BREAKING THE CYCLE OF UNPREPAREDNESS (III) (GETTING YOU READY FOR WHAT GOD IS PREPARING YOU TO DO) JOSHUA 3:4-6

Primary Scripture

Joshua 3:4–6 (NKJV)

Big Idea

Preparing for what God has planned requires spiritual sensitivity to follow His direction, faith to step forward despite difficulties, and obedience to fulfill our responsibilities while trusting Him to do what only He can do.

Introduction

Sometimes we become so excited about entering a new season that we move ahead without waiting for God's direction. We see an opportunity, recognize an open door, or become eager for change and assume that the next step must be the right one.

But preparation is not simply about being ready to move. It is also about knowing when, where, and how God wants us to move.

As Israel approached the Jordan River, they faced a significant obstacle between where they were and where God had promised to take them. What appeared to be a barrier was actually part of their transition.

Their experience teaches us that God's preparation often involves patience, spiritual sensitivity, sanctification, and obedient action.

Key Teaching Points

Waiting on God Is Part of Preparation

Not every opportunity is God's direction. Not every open door is God's assignment. Not everything that looks good is God's best.

Enthusiasm for a new season can become dangerous when excitement takes the place of discernment.

The Israelites were instructed to follow the ark of the covenant rather than move according to their own impulses. Their responsibility was to recognize God's presence and follow His direction.

Likewise, believers must develop enough spiritual sensitivity to distinguish between a desirable opportunity and a God-directed assignment.

Waiting is not wasting time when God is preparing you.

Waiting gives us an opportunity to pray, listen, examine our motives, and ensure that our next step is grounded in obedience rather than impatience.

6. YOUR JORDAN MAY BE PROOF THAT YOU'RE CLOSE.

Scripture: Joshua 3:15–17

Israel arrived at the Jordan River during harvest season, when the river overflowed its banks. Their promised destination was ahead of them, but a seemingly impossible obstacle stood between them and the next chapter of their journey.

The Jordan was not evidence that God had abandoned them. It was evidence that they were standing near their transition.

Sometimes the greatest resistance appears near the place of transition.

The Hebrew verb abar, meaning to cross or pass over, helps illustrate the movement from one place or condition to another. Crossing the Jordan represented more than changing geographical locations. It marked a defining transition in Israel's journey.

Don't mistake difficulty for denial. You may simply be standing at your Jordan.

Faith Requires Obedient Movement

Joshua 1:3 connects God's promise with the places Israel would tread. In Joshua 3, the priests carrying the ark were required to step into the water before the river's flow was stopped.

There are moments when we want God to remove every obstacle before we act. Yet biblical faith sometimes requires obedient action before we can see how God will make a way.

Getting our feet wet means responding to God's instruction even when the outcome is not yet visible.

The priests' obedience did not manufacture the miracle. God stopped the waters, and the people crossed on dry ground.

The Red Sea and Jordan: Different Demonstrations of God's Power

At the Red Sea, Moses stretched out his hand and God used a strong east wind to divide the waters (Exodus 14:21–22).

At the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark stepped into the river, and God stopped the upstream flow (Joshua 3:15–17).

The methods were different, but God was the source of both miracles.

At the Red Sea, the emphasis included Moses' obedient action as leader. At the Jordan, the priests' obedient steps became an important part of Israel's crossing.

The lesson is not that people control God's power, but that God calls His people to participate through obedience.

Jabbok: A Place of Struggle, Surrender, and Transformation

Scripture: Genesis 32:22–32

Another meaningful river encounter occurs at Jabbok.

Jacob sent his family and possessions across the stream and later found himself alone, wrestling through the night with a mysterious man.

During this encounter, Jacob's hip was injured, but he refused to release his opponent without a blessing.

Jacob received a new name, Israel, signifying a profound change in his identity and relationship with God.

The name Jabbok is commonly associated with the idea of pouring out or emptying. In this sermon, it provides a picture of struggle, surrender, and transformation.

The Jordan illustrates crossing into a new season. Jabbok illustrates the inward struggle that can accompany spiritual transformation.

