

Crossing the Jordan: From Promise to Possession

Lesson 03 of 06 in the series, "Strong and Courageous"

1. God told Joshua it was finally time for Israel to enter the Promised Land.

The Lord told Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites. They will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses. Give this command to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant: 'When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there.'" So Joshua told the Israelites, "Come and listen to what the Lord your God says. Today you will know that the living God is among you. He will surely drive out the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites ahead of you. *Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River!* Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. The priests will carry the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth. As soon as their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will stand up like a wall." Joshua 3:7-13 (NLT)

Note: Four hundred years earlier God had promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the land of Canaan.

"...The Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates - the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.'" Genesis 15:18-20 (NIV)

Life Application: PROMISES are received by FAITH.

"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Genesis 15:6 (NIV)

2. Israel had to cross a flooded Jordan River to begin possessing their promise!

"So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho." Joshua 3:14-16 (NLT)

Life Application: POSSESSING what God has promised us requires OBEDIENCE.

"What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well'—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless... Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: 'Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.' He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone."

James 2:14-17, 21-24 (NLT)

Example: Possessing the promise of peace requires obeying the command to not worry about anything but instead pray about everything.

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand...." Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

Note: It is normal to have obstacles we must overcome in order to possess God's promises!

Life Application: We must push past fear and walk in faith.

“Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous.... This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:6-7, 9 (NLT)

“For we live by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

3. God wanted Israel to **never forget** how they got into the promise land.

When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, “Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, ‘Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.’” So Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen—one from each of the tribes of Israel. He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the Lord your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.” Joshua 4:1-7 (NLT)

Life application: We must remember what God has done so we don’t become prideful.

“...You will enter the land and take it as your own. It’s the land the Lord promised to your people of long ago. **Remember** how the Lord your God led you all the way. He guided you in the desert for these 40 years. He wanted to take your pride away. He wanted to test you to know what was in your hearts. He wanted to see whether you would obey his commands. He took your pride away. He let you go hungry. Then he gave you manna to eat. You and your parents had never even known anything about manna before. He tested you to teach you that man doesn’t live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes didn’t wear out during these 40 years. Your feet didn’t swell. Here is what I want you to know in your hearts. The Lord your God guides you, just as parents guide their children.... When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God. Praise him for the good land he has given you. **Make sure you don’t forget the Lord your God....**” Deuteronomy 8:1-5, 10-11 (NIRV)

TOMMY GREEN • 07-28-19 • tommy@centeringlives.com

- Abraham was promised he would have many descendants, but his and Sarah’s bodies were incapable of producing children.
- Joseph was promised he would lead his family, but he had jealous brothers who sold him into slavery, a wicked master’s wife, and a prison sentence for a crime he didn’t commit.
- David was promised he would be king, but he had a current king and a son who wanted him dead.
- Moses was promised he would lead Israel to freedom, but he had a disability, insecurities and a stubborn pharaoh.
- Noah was promised he would be saved from the flood, but he had a cloudless sky and a mocking crowd.
- Mary was promised she would give birth to the Messiah, but she had no husband.
- Jesus said that in Him was eternal life, but he had to face the cross and a tomb.
- Paul was told to preach to the Gentiles, but he had a shady past, opposition from the church, and opposition from the city members and officials.

Connect Group Questions:

1. Imagine for a moment that someone was given the title, location and keys to a 1967 Ford Mustang Shelby GT (like “Eleanor” in the movie *Gone in 60 Seconds*), but they never drove the car. They only talked about it. What would you think about that?
2. In your opinion, how does a person move from knowing God’s promises to actually possessing them?
3. Read James 2:14, 21-24. Why do you think action is a vital piece of faith? How would you explain to someone that our action makes our faith complete?
4. Name one promise from God that you cling to in your life. Now share how you act upon/apply that promise.
5. Read Matthew 14:22-31. Can you describe a time that you, like Peter, began to step out on a promise from God, but fear suddenly consumed you? What crucial mistake did Peter make in verses 29 and 30 that caused him to sink?
6. Does walking by faith mean the absence of fear, or do we walk by faith despite fear? How could Peter have kept from sinking while walking toward Jesus on the water?
7. Read Joshua 4:1-7. Memorials help us remember things that have happened in our lives. Name a time when God fulfilled a promise after you responded in faith with action. What is something that helps you remember what God did in that situation? (example: a photo, a journal entry, etc.)