

DIGGING DEEPER

A 5-Day Devotional

Take the Next Step

Joshua 3:1-13

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How to Use This Devotional

This devotional takes Sunday's message on Joshua 3 and unpacks it across five days. Each day focuses on a specific thread from the text and what it means for where you actually are right now. Read it when you have a few quiet minutes. Sit with the reflection questions honestly. Use the prayer prompt to actually talk to God rather than just think about him.

The goal is simple: go deeper into what Scripture is saying, and let it reach the places in your life that need it.

Day 1 Early the Next Morning

"Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing." Joshua 3:1 / James 1:22

Four words carry the weight of this entire verse: early the next morning. Joshua received direction from God, and by the following morning, he and all the Israelites were moving. Not after a committee meeting. Not after six months of discernment. Not after the conditions improved. He heard, and he went.

Brandon pointed out what is easy to miss in that phrase. Early the next morning almost certainly means Joshua did not sleep. He lay awake wrestling with what God had said, working through the fear, the uncertainty, the questions about whether this was really the right move. And then morning came and he got up anyway. The wrestling did not produce delay. It produced action.

That distinction matters. The question is not whether you feel the weight of what God is asking. Of course you do. Every significant step of obedience feels heavy before you take it. The question is what you do with the morning after. Do you get up and go, or do you wait for the feeling to pass before you move?

James 1:22 makes the same point without softening it: "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." (NLT)

The gap between hearing and doing is exactly where the life drains out of faith. Joshua did not just hear from God. He moved. Early. The next morning.

REFLECT

1. Brandon asked: are you an early-in-the-morning type follower of Jesus, where when God speaks there is not a delay, there is movement forward? What is your honest answer to that right now?

2. Think about the last time you clearly sensed God asking you to do something. How long ago was it? Have you done it yet? If not, what has been filling the gap between hearing and doing?

3. What is the difference between healthy, prayerful waiting on God and using waiting as a way to avoid obedience? How do you know which one you are doing?

PRAY

Sit quietly for a few minutes and ask God: is there something you have already told me to do that I have not done yet? Do not rush past the question. Let him answer. Then ask him what early the next morning looks like for you specifically.

Day 2 Go and Then Know

"Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you." Joshua 3:4 / Proverbs 3:5-6

The Israelites standing at the edge of the Jordan had never done this before. That was the point. God was not sending them somewhere familiar with a well-worn path. He was sending them into new territory, and the only guide they had was the Ark of the Covenant moving ahead of them, step by step.

Brandon drew the contrast plainly. Most of us operate on a know-and-then-go basis. We want the spreadsheet, the five-year plan, the risk assessment, the answer to every what-if before we say yes. We want enough information to eliminate the uncertainty. And then once we have that, we will go. The problem is that approach quietly replaces trust with self-sufficiency. If you know everything before you go, who is God in that story?

God calls obedient people, not omniscient ones. He is the one who knows what is on the other side of the Jordan. He is the one who knows what the step will produce. He is the one who sees the full picture. Your job is not to figure out the whole plan before you move. Your job is to follow the next piece of light he has given you and trust him with what you cannot yet see.

Proverbs 3:5-6 has been memorized by more people than probably any other verse in the Old Testament, and it is worth reading as you have never read it before: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take." (NLT)

That is a direct challenge to the know and then go approach. Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. And he will make your paths straight. The path becomes clear as you walk it, not before.

REFLECT

1. Be honest about which mode you typically operate in. Do you tend toward go and then know, or know and then go? What drives that tendency in you?
2. Brandon said clarity tends to come as you take the step, not before. Has that been true in your experience? Think of a time when you obeyed before you fully understood and look back on what that produced.
3. What would you do differently this week if you genuinely trusted that God knows what is on the other side of the step he is asking you to take, even though you do not?

PRAY

Read Proverbs 3:5-6 slowly and out loud. Then bring the specific thing God has been asking of you and ask him honestly: am I leaning on my own understanding here? Am I waiting for information that only belongs to him? Ask him for the courage to take the step without needing to know what comes after it.

Day 3 What You Fix Your Eyes On

"When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, move out from your positions and follow them." Joshua 3:3 / Hebrews 12:1-2

The Jordan River was not a calm stream. Historians tell us it was flood season. The river was hundreds of feet wide, deep, raging, dangerous. Three days camped at the edge of something like that gives your imagination a lot to work with. Every morning you wake up, and the river is still there, still loud, still threatening, still not going anywhere.

Joshua's instruction to the people in that moment was specific. When the priests move, you move. And watch the Ark, not the river. The Ark represented God's literal presence with the people. It was not just a symbol. It was the reminder that the God who parted the Red Sea, who fed them in the wilderness, who brought them out of slavery, was still right there, still moving, still in this.

Brandon said what you fix your eyes on determines whether fear or faith magnifies. That is not a motivational statement. It is a description of how attention actually works. The river is real. The obstacles in your life are real. He is not asking you to pretend they are not there. He is asking you to keep your eyes on what is more real than the river: the living God who is moving ahead of you.

