

Life Lesson 40
Crossing Jordan
Text: Joshua 3 and 4

Introduction

After years of wandering, at last it was time to go into the promised land. The people hadn't seen the miracles in Egypt as their parents had. They ate the miraculous manna, angel food, every day, so that just seemed normal to them. Would they have the faith they needed to follow Joshua into the land and to fight to conquer the land? God gave their faith a boost in the story today.

The Story

The Israelites must have been so excited! The officers went through the camp with the big news.

"When you see the ark of the covenant go by tomorrow, leave your place and go after it," they said. "Don't get too close, though. Just stay close enough to see where it's going, because you have never gone that way before."

After spending all their growing up years in the wilderness they were at last going to the promised land.

Joshua had a special message for them, too.

"Make sure your hearts and your bodies are clean (sanctify yourselves)," he said. "because tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

Joshua knew wondrous things would happen because God had already told him what would happen and what Joshua should do.

“As soon as the priests carry the ark of the covenant into the river, the water will dry up,” Joshua said. “Pick 12 men, one from each tribe, for a special job.”

The people must have wondered what that special job would be. They maybe even wondered if they would really get across the river. Sometimes the Jordan river was low enough to cross, but not at harvest time. It always overflowed at harvest time, and it was flooding right then.

But the priests carried the ark right up to the river. Nothing happened. The people watched, but the river was just as deep as ever. The priests surely wondered about it. Would they just walk into the river and be swept away?

But they obeyed God, even though it looked like God wasn't keeping his part of the deal. They walked out into the flooded river.

As soon as they were in the river up their ankles the river was suddenly dry! They couldn't see that far away up the river, God had stopped the water from flowing. Just as soon as the priests stepped in, the water was gone, just as if someone turned off the faucet. The priests walked out into the river and stopped in the middle. The people followed and crossed on dry land onto the other side.

Years before their parents had crossed the Red Sea. Now they were taking part in a miracle, too.

“Here's the special job,” he said. “Every one of you get one big rock out of the river and carry it out on your shoulder. We're going to pile them up as a sign of remembrance that God brought us across the flooded river on dry land. Someday your children and grandchildren ask, ‘Why are those big rocks piled up there?’ You will tell them about this wonderful day and what

God did for us.”

They each picked up a rock as Joshua commanded and carried it out of the river. Then Joshua took twelve more stones and piled them up in the river by where the priests stood with the ark of the covenant.

The priests stood there holding the ark until everyone was over the river and everything was done that God commanded.

Then, acting on God’s command, Joshua told the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.”

As soon as the priests stood on dry land, the waters returned, just like the faucet was turned back on.

That night they piled up the stones, like God had told them to. It was there in Gilgal for many years as a testimony that God had done a miracle to get His people across the river. It was also a testimony that God was with Joshua, just as He had been with Moses. What a comfort that pile of stones must have been to the people!

The Life Lesson

Do you think it was hard for the priest to step into the river, when it looked like God wasn’t going to keep His promise? God said He would stop the river, but they sure couldn’t see Him doing anything! God planned it that way so the people could learn faith. They had to step into the river before they saw God answer their prayers.

Sometimes God allows us to learn by faith that way, too. Sometimes we have to obey, even if we can’t see God working. We may think, “Why is this happening this way? I think God made a mistake.”

But God never makes mistakes. Our part is to obey Him, whether it looks like obedience

will work or not. We can trust Him to do as He says, even when we can't see or understand what He is doing. We will find out in time. But first, we may have to get our feet wet!

Review Questions

What were the children of Israel to follow to the river?

The ark of the covenant

Who was to carry the ark of the covenant?

The priests

What river did they have to cross to get to the promised land?

The Jordan River

How did God say they would get across?

They would walk across on dry land.

Who went into the river first?

The priests, carrying the ark of the covenant.

Could they see the river being stopped up?

No, it happened upstream.

When did the water stop flowing?

When the priests were in up to their ankles.

How many stones did the people take out of the river?

Twelve

What did they do with the twelve stones?

They put them up in a big pile.

Why did God want them to have this pile of stones?

So that every time they saw it, they would remember the miracle God did for them.