

Joshua Chapter 2-4 • Beginning Steps of Faith

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The Book of Joshua, chapter 2. We covered chapter 1 last time. You'll remember we left the people of Israel camped on the east side of the Jordan, modern day Jordan, as they begin to ready themselves to make their way into the land that God promised them. Let's pray and let's get into this evening.

Father, we open our hearts to You. We pray, Lord God, that You would give us clear vision to see in Your Word what You have for us to see. We give You this time and pray that You would use it to strengthen our hearts. And we ask it in Jesus precious and holy name, amen.

Have you ever heard the term, a wilderness Christian? That's a fairly common term that people use today to describe a Christian who is not living to their utmost. They're not living the life that God has called them to live. But it specifically refers to a Christian who's not really walking out the promises of God.

Here's the deal. You can be saved. You can be born again. You can be on your way to heaven and not be walking out the promises of God. And that is, in fact, a wilderness Christian. And that is the picture that we get of the nation of Israel who spent a total of 40 years. The first 2 years were just learning from God. But after 2 years of learning about the heart, the nature, and the law of God, God brought them through the leadership of Moses right to the doorstep of the promised land.

And you'll remember what happened. They sent 12 spies into the land, 10 of whom came back with what the Bible refers to as, a bad report. Some Bibles even say, an evil report. And they basically said the land is wonderful, but we're like ants in the eyes of these people. They're giants and they're going to squash us like a bug. There's absolutely no way we can take the land.

And so through unbelief, the nation of Israel was thrust back into the wilderness for an additional 38 years, bringing a total of 40 years. That's why we call it the 40 years of wandering, but really it was just 38 that was the result of unbelief. Be that as it may, it was the result of unbelief.

And so you see, this is where the term, a wilderness Christian comes into play. This person has been brought out of slavery. They know God, they've learned about God. They're walking with God to some degree, but they're still walking in a great deal of unbelief as it relates to the promises of God.

And so what are they doing? They're walking around the wilderness, and they're just wandering in circles. And they're not getting to where they need to get which is to the place of promise where we begin to walk out the promises of God.

This is the picture that we get from the Book of Joshua as the nation of Israel comes to the Jordan river, there's this crossing of the Jordan. And what happens when they cross the Jordan? Where are they? While they're in the land of promise, they begin to walk out the promises of God.

What is it like to walk out the promises of God? We're going to see that in the Book of Joshua. It's full of battles. It's full of challenges. It sometimes contains failures and then there are victories, and that's life. That's life walking out the promises because we don't do it perfectly, do we? Wish we did, but we don't. It would be great if every single day of our Christian life is just one acceptance of the promises of God after another, and we're always just walking in victory.

I think that's what some Christians, when they get saved, think is going to happen. And then when it doesn't happen, they get really upset and they begin to wonder if they're even saved because, pastor I really haven't been walking in victory much. I get that. It doesn't mean you're not saved and it doesn't mean you're not necessarily walking in the promises of God. It's just that there are struggles along the way.

Guys, this isn't heaven. And that's something you need to remember all of your Christian life. This isn't heaven and it's not going to be like heaven. It's going to be full of challenges and battles and struggles. But here we go. That's why we're here tonight. To be encouraged, to be built up, and to walk out in strength. So let's get into it here.

