

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Joshua 3 as we continue our study through the book of Joshua; by the way, the first Bible book with someone's name attached to it and probably written by Joshua as well, although it is difficult to prove. It does seem to work. The book only covers twenty-five years of Israel's history. The exodus - that's when the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt - took place about 1445 B.C. So forty years later, 1405 B.C., we find Joshua leading the people into the Promised Land, and the book ends about 1379 (or so) B.C. - so maybe twenty-six years.

Moses had led the nation out of Egypt after 430 years of bondage, of really suffering. When Moses showed up, over a nine-month period God poured out ten plagues of judgment against the Egyptians to show Pharaoh and everyone else who the LORD truly was. This nation that worshipped a multiplicity of gods and animals and critters now met a God that they couldn't compete with - a miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea; a six-week walk with almost three million people to Mount Sinai; a year of sitting before the LORD's presence up in the mountain, as the earth shook and the mountains spit out fire, and Moses went up and down and met with the LORD and brought back (from the LORD) God's plans for forgiveness, for mercy. He brought back the Law. He set up the tabernacle. He taught them about how substitutionary blood sacrifice would work. He set the stage for how God would rightfully and righteously be able to forgive man. He set up the priesthood. He assigned the tribes. He called them to worship, to holiness. And then, after a year, he led them out on an eleven-day 126-mile walk to the edge of the Land of Promise, to a place called Kadesh Barnea. And they should have gone in. It had been nine months of plagues and six weeks of walking and a year of sitting, and now eleven more days to get to where they were at. But then they sent the spies in - all twelve - and you know how that story went. They brought back a discouraging, faithless report. They didn't consider the LORD to be trustworthy. After all that He had done, after all that they had seen, they still determined somehow the giants were too big, the cities were too walled, God couldn't be trusted, and they ran into this issue of - do we trust God or do we become overwhelmed with the circumstance - and they chose the latter. And so God, in His judgment, sent them all back into the wilderness to wander around for forty years till everyone twenty years and older died. He was going to try it again

with their kids. Very little written at all about those forty years. You get a little bit about the last year before they were to go in. In fact, the past year had seen the second generation learn about God's power as they fought kings more powerful than they but not in the land, on the other side of the Jordan River, on the eastern side. And so they were back, and they were standing in this place. Moses had died, the time of grieving had passed, and now God says to Joshua, "Let's go."

So we looked a week at Joshua's preparation - at how the LORD prepared this man for many, many years - for this job that now stood before him. We looked at God's commission to the people in chapter 1 and His promise that everywhere they put their foot would be theirs. "Possess your possessions. Don't let this word depart from your mouth. Walk with Me, and let Me be with you, and you'll find great victory." In chapter 2, we looked at Rahab as the focus was on two spies. They only sent in two this time - the two that represented, I guess, the two faithful from last time. They ran into Rahab, who had heard about what had happened forty years earlier when the LORD had brought them out of the land of Egypt and how He had brought them through the Red Sea. She had heard about the battles the year before (on the other side of the Jordan). She had heard enough to say, "This is the God that's going to rule. This is the God that we've got to serve. I'll leave everything behind. I'm going to follow Him." And she told the two spies, "We're in terror of you! We're fearful for our lives. Please, I will save you. You save me." And God gave her a promise of deliverance that she and her family would be assured, and by faith Rahab makes a covenant for her family. She hangs a scarlet cord outside of the window (she lived on the wall), and when they go in to take the land (in a few chapters), she'll be spared; and I suspect that's the one little part of the wall that didn't fall over - the place that she lived.

Tonight, the second generation of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million people or more will move forward. It really is a monumental day if you think about how long it has taken us to get to this point. Seventy-three days they'd been sitting in the Acacia Grove east of the Jordan, and the time had come to enter into the land that God had promised to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob and to Joseph. In chapter 1, the LORD had said to Joshua, to the nation, "Faith has to become action." In chapter 2, they focused on the action of one woman in faith. And tonight,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million people move out. They didn't fail like their parents. They went forward. It is one of those cool pictures because it seems to me if you can get a leader like Joshua, who loves the LORD, and you can find some folks with him who are willing to believe God for anything, then the sky's the limit. Don't you think? I mean, it's like a powerful,

energetic kind of picture, you know? Joshua's ready. He's been waiting a long time. He was with the original group. He's been wanting to go, and now this huge congregation is ready to move out, and so they're ready to take the land.

