



November 24, 2013  
Joshua 3  
*“Making Transitions”*  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

As Joshua chapter three opens, the Israelites are getting ready to go through a major transition. After 400 years of slavery in Egypt and another 40 years of wandering in the wilderness between Egypt and Israel, the former slaves and wandering vagabonds are *finally* home! What numbered 70 when they first left Israel 440 years earlier has returned 2 to 3 million strong. And, except for a few spies who spied out the land, not a single one has ever stepped foot into this land. As their senses were being bombarded by everything that was entirely new to them, they personally experienced the fact that God made good on his promise.

Life is full of transitions, like moving from childhood to adolescence; into adulthood; from being single to being married; from being a couple to becoming a parent; from one job or career to the next; from one home to the next or one city to the next; and finally, from this life to eternity. Some transitions are fun and some are painful. Every transition is the end of something, and at the same time, every end is the start of something new. It is true that we have some control over certain transitions, like whether or not to get married or take a certain job or change careers.

There is a right way to transition out of one thing into something else, and Pastor Gary outlines these principles in this message. In this study, we will learn that there is a right order, a call to consecration, a time to trust, and a requirement to remember.

### There Is A Right Order

1. **Joshua 3:3-4** - *“... When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have*

*never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it."*

2. The Ark, carried by the priests, was to go first and lead the way, followed at a distance by the people.
  - a. The Ark was a small box, measuring about 2ft. wide, 2ft. high, and 3½ ft. long.
  - b. It was made of acacia wood and covered inside and out with gold.
  - c. The Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the priests by way of rods that were slipped through rings on both sides.
  - d. The Ark contained the Ten Commandments, a sample of manna, and a portion of Aaron's staff that had budded.
3. The primary significance of the Ark was the presence of God.
4. Since the people were to follow about 10 football fields behind the Ark, it's easy to grasp the fact that God was to be way out front!
5. God leads and the people follow is the correct order.
  - a. Sadly, there are many Christians today who don't grasp this simple truth.
  - b. Many people make decisions and go through significant transitions without seeking the leading of the Lord.
  - c. Too often, people make decisions, expecting God to bless, when they should simply seek the Lord and follow his lead.
  - d. The key is to be tuned in to the Lord, so we'll know the when, where, why, and how he's leading.
6. Tools we can use to discern God's leading include:
  - a. The right mindset.
    - i. "I never want to get ahead of God, and I sure don't want to lag behind, either!"
    - ii. There are many examples in the Bible of the admonition to "wait upon the Lord."
    - iii. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience; it's not love, joy, peace, and hurry!
    - iv. We are naturally impulsive or impatient or both.
    - v. Abraham, rather than pray first and act later, acted first and prayed later.
      1. He was too impatient to wait for God's timing when it came to the child God promised.
      2. They decided they wanted to be in control, so Abraham agreed to Sarah's plan to have him sleep with her servant,

Hagar, which they would later deeply regret having superseded God's plan and his will.

b. Discipline

i. If we want to know the heart of God to make sure we are in step with his will, then we need to use the tools of God, which include Bible study, prayer, and fasting - the basic disciplines of the Christian faith.

1. Bible Study

a. Many Christians have found the book of Psalms and the book of Proverbs to be particularly helpful.

i. Psalms calm an anxious heart.

ii. Proverbs impart wisdom.

2. Prayer

a. Prayer is a two-way conversation with the Lord, and it's important to know that it's just as much listening as it is talking.

b. Prayer is not for the purpose of getting God to sanction our plans; it's bringing us to the point of submitting to his will and his ways.

c. [Isaiah 58:9](#) - *"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I."*

d. [Colossians 3:15-16](#) - *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..."*

3. Fasting

a. Fasting works in tandem with prayer, in that denying the body food for a short period of time increases one's spiritual appetite for God.

There Is A Call To Consecration

7. [Joshua 3:5](#) - *"Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.'"*

8. We don't know what they did to consecrate themselves, but they were being called to purity and holiness, and to get their hearts and lives right with God.

9. They were being called to deal with any sin or compromise in their lives.

10. It's foolish to think we can live an incongruous life in disobedience to God and expect him to bless, direct, guide or help.

