

# A Practical Study of JOSHUA

## “The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

### Study Number Three – Joshua 3:1-17

We have looked at two chapters. In Joshua chapter 1 we called it THE COMMISSIONING. Joshua was being commissioned to take Moses' place. His commissioning involved taking the people into the land that God had promised them through the Abrahamic covenant.

In that chapter the Lord speaks, Joshua speaks and the people speak.

In our last study we scraped the heavens as we viewed the magnitude of the grace of God and His unconditional love toward a prostitute by the name of Rahab. We saw the sacrificial act of service of two spies who gave of themselves unselfishly to run the risk of going into the land, and spying on the city of Jericho in anticipation of the crossing.

We called:

chapter 1—THE COMMISSION,

chapter 2—THE SPYING, and now

chapter 3—THE JORDAN.

The big obstacle right now in the way of the children of Israel, before entering into the possession of the land, is the flooded river that's between them and it.

Are they going to be able to make it? Are they going to get through the flooded river?

Richard Haydn was a comedian some days back in the 40s and 50s. That was before many of us were born. But as a comedic actor he was also a man who loved to interpret poems in a different way.

He happened to interpret a poem by Edgar A. Guest, "It Couldn't Be Done." And Haydn with his perfect fageyish professor in his black tie and his pince-nez, would stand stiffly with his hands behind his back and he would start to recite very stuffily:

(The Healing Choice by Ron Lee Davis)

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.

So he buckled right in with a trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done—

*And he couldn't do it.*

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The poem says it's a poem of success. It's a poem of joyful things. He buckled right in with a bit of a grin and he tackled the thing that couldn't be done and he did it!

We're coming to the river. Can we buckle right in with a bit of a grin and go across? It's when we can't do it that God can do it and He moves in and does work in our lives that is beautiful.

In Mark chapter 4 for instance, where the disciples are commanded by the Lord to cross the river after a long day teaching, Jesus finds a pillow and He starts to sleep in the front of the boat. And in the middle of the Sea of Galilee these seasoned fishermen are convinced they're going to drown.

They're caught in a horrendous storm, the water's coming in the boat. And so finally at a moment of sheer futility, they say to Jesus, "Don't you care that we perish while you're lying there asleep?" And Jesus somewhat groggily stands to His feet and says the words that change everything: "Peace be still." (see Mark 4:35-41)

And in that situation they come out of an impossible situation and into the blessing of a glassy sea—off a ten foot wave to perfect peace. All the blessings of the Promised Land are theirs, but it's on the other side of the river.

There have been similar situations like this in the Bible. In Exodus 14 for instance, when Moses is confronted with the Red Sea in front of him and with Pharaoh's armies coming up behind him, he tells the people:

### Exodus 14:13, 14

“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

### Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. And when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon you.

The spies have come back with a great report. They're excited about what happened over there in Jericho when they met Rahab and this great statement of faith that she had made. And so they're enthusiastic! They're excited! They're eager to get into the land.

And as the curtain dropped on our last study, they were reporting to Joshua all of their experience. And the last verse said:

## Joshua 2:24

They said to Joshua, “The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”

And that’s what Rahab had told them. Now it’s time to go into the land. Joshua’s convinced and ready to take the people.

So when are they going to do it?

Verse 1— isn’t this great?

**v. 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.**

“Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over.”

Look at that little phrase that convicts us all:

“Early in the morning.”

Some are going to say, “oh you’ve got all kinds of reasons why you have never been convinced that there are two six o’clocks in a day in your life. And the impossibility of it all is due to the fact that you’ve got a strange chemistry that does not start functioning until 10 a.m.”

We're going to present the truth and those that don't agree can argue with the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A lot of neat things happen early in the morning. When we see that little phrase in the scripture it makes us remember a lot of times that occurs.

“Early in the morning”—Joshua is so excited about this he wants to get after it. Let's go for it right now. Let's get started

Even before the sun gets up—let's get on with it—“Early in the morning.”