We are planning Easter already. I don't know if you've thought about it, but Easter's not that far away. But our goal this year is to see 1,000 more people show up at the stadium. What do you think? Think we can do that? We can only do that if we all pray together and reach out. It's going to take all of us. So we've got some great ideas about how to get to our neighborhoods, and we're going to introduce them to you. But you're going to have to promise to be involved, okay? I don't mean sit in Row 11 and just watch. I don't know what Row 11 is. I didn't mean to pick on you. Or Row 9. How about that? But it's going to take all of us. But then I think the sky can be, certainly, the limit. We're having Natalie Grant back out. She's coming again this year. We liked her so well last year, and she gave me goose bumpies. If you get goose bumpies, you gotta get 'em back. You know the Lord's workin' when you get the goose bumps. So she'll be with us.

I thought about reading this chapter about Saul. Saul was the first king of Israel, and there's a verse in 1 Samuel 10 that says, "And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched" (verse 26). I mean, talk about possibilities. Right? The LORD's on Saul's life. He's anointed by God. He's surrounded by godly people. They had every hope of seeing God do tremendous things. And the potential was set aside simply because Saul was unwilling to submit to God and walk with Him. I'm grateful that there's a body of believers here at church who, for the most part, walk with God and seem to seek to serve Him in any way they can. I get to be the guy in front a lot of times, and I have the mic, and I stand up here and talk to you; but really I'm not the church. We're the church, right? And God has a way of using us, and it thrills me to watch missions grow and salvations take place, and churches are planted. But that happens when valiant people walk by faith, when they grab what God has done, and they believe Him for what He has promised to do. And I think that's what chapter 3's all about. It's kind of the culmination of years of, "Are you ready?" and, "Yeah, we're ready." Now they don't always do so well. There're some real setbacks. We're going to get to chapter 7. There's a setback. In chapter 9, there's a setback. But they're moving. They're moving in the midst of it all.

So after the return of the two spies, we read in verse 1 (chapter 3), "Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the

Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.' And Joshua said to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.' Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.' So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. And the LORD said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.' " Verse 1 says Joshua got up in the morning. It was time to go. I don't know what three million people breaking camp sounds like, but I think it had to have been cool. Right? Forty days of Moses' sermons had come and gone - the book of Deuteronomy. Thirty days of mourning his death had come and gone. Three days (Joshua had said in chapter 1:11) they were going to go forward. It says in verse 16 of chapter 2 that the spies were told to hide for three days and then come back. So all of this to say this is the time to move.

And God leads these folks forward - three million of them, maybe, watching a swollen river fly by during the height of flood season. We read (in verse 15 there) that it says, "And as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of the harvest)...." You might remember that the flax was already laid out on Rahab's roof (that we studied in chapter 2). So it was that time in April or so. We know that the nation would cross the Jordan (according to chapter 4:19) four days before the Passover. So you can find the exact time, if you will, around April, and indeed it's a time when the snow up on Mount Hermon, there, begins to melt. And the Jordan River can be dangerous - it can overflow its banks. Sometimes the River can be 100' wide and moving at 20 miles an hour. Now imagine you're on the other side. The last time it was the giants. This time it's the River. The Jordan River, as you might know if you've ever looked at a map of Israel, just kind of cuts the entire country from north to south. And there are three main arteries that feed it in the north, and there's really no outlet in the south; it ends up in the Dead Sea, and it's dead because there aren't any outlets. In the north, there are three sources of water, some of them twelve miles above Caesarea Philippi. The first place is called the

Jordan or the Yarden; the Yarden means to descend from the heights of Dan. That's how it got its name. A little south of Caesarea, there's a second river called the Banias, which joins in; and a bit further south, a little tributary called the Hasbani River. And all three of them, to this day, add water to the flow, and then it heads thirty-five miles south until it flows into the Sea of Galilee. But the word "Jordan" means to descend, and it falls from the Sea of Galilee 700' below sea level to the Dead Sea, which is 1290' below sea level. And, like I said, with Jericho situated in the base of the mountains that far down, it's got a lot of runoff, it's got a lot of water. It's at the place where the mountains kind of end. It's a very treacherous place.