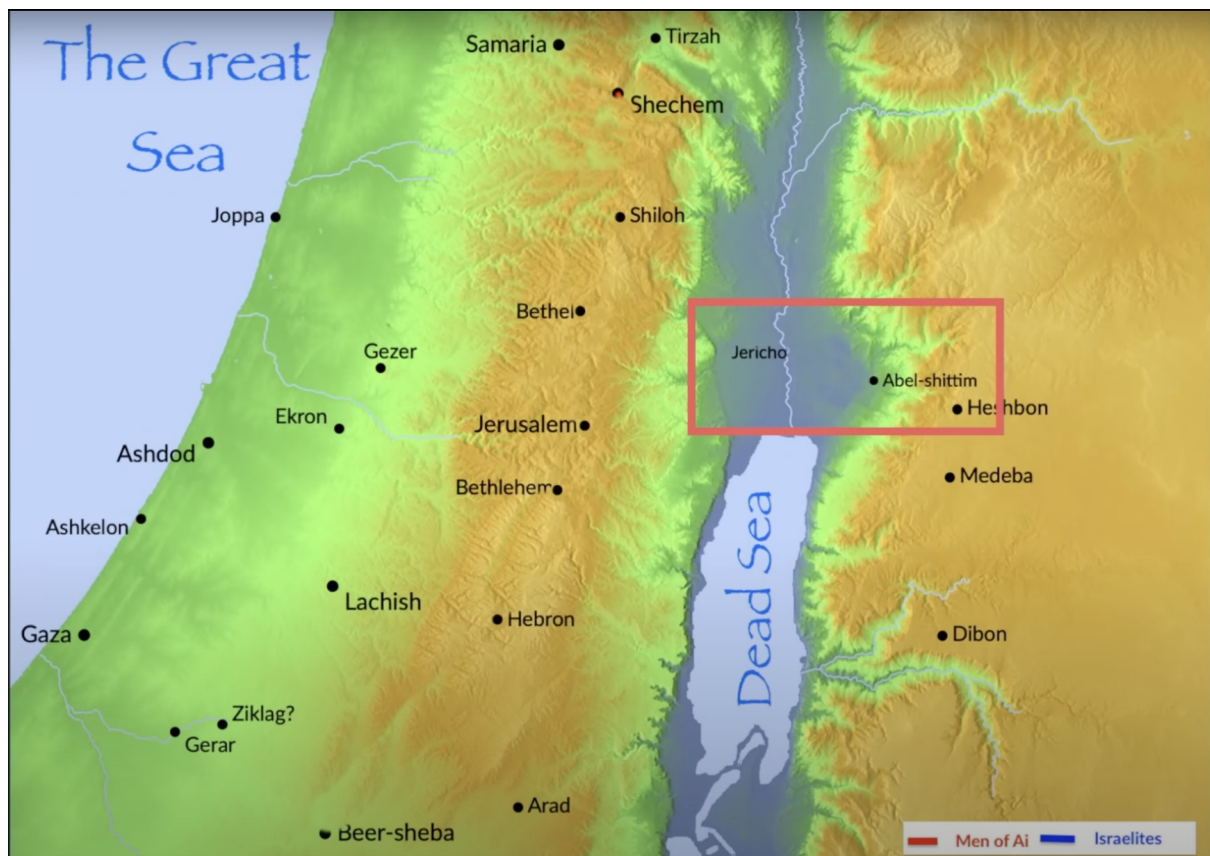
Chapter 2, verse 1 it says, *“And Joshua the son of Nun sent (look at this) two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” (ESV)* Because, of course, Jericho was going to be their first conquest.

I want you to notice here how different this is from what Moses did 38 years ago when he sent out 12 guys and 10 of them came back with that bad report. The only 2 that came back, you remember Joshua was 1 of the 12, so was a man

named Caleb. And those are the 2 of the 12 that came back and said, we can do this! We can do this in the power of the Lord. It was the other 10 that said we can't.

Here now is Joshua. He's learned a thing or two. And so rather than sending out a whole bunch of guys, I'm sure he hand-picked two guys who were strong in their faith. That seems like a smart move to me. And you'll notice that it says, he did it secretly. In other words, he didn't tell the rest of the nation of Israel that he was even doing this. He's like, hey, he pulls these guys into his tent probably and says, alright, I got a job for you. I want you to go get some intelligence and scout out the first part of our conquest, which, they could literally see probably Jericho from where they were. Right? Because Jericho is just across the Jordan River.

In fact, you know what, I've got a map I'll put on the screen here for you so you can see the location. I know the text is small and I apologize for that, but I wanted to give you a good sense of the whole area. And so I put a box around these two areas. You've got this fertile valley, that's that dark blue area, that's not water. You can see the light blue is the Dead Sea, but then you've got that darker blue fertile valley, which is the Jordan valley. And on the right side of that box, you have a Abel-shittim, this is where they're camped.