In Genesis 22 God did test Abram by telling him to take his son—his only son Isaac—and to make a sacrifice of him. And the text tells us early in the morning he saddled his donkey and got ready to go to be obedient.

In 2 Chronicles 20:20 Jehoshaphat surrounded by all of the nations that would be his assassins, ready to make war and to wipe out the land of Judah, it says in our text early in the morning they left for the desert of Tekoa—set out to see if the Lord was going to be faithful to His promises to take them and deliver them from all of their enemies.

We see that same thing in Mark chapter 1 in the New Testament:

Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.

As we read the stories of great Christians there seems to be a common denominator. All the action happens “early in the morning.”

They rise a long time before normal humanity gets up to have an audience with the King of kings and to spend time speaking with the Lord before they're seen of men.

Here Joshua, early in the morning, tells the people we're going. They have about a 7 or 8 mile trip and it's over level ground—but they have 2 1/2 million people with all the herds and flocks and everything else—so it is a massive move of humanity here that's involved in this trip, leaving their campsite.

When they got going they probably started singing:

“Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angel feet have trod;  
With its crystal tide forever  
Flowing by the throne of God?

Ere we reach the shining river,  
Lay we ev'ry burden down;  
Grace our spirits will deliver,

And provide a robe and crown.

Soon we'll reach the shining river,  
Soon our pilgrimage will cease;  
Soon our happy hearts will quiver  
With the melody of peace."  
(source unknown)

What did the people think about when they finished the 8 mile trip and arrived at the shores of a flooded river? Are they any different than us?

“Wow! Look at that river! How are we going to get across that thing with this big group of people?”

“All the blessings are on the other side of the river! What am I going to do?”

Are any of them anxious or a little apprehensive?

They're not any different than us. When we come to times in our life that overwhelm us and circumstances that we can't see any way out, and we've gone as far as we can go—we're just like them.

Philippians 4:6 says: “Be anxious about everything and pray about nothing.” That's the way we do it! It's just we have to carry it for the Lord because there's just no way out of this unless we really worry up a storm about it!



Now what does the Lord do with us when He finds us in a situation of anxiety and apprehension? Does He just immediately scoop us up in His arms and give us a solution and lead us on? Does He do that? We know better than that.

The Lord just delights to extend the period of bumping up against the impossibility while we're anxious and apprehensive. Why?

Well when the help really does come, we're going to recognize that it could have only been from Him because nobody else could have done—because we've worried it all to pieces and tried every angle and exhausted ourselves. So if something happens, it has to be God that does it.

See verse 2—isn't that great?

**v. 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp,**

“After three days the officers went throughout the camp,”

They evidently got there on Friday and the Lord gave them the whole weekend to stew in their apprehension and anxiety “Just look at that flooded river! Just take a good look at it and see if y'all can figure out a way to ferry over that thing.”

Now why does He do that to us? Why does He allow these periods of apprehension and anxiety?

We have the TWO Hs—HELPLESSNESS and HIMSELF.

1. The delay causes us to realize how HELPLESS we really are in this thing.

That poor man laid by the pool for 38 years, totally helpless and hopeless. And he was convinced of that when Jesus met him there in John chapter 5—there was no hope or help for him.

And then the second reason is:

2. God wants us boxed into HIMSELF completely. We have to give up! We can't do anything about it!

Why did God wait 25 years for Abraham and Sarah? Because Sarah had to get beyond baby-barren and Abraham had to get too old to be able to produce a child. And in their helplessness and their hopelessness, if they're going to have a baby to fulfill the promise, God's going to have to do it. So they're boxed in completely to Him.

HELPLESSNESS and HIMSELF—those two things often join together in the times of delay. Now it's a trite saying, but it has a lot of truth and it fits here.

Man's extremity is always God's opportunity. And sometimes He lets our circumstances get critical. Just downright out of hand. And desperate! And then He does something so we'll give Him the glory and we'll know who's involved.