So Joshua wakes up, and he moves these millions of folks forward. During those three days, the officers had gone through the crowds to prepare the people for this venture of faith that immediately has a challenge involved. There's a flood, and it's moving fast, and there's a river between them and God's promise. They are told to wait until the ark of the covenant of the LORD is moved and then to follow it. "Don't get too close. We want everybody to see it. But wherever He goes, you should go." And God's presence goes before them, and the Levites (the priests) lead the people. Up to now, they had followed a cloud by day and a pillar by night. That's gone. From now on (here in chapter 3), the walk is not so much by sight as it is by faith. Oh, they could visibly see God's presence before; every night, every day there was a physical, visible presence of God. But now there was just this little box where God's presence would be, and they would have to wander and follow, if you will, by faith. They'd have to stay back 2,000 cubits or 3,000' or 1,000 yards back. Why? Well, I think if you had that many folks, probably it would be good just to give them a clear pass so everyone could see where they were going. Plus the LORD is holy, and they're not, and there is always this issue of reminding yourself that God is holy. This was the embodiment of the LORD's presence with them. So the LORD was going to lead them. It was a place they hadn't been. It was a place God had promised them. It was a joy for Him to give it to them. He promised that they could have wherever they walked, wherever they stood. "It is all available to you, but now you're going to have to walk by faith and not by sight." And even this ark, that was to house God's presence in their midst, was not visible to the eye. It was covered. Only the high priest could go in there and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. So the Holy of Holies was a place that God dealt with the sins of the people, but His presence was there. They literally could just see a covered box; not exactly, maybe, as easy to follow as the cloud had been. But it is veiled, and yet it would lead them (according to verse 11)

that says, "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan."

So verse 5, "Be ready. Tomorrow is the day the LORD is going to do great wonders among you." And I wondered if, after all these years, Joshua finally had a sleepless night. Right? I mean, what a big day this was and how long they had been waiting for this, and nervous and unable to rest. I don't know how often you go to church after a night of looking forward to meeting with God and seeing what He's going to say to you. I don't know if that's the way you come to church or you're just running in late because you've been at work all day. But the LORD said, "Tomorrow's going to be a big day. Tomorrow you're going to see God do some great things. We've been looking at this for hundreds of years. This has been God's will for a long time. And here you are. Tomorrow's going to be an awesome day." And I think we should live that kind of expectant life, you know? God has made us great promises. We should go where we haven't been. Don't you think? You haven't been there before, so just follow the ark. You haven't been there before, so just follow the Lord. God has more for us to do and more for us to experience than we ever will just pick up on our own, certainly. And I don't doubt that these millions of folks were any different, and I don't also doubt that Joshua (because we've read it a couple of times) wondered how the people would react to his leadership. He'd seen the downside and their behavior towards Moses for years. It had been horrible. And so I wonder if he didn't think, "Man, how's it going to work?" But notice the LORD says to him specifically, in verse 7, "Starting today I'm going to exalt you in the sight of Israel. They're going to know I was with you as I've been with Moses. They're going to see it." And this parting of the Jordan, kind of like the parting of the Red Sea, would really establish him in the eyes of the people.

Verse 8 says, "You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, "When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan." ' ' " (That's always a good idea, 20-mile-an-hour swollen river, out of control. "Just stand in the Jordan.") "So Joshua said to the children of Israel, 'Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.' And Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites' " (the termites, the out-of-sights - Laughing - well, there're a lot of "ites" there, anyway). "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing

over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.' " So, by faith, right? That's the issue. Remember, we spent a long time in Hebrews 11 because we said Joshua is a book of action by faith. The priests are the first ones to get a job. "Stand in the water, hold the ark, don't move. When you get to the water, carrying My presence with you, I'll open up a pathway for you to get into the Land of Promise." Sounds pretty good. God makes us a lot of promises, and we wonder how He's going to keep them. We see a lot of obstacles. But if He goes with you, I think you should rest in His ability and trust in Him.

Notice (in verse 8) that the LORD talks about the ark of the covenant. You might remember, when we were going through Exodus, that this ark of the covenant isn't very big. It's 45" long and 27" wide and high; not a very big box - 4'x2' basically. And in it was Aaron's rod that had budded. You remember? In it was the second edition of the Law (because Moses had wrecked the original), and then a pot of manna under it; all to say, "God has brought you this far. God has provided all that you've needed. This is God's work. This is a memorial to God's name." And upon this ark of the covenant was this lid with cherubim (angels) that Exodus tells us have these covering wings that kind of shrouded the middle of it, if you will, because it was a place where God allowed the blood of the sacrifice to be placed so that, in His presence, the blood would atone for the sins of the nation. When Paul wrote to the Romans (3:23), he said, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood....." When Paul wrote to the Hebrews (9:5), he said, "and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat." And the word is "*hilasterion*." It really literally means just that. It means a place of mercy or a place of washing. So it's a big picture for us. I mean, it shows us Jesus who took man who had sinned, and he finds mercy by His blood. Same thing with the children of Israel; same thing with us, individually. God gives us new life. He takes you where you haven't been before to a life that's forgiven and that's new and that's filled with His Spirit, that you can claim victory over the enemy who's trying to hassle your life, that you can find the peace and the joy and the hope and the rest that only God can provide. It's the same portrait. It's the same walk. Don't read this story and go, "Oh, man I'd