And then you can see, I don't know if you can see, right on the left side of the Jordan river, there is the city of Jericho. And it was a huge, tall, walled city, and I'm sure you could see it for miles. This is where they're located. They're literally on the doorstep of the Promised Land. And by the way, the name, Abel-shittim means, the valley of Acacia trees or just the Acacia trees more specifically. It was an area where these beautiful Acacia trees grew and it was a very lush and fertile area.

We're still in verse 1 here, in the middle of verse 1. Let's take a look. It says, *"And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there."* Now, I need to stop you there for just a moment because this has raised the eyebrows of more than a few people to think that, it's like, well, aren't these guys, just good fellas that no sooner get away from the rest of the nation of Israel and they go and hang out with a prostitute.

Well, the fact of the matter is it says here very specifically they *"lodged there."* Okay. And frankly, I think, personally, the decision to stay with Rahab, it was probably the best decision they could have made, because what better way to avoid any kind of suspicion or real notice than for a couple of guys to walk into a prostitute's house. I mean, think about it. That's got to be a fairly regular and routine sort of a thing that people see during the course of a day, right? And so why not? This is the best way to stay hidden. I mean, instead of checking in at the local hotel and saying, hi, we're Israelites. The people you guys are afraid of, we just thought we, we need a room for the night, sort of a thing.

No, this is the best thing they could do, but here's the deal. Here's the deal. Regardless of the reason these two spies had for going in and staying at Rahab's house, we're going to find out as we read through, not just this chapter, but chapters down the road, that the Lord had a reason for them to go to Rahab's house. Because we're going to find out that this Rahab is no ordinary lady. And yeah, she's got a little bit of a colored background. I'll grant you that but she's a lady of faith, and you're going to see that.

And the other thing I want you to notice as we go through this chapter is that God sees faith and He rewards faith. Even when a person has been unsaved, they're living the life of an unsaved unbeliever, living a pagan lifestyle, and yet they're beginning to open their heart to the one true God. You think God is going to say, well, listen, you get cleaned up first. See that's what we, the church has historically said to people. Shame on us.

That's what was happening back in the 1960s during the hippie movement. These kids wanted to learn about Jesus so they started coming to church. And

the people met them at the door and said, you need to go home and get a haircut, put on some nice clothes, get some shoes, take a bath, and then come to church. And how wrong that was because these people they wanted to hear about Jesus. They wanted to hear about the cross.

Thank God there were a few churches in southern California and some other places that opened their heart to the hippies. You guys know the story. You know Calvary Chapel down there was one of them, but it wasn't the only one. But it was one of them that simply said, yeah, come on in, sit on the floor if you want to. And that's not to say that everybody was happy with that. There were a few people that were a little bit crabby about the hippies coming to church with their bare feet, and this, and that, and the other thing.

But what they learned over a period of time was, you don't say to people, clean up your life and then come to church. You say hey, everybody is welcome. Open your heart to Jesus and He'll clean up your life. We're not going to be worried about that. And we're not going to look at the outside and make a big deal about it. And I love that.

And that's one of the things we're going to see about Rahab. And not just that God responded to Rahab and her faith, which we will see. We're going to find out that she then marries an Israelite. And then we're going to find out that she literally was in the lineage of king David, and that she was in the lineage of Messiah. That, people is the grace of God. God took a prostitute and honored her in the lineage of Jesus Christ. When we get to the destruction of Jericho, I will share with you some specific passages that go on and talk more about that.

Verse 2, *“And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.””* They had spies of their own, keeping a watch, and they knew a couple of strangers came into the city.

And *“³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land.” ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.*

⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out.

(obviously it's after dark now when they're coming to Rahab, she says) *I do not know where the men went. (go ahead) Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.” ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof.”*

By the way, we'll pause here for just a moment to say that this is one of the troubling passages that some people struggle with when they read their Bible, that references deception being used and then the blessing of the Lord following that deception.