“After three days the officers went throughout the camp,”

**v. 3 giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it.**

“giving orders to the people:”

And here basically are the orders given to the people:

“When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it.”

Now there’s something different in this study that has been the experience of the children of Israel before this. The something different is, the focal point is completely on the **ARK OF THE COVENANT**.

The Ark is mentioned **THIRTEEN TIMES** in this chapter and the **PRIESTS** are mentioned **SEVEN TIMES**.

What has been the focal point up to this time, as they’ve wandered in the wilderness and as they’ve come up from the land of Egypt? The visible presence of God was always the cloud leading them by day and the fire by night. And they always could see God’s presence by that cloud and by that fire hanging over the Holy of holies—right over the Ark of the

Covenant.

Now it's the Ark of the Covenant. It's a new deal. The Ark of the Covenant typifies Jesus Christ. They're told, "keep your eyes on the Ark."

And we're told in Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..."

We'll always find we get depressed and down and really whipped when we get our eyes off of Jesus and on our circumstances.

### Isaiah 26:3

But thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.

Keep our focus on the Lord—that's what we need to do.

"Keep your eyes on the Ark. When it moves, you move and follow it. Let the Ark lead you."

**v. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it."**

"Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand

yards between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

Let the ark lead you, “Then you will know which way to go.”  
Wherever it goes, you follow it. Why?

“since you have never been this way before.”

Now that could have two meanings:

1. “Since you’ve never traveled like this before—it’s always been the cloud and the fire. Now you’re following the Ark.”

We could say that or something else.

2. This could be new territory—which it is—and they’ve never been here before. They’re traveling in new realms with the Lord. “Follow the Ark since you’ve never been this way before.”

Doesn’t that bring a lot of comfort? Knowing that when we’re traveling in new territory of financial impossibilities, reverses and adversity, bereavement, divorce, sickness, pain, misunderstanding, failure—to know that He’s the one leading through that new territory where we’ve never been before. Ever thought of that?

He will never lead us anywhere but what His grace will sustain us. And He wants to take us to the place of His choosing because of what He wants to teach us. And the Ark is to go ahead.

Proverbs 3:5 and 6 fits here:

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all of your ways acknowledge him, and he will be the one who will direct your path.

Now Joshua has a word for the people. This is the President—the General. The speech is going to be carried from the President's Oval office, carried on all the networks live. Joshua has something to say to the people before they go into the land. See it in verse 5?

**v. 5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”**

“Then Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

Understand what he said?

“Consecrate yourselves.”

“Are you? Have you? Do you know what it is? Is it good to eat?”

What is “Consecrate yourselves”?

Let's put some truth with this to help it be fleshed out for us.

“Consecrate yourselves”—and there's a reason for it. It'll be given here in just a minute.

### Genesis 35:2, 3

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress...

What's he telling them?

“Listen, clean up your act. Get rid of your foreign gods and your idols. Get a bath, put on some clean clothes. We're going up to Bethel and build an altar and we're going to meet with God.”

What does that tell us? That tells us before we meet with God we ought to prepare ourselves.

And he's saying to them, in order to be candidates for God's great work among you tomorrow, “Consecrate yourselves” today in anticipation of what's getting ready to happen.

How about 2 Corinthians 7:1?

## 2 Corinthians 7:1

Having these things, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

## 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

How about Matthew 5:23 in the Sermon on the Mount? If we have something against somebody and we come to worship, the Lord says stop our worship, leave our gift and go get our act together with our brother and then come and worship.

Preliminary preparation is necessary for God to work significantly!

Now here's a good one—1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Come to the Lord's table and we're not ready, we could be eating and drinking judgment unto ourselves.

## 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

... But let a man examine himself and so let him eat. Don't eat and drink of this cup in an unworthy fashion for you eat and drink judgment unto yourself.

Is that why David said in:



## Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts. ...

