

Family Service

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Joshua. Now you're thinking, no it's not, it's David. But for the next 20 minutes, okay, my name's Joshua. And I was born over 3,000 years ago in a place called Egypt. Now many of you will have heard about Egypt, and you'll know about the pyramids in Egypt. They're probably the most famous thing that there is in Egypt. Well, they're very ancient. In fact, they're so ancient that when I was born and was brought up in Egypt, they were already there, and they were already very ancient even then. You might think it must have been a lot of fun to have been born and brought up in such an exciting place, such an amazing place like Egypt.

Well, it wasn't. It wasn't fun at all. And I'll tell you why it wasn't fun. It wasn't fun because I was a slave, and all of my people, the Israelites, they were slaves as well. We hadn't always been slaves. When our great-great-great-grandfather Joseph had come to Egypt, he was a very important person. But as the years passed, the Egyptians forgot about Joseph, and they turned us into slaves. And we suffered terribly in Egypt. And we suffered so much that we cried out to God for help.

And God raised up a very special leader called Moses to rescue us from slavery in Egypt. Well, they were very exciting times. But I can't tell you all about them because I want to get on to something that happened many years later. But I'll just tell you one thing that happened. Pharaoh, who was the king in Egypt, finally decided to let us go. Moses had been trying to persuade him in different ways with God's help, and finally said, okay, you can go. And off we went. And we were so excited to be leaving slavery and going to the promised land, to Canaan, the land that God had promised to us. But as we made our way, we had a big problem. And the big problem was that there was something blocking our way. It was called the Red Sea. And we couldn't get across because there were so many of us, and there was old people and children and animals, and we just couldn't get across. And to make matters worse,

Pharaoh changed his mind. He changed his mind, and he said, I don't want all my slaves to go. Who are going to do all the work for me? And so he sent his army to chase after us and to bring us back.

And we were terrified as we could hear the army and the chariots making their way towards us. What were we going to do? And then something amazing happened, and I remember it as if it were yesterday. The Red Sea just opened up. It just opened up. I can't really explain it, but it just opened up, and we were able to cross on dry land and escape from the chariots and the soldiers that were chasing us. Well, you can imagine that when we got across the Red Sea, we were all so excited, and we thought, well, we'll soon be in the promised land. We'll soon be in our own land, and we won't be slaves anymore, and everything will be wonderful. But there was a problem.

[3 : 24] The problem was that the promised land, the land of Canaan, already had lots of people in it, and they didn't want us to come and live there. They hated us, and they were going to stop us from coming into Canaan. So, what were we to do? Well, Moses decided that he'd have to just check out the situation in Canaan to know how best to conquer the land. So, he decided that he would send 12 spies that could go over and just see what it was like, and what the armies were like, and how strong they were, and what we would need to do to conquer the promised land. Well, what was very exciting for me is that I was one of the 12 spies. I was one of the ones who was sent by Moses to check out the land.

So, off we went. We had a look at everything we could see, and when we came back, me and one of my friends called Caleb, we were sure that with God's help, we'd be able to conquer the land.

I thought, well, if God can open up the Red Sea, surely He can help us conquer the promised land. So, we told Moses that we were sure that we could do it. But sadly, the other 10 spies didn't share our opinion. They were terrified by what they saw. Very strong warriors in the promised land, and they were frightened, and they frightened everybody else. And so, sadly, people went with the other 10 and didn't listen to us. Now, you might think, well, that was a bit of a wee setback. But maybe a few weeks could pass, or a few months, and you'd be able to think again. Well, it wasn't like that.

Because the people didn't trust in God, because they were so frightened by what they heard, we ended up spending 40 years. Can you imagine that? 40 years. That's a very long time. It's so long that it's just about how long I've lived. Well, I've lived a little bit longer than that, but it's that long.

And they were just, we were wandering around in the desert because we didn't trust in God. Well, I want to get to the part at the end of those 40 years, and something very sad happened.

[5 : 42] The very sad thing that happened was that Moses died. Now, I loved Moses. I respected Moses. He was our great leader, and I followed him and tried to do everything that he asked me to do.

But then he died. He was very old, and he died without even getting into the promised land. And on that day, or soon after, something very special happened. Well, it was very special for me.

Probably wasn't so special for other people, but for me, it was very special. I would say it was even more special than when we crossed the Red Sea. And the very special thing was that God came, and He spoke to me. And He said, Joshua, it's time for the people to cross the Jordan, the River Jordan, and occupy the promised land, the land that I've promised to you. It's time for you to go across, to conquer the land, and to live there. No more wandering in the desert. Well, that was good.

But then He said, and I want you to lead the people over. Well, that was just something I didn't think I'd be able to do. It was such a big job. If Moses, the great Moses, hadn't been able to do it, how could I possibly do what he hadn't been able to do? Well, I think God knew that I thought this was very, very difficult. And so, God said some very important things to me on that day. On that day, when He told me that we were going to take the promised land, and I was going to lead the people, He said some very special things that I want to share with you, because they were important for me, but they're important for all of us as well. So, I'm going to tell you some of the things that God said to me on that day. The first thing He said, one of the first things He said to me was, I will give you every place that your feet stands on, just as I promised Moses.