And so there are, been a lot of people who've read this and been a little bit troubled by this and thought to themselves. Well, now, are you trying to tell me that God blesses deception because, we saw this, way back in the Book of Exodus when the midwives in Egypt lied to Pharaoh about why they weren't killing the baby boys when they were born. And right after that, it goes on to say, so God blessed them with their own families.

And so a lot of people have read that sort of a passage. And then this one and kind of gone, well, what's the deal here? Does this mean I can lie? Can I cheat on my exam in school and it's okay with God? I can lie to my parents and tell them, I don't have to tell them where I've been. I can lie about it. It's okay, God will still bless me.

Listen, these examples should not be seen as some kind of a proof text that God approves of deception. What it does show us is that God responds to a person's faith and that's what He does. And that's what I've already mentioned.

Listen, this is simply a narrative. It's telling us how people act. It's not saying that God puts His stamp of approval on the way they act. But what it is telling you is that God's grace operates in the midst of people's mistakes and failures. Did you hear me, Christians? Because you need to understand that for your own life. God's grace works in the midst of our own mistakes and failures.

And these people, there's no doubt about it. Whether we're talking about the midwives in Egypt or Rahab. She lied. They lied. These people are using deception. And that's not something God told them to do. It was a choice. But God responded to their faith. And we assume that these people all came to a place of understanding later on that these sorts of things aren't appropriate.

Listen, God takes a person where they're at. He's not going to say to somebody, oh, if you just wouldn't have lied. Now I got to boot you out. I was about to love you. I was about to show you some really good things about Me and walking with Me, but you went and lied. Why did you have to do that? Good grief, if that's the position God took, none of us would last a day. Right? None of us would last a day. He'd kick us all out. Oh, you messed up. Of course we did. Of course we did. Please understand that.

Verse 7, *“So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan (so they start heading toward the river) as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.”* They figured, well, if the guys haven't left the city, then we're going to keep them from getting out. And if they haven't gotten here, or if they're thinking of coming back, we're going to keep them out.

But it says in verse 8, *“Before the men lay down, she (and that's Rahab) came up to them on the roof⁹ and said to (them) the men, (and I want you to be very careful to listen to the words of faith that this woman expresses here. She begins by saying) “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us,…”*

And I want you to stop there and I want you to notice, would you look at the word, *“LORD”* in the passage there? What do you see? You see all capital letters, don't you? That means that she's using the divine name. She's using what we call the Tetragrammaton or what would be otherwise translated as, YAHWEH.

She is literally speaking of who the Hebrews knew God to be with that divine name. The Great I Am. She's saying to them, I know that the Great I Am has given you this land. I know that. And notice that she doesn't say, I think, I'm wondering, I'm a little confused about. She says, *“I know.” “I know.”* People, that's an expression of faith. Right?

And then she goes on to say, *“and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.”* Look at verse 10, *“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, (guys, that's 40 years ago, that was 40 years ago. They're still talking about it. And then she says) and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.”* Now that was just a few weeks ago in this timeline of where they're talking.

And then she goes on and she says, *“¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD (and there it is again, YAHWEH) your God, (look at this people) he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”*

This is an acknowledgement by Rahab of the sovereignty and almighty power of God. And here's a woman living in a pagan society where they've got gods for every day of the week. They've got gods for every situation in life. They've got gods for every circumstance in life. I mean, there are just hundreds, multiplicities of gods that the pagans supposedly believe in.

And here's this one woman who says, I know, I know that YAHWEH is the one true God. So this is really incredible stuff. But this is what happens when somebody has a heart of faith. God begins to reveal Himself to them. When they have a heart that says, God, I want to know, I want to know.

We talk a lot about praying for people that their eyes might be opened. If you've got unsaved loved ones, one of the things I'm going to tell you is, hey, if you're praying for unsaved family members, friends, or whatever, you need to pray that God would open their eyes. And that is true. But you know what? Those people also have to want to have their eyes opened.

They have to be willing to open their eyes and say, Lord, I want to know the truth. And then God's going to reveal Himself to that person. Look at this information. Look at this. Look at what this woman knows.