have done it." No. You can still do that. God has still made those promises to you. But faith requires action, and it usually requires action before you see any results. People that say, sometimes, "Well, I'll just trust the Lord," and I'll say, "How are you doing with that?" They'll say, "I'm just waiting on the Lord." "What are you doing?" "I don't know. I'm not doin' nothin'." Well, you're going to sit there a long time, usually. There's a part for us to play, and then there's a part for Him to move. So, if you go stand where God says to stand, then you can wait for Him. But meanwhile the people are told by Joshua today their faith would be greatly encouraged. Notice, verse 10, he says to them very clearly, "Today you're going to know that the living God is among you to overthrow the 'ites' of the land."

Now you might remember, if you were with us back in the book of Numbers, that there were three families of the Levites assigned to this tabernacle, this important place of worship and gathering. They were all the descendants of three families - the Meraris, the Gershons and the Kohaths. And the Kohathites were given the job of carrying the ark. That was their part. The other guys had to set up the tent and set up the tabernacle and carry the wood. But it was the Kohathites' responsibility to carry the presence of the LORD - covered up - to lead the people forward. So it was these guys who had to now go put their feet in the water. But notice that (in verse 10) Joshua's point is, "Through this experience of going into the land, you're going to learn that the living God is among you and that He will, without fail, get rid of the enemy in the land," represented by these seven "ites." "The living God is among you." Why is that important? Well, they were going into a land that was filled with idolatry. Every place that you looked, people were worshipping statues and burning incense to rocks and rock figures, and offering food and money to carved images, and even placing their children in the fires to appease the gods that they were sure were angry with them. And the greatest threat to these people - over the next few hundred years - was the influence in the land regarding these false gods. It would lead to the northern kingdom being destroyed. It would lead to the southern kingdom being taken - for seventy years - into captivity. It was all about idolatry. It was all about replacing God with someone or with something else. And so the LORD says early on, as they go in, "Look, the living God is among you. You're going to go take a land from people who are worshipping a bunch of dead gods or gods that just don't exist." His people were serving a God who'd go before them, who'd give them victory, who'd defeat the enemy if they would just learn one thing - walk with Him, walk with Him. That's all we need to learn, right? You're serving a living God who made the heavens and the earth. That's pretty good company to hang out in. That should



get you puttin' your chest out and walkin' straight up, shouldn't it? I mean, He's a faithful God.

There's a great Psalm, 115, and I just want to read you a few verses from it, where the psalmist understood the issue of serving a living God so distinct from the gods of the world. And this is what he wrote, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth. Why should the Gentiles say, 'So where is their God?' But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell; they have hands, but they do not handle; feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them. O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield." In the psalm, the Gentiles ask, "Where is your God?" and that's a good question because the Gentiles could point to theirs. "Where's your god?" "Oh, he's up on the mantel. He's at the door. He's on my shirt. He's on my hand. I carry him around with me." They could point to the stone or to the metal, to the carved or to the decorated, to those standing in the groves or built upon the high places or in the temples - often made to look like man, in some form or another. Their gods have eyes and ears and feet and mouths. They look a lot like man and not a lot, at all, like what you might consider God. "Your gods look like men. In essence, they're worse than men. They're less than men. Your gods are below you because you have a mouth that can speak, but your god, he's got a mouth, he just can't say anything. And you can walk around, but if your god needs to move, you've got to go pick him up and carry him. You've got a very weak god - one that's been created by you. So he looks like you. But if you want to know where my God is," he says, "our God is in heaven. Can't see Him, but He's there, and He does whatever He wants. He is the LORD. He's invisible to the eye, but He's seen by those who know Him. He's the One above the mercy seat. He gives life to anyone who looks to Him or calls upon Him. Your gods look like men, but they're unable to do what man can do. Your gods are made by you, are less than you. Our God made us, and He's far greater than we are. That's the distinction, isn't it? Our God is greater, much greater than all of us." And the consequence that the psalmist writes about, there in Psalm 115, is you become like your god - which is a pretty strong statement, is a pretty strong statement. To the idol worshipper, he dies in his worship - becoming like his god. He's insensate, he's unfeeling, he's unable, he's weak, he can't do anything, he's got no hope for anything because his god's dead! I

