

Small Group Guide: Forward by Faith - Crossing the Jordan

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when you had to take a step forward without knowing exactly how things would turn out. What was that experience like?

Sermon Summary (5 minutes)

This message focuses on Joshua 3-4, where the Israelites stand at the flooded Jordan River, ready to enter the Promised Land. God calls them to move forward by faith, consecrate themselves, keep their eyes on the Ark (representing Christ), and step into the water before seeing how God will make a way. The message challenges us to identify what holds us back from fully trusting God and to take steps of faith even when we can't see the outcome.

Key Scripture Passages

- Joshua 3:1-8 (Consecration and following the ark)
- Joshua 4:1-24 (The memorial stones)
- Hebrews 12:1-2 (Fixing our eyes on Jesus)
- James 1:2-4 (Trials produce endurance)

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Understanding Faith's Direction (15 minutes)

1. The pastor outlined four types of faith: passive belief, active obedience, looking back, and moving forward. Which one best describes where you are right now? Why?
2. Read Joshua 3:4 - "You have not passed this way before." How does it feel to know that God often leads us into unfamiliar territory? Can you share an example from your life?

3. The sermon stated: "Faith is not going backwards. Faith is not standing still. Faith is moving forward." What is the difference between being cautious and being stuck in unbelief?

Part 2: The Requirement of Consecration (15 minutes)

4. Before crossing the Jordan, God commanded the people to "consecrate yourselves" (Joshua 3:5). What does consecration mean in practical terms for us today?
5. During the sermon, we were asked to identify what holds us back from being "all in" for God. What are some common things that keep Christians from fully surrendering to God's direction?
6. The Israelites camped at a place that reminded them of their past failure before moving forward. How can remembering our failures actually help us move forward in faith?

Part 3: Stepping Into the Water (15 minutes)

7. The priests had to step into the flooding Jordan River before the waters parted. Why do you think God requires us to step out in faith before we see the miracle?
8. Read James 1:2-4. How have trials in your life produced endurance and maturity? Share a specific example if you're comfortable.
9. The pastor said, "Early faith may be based on what you've seen God do before, but deeper faith is built when you trust Him without seeing the outcome yet." What's the difference between these two types of faith?

Part 4: Building Memorials (15 minutes)

10. God instructed the Israelites to set up memorial stones so they could tell future generations what He had done. What are some "stones" (testimonies) in your life that demonstrate God's faithfulness?
11. Why is it important to share our testimonies with others, especially the next generation? What happens when we keep our faith stories private?
12. The pastor mentioned there were stones in the river (unseen) and stones on the shore (seen). What might this represent about our faith journey?

Key Takeaways

✓ **Faith requires movement** - We must choose to move forward, not backward or remain stagnant

✓ **Consecration comes before blessing** - Obedience and preparation precede God's miracles

✓ **Keep your eyes on Jesus** - Like the Israelites following the ark, we must fix our focus on Christ

✓ **Step in before the miracle** - God often requires us to act in faith before we see the outcome

✓ **Build memorials** - Our testimonies are meant to be shared to encourage others and glorify God

Practical Application

This Week's Challenge:

Identify Your Jordan

- What is one area where God is calling you to step forward in faith?
- What specifically is holding you back (fear, comfort, pride, past failure, etc.)?

Take a Physical Step

- Like the exercise in the sermon, identify one concrete action you can take this week that represents stepping into your "Jordan"
- Examples: Having a difficult conversation, starting a spiritual discipline, serving in a new way, sharing your testimony, making a financial commitment, etc.

Create Your Memorial

- Write down or share with someone this week one specific way God has shown Himself faithful in your past
- Consider how you might share this testimony with someone who needs encouragement

Accountability Questions for Next Week:

1. What step of faith did you take this week?
2. What did you learn about God through taking that step?

3. How did it feel to move forward without seeing the complete outcome?

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Group Prayer Time:

- Pray for each person's specific "Jordan" - the area where they need to step forward in faith
- Ask God to give courage to step into the water before seeing how He'll part it
- Pray for opportunities to share testimonies with others this week
- Thank God for His faithfulness in the past and trust Him for the future

Closing Prayer Prompt: *"Lord, help us to be a church that moves forward by faith, that consecrates ourselves for Your purposes, and that steps into the water trusting You to make a way. Give us courage to drop what holds us back and testimonies worth sharing. In Jesus' name, amen."*

For Further Study

- Read the entire account in Joshua 3-4
- Study other "water crossing" miracles (Red Sea in Exodus 14, Jesus walking on water in Matthew 14)
- Reflect on Hebrews 11 - the "Hall of Faith" - and notice how many acted before seeing the outcome

Leader Notes

- Be prepared to share your own "Jordan" and what holds you back - vulnerability encourages openness
- Have tissues available - this topic can bring up emotional responses
- Create a safe space for people to share struggles without judgment
- Consider having members write down their "memorial stones" to share with the group
- Follow up during the week with those who shared specific faith steps they need to take