One of the other biblical examples of this kind of revelation as a result of faith, is the thief on the cross. A man who started off throwing insults at Jesus along with his buddy, but then later on, as he watched how Jesus responded to His own crucifixion, and the people that were mocking Him and all the insults. And the fact that, they nailed Him to a cross to die there, that thief on the cross had a change of mind.

And finally, he ended up rebuking his friend, as you know, and then he turned to Jesus. And what did he call Him? Did he say, hey, Nazarene. Hey, you, the carpenter guy. No, he said, Lord. Lord. And then he said, remember me when you come into Your kingdom. You don't say that to someone. You don't say remember me when you come into Your kingdom unless you believe by faith that they have the ability to remember you, and secondly that they have a kingdom. And so you can see the expression of faith.

And what did that get him? A promise back from Jesus. This day *“you will be with Me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43) So you see this revelation of truth that begins to lay hold of people when they open their heart to want to know the truth.

This woman now she says, verse 12, *“Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”* This is a beautiful picture of a woman caring for her family because she knows that this city is going down. She knows it and so she is interceding for her family.

And so in verse 14, *“And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”*

(and) ¹⁵ *Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she lived in the wall.”* Now that tells you how thick the walls are of the city, right? You can literally have an apartment there. And by the way, that was prime real estate back in those days. I mean, and that probably tells you that this woman had a fairly booming business, and so she literally lived in the wall. And so she, it tells us that *“she let them down by a rope”* and it's...

And verse 16 says, *“And she said to them, “Go into the hills, or the pursuers will encounter you, and hide there three days until the pursuers have returned. Then afterward you may go your way.””*

And, if you know that area, if you've ever seen pictures of the Jordan valley and that area opposite where Jericho was, you know that there were hills and caves galore in that area. And she's telling them to basically go and hide. And just hang out for a few days, and let these guys just exhaust their attempts to find you. And then you guys can go ahead and just cross the river again and go back to your people. That's what she's essentially telling them to do.

And *“The men said to her, ...”* And in verse 17 and following, what you're going to read is, they're going to repeat back to her the terms of their agreement. This was very common back in those days. When you make an agreement with someone, you repeat the terms multiple times so that there's no misunderstanding about what exactly we've agreed to.

And so, ¹⁷ *The men said to her, “We will be guiltless with respect to this oath of yours that you have made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head. ²⁰ But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be guiltless with respect to your oath that you have made us swear.” ²¹ And she said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.”*

Now this is interesting because it beckons us back to the first Passover, doesn't it? Where the people of Israel were about to be released from their bondage in

Egypt, and they were told to paint the blood of the sacrificial Passover lamb onto the doorposts of their house so that when the angel of death went through the region, he would see the blood and spare the people who were in that home.

And you'll remember that that's exactly what happened. The angel of death went through and slew the first born male of every household human and animal. This is very similar. She ties, she's told to tie this scarlet cord.

And isn't it interesting? It's a scarlet, which means red, chord and it all points back to this whole picture that is being given to us of the saving blood of Jesus Christ. Of course, Passover is a little bit clearer because we're dealing with actual blood, but in the same point, we still have this red scarlet cord that is being put in the window that is going to save her entire family.

So it says in verse 22, *“They departed and went into the hills and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing. ²³ Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they told him all that had happened to them. ²⁴ And they said (look at this) to Joshua, (notice they didn't tell anybody else, this was not given as a report to the people. They told Joshua) “Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us.””*

And by the way, that melting away, that fear that the people had, that was from the Lord. I mean, yes, God did some amazing things and those were fearsome things to think about. The parting of the Red Sea, the defeat of the two kings of the Amorites, those were fearsome things. Yes, indeed. But this melting away thing, this is God. And God told them He would do that. He said, I'm going to put fear into the hearts of the people so that when you go there, they're going to literally run from you.

Chapter 3, *“Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, (in other words, they're coming to the very shore of the river. All right. And it says) he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.”*

Now stop there, please, for a moment. I want to remind you what this passing over of the Jordan is a picture of. Again, it's going into the promises of God. Right? Now this is important for us to see this because we talked in our very first study of Joshua how this book is just full of types and shadows and so forth. And so there's a picture here. Now, they're going to camp right here on the river banks where they can see the city, that they're about to attack the city

of Jericho. It's right there, right across. The river is not that wide, probably about 200 yards when it's at full spring runoff sort of a thing, so it's not hard. It's a couple of football fields, across the river, and then there's the city of Jordan.

