

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3:7-17

The LORD told Joshua, "Beginning today I will show the people that you are their leader, and they will know that I am helping you as I helped Moses. Now, tell the priests who are carrying the chest to go a little way into the river and stand there."

Joshua spoke to the people:

Come here and listen to what the LORD our God said he will do! The Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites control the land on the other side of the river. But the living God will be with you and will force them out of the land when you attack. And now, God is going to prove that he's powerful enough to force them out. Just watch the sacred chest that belongs to the LORD, the ruler of the whole earth. As soon as the priests carrying the chest step into the Jordan, the water will stop flowing and pile up as if someone had built a dam across the river.

The LORD has also said that each of the twelve tribes should choose one man to represent it.

The Israelites packed up and left camp. The priests carrying the chest walked in front, until they came to the Jordan River. The water in the river had risen over its banks, as it often does in springtime. But as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the river stopped flowing, and the water started piling up at the town of Adam near Zarethan. No water flowed toward the Dead Sea, and the priests stood in the middle of the dry riverbed near Jericho while everyone else crossed over.

Storyteller: (spreads out the Desert Bag) This is the Desert Bag. So many wonderful and important things happen in the desert, we need to know what it is like. We can't get the whole desert into our church, so here is just a little piece of the desert. *The Storyteller smooths the sand while s/he talks.* The desert is a dangerous place. It is hot in the daytime and cold at night. There is little water, and almost nothing grows there.

God's people were in the desert for forty years. *Put some People of God figures in the desert along with Moses and Aaron.* People who were young when they left Egypt became old in the desert and forgot what it had been like to be slaves. *Add some figures of older people.* Babies who were born while they were in the desert grew up knowing nothing else. *Add some babies and children figures.* People who had grown old as slaves died in the desert and the memory of slavery died with them. *Take away the oldest of the first People of God you put out, including Aaron.* Moses had been an elder when he led God's people out of Egypt. He lived long enough to bring them to the edge of the desert, and then he died too. *Take away the Moses figure.*

The people of God needed a new leader. The leader had to be someone who was blessed by God, just as Moses had been, and who could carry God's messages to the people, as Moses had done. God chose Moses's assistant, Joshua, to be the new leader of God's people. *Put the Joshua figure in front of the people of Israel*

Now God's people were renewed and God was ready to lead them into the promised land.

Put the plant figures (or actual plants) into the far right-hand corner of the desert (from the Storyteller's perspective).

Between the promised land, and the desert, was a river, the River Jordan. *Lay out the blue pieces of felt between the people and the plants.*

God told Joshua "Today, I will show everyone that I am helping you, the same way I helped Moses." Joshua told the people, "God is going to show you how powerful he is. Watch what happens when the priests carry the Ark into the river. The water will stop, just as if there was a

dam blocking the way.”

God's people travelled right to the edge of the River Jordan. The priests who were carrying the Ark of God's Covenant were in front, and all the people followed behind them. *Start moving the people towards the river, starting with the priests and the Ark.* As soon as the priests stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing. *Move the priests into the river, rolling back the felt to make space for them. Make a little extra space, as you will have to move the rest of the figures past them.* The priests stood on dry ground in the middle of the river, and the people of God were able to cross. *Move the people figures through the gap in the river, past the priests and the Ark.* The priests stayed where they were, holding back the water, until the entire nation of Israel had crossed into the promised land. *After all the people have been moved across, move the priests out of the river, and replace the water.*