“Striving to be a person who has a clear conscience before God and before men.”—Acts 24:16

But here’s a good one. This really spells it all out. Ephesians 5:25-27—we’ve heard this on marriage, but listen to it from the relationship to the Lord:

## Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with the water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

“Consecrate yourselves”—WHY?

REASON—next phrase:

“for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

Second Chronicles 7:14 answers that:

## 2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, would humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, I'll heal their land, I'll forgive their sin.

Yes?

Now about Malachi 3:10?

### Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough to receive it.

We would be singing:

There shall be showers of blessing,  
O that today they might fall.  
(source unknown)

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.  
(source unknown)

Did we really consecrate ourselves before we came to study?  
Or did we just come by biding time to get our spiritual taste

buds salivating and having a chance to feed on the Word and go away no different?

Or did we come expecting to really meet with God? Did we come hoping against hope that God might really have something to say and deal with us so that we're not the same person?

That's what "consecrate" means. It means to have our heart in a position that God can really work. And the sad thing is, when a group of people get together, if there's one person that doesn't have his heart together, he affects the whole group.

That's severe. Wait until we get to study #7 and watch one man affect the whole nation by his sin and his disobedience.

Joshua says we need to be clean and ready because God is going to work tomorrow!

### 1 John 3:2

Soon we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

### 1 John 3:3

Everyone has this hope purifies himself, even as he is pure.

We need to ask ourselves, if Jesus Christ came back today, are we consecrated and ready to go?

As a believer, there needs to be a desperate revolution in our spiritual discipline. The reason God isn't working significantly today is because there's so little consecration, there's so little commitment, there's so little anxious concern about sin and disobedience in our lives. The Spirit of God is being stifled in what He would do among us. If only we were those who would allow Him to really work.

Look at verse 6.

**v. 6 Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.**

“Joshua said to the priests, ‘Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.’ So they took it up and went ahead of them.”

Now he's had a message to the people, but he also has a message to the priests. And his message to them is that tomorrow morning, because they need this evening to get the consecration done—tomorrow morning the Ark is going to “cross over” ahead of them and they're supposed to be the ones who take the Ark. So these are the instructions of what is going to happen.

The Psalms says:

Psalm 23:3

He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

The Lord goes before us. He opens up the way.

There's an old camp song that fits well here:

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,  
All I have to do is follow.

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,  
All I have to do is follow.

Strength for today is mine always'

And all I need for tomorrow.

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,  
All I have to do is follow.

(source unknown)

**v. 7 And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses."**

"And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses."

Did the Lord tell Joshua that he was going to magnify him and exalt him? Remember when we did our first study on that in chapter 1? The Lord says:

“Be of good courage, don’t be scared. I’m going to exalt you before the people. And as I was with Moses, I’m going to be with you.”

Does God ever forget a promise that He makes?

Now the time’s here and the Lord says, “Today’s the day! I’m going to exalt you before these people. This is the time.”

### 1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

The time is now here.

**v. 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.””**

“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.””

Now he tells them, “Don’t just stop at the bank. Y’all go on down and step into the water. This is your act of faith. When your feet touch the water you’re expressing your faith in the fact that God is going to open up a way.”

**v. 9 Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen**

## to the words of the Lord your God.

“Joshua said to the Israelites, ‘Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God.’”

Is that with a lot of great respect? Remember back in chapter 1 the Lord warned him, He says, “Don’t turn to the right, don’t turn to the left of it. Be careful to mediate in it day and night and you’ll be successful.” (see Joshua 1:7)

Joshua is saying to them, “one final word to you folks before tomorrow:”

“Come here and listen to the words of the Lord.”

What’s your attitude toward the “words of the Lord”?

In the book of Jeremiah’s there’s a very sobering passage in Jeremiah 36. Jehoiakim has received a prophecy from Jeremiah of judgment on the nation Israel, and he happens to be a king. And he gets Jehudi, his scribe, to unroll the scroll and begin to read to him. And as the prophecy depicts judgment upon the people, Jehoiakim reaches out with his pin knife and he starts to slice the scroll and take it in his hands and throw it into the fire and let it burn.