And he's going to have them stay there for like 3 days. He brings them right there to the shore of the Jordan and they're going to stay there for about 3 days. So this is really interesting and I think this is a picture. It's a great picture of this step of faith that they're about to take and it's going to be a big step of faith.

And yet we're going to learn here just a few verses that the river Jordan is at flood stage. And then for a couple of guys to cross at flood stage, that's possible. There's like 2.5 million people who are about to cross. That's impossible at flood stage. And then you've got all this land in front of you and then, and this huge city with walled city. It's like, how in the world you come against a walled city? Did we bring any catapults with us along the way? I don't think so.

And by the way, they haven't received any direction from the Lord yet on how the battle is supposed to proceed there. That's one of the reasons Joshua sent the couple of spies in, because we're waiting. We're waiting on the Lord literally, and we don't know yet what the Lord wants us to do. That's to come.

He's going to share that in just a bit and Joshua is going to have a face to face with God. But at this point, they're simply looking at the road ahead, and they're looking at the impossibility of it.

And I've noticed in my own life, in my years of walking with the Lord, that God has brought me to the banks of the Jordan on a few occasions. And He's allowed me to see the virtual impossibility of what He's asking me to do. And yet He's saying to me, I'm with you. I'll cross with you. I'll be there. And I'll give you the strength to do what I'm asking you to do, but I'm just going to let you sit here for a while and look at the impossibility of it.

And that's not a cruelty, by the way. That's understanding the reality of the fact that without God, I can't do this. We've talked about this many times in the past. The smartest thing you can do when God gives you a task is say, Lord, I can't do that, but You can. And You can enable me, You can empower me. You can give me the strength that I need to carry out that task, but I don't have what it takes. And I believe that's one of the things that pleases the Lord most.

Look at verse 2. It says, "*At the end of three days (that's how long they were there) the officers went through the camp³ and commanded the people, 'As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD (and you'll remember that*

is the visual reminder to the people of Israel of the presence of God in their midst, all right— *as soon as you see the ark of the covenant...*) *your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it.*”

And again, what are they to follow? The ark of the covenant. What is the ark of the covenant to them? The presence of God. What is God telling you and me about those times when He wants us to step out in faith? I'll go before you. Follow Me. Don't get ahead of me. Isn't that one of your biggest issues? Getting ahead of the Lord. It is for me. Jumping ahead, doing what I think, it's like, well, Lord, okay, you gave me some direction here. I go, boom, off like a shot. And He's like, you know what? I didn't say go yet. Right? And we all have done that. We've all done that.

And so He's telling them, when you see the ark set out, but not before. Not before. Because what you guys want to see is you want to see God going before you. You want to see Him going first and then you follow. Alright. Now, so that's a beautiful picture of our walk with the Lord as He tells them to wait and follow it.

But then this chapter also gives us some images of the differences between us in our walk with the Lord and the Israelites, which we see in verse 4, look what it says. *“Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. (he says) Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.”*

On the one hand he's telling them, God's going to go before you because you've never gone this way, so you need to follow Him. But, the second thing he's telling them is, don't get too close. And frankly, 2,000 cubits is about a half a mile. So he told them to put a distance of about a half a mile between themselves and the ark of the covenant.

Now this is Old Testament, people. We've been talking a lot about how this is a picture of our walk with the Lord but this one isn't. In fact, this is a contrast with your walk with the Lord. With you, the Lord says, come near. With the Israelites, He said, stay back. Because you see, it was, they're under a different covenant. They're under a different covenant than the one you are under with God.

And under your covenant, the thing is, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden. Under their covenant, it was, keep your distance, or you'll die. So you need to see that there's a contrast built in to the story as well.

Verse 5 says, *“Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”* And when he says consecrate yourselves, he's basically telling them to be very cautious about doing or saying or anything that might grieve the Lord or hinder the presence of the Lord among them. In other words, just chill and...