remember growing up as a Catholic. When they decommissioned Saint Christopher I was so upset. He used to watch over my car, I thought, and then all of a sudden he was not. He can't watch over my car - stupid little statue! God can watch over me. He's a big God! More than able. But you become like your god. You start worshipping all these dead.....you become dead in every way. If you become like the living God, you become victorious. You're able to bear burdens. You can walk in the ways of righteousness. You can overcome sin. You can get in the Promised Land. You can put your foot down, and the "ites" can go flyin' out the door. Same for you. Who do you serve?

So the miracle (verses 10 and 11) of the crossing of the Jordan was to assure the people that they were going forward with the living God clearly and closely involved with them. And boy, did God do something great that day. We read (in verse 12), " 'Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.' So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan."

That's a pretty cool picture. The Lord of all the earth was busy this day. He stopped the flow of water sixteen miles upstream; that's where this place is - Adam. Down below from where they stood, the waters that were rolling down towards the Dead Sea eventually quit rolling all together. The River dried out. And so there's this big back-up. The LORD built a dam, put His hand out. I don't know. But for sixteen miles along the River, God was doing something cool. And for miles downstream, the same thing. And the people looked, and the priests stood, and they went, "That's pretty interesting," and 2½-3 million people crossed

over. I don't know how long that took. Must have been an interesting place, and the place was dry. The River was dry. Why roll the River back so far? I suspect it's to make sure that every king in the area would hear about it. God's people have arrived. You know, you might as well set the siren off. Imagine if you had a house on the River, looking out your window one cool April morning eating breakfast. "Hey, hey, hey! Where'd the River go?!" You might remember Rahab's words back in chapter 2, when she was talking to these spies, and she says this, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen upon us, and that all of the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." But she said, "We've heard how He dried up the waters of the Red Sea." Well, He's at it again. Now He's doing it with a River. He's drying up the Jordan. So the second miraculous crossing. The first one took some forty years earlier, at night. This one happened during the day. One brought them out of bondage into the wilderness, headed for the Land of Promise. It was a long journey. This one took them into the Land of Promise. But both of them required a miracle of God, who led the way. And I love verse 13 and verse 15. As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests bearing God's presence, the ark of the LORD, rested in the waters - the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water, then God moved mightily, rolling back this rain-swollen River and provided a way across for people on dry ground. It could have just been like the best day ever for these guys, don't you think?

But I wrote something in my notes years ago on the edge of my Bible. And, unfortunately, if you're a pastor, you go through Bibles like you go through socks - you throw 'em down, you pick 'em up. I know some of you have kept your Bibles for years, and you've got every note every made in them? I've got every note ever made in six chapters and then pretty much need another Bible. But I wrote in one of the Bibles that I kept, and it says, "Sometimes if you want to see God's best, you just have to get your feet wet." And I think that's true. Right? We can talk about faith, theologically, for the rest of our lives - what it means, what we should be doing, what we think. We can talk about God's power. We can agree with God's ability. We can mention His goodness and how He's provided, and His commitment to us. But it's all talk until you get your feet wet. It's all talk until you put it into

action. "Yeah, the LORD's gonna part the Red Sea. Yeah, He's gonna part the Jordan. Yeah, we're gonna go in and conquer the land. Let's go." "Well, not right now." That's real faith. Faith has to produce behavior. And if there's no moving forward, stepping into the flowing river, God probably won't make it dry ground. When we started Morningstar in 1985, there were literally three couples sitting in a house in Whittier. And we were having Bible studies together, and we had no clue; nor did we believe necessarily that God was going to do great things. We just thought that we should be teaching the Bible. And it wasn't long before 20 people showed up at a house, and then 50 people showed up, and then 100 people showed up, and then 150. It's hard to get 100 people into a house. It was during the summer. People were sitting, looking through the windows. It was cool though, you know, just to watch God work. And it took doing, though, because I don't know if you can ever guess that God would want to do great things with you, but you should believe that because He has great plans. He doesn't do anything poorly or halfway. He doesn't just "sort of" do stuff. You read the Bible, and God's into big stuff, isn't He? Big stuff. And I suspect that He wants to do that with you, that God will honor steps of faith if you're willing to get your feet wet. But that's going to have to be on you. You're going to have to walk into a storm you can't overcome and into a river that looks undefeatable, that might take you out in the process; or into a situation that, "Man, I just feel like I'm over my head in this, this is going to take me out." Well maybe it will, but get your feet wet. Because it seems to me you find God at the end of that kind of a choice. I don't know if you've asked yourself what God wants to do with you this year, what you've been dreaming out for years, and talking about forever and, "One of these days, and then I'm gonna, I'm gonna, I'm gonna." You're never gonna. You've got to go get your feet wet. These guys had sat long enough staring at the River. I imagine for three days this River was raging. People were going, "This is crazy. We're not going to do this. This is ridiculous. We're going to have to wait till summer." But God did something great. He did something great. You're out of Egypt. You're saved. God's brought you through the trials of the wilderness to teach you that you can trust in Him. Maybe you're parked on the Promised Land borders, and the living God is waiting to lead you forward, and all you've got to do is get your feet wet. Step out. Get involved in some ministry. Make yourself available somewhere. "Oh, I can't. I just don't know." Right. I've heard it all before. Get your feet wet.