Hebrews 12 says, "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne." Hebrews 12:2 (NLT). The word "pioneer" there is the same as the one used for the one who goes first and makes a path. Jesus is already on the other side of what you are facing. He went before you. And the instruction is to fix your eyes on him and follow, not to stare at the water until it parts on its own.

REFLECT

1. What is the river you keep looking at right now? The specific thing, situation, or unknown that most consistently pulls your attention away from Jesus?
2. Brandon said the obstacles produce fear, and fear magnifies when you stare at it. Has that been true in your current season? What happens to your faith when you look at the river too long?
3. What does it practically look like for you to fix your eyes on Jesus in the middle of what you are facing? Not in general terms. What does that mean in a normal day this week?

PRAY

Read Hebrews 12:1-2 slowly. Then name the river out loud, the specific thing you keep looking at. Tell God what it is. Then ask him to help you shift your gaze from the obstacle to the one who is already moving ahead of you. Ask him to show you where he is at work in this.

Day 4 Step Into the Water First

"When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop there... 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." Joshua 3:8, 15-16

When Moses led the people through the Red Sea, God parted the water first. Moses lifted his staff, the sea divided, and then the people walked through on dry ground. The miracle preceded the movement. God went first, and then the people followed.

The Jordan crossing does not work that way. God's instruction to the priests is precise: step into the river and stop there. Not wade in once the water starts moving. Step in first. Stand there. And then the water will respond. The miracle does not come before the obedience. The miracle comes after.

Brandon asked whether you have been waiting for the water to part before you step in. It is a fair question. It feels like the right kind of faith to wait for a sign, to wait for confirmation, to wait until the path is clear. But Joshua 3 describes a different kind of faith, one that puts its feet in the water while the river is still raging and trusts that God will do what he said he would do.

Brandon shared his own version of this from when he moved to San Diego. No house, sleeping on a couch, wondering if he had heard God correctly, watching the water rage around him. And then slowly, step by step, clarity came. The school, the building, the connection with Harvest Church, the congregation that grew. He did not see any of that before he stepped in. He only saw it after. That is how this works.

REFLECT

1. Where in your life have you been waiting for the water to part before you step in? What specifically are you waiting to see before you say yes?
2. The priests had to hold steady while they were standing in a raging river. What does holding steady look like for you in the middle of a step of obedience that has not yet produced visible results?
3. Think about a time in your own life when you stepped in before the water parted. What did you learn about God in that season that you could not have learned any other way?

PRAY

Ask God to show you specifically where he is asking you to step into the river before it parts. Not in general. Where is the specific step he has been asking for that you have been waiting to see results before you take? Sit with that honestly. Then ask him for the faith to step in.

Day 5 The Hero of the Story Is Not You

"Today you will know that the living God is among you. He will surely drive out the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites ahead of you." **Joshua 3:10 / Romans 8:31-32**

Brandon closed the message with a line worth sitting with all week: the hero of Joshua 3 is not Joshua, not the priests, not the strategy. The hero is God's faithfulness. And when God is not the hero of the story, when you or your plans or your ability to figure it out takes that role, the story is never as good.

Joshua keeps redirecting the people back to that truth throughout the chapter. He does not say look at how well we planned this. He does not point to his own leadership. He says look at the living God. Today you will know that the living God is among you. The emphasis is not on Israel's readiness. It is on God's active, present, moving faithfulness.

Brandon said something else that is worth staying with: God is not a God of the past. He is a living God. Not a has-been God, not a once-upon-a-time God, but a right-here, right-now God who is still opening doors, still breaking chains, still saving people, still guiding households and workplaces and lives. The God who parted the Jordan is the same God you woke up to this morning.

Romans 8:31 asks the question that the whole chapter builds toward: "What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?" (NLT). That is not a rhetorical flourish. It is a serious theological claim. The God who did not spare his own Son will with him freely give us all things. The one who crossed the river of sin on your behalf is the same one walking ahead of you into whatever is on the other side of your Jordan. Take the next step. He is already there.

REFLECT

1. Brandon said when God is not the hero of your story, the story is never as good. Where in your current life are you most tempted to make yourself the hero, to rely on your own strategy, your own ability, your own effort to make things work?

2. He described God as a living God, active right now, not just in the past. What would it look like for you to genuinely relate to God as someone who is actively working in your life today, not just someone you know from history or from a previous season of faith?

3. As you close this week, what is the one next step of obedience God has been putting in front of you? What does taking it look like starting tomorrow?

PRAY

Read Romans 8:31-32 slowly. Then sit with this: the same God who parted the Jordan and who crossed the river of sin through Jesus is with you right now, in your specific situation, moving ahead of you. Ask him to help you trust that enough to take the next step. Then tell him what that step is and ask him to meet you there.