

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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**SERMON TITLE** Courage to Cross Over

**SERIES**

**DATE** 11/6/2022

**KEY SCRIPTURE** Joshua 3

**SYNOPSIS** Take a step of faith and trust God to do the rest.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☞ Courage to Cross Over

### Joshua 3

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, 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. 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."

**Shittim** = thorns

**Jordan** = downward; descending

A miracle was about to happen, but they were leaving a thorny place and going downward. A lot of times in life it seems that things just go from bad to worse, and you feel like you can't go ☞ any lower. **When things are at their worst, that's when God will be his best.**

*At a moment like this, all the wonderful talk about living in the Promised Land can sound hollow. There is a seemingly impossible obstacle blocking the way — how will God do this one? Likewise, we've talked about God's personal promises to OBC, but now in the natural it seems impossible. Perhaps we are just about to cross over our Jordan.*

☞ **When you see the ark...** Ark = God's presence. **Listen and look for God at work.** If you're paying attention you can see that God has been moving at OBC. *The ark is referred to 14 times in these 17 verses. There is an emphasis on God's presence here.* Watch for God's presence – evidence of God at work.

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

**Consecrate** = sanctify; prepare; set apart; separate. *This means they were to separate themselves from common things to focus in on the Lord.* What needs to be cut out from your life so that you can be closer to God? Perhaps a period of fasting, whether it be food or Facebook or something else.

**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. 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. 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.'"**

*As Joshua takes a step of faith, God encourages him all the way and gives him more specific instructions...* Chapter 1 – get ready to cross the Jordan. Chapter 2 – follow the ark. Now – tell the priests to stand in the river. That's how God typically leads us – one step at a time. So, ☞ **take that first step and trust God for the rest.**



Joshua didn't send his Army Corps of Engineers first. Instead, he sent the priests who carried the ark of the covenant. He knew this was a spiritual problem, not a feat of human engineering. So often when facing a serious problem, we look for human answers and forget to look for God's ☞ miraculous solution. **You have a problem? God has a possibility.**

**9 Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. 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. 11 See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. 12 Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. 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. 9 Listen... v. 11 see** Listen and look (again). God leads. We listen and look with spiritual eyes and ears so that we may follow him as he leads. And, when God is leading us he will take care of the obstacles we face.

Canaanites = he that subdues

Hittites = fear; terror

Hivites = wickedness

Perizzites = dwelling in villages

Girgashites = who arrives from a pilgrimage

Amorites = bitter; rebel; babblers

Jebusites = treading underfoot

Here's the nature of our enemy: He wants to subdue us with fear. He wants us to indulge in our sinful nature and keep us stuck there. He loves to incite gossip, rebellion, and bitterness. And, ultimately, he wants to keep us under his foot - helpless and hopeless. But Joshua was going to trust the Lord through it all. He didn't get discouraged because of the difficulty of crossing the Jordan. He wasn't afraid of all the adversaries they would be facing. He trusted God and **saw ☞ these obstacles as opportunities for God to work.**

**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. 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 Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. 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 average width of the Jordan is about 98 feet while the depth ranges from 3 to 10 feet. During flood times, the Jordan swells to a width of half a mile in certain areas. This was no small obstacle, especially when you consider that Joshua was leading millions of people of all ages along with livestock and supplies. How is he going to get them across?





**v. 15 as soon...touched the water's edge** = a step of faith. This is even more trusting than before. Up to this point they were simply getting themselves ready and starting to follow the ark. Now, they would actually have to step into the water. What if nothing changed? What if they got soaked, or worse, drowned?

*We usually want the river to be dry before we even make a step, but God was truly calling Israel to step out in faith. God is letting them take one step further and saying, "Go ahead and step out before you see any evidence, before you see any signs, go ahead and step out in faith. Get your feet wet."*

I feel like this is what we have been doing these past few weeks. We've called people to the altar not knowing exactly what God would do. We started praying and saying whatever we sensed God was leading for individuals. It felt a bit awkward and we weren't 100% sure God would fill in the blanks. But we stepped out and trusted God. Some of you may have felt a nudge from the Lord. I want to encourage you to take that first step of faith and trust God for the rest.

☞ **2 Corinthians 5:7... we walk by faith, not by sight.**

It was at this point – when their faith got serious – that God stepped in with a miracle.

**v. 16 Water stopped flowing/v. 17 dry ground** = miraculous happens. It was instantaneous but also took a while to be obvious. The water stopped flowing a great distance upstream – that is miraculous. But, it seems that the flow would take a while to completely stop where the priests were. I think miracles often work like that – an instant response from the Lord, with a process which follows. In Daniel 10 we see that when he prayed there was an instant response, but a 3-week delay. There was spiritual warfare going on which Daniel couldn't see, but his prayer was being answered. Just because you don't see something immediately does not mean God hasn't responded.

Our God is a God of miracles. He has done countless miracles throughout the ages. If he did them before, he will do them again. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. If he did a miracle for someone else, why not you?

Mark 16:17-18

17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

☞ These are God's promises to us. **We should expect God to do miracles today.** We should expect healings. We should expect deliverances. We should expect spiritual gifts. This is our heritage. When you come to church on Sunday, are you anticipating God to work wonders? When you pray with someone, are you expecting God to answer?



Acts 14:3

3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.

I believe that we, at OBC, proclaim the truth of God's Word without compromise. We stick to the Bible. So, it's reasonable to expect God to work wonders amongst us as well.

v. 16 **Zarethan** = distress; tribulation; perplexity

**Water cut off down to Dead Sea...** distress and troubles can lead us down a dark road and we can slowly die in our hearts and minds unless we trust God to get us through.

☞ This is the nature of God's miraculous ability. **He can bring all of our concerns, confusion and conflicts to an abrupt conclusion.** He can make a way where there seems to be no way. **He can breakthrough seemingly impossible blockages.** He can deliver us in our distress.

v. 17 **Priests stood firm.** This is our calling today. God has been leading and we've been doing our best to follow. We've gotten our feet wet with stepping out into ministry, especially around ☞ the altar. Now, we need to **resolve to stand firm and rely on God** to make a way.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always **give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord**, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Some may be thinking, "I've followed the Lord and prayed but haven't seen the answers I'm ☞ looking for, so I just give up." No! Don't give up. Stand firm! **Keep on keeping on!** I want to build your faith today with this short video from James River Assembly in Springfield, Mo.

☞ **Video**

Now, we are going to keep on stepping out in faith. If you need prayer or a word from the Lord, come to the altar, get your feet wet and see what God will do. Others, you are free to go.