Jacob's experience reminds us that preparation may require more than a change in circumstances. Sometimes God must also deal with our character, dependence, and identity.

His encounter marks a movement from relying on his own schemes toward a deeper recognition of his dependence on God.

Personal Reflection: What is God developing in you while you are preparing to enter your next season?

7. GOD WILL DO HIS PART, BUT YOU MUST DO YOURS.

Scripture: Joshua 3:5

Joshua instructed the people to sanctify themselves because the Lord would do wonders among them.

This instruction establishes an important distinction between human responsibility and divine power.

Our responsibility: Sanctify yourselves.

The people were called to consecrate themselves, setting themselves apart in preparation for what God would do.

Sanctification emphasizes holiness, spiritual readiness, and a willingness to obey God's instructions.

God's people could not approach His presence and purpose carelessly.

God's responsibility: Do wonders.

The Israelites could not stop the Jordan's waters through their own strength. The miracle belonged to God.

Similarly, we cannot manufacture miracles, force God's timing, or manipulate His purpose.

However, there are responsibilities we must not neglect.

We can pray, forgive, study, prepare, develop discipline, and obey God's instructions.

We can position ourselves to respond faithfully to the opportunities and assignments He gives us.

We must avoid becoming so preoccupied with what only God can accomplish that we neglect what He has already instructed us to do.

God provides. You obey. God opens. You position yourself. God performs the wonder.

Supporting Scriptures

- Joshua 3:14–17: The priests' obedient steps precede God's miraculous stopping of the Jordan's waters.

- Joshua 1:3: God's promise calls for a response of faith.

- Exodus 14:21–22: God demonstrates His power through a different method at the Red Sea.

- Exodus 14:26–28: The returning waters demonstrate God's deliverance and judgment.

- Genesis 32:22–32: Jacob's encounter reveals struggle, blessing, and personal transformation.

Reflection / Discussion Questions

1. How can excitement about a new opportunity cause us to move ahead of God's direction?

2. What practical steps help us distinguish between an attractive opportunity and an assignment God is directing us toward?

3. Why do we sometimes interpret difficulty as evidence that God has denied or abandoned us?

4. What does the priests' willingness to step into the Jordan teach us about faith and obedience?

5. How do Jacob's experiences at Jabbok demonstrate the importance of inward transformation before moving forward?

6. Which responsibilities have you been expecting God to fulfill even though He has already equipped you to act?

7. What would it look like to sanctify yourself as you prepare for the next season of your life?

Practical Application

1. Evaluate the opportunity before moving. Identify an opportunity you are currently considering. Spend intentional time in prayer, examine how it aligns with Scripture, and seek wise counsel rather than relying on excitement alone.

2. Identify your Jordan. Write down an obstacle that currently appears to be blocking your progress. Consider whether it is a warning to reconsider your direction or a difficulty you must face through faithful obedience.

3. Examine your Jabbok. Ask God to reveal attitudes, habits, or areas of self-reliance that need to change. Be willing to address internal struggles rather than focusing only on external circumstances.

4. Separate God's responsibility from yours. Make two columns. In the first, identify what only God can accomplish. In the second, write specific actions you can take in obedience today.

5. Take one obedient step. Choose one practical action you have been postponing, such as forgiving someone, establishing a consistent prayer

routine, studying, preparing, or following through on an instruction you already understand.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for being faithful in every season of our lives. Forgive us for the times we have allowed excitement, impatience, or fear to move us ahead of Your direction.

Develop within us the spiritual sensitivity to recognize Your leading and the patience to wait when waiting is necessary.

When we stand before our Jordan, remind us that difficulty does not always mean denial. Give us the courage to obey even when we cannot see the entire path ahead.

As You dealt with Jacob at Jabbok, work within our hearts. Transform our attitudes, strengthen our character, and teach us to depend on You rather than our own understanding.

Help us to take responsibility for what You have placed in our hands. Teach us to pray, forgive, prepare, sanctify ourselves, and walk in obedience.

We trust You to accomplish what only You can do.

In Jesus' name, Amen.