I'm sure these priests wondered, "And then what? I can't even swim!" I'm pretty sure Levites weren't known for swimming. They were known for praying and for marching; not so much for swimming. God honors faith, and He doesn't expect to

have blind faith. The faith that God honors is actions taken in trusting His directions and believing His promises. That's what Hebrews 11 is all about. It's all about taking God at His Word and not being overwhelmed with the challenges. "I'm just going to trust He's going to do what He's going to do." And I love this picture because this is a monumental chapter, man. Here're the millions of folks God's been giving promises to, and He's pushing them into the land. They're making their entrance, if you will. And everyone is involved - Joshua is there, the priests are there, the people are moving - directed by God's Word to them. There's those twelve guys that have been picked that are going to be given an assignment here in a little bit. It's easy to be led astray when you move relying on how you feel or the experiences of others. And so often it just seems like more and more churches aren't teaching the Bible. They're talking about experiences. Well that doesn't help me any and doesn't help you any. But God has spoken, and Joshua is listening, and the people are believing it, and the priests are obeying it, and they're leading the people, and they're setting the pace, and they're getting their feet wet.

I don't know how long the priests had to stand with their little feet in the water, but 20-mile-an-hour water is scary. It'll knock you off your feet if you're not careful. I don't know if the LORD made them stand there for 30 seconds, 1 second or a minute and a half. "Come on! Come onnnnn!" I don't know. Wait to see the DVD when you get there. It's all going to be on DVD in full-living HD color. It's going to be beautiful. And then we'll play your life.....ohhhh.....black and white. (Laughing) I just see them collectively praying under their breath, "Come on, LORD." And slippery and the currents. "LORD, if You can just do something." But that's when God worked. When does God work? When you put yourself out there and you feel like you're hung out to dry. And God works. He does it every time. He does it every time.

Our problem isn't that we have a weak God. We just have weak confidence in a strong God. That's usually our problem. "I don't want to share with them. They're going to get mad. I don't want to reach out to them. I don't think anything good's going to come. I don't know what to do. I haven't got what it takes." You can just beat yourself over the head with hammers, or you can get your feet wet.

So the priests stood in the water, which rolled back, and as they bore God's presence, everybody safely crossed - for however long it took. It took a whole night the last time we read of them. But the priests are, in faith, interceding. The people are being served. The ark is in their hands. The presence of God is with

them. And they find themselves on the ground that had been promised for generations - finally where God wanted them to be, they find themselves.

By the time we get to chapters 4 and 5, we will find them just two miles away from the walls of Jericho in a place called Gilgal, which will be their kind of rallying point. It'll be their home away from home. It'll be the place that they will come to as they take their attacks to the north and to the middle and to the south. Gilgal will always be a place where they can be reminded. In fact, the LORD will tell them - these twelve men that He had chosen - to leave a marker behind to highlight this amazing work of God. "You got here by God's work. You'll take the land by it as well." The faith that saved you is the faith that keeps you.

So, what are the lessons? Well, look, act on God's Word. Know that God is with you. Faith has to get its feet wet if you want to see the Lord do anything. Your God is alive, and He's real; the god of the world - dead. All the folks who believe in all this foolishness? They're made in man's image - they're backwards. God made us. We didn't make Him. Right? And if you want to see God do great things, then go in. Go in. Go in! You taste a little bit of what the Lord can do, and, man, you'll go in all the time. It's just that first time's kind of scary. So what did the LORD say? "Stay behind Me. You haven't been here before. It's gonna be cool. Keep Me in view. Don't look around too much."

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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