

a way through the water was created.

*14 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. 15 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, ... 17 Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground. - Joshua 3:14-15, 17 NLT*

*The Ark represented the presence of God. It was when the priests touched the water it stopped flowing upstream about 30 miles away! How long do you think the priests had to wait until the ground dried up and 2 million people passed through? What message did this send to the inhabitants of the Land?*

Sometimes we must be obedient over the long haul to see the conclusion to God's promises. We can grow weary standing our ground. But God is faithful to go before us and we will see the Promised Land.

#### **WRAP-UP**

Abraham's descendants were about to enter the Promised Land after wandering for years. Initially, scouts were sent to assess the land, but fear held them back, except for Caleb and Joshua who trusted in God's strength, not their own. The first barrier was the Israelites' lack of faith and obedience, leading to their exclusion from the promise. Only Caleb and Joshua's unwavering devotion allowed them to enter. Then, at the Jordan River, they encountered a huge barrier. As when Moses parted the Red Sea, God's presence went before them to make a way through on dry ground. We need faith in God's promises, even when things get tough, and patient obedience until we enter our Promised Land.

#### **MEMORY VERSE**

*Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River!*

*- Joshua 3:11 NLT*

*Challenge – This week if you face a challenging situation, don't allow it to overwhelm you, instead trust that God is at work and He is able to see you through.*

## **Overcoming Barriers**

Great Things #2

### **INTRODUCTION**

When we look at the promises of God we often find that there are barriers keeping us from taking hold of them. That was certainly the case for Israel entering their Promised Land. Many generations had passed without entering the land promised to Abram's descendants. There had been many barriers along the way. Now as they prepared to enter the place of rest and blessing there were still barriers to overcome. What did it take for Israel to finally possess the land? What is holding us back from God's promise of great things?

### **Ice Breaker**

If you were designing an obstacle course, what would you be sure to include? (Think American Ninja Warrior)

### **Key Passage**

*Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River!*

*- Joshua 3:11 NLT*

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Barriers up to this point**

After forty years of wandering Abraham's descendants stood at the threshold of entering the Promised Land. But this was not their first opportunity to enter the land. Years earlier Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land and report back what they found. What they found frightened them because there was a barrier that they didn't think they could overcome.

30 But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" 31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" 6 Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. 7 They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! 8 And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. 9 Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!" ... 11 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?"

- Numbers 13:30-31;14:6-9 NLT

*Why did the people refuse to enter the Promised Land? Why did Caleb and Joshua believe they could take possession of the land?*

The strength of our faith is often revealed in circumstances that take us to our limits. The Israelites saw giants in the land and knew that they themselves were no match for them. But this is like the story of David when he saw Goliath. It was God who Goliath was challenging, and David knew that Goliath was no match for God. Neither were the giants of the promised land, but only Caleb and Joshua recognized who really was fighting this battle.

*When has God taken you to the limits of your faith?*

"... 11 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?"

11 'Of all those I rescued from Egypt, no one who is twenty years old or older will ever see the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they have not obeyed me wholeheartedly. 12 The only exceptions are Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they have wholeheartedly followed the LORD.'

- Numbers 14:11; 32:11-12 NLT

It is easy to allow circumstances to overwhelm us. There are things we can't do alone. But what Joshua and Caleb recognized, and what God longs for us to recognize, is that He is for us, and He will fight our battles. We are called to follow Him wholeheartedly, to trust and obey.

*What miracles had God done for the Israelites that they had forgotten? What miracles God has done in your life that show you He loves you and He is for you?*

The first barrier to entering the Promised Land was the Israelites themselves. Their fear and lack of faith in God resulted in being disobedient and disqualified to enter the Promised Land. The only adults who would be allowed to enter were Caleb and Joshua, who followed God wholeheartedly. Our faith in God must grow to be greater than our fears. And our faith will grow if we recognize the miraculous ways God touches our lives with His love.

## 2. The Jordan River

*11 Look, the Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River!*

- Joshua 3:11 NLT

There was one big barrier that stood between Israel and entry to the Promised Land- the Jordan River. Remember, this was not a small family wading across a stream. When he was alive, Moses had tallied the number of men of Israel in camp. There were over 600,000. When you add women and children, we are talking at least 2 million people crossing the river. And it was at flood stage (It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. Josh 3:15).

*What did Joshua tell the people to give them the confidence to cross? How did he refer to God? Why do you think this title is significant? This was not the first time God parted the waters to lead His people into a promise.*

*13 But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. 14 The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm." 15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving! 16 Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground. - Exodus 14:13-16 NLT*

*As Moses obeyed God and held out his staff and his hand over the water,*