Back when Moses told them to consecrate themselves to the Lord, he told them to wash their clothes and to refrain from sexual intimacy in families. And that was part of, the consecration process. In other words, this is like fasting a little bit, in some ways because God's going to do some pretty incredible things in your midst. And His presence is going to be manifested among you in very dynamic and very powerful ways. So don't just go on with your business like it's just like, it's the same day as you've been through before. This is a special day, right?

Verse 6. *“And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.*

⁷ *The LORD said to Joshua, “Today 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.”* ⁸ *And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’”* In other words, they're to get just in the water and then stop.

⁹ *And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.”* ¹⁰ *And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Gergashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.”* ¹¹ *Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.* ¹² *Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man.* ¹³ *And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”*

¹⁴ *So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,* ¹⁵ *and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, (look at this) and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (and then*

were told parenthetically) (*now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest*), ” We'll talk more about this in a bit.

“¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood (in other words, upstream) and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground (that's crazy it was dry and that's a miracle too) until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.”

This is pretty interesting, isn't it? That as the nation of Israel is entering into this new relationship of faith. Walking in faith and the promise of faith. Or I should say the promises that go along with faith. God asked them to do something that in itself required faith. Isn't that something? Even to start off.

This is what we were talking about earlier when I talked about the fact that they had to sit there for 3 days, camped by the Jordan, looking at this impossible situation. And so He's telling them, listen, you guys are crossing the Jordan into this new life of faith, and I'm asking you to step out in faith.

Chapter 4 says, *“When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, ² “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, ³ and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’””* Notice they were to get the stones from right where the presence of the Lord had been, so let's find out what these stones are all about.

“⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. ⁵ And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, (this is not a small thing) according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, (okay, here we go, verse 6) that this may be a sign among you. (he comes the explanation of the sign) When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ ⁷ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel (this is important) a memorial forever.””

This is great. I like this. We learn here that one of the critical elements of learning to walk by faith and not by sight is to remember. And that's pretty simple to say. It's much more difficult to do. But just simply to remember. To remember the faithfulness of the Lord. This pile of rocks was going to exist at the edge of the Jordan as a constant and ongoing memorial reminder that God is faithful. That God is faithful.

Here's the deal. When you are being asked to step out in faith into a new area that you haven't done before, do you have anything that you can look back on? Do you have any piles of rocks that you can look and then, we're not talking literal piles of rocks here. But do you have any memorials to look back on that you can encourage your heart before the Lord by saying, Lord, you're taking me into a new area here. I've never done this particular thing before, but I can look back on the other things that you did ask me to do, and how You faithfully saw me through. And then you can say, well, God has been faithful.

That's one of the things the Lord has spoken to me in times of prayer. Well, and in times of difficulty many, many times. The Lord just has this repetitious statement that, and I imagine He repeats it because I'm so thick headed. But the Lord has spoken to me in times of difficulty many times and this is what He has said over and over. Have I not shown Myself to be faithful? That's it.

The simple rhetorical question, have I not shown myself faithful? And I always have to answer the same way, Yes Lord, You've shown yourself faithful. And He's like, okay, there you go. Let's get going. Walk out by faith, what is in front of you. And that's what God is encouraging them to do. To build these memorial altars of God's faithfulness. It's a beautiful thing.

“⁸ And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the LORD told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. ⁹ And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. ¹⁰ For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.”

The people passed over in haste. (so they hurried) ¹¹ And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people. ¹² The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe

of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them.”

They're going to eventually go back and they're going to live on the east side of the Jordan, but for now, they're going over armed to help their brothers clear the land.

“¹³ About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. ¹⁴ On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

¹⁵ And the LORD said to Joshua, ¹⁶ “Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.” ¹⁷ So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” ¹⁸ And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

¹⁹ The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.” And the location of Gilgal is going to come up again with some very important information about walking in faith. We'll get to that when we get to it. but it says,

“²⁰ And (it says, and that'll be probably next time) those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. ²¹ And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ²² then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’”

Here's, this is beautiful. He's telling them, tell your kids about the things that God has been faithful to do in your life. Tell your children. Be careful that you don't keep those things from your kids.