We don’t change the message of God by disregarding it. We don’t change the message of God by crumbling it all up and burning it. We don’t change it by running away from it. We don’t change it in any way by being disobedient to it. It’s still

there just the same. Regard it. Come to truth and honor it.  
“listen to the words of the Lord your God.”

Here they come—verse 10.

**v. 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.**

“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.”

Those are the SEVEN GROUPS that reside in the land at this time. And he says you can be assured “that the living God is among you” by the fact that He’s not only going to open up the river and take you into the land, He’s going to drive out the enemy and give you the land. That’s all God is going to do to fulfill His promise.

Now every page has almost been covered with the words “I will be with you.” And now “the living God is among you.” And He will deliver you from all of your enemies.

Donald Campbell wrote a book called *No Time for Neutrality* and it’s on the book of Joshua. He uses an illustration from the Civil War that really gets across the point of what’s being



said here:

(No Time for Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

During the Civil War, the town of Moresfield, West Virginia was on the dividing line, and seesawed back and forth between Federal and Confederate troops. In one old house which still stands today, an elderly woman lived alone. One morning Yankee troops stomped up on her porch. Though at their mercy, she remained calm and invited them to be seated at her table.

When breakfast was set before them, she said, “It is a custom of long standing in this house to have prayers before meals. I hope you won’t mind.” With that, she picked up the Bible and opened it at random and began to read from Psalm 27 (KJV):

The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came near upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident....I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait, I say, on the Lord.

When she finished, she murmured quietly, “Let us pray.” As she prayed, she heard stealthy sounds of shuffling shoes. When she ended with “Amen,” she opened her eyes. The soldiers were gone! Her lack of fear had made them fearful of

lingering any longer!  
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And now the time has come. We are at the brink of impossibility. We face a flooded river in front of us. But look at verse 11.

**v. 11 See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.**

“See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.”

There’s the PROVISION—the Lord’s going “ahead of you.”

**v. 12 Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe.**

“Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe.”

Hang onto that. That’s going to be in our next study. There’ll be a job description of these twelve men and what they’re going to do.

**v. 13 And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”**

“And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, the waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”

He’s telling them this is what is going to happen. As soon as the priest’s feet hit the water, the water’s going to stand up in a great big heap—up in the north—and the rest of it is going to flow right on down into the Dead Sea to the south and dwindle out.

Now how does a nation respond to this? This is their new leader, he’s brought them eight miles to the river, they’ve had a three day delay to look at all of this. They’ve been apprehensive and anxious about it. But now he says follow the Ark.

Are the people going to respond to this? See that phrase in verse 14?

**v. 14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them.**

“So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan,”

That’s when they exercised FAITH. If they didn’t really believe that God was going to take them into the land, there was no need breaking camp.

So right there is the crucible. They act on the basis of the

message that's been given to them.

“So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them.”

Another quote comes to mind:

(No Time for Neutrality by Donald K. Campbell)

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?  
God specializes in things [called] impossible;  
He'll do [for you] what no other friend can do.  
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They “broke camp” and look what happens.

**v. 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,**

“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,”

**v. 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 (the Salt**

**Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.**

“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 (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.”

How far is that? The water heaped up 14 miles upstream toward the Sea of Galilee. That means we have at least 20 miles of dry riverbed for 2 1/2 million people to make their entrance into the land.

Now we can read all kinds of commentaries on natural explanations as to what happened. The biggie is there was an earthquake and it shook it up so that they got across.

The only problem with that is when Elijah and Elisha went across the Jordan it opened up then too and it opened up again so that Elisha could come back across after Elijah was swept home in a whirlwind.

Did God just give two quick earthquakes on the richter scale so that it opened up so they could go across, and open again so they could come back?

Why not let God be God and be big enough to open up a river so His people can go into the land that He's given them? Why do we need natural explanations to try to rule God out of

everything we do? He's God! Nothing's too difficult for Him. Nothing's impossible.

