

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

LOOKING BACK TO SEE AHEAD

JOSHUA 4:1-24

FEBRUARY 2, 2020



SERMON OUTLINE

Do you like change? That depends on...

God's instructions on a successful transition in leadership.

1. Be Careful _____ to obey God Today _____ for His

_____ blessings Tomorrow _____

Deuteronomy 8:1

“so that” you may Live _____, Increase _____,

Enter _____, Possess _____

2. Remember _____ God's past faithfulness

Deuteronomy 8:2-5

What is the history of God's faithfulness in your life?

3. Anticipate _____ God's future

Deuteronomy 8:6-10

Anticipate Obeying _____ v.6

Anticipate Trusting _____ vv.7-9

Anticipate Blessing _____ v.10

God in the Wilderness _____ will be your God in the

Promised _____ land _____.

4. Be Careful _____ not to forget God

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

Beware of the danger of:

Satisfaction _____ vv.12-13

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

Pride _____ v.14a, 17-18

Idolatry _____ vv.19-20

What is God saying to me this morning?

MAIN POINT

Reflecting on where we've come from prepares us to follow Jesus wherever He will lead us in the future.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Are there any objects of significance or stories representing family history that have been passed down through the generations in your family? What makes these particular things special?

2. Why is that kind of thing important in a family? Why is it important that we hold onto objects and memories like those?

Leader: We are by nature a forgetful people. One of the things that helps us remember where we've come from is when we have memories associated with special objects. When we see that object, we have a story to tell about why it's special.

In Joshua 4, God commanded His people to set up piles of stones in order to help them remember where they had come from. When we regularly reflect on where we've come from we are better prepared to follow Jesus where He will lead us in the future.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 4:1-7.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

3. What do you know about why the Israelites were crossing the Jordan River? Where were they coming from? Where were they going?

4. Why is it important to understand where the Israelites had come from and where they were going in order to see why God gave them these instructions?

Leader: It had been a long road to the Jordan River. The people had been slaves in Egypt for some 400 years until God miraculously delivered them. Then they had spent 40 more years wandering in the wilderness due to their lack of faith. But now, at long last, they were crossing the Jordan River into the land God had promised Abraham hundreds of years earlier. God wisely commanded them not just to cross the river, but to set up a monument that would serve as a reminder of that crossing into the future.

5. Do you have anything like these stones in your life—a sort of memorial to help you remember what God had done at a specific time?

6. What of God's character would this memorial remind the Israelites of? What about you? What do your memorials remind you of regarding God's character?

Leader: As we follow Jesus into the future, there is no doubt He will lead us through difficult times and times of transition. It's during times like these when we are likely to question whether God is truly good, or powerful, or even faithful. During these times, we can look back to where we've come from and know that God is still the same God who has always led us. If He provided for us once, He will be faithful to do so again. The Israelites were about to embark on a season of war, and during that time, God knew there would be times when they would need to call to memory His power and faithfulness. By establishing this memorial at Gilgal, their base of operations, the people would see time and time again the reminder of who He is.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 4:8-24.

7. Besides this generation of Israelites, there were two other groups of people the memorial was meant to communicate to. Who were they? What does this show you about the way faith is to be communicated through families?

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

8. Do you have any regular means of re-telling your story of God's faithfulness to the next generation? What are they? How might this look in the church, even if you don't have children of your own?

9. What does the fact that the memorial was also set up to show all the people of the earth who God is show you about His intent for His people?

Leader: The call from Joshua 4 is a call for us to remember. But remembering is something that rarely happens by accident; it's something we must make an effort to do. But when we do, we are better prepared for what God is calling us to do because we have been bolstered by the memory of His faithfulness in the past. Joshua exhorted the Israelites to remember for the sake of the next generation of Israel and also for the sake of all the nations of the earth. Likewise, our remembering is meant not only to encourage us but also to tell what God has done to the next generation and those who are far from Him.

10. How would this memorial result in the fear of the Lord (v. 24)? How can your story have the same result?

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. During our present season as a church, how is God calling you to remember His past faithfulness in order to trust Him in the future? What are some specific instances that you might seek to actively remember?

12. How can we as a group, or you as a family, remembering the work of God? What value is there is encouraging one another in this way?

Leader: Consider some tangible ways you might remember the work of God. This might include having a communion meal together, starting a prayer and praise scrapbook, regular telling time to tell and listen to one another's stories of faith, or something else.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

PRAYER

As you close, thank God for His past faithfulness. Pray for our church during this season of transition that we would celebrate God's past faithfulness and trust His leading for the future.

MEMORIZE

^{6b} "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' ⁷ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." -Joshua 4:6b-7

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JOSHUA 4:1-24

4:1. The emphasis on the entire nation crossing suggests the importance of the unity pictured here. The term had finished could also be interpreted as "were finishing," meaning the crossing and the events of verses 1-5 overlapped. The key word crossing (Hb 'avar) occurs four times in this section.

4:2. These are the 12 men selected at 3:12.

4:3. The 12 stones represent the point of the crossing of the whole nation of Israel, all 12 tribes. This would enable future generations to understand and participate spiritually in the crossing that Joshua and the 12 tribes experienced.

4:6-7. The word sign occurs only here in Joshua. In the Pentateuch it is associated with Israel's religious festivals and events, such as Passover (Ex 12:14; 13:9). The explanation given to future generations takes a chiasmic form. The outermost phrases designate a sign or memorial. Within that are lines referring to these stones and then how the waters of the Jordan were cut off. The central focus is that this occurred when the ark of the Lord's covenant, the presence of God, crossed the Jordan.

4:8-12. There are three possibilities here. First, Joshua may have set up a separate pile of stones in the middle of the river, which was probably visible during the dry season. Second, Joshua, as leader, was credited with taking the 12 stones out of the river by means of the 12 men in his employ. The phrase in verse 9 means that Joshua commanded the men to set up 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan. Third, verse 9 might be retrospective—Joshua had set up 12 stones in the middle of the Jordan—and the 12 men subsequently picked up those same stones and set them down in the camp.

4:13. The troops that crossed entered enemy territory, but they also had established a foothold in the promised land when they arrived west of the Jordan River. This 40,000 represented the best portion of the Transjordanian fighting force that crossed with their kinsmen. According to Num 26:7, 18,34 the total of these two and a half tribes would have been over a hundred thousand (see note at Num 1:44-46). Perhaps the rest were protecting their land and families.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

4:14. That the Lord exalted Joshua indicates the fulfillment of 3:8. The connection with Moses is reaffirmed.

4:15-17. The time of the exit from the Jordan River, like the time of the entrance into the river, is determined by God.

4:18. The priests' ascent from the river bed brings the miracle to an end. They reversed the procedure by which they began the parting of the waters (3:13-16).

4:19. The tenth day of the first month was the day that preparations for the Passover were to be made (Ex 12:2-3). This signals the celebration of chapter 5. Gilgal, meaning "circle," could describe any of a variety of sites.

4:20-23. The purpose of the 12 stones is found in the questions that the children would ask. The question and the instruction of the next generation about the divine miracles resembles Dt 6:6-9. Questions asked by sons about the significance of the Passover and the exodus are found in the Jewish Passover Seder or liturgy. Their mention here connects this Passover with the events of the crossing of the Jordan just as the earlier Passover remembered the crossing of the Red Sea.

4:24. The purpose of this miracle is to declare God's might to all the people of the earth and to encourage Israel to always fear the Lord. Faith and commitment to God is the goal, just as with the miracles of Jesus (Jn 20:30-31).