

Live Strong. Facing Life with Faith  
Following in Faith/Detailed Notes Week 3  
Joshua 3 & 4

We have defined faith as trusting God enough to obey Him. Israel is entering a new day. They are about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. They would have to trust God every step of the way. In Chapters 3 & 4, God is giving specific instructions which Joshua and the people would have to follow exactly. The principles for following God in faith apply to us as well.

### I. The Attitude of Faith (Joshua 3:1-5)

The Israelites are camped at Shittim, about 7 miles from the Jordan River. They have been here for quite some time (Numbers 22). The day has come they have been waiting for, but following God in faith would not be a casual stroll with a flippant mindset. Their journey would require an attitude of faith.

#### A. An Attitude of Reverence

The Ark of the Covenant would lead the way as the people crossed the Jordan into Canaan. The Ark always represented the presence of God, some referring to it as the throne of God. Great care was always taken when transporting the ark. No one was to touch it. The specifics are laid out in Exodus 25:10-22. The ark was a chest or box made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold inside and out. At each of the lower corners, gold rings were attached. Long poles made of acacia wood covered in pure gold were inserted into the rings, never to be removed. It was with the poles that the Levitical priests carried the ark. On top of the ark was the mercy seat fashioned from pure gold and two golden cherubim graced each end of the mercy seat. Psalm 80:1 says God sits on the mercy seat. Inside the ark were the tablets of the Law, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod. Each detail of the ark represented God. For New Testament believers, the ark is a wonderful foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. The ark was a reminder of God's holiness, His mercy, and His provision. (A stark and serious account of moving the ark can be found in 2 Samuel 6).

As Israel prepared to cross the Jordan, the priests were to be 3000 feet or 1000 yards in front of the people. The people were not to come near it and they were to stay behind the ark. It was a symbol of their reverence for God, their reverent fear of God.

Today we often chaff at the idea of reverent fear and yet it is a positive attitude of reverence that affects every area of our lives. While God loved Israel and He was indeed leading them, **He is not their buddy! Neither is He ours.** Even in our casual approach to so many things, Christians must recapture an awe for God: a reverence and even fear of His holiness. God has not changed. While God's presence no longer rests on the ark, His presence is within the believer in the form of the HOLY Spirit of Christ. **Read Isaiah 6:1-6 and Revelation 1:12-18. Ask the Lord to press into your heart and mind His holiness.**

#### B. An Attitude of Submission

When we (and Israel) have readjusted our attitude and recognize His holiness, we see ourselves. We are humbled. We understand our limitations in light of God's holiness and might. We submit to Him. We surrender.

Joshua 3:4 is profound. "***Go after it for you have never passed this way before.***" Other than the spies, Israel had never stepped one foot into the Promised Land. They did not know the way. They did not know the plan. They did not have a strategy. They must completely rely on and surrender to God.

Ladies, you and I have never lived one moment into the future. We have no idea what tomorrow or even the next moment holds. We must lay down our pride, and humbly submit to Christ. He knows the way, He knows the plan, and He is the leader. We must follow.

To follow, we (and Israel) must have complete confidence in God and we must be humble enough to follow. Humility is not a doormat mentality. It is simply declaring my total dependence on Christ.

### **C. An Attitude of Personal Holiness**

Joshua tells the people (verse 5) to consecrate themselves. The Hebrew word is Qadash (kah-desh). It means to make clean. This word is a verb, an action word. According to Exodus 19:10, the people were to take a bath and put on clean clothes. It was an external action to symbolize an internal attitude. It was an outward sign of inward cleanliness or holiness. God was about to do wonders among them and when God is doing a new thing and a mighty thing, He takes seriously the personal holiness (cleanness) of His people. But what does this mean for the New Testament believer?

Ephesians 1:4 tells us we are chosen to be holy and blameless before Him. This is our POSITION, our STATUS in Christ. When we come to Christ, God declares us holy and blameless. This is how He sees us. Our position will never change. BUT we are responsible to live holy, clean lives. We are equipped to do this through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Ephesians 4:22-24 reminds us to take off the old and put on the new life in Christ. We do this by dying daily to the old way of living, the old sinful nature (Romans 6:11-13). Why? Because it matters how we live! (1 Peter 2:9-12). Each day we allow the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to search us and expose any sin (Psalm 139:23-24, Hebrews 4:12). Then we confess and turn from our sin, allowing Christ to forgive us and cleanse us, and create a clean heart within us (1 John 1:9, Psalm 51:10). This process of searching, exposing, confessing, and cleansing is a daily, sometimes hourly, exercise in obedience.

Israel is ready to cross the Jordan. They have an attitude of reverence and submission. They are also dedicated to living holy, consecrated lives.

### **II. The Action of Faith**

**Joshua 3:1-7** are God's words to Joshua, telling Joshua exactly what would happen. The instructions are clear. The priests are to lead the people while carrying the ark. The moment the feet of the priests touch the flooded Jordan River, the water will dry up and the people will be able to cross over on dry land.

This was not Joshua's plan. It was God's. But none of it would transpire until the priests and the people were in motion. They had to walking toward the Jordan River before the river ever dried up! Can you imagine being in that situation. Surely some of us would have said, "I'll wait and see if the river dried up before I pack up and start moving." But that is not walking by faith. We trust what God says enough to step out and obey Him.

Luke 17:11-14 is a familiar story of ten lepers who cried out for Jesus to heal them. They believed Jesus could do it! He tells them to go show themselves to the priest (the priest had to declare them clean before they could go back into society). Verse 14 says something we often miss. "*And it came about that **as they were going, they were cleansed.***" When they departed from Jesus they still had leprosy, yet they trusted His words enough to obey Him—even before they experienced His healing. This is faith—trusting enough to obey even when we cannot see the big picture.

Joshua 3:14-17 verifies that what God said really happened. The river water stood in a heap 17 miles north of where the priests put their feet into the water. All the tributaries died up as well. The people crossed while the priest stood firm on solid dry ground. Dear one, faith is not just believing. It is an action that affirms our belief.

### **III. The Acknowledgement of Faith**

Israel has experienced a mighty wonder, unparalleled since the crossing of the Red Sea. But that generation is dead and gone and God is doing new wonders for a new generation. And He never wants them to forget His wonders.

Throughout Joshua 4, God is giving instructions. Twelve men must take 12 boulders from the middle of the Jordan. They are to build a memorial in the place that Israel camps –on the other side of the Jordan. The memorial is to serve three purposes. 1) a reminder to the adult Israelites, 2) a teaching tool for future generations, 3) a testimony to an unbelieving world. The twelve stones were reminders of God's faithfulness to His people.

We too need to set up reminders of God's faithfulness in our lives. Why? In times of sickness, despair, grief, loss, and difficulty we are prone to forget the faithfulness of God in our past. But we must not forget. We must write it down, tell it to our children and grandchildren, and remind ourselves of the goodness and faithfulness of God. And finally, our very lives are to be a memorial. To those who are look back at our lives they see our lives marked by the faithfulness of God.