I see a lot of kids grow up in Christian homes who are clueless of what mom and dad have experienced because they never, their parents never told them. They depended on some Sunday school teacher to pass along everything their kids needed to know. And I'm thankful for Sunday school teachers. They do a wonderful job, but that doesn't take the part of parents who sit their kids down at some point and say, can we just tell you how God has been faithful to us? Kids need to hear that out of their parents mouths, or even grandparents for that matter.

Verse 23, *“For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, ²⁴ so that all the peoples of the earth may know (this is not just for the Jews, yeah, this is for all the peoples of the whole earth) that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”* Yes, and amen.

That's where we're going to stop for tonight and we will pick it up next time in chapter 5. There's going to be some just, they're going to continue to, we're going to get great reminders through the course of this study of what it takes to walk by faith. And to deal with the battles of life that come our way because we all fight battles. And some of you guys have been beaten down.

And, can I just tell you that the enemy comes when you're facing a battle, and he tries his best, his level best to convince you that because you're going through battles that you're not really a top drawer Christian. In fact, you might not even be a Christian. And he, that's the thing he says.

And I just want you to know how wrong that is. And you need to learn to hear the voice, or at least discern the voice of the enemy. Not hear, but discern. Because he's a liar. And when he opens his mouth, he can't help but lie. So don't believe it.

If you're going through battles, all that means is you're a Christian walking by faith and walking out the promises of God. That's all that means. So own them. Own the battles. When somebody asks you, hey, how are you doing? You don't have to lie and go, Oh, we're doing great. Just tell them, in the midst of a battle, pray for us.

Need to be strong. The Lord is strong. He's going to get us through, but we're in a hard one right now. This one's hard. This one's, this one hurts, but God is faithful and He will do what he said He'd do. That's so important. So important.

Do not think yourself unspiritual if you're going through battles. Has nothing to do with it. Joshua and the people of Israel went through battles as they walked out the promises of God. Battles are normal. When Paul was at the end of his life, he said to Timothy, I have fought the good fight. (2 Timothy 4:7) And right there, he tells you that this life on earth is a fight, it's a battle. Don't deny it, we don't roll over and show the devil our belly. We keep fighting in the strength and power of the Lord.

And that's what Paul talks about and I would encourage you to go and read through Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He has such incredible words that he gives to them about spiritual battles that we fight. And he tells them, be strong in the mighty power of the Lord, so that when the day of evil comes, you can take your stand. And that after everything is done, after the battle is over, you're there, you're standing. You're standing in the good promises of God, men? Let's pray.

Father, I thank You so much for the reminders that we get from this wonderful Book of Joshua. And I just pray right now for the people who are in this room and the people who are watching online, specifically and particularly for those who are enduring battles right now. Who are going through a rough season, a rough patch, and maybe in some cases, Lord, You are allowing this in their life to get their attention because they haven't been walking like they should. So be it.

I pray, Father God, that their eyes would be open and they would get serious about walking with the Lord from here on out. But regardless of the reason for the difficulty and the struggle and the battle, I pray, my Father God, that You would show Yourself faithful on their behalf as they trust in You, with all of their hearts. Leaning not on their own understanding, Lord, but trusting You, putting their hope in You to fight the battle, to go before them in the battle, to show them what they must do to fight the battle, and to strengthen them every single day.

Father, I pray my— that these people would all be in the Word every single day that they'd be strengthening themselves in the Scriptures every single day, because Lord, we can't put aside a day when we're not in the Word, especially during times of difficulty and battles. So Father God, I just pray in Jesus name that You would quicken to their hearts the need to be in the Word every single day. To be hearing the Word of God.

And I pray, Father God, that they would emerge from this situation able to build an altar of remembrance to the faithfulness of God. A memorial that would allow them to be strengthened in the future when new battles arise.

And so I thank You, my father, that you are the faithful God who takes us by the hand and leads us in the way that we are to go. Guide us, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. Amen.