They “crossed over opposite Jericho. And they had a lot of dry riverbed.

Go to the edge of that difficulty. Go as far as we can. Do our utmost duty and leave the rest in the hand of God.

What does God want out of this? Well He wants Joshua to be exalted. He wants to be glorified. He wants Israel to be encouraged and He wants the Canaanites to be terrorized.

What did they think when he saw this massive force of people on their west bank of the river? It hit the headlines. Everybody started singing, and they should have been saying, “This land is your land. We're leaving!” But they didn't. They hung around to fight the thing out and a lot of them lost their lives as we're going to see in the rest of the possession.

But at least they've gotten a great message—God means business and the land belongs to these people.

**v. 17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.**

“The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord

stood firm”—WHERE?—“on dry ground”

What happens when we dam up a river? It gets all muddy and gooey. They'd have been sloshing through stuff knee deep trying to get across.

God just blows on it and dries it out after the waters heaped up. He just blows a nice dry path for them and they walk across. The same God that holds the river back is the same God that can dry it out.

And the Lord, the priests of the Lord:

“stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.”

What is it that is significant about the crossing of the Jordan River? How does the crossing of the Jordan River apply to us and this event?

Well some would probably be misled by hymnology.

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
and cast a wishful eye...

(source unknown)

Most of hymnology wrongly interprets the Jordan experience. They speak of the Jordan experience as being physical death and Canaan as being heaven—the Promised Land.

And so much of hymnology has led us that direction. It's much safer to look at the Jordan River in another very significant way and the scripture will bear out on this.

Let's look at it this way—Egypt is a period of bondage. That's where we are if we don't know Jesus Christ.

### 1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, they're foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them.

So residing in Egypt we have nothing of what God can give us yet! Coming out of bondage and out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea is the salvation experience. We have been baptized into the Red Sea into Moses. He is our leader. He is taking us to that land and that is salvation, where by faith we trust ourselves to the leader who's taking us to the land.

Now what happens when we're on our way to the land? Well we decide we don't want to go in. We don't want to pay the price. We want to be part way. We don't want it all.

And so in our carnality we wander around in the wilderness of our own making. Maybe some find yourself there today. Spitting sand and experiencing all kinds of dry, dusty, boring experiences that have very little fulfillment in life—wandering around in a meaningless maze, not sure of what tomorrow's going to bring and not sure whether we want to see it or not



anyway. Not happy at all.

But then comes the time when we make that surrender. And when we make that surrender, the crossing of the Jordan takes place and spiritual life begins to become ours.

Perhaps some are there at the Jordan River, facing the river of impossibility. One dear man said, “My river of impossibility is my eyes. Today was the first day that no matter how big the magnifying glass was, I could not read my own mail. And I face this river of impossibility, waiting for God to work.”

We each have a different river of impossibility. Perhaps it’s just plain selfishness. We’re content to love the world and to live in it and we really don’t want to change that.

Alan Redpath says it the best:

(Victorious Christian Living by Alan Redpath)

The crossing of the Jordan does not illustrate the passing of a soul into eternity, but rather does it illustrate the passing of a Christian from one level of Christian life to another. It marks the end of the self-life and the beginning of the Christ-life: the end of a life lived on the principle of effort and the beginning of a life lived on the principle of faith and obedience. Between these two rolls the mighty river Jordan—a river of impossibility.

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Maybe that's where we are.

It's almost a foreign message today. To die to our own selfish desires, that we might awaken to God's ambition and will for our life!

We are so saturated with all this business about positive thinking and self-fulfillment, it's almost like the gospel is saturated with "you have to have a good self-image" and "you have to be self-fulfilled" and "you really want to be satisfied." And if we're really depressed and down, we have to think positively

The Bible doesn't say anything at all about that. The Bible says:

### John 12:24

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit.

### Luke 9:23

... "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

### Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

A. W. Tozer says:

To encourage self-ism is like pouring gasoline on a fire that's already raging out of control.

