

Joshua Wet Feet Faith Walk

The Bible Study

What you will need:

- Bible, pen and note pad for each participant
- A stone to add to the altar. Stone to have feet stickers. (from \$2 shop)



Joshua 1-24

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:6-9

"Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings. There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the Law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel. Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them." Joshua 8:30-35 (NIV)

When Joshua led the people of Israel across the flooded Jordan, it was a new beginning for them and a time to conquer the Promised Land. The doubting first generation died in the wilderness and the new generation grew up in the wilderness. The first generation passed through the parted waters of the Red Sea but most of the people who would go into the Promised Land with Joshua had limited or no memory of the great escape from Egypt through the power of God. This new generation knew the leadership of Moses and now must transfer their trust in the leadership of Joshua.

God used many elements to help this new generation of His chosen people understand that they can trust Him. First God commanded Joshua to prepare the people to cross the Jordan River. In this preparation process God reminded the new generation that He delivered their parents and grandparents from the Egyptians by dividing the Red Sea. The generation who crossed the Red Sea with Moses died during the 40 years in the wilderness as punishment for their doubt and rebellion.

- What did their doubt and rebellion cost them?

The generation for whom Joshua was responsible would have experienced the crossing of the Red Sea as small children or would have known it only as a story. God knew they needed their own river to cross if they were to realize they could trust Him.

- Can you think of times when God asked you to take a step in faith?

Read Joshua 3. The people have now been moved to a strategic position. It is also a time of testing. They are camped with the flooded river in full view. Imagine the sights, sounds and smells of the river. Can you imagine what the conversations around the campfires must have been like? Can you hear the voiced doubts? How about the hushed whispers of fear or discontent?

- Do you think people were praying for their leader?

After three days, the people received instructions from Joshua. They were told to look for the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's Presence, and follow. "Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before." (3:4a) Words of

encouragement are important as people prepare for a faith walk. Joshua told the people to consecrate themselves and get ready for the amazing things God would do for them (3:5). The process of consecration in Old Testament life included washing the body and putting on clean clothing so that the physical act would also help the spiritual process of getting ready for God. Joshua spoke to the people, (3:9-13), and basically said, "Get ready, get set, because here we go." Think about how the excitement and the tension rose as the priests lifted up the Ark of the Covenant on the poles and began to move forward to the flooded Jordan. As they approached the river, nothing happened. There was no wind, and the river did not divide.

The people must have wondered if Joshua was crazy. Did Joshua's heart pound as the priests got closer to the water? When was God going to do something? The priests moved forward believing. Step by step they came closer to the flooded river. They stepped into the river. The flooded river stopped flowing. The priests walked to the middle of the riverbed on the rocks and stopped. As the river divided before them, the people crossed over into the Promised Land. When all the people crossed the river, the priests left their spot in the middle and crossed to the riverside. When they did that the river began to flow. Wow, what a drama. God waited until the priests got their feet wet in the Jordan River before He acted. God acted. He acted in His time and in His way. Sometimes we have to get our feet wet as we walk in faith, but we must keep walking.

- Can you think of another story in the bible about stepping out and getting our feet wet?

God instructed Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each tribe for a special task even before the river was parted. Each of these men was to collect one stone from the bed of the river. Those twelve stones were stacked as a memorial and a sign. Is it significant that God had Joshua choose them before they crossed the river?

- Look at chapter 4. Verses 1—7 - What do the twelve stones signify?

Looking at these first four chapters of Joshua we can learn many truths. One is that sometimes we get wet feet in our walk of faith. Typically we use the term cold feet to apply to times when we begin to get second doubts about a decision or commitment we have made. It is possible that this term came from this Biblical account because when our feet get wet, they can grow cold. As the priests approached the river and their feet sensed the damp cold of the ground and the cold of the water it would have been easy to surrender to doubt and not take those faith steps that led to the parting of the river. Joshua built two stone memorials. One was built where the priests carried the Ark to the middle of the river bed and the other was built beside the river.

- Read Joshua 4:14 and 4:24

God prepared His leader to lead, His people to follow and His priests to step out in faith as they proved God faithful to His promises. It is a powerful lesson. It was a visual that proved God's power to provide a way for His people. Yet God knows people very well. He knows that we need physical things to remind us and teach us. So God prepared twelve men and twelve river stones to help get His message across. As we think of this event recorded in the Bible, we know it is not there by accident. God placed it there for us to learn and remember.

- Have you experienced a time when you got wet feet?
- Can you think of a time when you got "cold feet" and turned back?

