

Life: Be confident in God's power

May 29, 2015

- *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 14 focuses on Joshua 3:7-17.*

From our home on the 15th floor of a condominium building in downtown Dallas, my husband and I can see the Trinity River flowing underneath the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge—something I never have seen since the bridge was completed in 2012.

Typically, the river bottoms near downtown are dry. People jog, play soccer, walk their dogs and even ride horses in the “river” on the near west side of downtown. However, torrential rains came in April and May. For the first time since January 2014, Dallas officially is free of drought conditions. Unfortunately, this good news does not extend to parts of Central and West Texas, where many areas of moderate to severe drought still exist.

Jordan at flood stage

When the Israelites broke camp to cross the Jordan River and wage war for the land God promised them, the river was at flood stage. Even so, God told Joshua to command the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the middle of the river (Joshua 3:8).

The priests might have reacted to this request with fear, because anyone who touched the ark died by the hand of God. The priests carried the ark with poles inserted through the handles, and keeping it from slipping as they waded into the fast flowing river would be difficult. However, it was essential the ark lead the people into the Promised Land because it symbolized the presence of God. It contained the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, a jar of manna and Aaron's rod

(Hebrews 9:4).

When the priests and the ark crossed the river before Joshua did, the people saw even their leader subordinated himself to God. Additionally, Joshua emphasized the presence of God's power by telling the people: "Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. ... See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you" (Joshua 3:9,11). By following the ark, the entire nation of Israel could be confident God would give them the victory he promised.

Crossing the Jordan

As the priests stepped into the river "water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away," and "all of Israel passed by" (vv. 16,17). Seminary professor Robert Hubbard says in *Joshua: The NIV Application Commentary*, the Hebrew word for "heap" in verse 16 is the same word used when God parted the Red Sea as the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt.

Joshua understood these two events were connected. In Joshua 4, he says: "For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God" (vv. 23, 24). Remember, only Joshua and Caleb experienced the parting of the Red Sea firsthand. Everyone else had died during the subsequent 40 years of wandering in the desert.

God's care for his people

Now, a new generation of Israelites needed to be reminded of God's great care for his people. To reinforce their memories of this miracle, one man from each tribe selected a stone from the middle of the river to carry with

them to their camp “to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” (4:4-7).

Joshua led the Israelites with confidence because he trusted in God. Similarly, Christians can step confidently into the challenging waters of leadership when they follow God’s direction. If leaders follow God down the paths he directs, they will inspire others to join them, always thanking God for providing the way.