- a. God may choose to do these things for us in his mercy, but to live our lives however we want, and think that God will somehow bless us, is an unrealistic, and unholy expectation.
11. **Ephesians 1:4** – *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”*
12. **1 Peter 1:14-16** – *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ ”*
13. It’s a true statement that a compromised life is a complicated life.

### There Is A Time To Trust

14. **Joshua 3:8, 14-16** – *“Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go and stand in the river.’ So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam <sup>1</sup> in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.”*
15. This miracle is similar to the one God performed for the Israelites at the Red Sea, when he parted the waters so they could escape Pharaoh and the Egyptian army.
16. The Jordan River was dried up at this crossing to such an extent that 2 to 3 million people were able to cross over!
17. It’s important to notice that God didn’t choose to automatically pull back the water upstream in advance, and the Bible doesn’t indicate they knew God would do that at all.
  - a. God didn’t say, “Now, listen, when you get to the Jordan River I’m going to pull back the water, so don’t worry about anything!”
  - b. The instruction God gave to the priests was simple, *“when you get to the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go stand in the river.”*
  - c. You have to wonder what the priests were thinking, especially since the Jordan River was a flood stage!

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<sup>1</sup> Adam was about 16 miles upstream.

- d. You also have to wonder how faith-filled those priests were, because they had to have one of two responses: “We’re about to get wet, but let’s do this!” or “Oh, God, please make this work out!”
  - e. It was only when their feet touched the water’s edge that God displayed his power.
18. Every new transition in life involves a certain amount of risk – not foolishness or recklessness – but a certain amount of the unknown if we’ve never been that way before, and it’s in times like this we have to trust God.
19. If God always made it easy, if he always parted the Jordan River before we got there or removed all of the obstacles, fears, and apprehension, we’d never have the opportunity to see the awesome display of his power on our behalf.
20. Sometimes God will take us right to the edge and say, “Now, trust me!”
21. [Psalm 31:14-15a](#) – *“But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hands...”*

#### There Is A Requirement To Remember

22. [Joshua 4:1-7](#) – *“When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry the over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.’ So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, ‘Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 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.’ ”*
23. The first order of business as soon as the Israelites stepped into the Promised Land was to set up memorial stones to commemorate the faithfulness of God.
- a. Men from every tribe were selected and told to take up 12 large stones from the riverbed of the Jordan so they could be placed in a pile as a tangible reminder of the power and faithfulness of God.
  - b. They, like us, needed to be able to look upon the memorial stones so God’s faithfulness would never be forgotten.

24. According to [Joshua 4:9](#), Joshua also set up 12 stones, but he set them up in the middle of the Jordan where the priests had been standing, and the reason he did this was so that in times of drought, when the water level would be low, the pile of stones would be a testimony of God's faithfulness even during difficult times.
25. [Psalm 100:5](#) - *"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Joshua 3:1-17](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. The million-dollar question would be, is it possible to be absolutely certain when God is leading versus your own desires, thoughts and wishes?
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when they were way out in front or way behind the leading of the Lord.
5. How has waiting upon the Lord "paid off" in your life?
6. Spend time talking about the disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and fasting, and how important they are when it comes to discerning God's will.
  - a. Read and discuss [Isaiah 58:9](#) and [Colossians 3:15-16](#). (See #6b above)
7. What are some of the ways you can discern God's leading, especially when there is a major transition? (See # 6 above)
8. What are some of the ways a person can consecrate him or herself, and pursue purity and holiness?
  - a. Read and discuss [Ephesians 1:4](#) and [1 Peter 1:14-16](#).
  - b. Do you agree with the statement that a compromised life is a complicated life?
  - c. How have you suffered because you didn't deal with sin and compromise in your life?
  - d. How has the Lord helped you be victorious over sin and compromise?
9. Share examples of the ways the Lord has asked you to trust him.
10. What are some of the "memorial stones" you've set up so you'll never forget

the Lord's power, blessing, and faithfulness?

a. Read and discuss [Psalm 100:5](#).

11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: purpose in their heart to never have a desire to go ahead of the Lord or lag behind him; seek the blessings that come from personal Bible study, prayer and fasting; consecrate him or herself for the purpose of pursuing a life of purity and holiness; trust the Lord in difficult times because he can be trusted; remember the Lord's faithfulness, in both the good and bad times.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).