(source unknown)

We are selfish creatures! Set and bent on our own comfort and enjoyment!

(The Seduction of Christianity by Dave Hunt & T.A. McMahan)

Self is one of the toughest plants that grows in the garden of life. It is, in fact, indestructible by any means. Just when we are sure it is dead it turns up somewhere as robust as ever to trouble our peace and poison the fruit of our lives....

The victorious Christian neither exalts nor downgrades himself. His interests have shifted from self to Christ. What he is or is not [is no longer a concern to him]. He believes that he has been crucified with Christ and he is not willing either to praise or [to] deprecate such a man.

(source unknown)

That's Romans 12:

Romans 12:1, 2

...I beg of you brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God....

Are we there? So tired of failure and futility in our Christian life, and God is just saying, “Look, I’m ready to open up the river. Come on in!”

Listen to Hebrews chapter 4. It’s pretty serious:

### Hebrews 4:1-16

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it....Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts...

Fénelon wrote a little book called *Let Go* and he says:

(Let Go by François Fénelon)

When it comes to accomplishing things for God, you will find that high aspirations, enthusiastic feelings, careful planning and being able to express yourself well are not worth very much. The important thing is absolute surrender to God. You can do anything He wants you to do if you are walking in the light of full surrender.

(source unknown)

Paul Tournier was a Swiss psychiatrist. He was a very sober-thinking man. He throws a lot of light on problems that we

face in our pursuit of Christian excellence. In his book *The Seasons of Life* he makes a statement that goes way beyond anything that we could have ever imagined that he would make. Listen to his words:

(The Seasons of Life by Paul Tournier)

God loves those who do not give in without a fight. It is by their very battles that those men grew. Jacob, on the morning after his dramatic night-long wrestle with God, awoke hardly able to stand up but he woke up a changed man. He had entered into a new season of life. The same was true of Abraham after his importunate prayers that Sodom be spared from the wrath of God; of Moses after his obstinate debate with the Lord before the burning bush; of Jeremiah the timid after all his refusals to bear a message of destruction; of Peter after his denial; of Paul after the road to Damascus. The same was true of all the other Biblical heroes. They were real men. They knew how to defend themselves. They would not give in easily. Therefore, their surrender had nothing in it that resembled childish dependency. Their very surrender was an act of manly courage. It brought them to human fulfillment and opened up human history to new seasons of life.  
(source unknown)

Maybe God is saying, “Hey look, it’s time. Come on. Throw the flag and let’s get on with it. It’s time to really let Me work.”

Jacob at 130 years of age says, “You’re not taking Benjamin. Simeon’s gone and Joseph is gone. Benjamin does not go!” And

finally when he says, “Take him! If I’m bereaved, I’m bereaved.” God turns his whole life around and the next 17 years are fantastic blessing to him.

Joseph comes back, Simeon comes back, Benjamin comes back. He has all twelve of them. He resides in the land of prosperity and plenty because God is first in his life! In the last scene, he’s worshipping God on the top of his staff.

### Ephesians 3:20

Now unto him who is able to exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think...

If we’re so tired and so unfulfilled:

### Matthew 11:28, 29

Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I’m meek and lowly of heart.

We have to sing with the hymn writer:

You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase,  
And have earnestly, fervently prayed;  
But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest  
Until all on the altar is laid.

Would you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,

And have peace and contentment always?  
You must do His sweet will to be free from all ill,  
On the altar your all you must lay.

Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow  
Of the blessings for which we have prayed,  
Till our body and soul He doth fully control,  
And our all on the altar is laid.  
(source unknown)

Willing to give it up? Maybe it's a job. Maybe it's an affair.  
Maybe it's something that's really wrong and it's just tearing  
you up. And you're saying, "I can't. I don't want to. Leave me  
alone in my bitterness and resentment! Let me go this way!"

