

Small Group Guide: The Pasture on the Other Side

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when you had to take a leap of faith without seeing the full outcome. What made you finally take that step?

Sermon Overview

This sermon explores the journey from the wilderness to the Promised Land, using Joshua's crossing of the Jordan River as a metaphor for moving from survival mode to abundant life in Christ. Pastor Jeff contrasts three types of life: Egypt (bondage to sin), the wilderness (saved but not possessing), and Canaan (abundant life). The message challenges us to cross our own Jordan by letting go of what holds us back and following Jesus into the fullness He promises.

Key Scripture References

- **John 10:10** - "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
- **Joshua 1:3** - "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you."
- **Psalms 23:4-5** - "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."
- **John 10:3-4** - "The sheep hear his voice...he goes before them, and the sheep follow him."

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. **Three Types of Life:** The sermon describes three stages - Egypt (bondage), Wilderness (survival), and Canaan (abundance). Which stage do you most identify with in your current spiritual journey? Why?
2. **The Thief's Work:** How have you experienced the enemy trying to "steal, kill, and destroy" in your life? What areas feel most under attack?
3. **Abundant Life:** Pastor Jeff defined abundant life as "superabundance, overflowing, surplus beyond what's necessary or expected." How does this definition challenge or change your understanding of what Jesus promises?

Going Deeper

4. **Crossing the Jordan:** The Israelites had to consecrate themselves and step into the flooded river before God parted the waters. What might God be asking you to "step into" right now before you can see how He'll make a way?
5. **The Voice of the Shepherd:** Jesus said "My sheep hear my voice." How do you discern God's voice in your life? What practices help you hear Him more clearly?
6. **No Retreat:** When God closed the Jordan behind the Israelites, He eliminated their option to retreat. What "retreat options" might you need to close off to fully commit to following Jesus?

Personal Reflection

7. **What's Holding You Back?** The sermon invited us to identify what we're holding onto that's actually holding us back. What came to mind for you during that visualization exercise?
8. **Forgiving Yourself:** Pastor Jeff mentioned that sometimes we struggle to forgive ourselves even when God has forgiven us. Is there something you need to release to truly experience the freedom Christ offers?
9. **Tithing & Trust:** The sermon addressed financial obedience as one area where we learn to trust God. What's your honest reaction to this teaching? What fears or questions does it raise?

Key Takeaways

✓ **Abundant life is available NOW**, not just in eternity - it's about quality of life, not just quantity of years

✓ **Jesus goes before us** - like the ark entering the Jordan first, Christ has already cleared the path through death and difficulty

✓ **Abundant life doesn't mean no battles** - Canaan had giants, but also had God's presence and provision

✓ **We just need to be willing** - God makes us able when we're available and obedient

✓ **Following Jesus requires cutting off retreat** - full commitment means no backup plan to return to Egypt

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE area where you'll take a step of obedience without seeing the full outcome:

Option 1: Financial Obedience

- If you don't currently tithe, commit to giving 10% for the next month and journal about God's provision
- If you do tithe, consider an additional sacrificial gift toward children's ministry or community outreach

Option 2: Relational Obedience

- Reach out to someone who doesn't know Jesus - not to preach, but to genuinely invest in friendship (like Andrew)
- Make that difficult phone call to ask for or extend forgiveness

Option 3: Service Obedience

- Sign up to help with VBS or another ministry that stretches you beyond your comfort zone
- Commit to a regular prayer time, even if it's just 10 minutes daily to start

Option 4: Personal Consecration

- Identify one thing you're "holding onto" that's holding you back - write it down and symbolically release it to God
- Fast from something (social media, entertainment, complaining) for one week to create space for God's voice

Group Accountability

- Share which option you're choosing with at least one other group member
- Exchange contact information and commit to checking in mid-week
- Come prepared next week to share what happened when you took that step of faith

Prayer Focus

Pray for each other in these areas:

1. **Courage to cross** - That each person would have the faith to step into their "Jordan" this week
2. **Ears to hear** - For sensitivity to the Shepherd's voice above all the noise and distractions
3. **Freedom from fear** - That the giants and obstacles wouldn't paralyze us from moving forward
4. **Contentment in battle** - To trust God's presence even when we're in the valley or facing enemies
5. **Hearts for the next generation** - For VBS, children's ministry, and opportunities to invest in young people

Closing Reflection

Read together: "The abundant life is not about having more things, but about being more - more like Christ, more filled with the Spirit, more aligned with God's purposes." - Tim Keller

Final Question: What would your life look like six months from now if you truly lived on "the other side of Jordan" in the abundant life Jesus promises?

Looking Ahead

Next week we may begin a series on Jonah. Start reading the book of Jonah (it's only 4 chapters!) and consider: What does Jonah's story teach us about God's provision, obedience, and second chances?

Group Leader Note: Create space for silence and reflection. Don't rush through questions. The goal isn't to cover everything, but to allow the Holy Spirit to work in hearts. Be prepared to share your own vulnerabilities about areas where you're "east of Jordan."