Remember that God is faithful to all His promises. Remember, God will part the flooded rivers when you step out in faith.

Joshua 5 -8

Lessons from the Battles

Joshua remembered the condition of God's blessing was to obey the Law, to study and meditate on it and build his decisions and life on the Law of God. Chapter 5 opens with Israel making a new commitment to the Covenant ceremonies. The wilderness journey ended. The people celebrated their first Passover in the Promised Land. When the forty year wilderness journey ended with the celebration of Unleavened Bread, manna ceased to appear. The bread from heaven would be supplied in a different way. God placed fear on the people of the land so the Israelites were left alone during the time it took for the men and boys to heal from the covenant observation of circumcision. During this time Joshua spent time walking and thinking. As he approached the city of Jericho, Joshua saw a man with a sword. Joshua asked a natural question, "Are you friend or foe?" The man revealed himself as the commander of the Lord's army. When Joshua asked the commander for instructions, he was told to take off his sandals and recognize that he stood on holy ground. Joshua did as he was told.

The conversation between Joshua and the commander of the Lord's army is not recorded for us, but we do see Joshua giving strange instructions for conquering Jericho. (See chapter 6) The great city was to be completely destroyed and no plundering was allowed. Only Rahab and her family were allowed to live. Rahab was spared because she believed. The signal for her salvation was a scarlet coloured rope. Scarlet thread and rope signal significant messages in the Bible. Faith and obedience were rewarded. God destroyed the walls of Jericho. The city was left a pile of cursed stone and rubble. Once again God made the impossible possible.

Chapter 7 gives the account of a man named Achan who disobeyed God and took plunder from Jericho. His disobedience cost the Israelites a small battle and could have cost even more. After his sin was discovered, Achan, his family, and his possessions were all destroyed. A heap of stones was piled over the ashes. This became a stone memorial of what happens when sin is allowed to affect a family and a community. Even though Achan committed the sin by giving into the temptation of taking what did not belong to him, he infected his family by bringing it home. Achan's family helped hide the things. Secrets are not really secrets for long. What should have been an easy battle for Israel became a lost battle. It could have easily spelled doom for all of Israel. The response had to be swift and severe.

- Why is it important to confront "sin in the camp" before it festers and hampers the work of God?

Chapter 8 indicates that Joshua and the people of Israel learned a few more lessons about battles. The biggest lesson was to trust in God and not in their might or cleverness. This time the Lord allows the people to have the spoils of war. This time they used their past failure to lure the men out of the city. This time Joshua, the leader participated in the battle. The chapter ends with a renewed commitment to the Covenant. A new altar was erected at Mount Ebal. Joshua copied the Law on to the stones.

The book of Joshua is filled with many more battles and other memorial stone altars are erected as lessons are learned and the land is conquered and divided among the tribes of Israel. One of the last recorded acts of Joshua was to gather the people for a time of rededication to the Covenant and a promise to be faithful to obey the Law of God. (Look at chapters 23 and 24.) Joshua states that he and his household have chosen to serve the Lord. He asked the people who they would serve. When they replied that they would serve the Lord, Joshua challenged their resolve. Again they said their desire was to serve the Lord God. Joshua challenged the people a third time, and told them to destroy their idols if they would serve the Lord. The people agreed to serve the Lord.

Joshua chose a large stone and rolled it by an oak tree next to the tabernacle. He declared that the stone would stand as a witness of the promises made and would testify against them if they went back on their word. This stone memorial was like the other stone memorials and altars. It stood as a reminder of a significant spiritual event or commitment. The stone memorials throughout the Promised Land taught and reminded the people of God's Covenant, His Law and His promises.

When the Jews went up to Jerusalem for the sacramental feasts, they followed a pilgrims' pathway. Along the way stone memorials marked places where they would repeat verses of Scripture to remind them of God's plan and prepare them for the worship experience. Years after Joshua set up the last stone memorial Jesus would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey colt and His followers would quote Psalm 118:26 and refer to Jesus as the King. The Pharisees would tell Jesus to silence His followers. Jesus replied "If they kept quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:36-40) The Pharisees were asking Jesus to deny that He was the fulfilment of all God's good promises. If Jesus' followers were silenced, the very stones would testify on the truth of Jesus' claim to the Kingdom of Heaven. When Jesus died, the earth shook and rocks were torn apart. (Matthew 27:50-51) When Jesus rose, the earth shook again. (Matthew 28:2) Even the rocks cry out as a witness of the fulfilment of God's promises to us. Think about how God has been faithful to you next time He calls you to walk in faith and get your feet wet.