The choice is ours. We can turn away from truth or we can  
consecrate ourselves and experience all that God has for us by  
opening up a way through an impossibility to take us into the  
land that He meant for us to have.

There are a number of lessons that come out of it and with  
this we'll wrap up the study.

Lesson #1: Early in the morning seems to be the best time for  
a lot of God's people.

Lesson #2: The Ark of the Covenant is the focal point in this  
whole chapter.

Just keep our eyes on the Ark. The Lord's going to open up a

way before us.

Lesson #3: God allows us plenty of time to view the impossible before He does His work.

They had three days to look at the river before God did a work among them.

Lesson #4: Will you examine your heart before the Lord so that He might do a great work among us?

Lesson #5: God is the one who is going to take them in, drive out the enemies, and give them the land.

Take them in, drive out the enemies, give them the land.

Lesson #6: The people exercised faith when they broke camp

Lesson #7: The Lord goes before us to open up the way.

Lesson #8: All the blessings of the land are waiting on the other side of a flooded river.

Lesson #9: Are you tired of wandering in the desert of Christian experience and longing for the spiritual sweetness of drawing upon an adequate Christ?

Hudson Taylor's great old hymn fits here:

Jesus I am resting, resting



In the joy of what Thou art.  
I am finding out the greatness  
Of Thy loving heart.

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,  
And thy beauty fills my soul,...

Jesus I am resting, resting  
In the joy of what Thou art.  
(source unknown)

Tired of wandering in the desert of Christian experience and longing for the spiritual sweetness of drawing upon an adequate Christ?

Lesson #10: Have you made that surrender and turned it all over to Him?

It's all about coming to know Jesus in a personal way. Some of us know Him, but haven't surrendered and are still hanging onto those things. And until we open our hand and let go, we're not going to know the blessings of the land of rest and peace that God has for us. That's the message of crossing the Jordan.

Father, we sense Your Spirit at work among us. We know there are those who need to decide to make things right with You. We pray Your Holy Spirit might bring real conviction until things happen. Take away the desire for lukewarmness and the deep desire to be cold or hot. Restore unto us the first

love that was ours at the day of forgiveness and of salvation. Fill us with the fervor and fire of the Spirit, that we might share Jesus Christ with those around us. For it's in the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

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# A Practical Study of JOSHUA

## “The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

### Study Number Three – Joshua 3:1-17

### NOTES

v. 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.

v. 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp,

v. 3 giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it.

v. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

v. 5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

v. 6 Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.

v. 7 And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.

v. 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.’”

v. 9 Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God.

v. 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.

v. 11 See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.

v. 12 Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe.

v. 13 And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”

v. 14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them.

## NOTES

v. 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,

v. 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 (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

v. 17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Read Joshua 3:1-17 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What is to be the signal for military invasion, according to verse 3?

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3. What is Joshua's message to the people in verse 5?

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4. What is the Lord's message to Joshua in verses 7 & 8?

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5. What will the Lord do as soon as the priests set foot in the Jordan, according to verse 13?

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6. What was the condition of the Jordan, according to verse 15?

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7. Describe in your own words what happened when the feet of the priests touched the water's edge.

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8. What did the priests do, according to verse 17?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Early in the morning seems to be the best time for a lot of God's people.

LESSON #2: The Ark of the Covenant is the focal point in this whole chapter.

LESSON #3: God allows us plenty of time to view the impossible before He does His work.

LESSON #4: Will you examine your heart before the Lord so that He might do a great work among us?

LESSON #5: God is the one who is going to take them in, drive out the enemies, and give them the land.

LESSON #6: The people exercised faith when they broke camp and moved toward the river. The priests exercised faith when their feet got wet at the river's edge.

LESSON #7: The Lord goes before us to open up the way.

LESSON #8: All the blessings of the land are waiting on the other side of the flooded river.

LESSON #9: Are you tired of wandering in the desert of Christian experience and longing for the spiritual sweetness of drawing upon an adequate Christ?

LESSON #10: Have you made that surrender and turned it all over to Him?