faith?**

When the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them to the river. Verses 15-16 emphasize the spectacular miracle that occurred when the people crossed the Jordan. As soon as the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant touched the water's edge, the water from upstream ceased flowing. The waters were so completely stopped that the priests stood and all the people crossed the riverbed on dry ground. The people's obedience to the words of the Lord laid the foundation for a lifetime of obedience.

**What lesson do you see in Israel's crossing of the Jordan?**

**What are the rivers, or obstacles, in your life at this time? In the life of our church? What would a step of faith look like for you or our church in that area?**

**What is the biggest step of faith God has asked you to take during your time at our church? What role did our church play in helping you take that step of faith?**

Our obedience provides the best vantage point from which to observe God's power at work. For the Israelites, there was no doubt that if they were able to cross the river, it would only be because of the miraculous power of God. As a church, we have the opportunity to watch God work miraculously in our midst, and reflecting on the rivers we have crossed as a church is one way we communicate God's greatness.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 4:15-22.**

**Why did Joshua have the people set up a monument?**

**Following the successful crossing of the Jordan, Joshua established a stone memorial to commemorate what God had done and to serve as a reminder for the current generation and a teaching aid for future generations. How can past victories remind us of the Lord's work on our behalf? How can past victories encourage us to remain faithful?**

At Gilgal Joshua set up a memorial to commemorate the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan on dry ground. The Lord had commanded Joshua to choose 12 men, "one from each tribe" (Josh. 4:2). Each man was to choose a stone from the middle of the Jordan and carry it to the place where they camped that night. There the memorial would be erected. The memorial stones would remind the Israelites of God's miraculous work and would assist them in sharing their faith with future generations.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 4:23-24.**

**What two purposes are given in this passage for God allowing the people to cross the Jordan on dry ground?**

**What do your answers to the previous question reveal about God's purpose for working in and through us?**

The Israelites not only had the opportunity to influence their descendants, but they also were privileged to testify to the world. Two purposes of God's mighty work are stated in this passage. The first purpose related generally to the world, including the surrounding nations. God's great acts demonstrated that the hand of the Lord is powerful. The second purpose related to the people of Israel in particular. God acted so that the people of Israel might always fear the Lord their God. Both their awareness of what God had done for them and the reaction of other nations to God's power should motivate Israel to always fear the Lord.

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## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**When we take the time to celebrate what God has done for us, we are reminded of the great God we serve and the honor it is to be used by Him.**

**Spend a few minutes to celebrate what God has done in your group lately. What do you learn about Him through this time of reflection? What do you learn about His purpose for your lives and your group?**

**How can commemorating spiritual victories help others recognize the “mighty” nature of God?**

**What is preventing us from sharing the message of God’s faithfulness with people around us who need to know and reverence God?**

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## PRAY

Close in prayer, asking that your eyes will be open to recognize God’s mighty work in the days ahead. Spend time thanking God for all the ways He has worked through our church to change lives in our church, our community, and the world. Pray also for the days ahead, that He would work in even more powerful ways and that we would be obedient to join Him in His mission.

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## COMMENTARY

**JOSHUA 3:9-17**

3:9. This is Joshua’s first speech to the Israelites. His concern that they come closer and listen suggests the importance of attention to God and His word. The phrase living God appears elsewhere only three times in the Old Testament. In Hosea 1:10 it is used in the context of the fulfillment of God’s promises of an innumerable people who belong to Him. In Psalm 42:2 and 84:2 it describes the deepest yearnings of the psalmist, who longed for the presence of God and intimacy with Him. The concern for the presence of God and His fulfillment of His promises for His people are both present here. The Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites describe the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land. Canaanites is a general term referring to those

living in the land of Canaan, although it may also describe the indigenous peoples of the land.

3:11. The ark's passage, using the key word "cross over" (1:2), demonstrates God's leadership of His people, His presence with them, and His fulfillment of His promises. The Lord of all the earth uses a phrase identical to that charged against the spies in 2:3 ("the entire land"). While God is indeed Lord of all the earth, the expression in chapters 2 and 3 focuses on "the whole land" of Canaan.

3:12-13. The 12 men introduces a third group in addition to the people who will follow the ark and the priests who will carry it. The purpose of these men is explained in 4:2-3. The mass of the water is the same term as that used of the waters of the Red Sea in Exodus 15:8 and Psalm 78:13. God would act for His people when they crossed the Jordan River just as He did with the previous generation at the exodus.

3:15. At spring flood, after the winter rains and during the barley harvest, the Jordan River could reach a width in excess of 100 feet and a depth of 10 feet. The priests as the leaders of the people were the first to step down into the water. Doing so was a risky activity with the river at flood stage. Carrying the ark could easily have caused them to be swept away by the current unless the promised miracle took place.

3:16-17. Taking into account the distance from Adam to the Dead Sea, this means that approximately 29 percent of the Jordan Valley was affected. Wordplay ties together the actions of the priests and people with God's miracle of the waters. Thus the same verb describes how the waters stood still and how the priests stood firmly. The priests stood on dry ground while the people crossed on dry ground. The water was completely cut off until all Israel had finished crossing the river.

#### **JOSHUA 4:15-24**

4:15-18. The time of the exit from the Jordan River, like the time of the entrance into the river, is determined by God. The priests' ascent from the river bed brings the miracle to an end. They reversed the procedure by how they began the parting of the waters (3:13-16).

4:19. The tenth day of the first month was the day that preparations for the Passover were to be made (Ex. 12:2-3). This signals the celebration of chapter 5. Gilgal, meaning “circle,” could describe any of a variety of sites.

4:20-23. The purpose of the 12 stones is found in the questions that the children would ask. The question and the instruction of the next generation about the divine miracles resembles Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Questions asked by sons about the significance of the Passover and the exodus are found in the Jewish Passover Seder or liturgy. Their mention here connects this Passover with the events of the crossing of the Jordan just as the earlier Passover remembered the crossing of the Red Sea.

4:24. The purpose of this miracle is to declare God’s might to all the people of the earth and to encourage Israel to always fear the Lord. Faith and commitment to God is the goal, just as with the miracles of Jesus (John 20:30-31).

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## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 5:1-12