Now, that was important for me because, first of all, it reminded me that it was God who was going to give us the promised land. It didn't matter really how brave I was or how strong we were or how many soldiers we had. It was God who was going to give us the land. And that was important because if I had thought it was up to me, then I would have probably felt we couldn't do it. But God was saying, no, I'm going to give you the land. And then He said something else there. He said, just as I promised Moses. And that was important because that was reminding me that God had promised, promised, and God always keeps His promises. So, I could go confidently, even though it seemed such a difficult thing to do, because God had promised. He promised to Moses. He promised to the people, and He would keep His promise. So, that was one thing that God said to me that day.

[8 : 40] Another thing that He said to me was, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Well, I needed to hear that, because it was such a big thing that God was asking me to do, and God was promising that He would be with me. However difficult it was, however many obstacles there were, however impossible it might have seemed, God said, I'm going to be with you. And He said, more than that, He said, I'll never leave you, and I'll never forsake you. I'll never leave you alone. Now, that's a wonderful promise. It's a wonderful promise for all of us to know that God promises to always be with us. And that's a promise for you. It was very special for me when God spoke to me on that very special day, but it's special for you as well to know that, however difficult things might be. Maybe there can be difficult things going on at school or at home, all kinds of things that can be very difficult. And to know this promise that God gives to us, I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you. That's a wonderful promise. And I remember God saying that to me on that very special day. Now, maybe you're thinking, well, if God was going to give us the land, if it was all up to Him, if He was so great and so powerful, well, it would be easy for me.

Easy peasy, because God's going to do everything. Well, it wasn't easy. It was still very difficult, and God knew that. And that's why God said something else when He spoke to me that day. He said this.

He said, be strong and courageous. Be strong and courageous. Don't be terrified, and don't be discouraged. You see, God knew that it was still a very difficult thing to do, and that it would be important that I be very strong and very courageous, very brave. Now, I want to tell you something that maybe you don't know about being brave. Some of you maybe know this already, but some of you maybe don't, and it's a wee secret that I think is very important to remember. Some people think that being courageous or being very brave means never to be scared. But that's not what it means. It means that even when we are scared, we do the right thing. You see, when I had to cross into the promised land, I was scared.

When I had to go as a spy, I was scared. But with God's help, I was courageous, and I did the right thing. And that's important. Sometimes you'll be scared to do the right thing. Maybe at school to tell somebody else that you're a Christian, that you love Jesus, or maybe to say to your friends that you're not going to do something that they want to do, or speak like they speak. And that can be scary.

[11 : 41] And if you're scared, that doesn't mean you're not brave. If you're courageous, like God asked me to be, then even though you're scared, you'll do the right thing. And God will be happy with you, and He will help you. Well, that's one of the things, another thing that God said to me on that day, be strong and courageous. Then He said something else that was very important that I want to mention to you. He said, be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave to you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. You see, God had given some laws to the people through Moses, and He did that for our good, so that we would know how to live in a way that was pleasing to Him and was best for us. But there was lots of laws, and God was saying to me that I had to be careful to obey all of them. Well, that was quite difficult, because there were so many, and some of them were quite difficult to obey.

And so God was saying that I would have to know the law. I would need to be careful to keep the law, and I'd have to be careful not to go in any other direction, wander to the left or to the right.

That was very important. I needed to know and to keep the law. And in order to do that, God told me something else. He said that I should meditate on the law day and night. That means I had to read it and think about it and work out what were the things that I should do in order to keep God's law, to do what God wanted me to do. I would need to think about it and be very careful about it.

Now, one way of doing that for you, I had to do that, but one way of doing it for you that you've been doing is to memorize parts of God's Word. Today, some of you have recited verses that you've memorized. That's a good way of meditating on God's Word, having it in your head so that whenever you need to remember something important that God has said or a promise that He's given, it's there for you. That was something I had to do if I was going to be the leader that God wanted me to be, and it's something you can do as well, to meditate on God's Word. Well, there are some of the things that God said to me that day, that very special day, when He said that I was going to lead the people into the promised land. And He said lots of things, but if I had to just say it in a few words, I would say this.

God was saying to me that I had to trust in God and in His promises, that I had to be strong and courageous in serving God and keep God's Word. And that is very good advice. More than advice, it's very good instruction for all of us, that we would all trust in God and His promises, that we would be strong and courageous in being faithful to Him, even when it's difficult, even when many other people don't want to or don't, and also that we would be careful to know and to keep God's Word. Well, those were the things that God said to me that day. Now, what were we to do? Well, what we had to do was to go across the Jordan and take possession of the promised land. That's what we've been told to do by God. So, I quickly gathered all the people, and I told them that this is what we were going to do.

[15 : 18] But there was one final thing we needed to do before doing that. I remembered what Moses had done so long before, and I thought it would be a good idea to send two spies just to check out the land that we were going to conquer. Not twelve, because that had been a big mess up. Just two, that would be enough. So, two spies went, and they came back, and they said, everything's prepared.

Everything's prepared for us to conquer the land. The people there are very frightened of us. It's all ready. God's prepared everything for us. And so, we were all ready. We were all very excited.

And then, as I gathered all the people, the older folk and the younger folk and the boys and girls, we gathered them all together. And there was one final thing that I said to them the day before we were going to cross the Jordan to take the promised land. And one thing I said to them was this.

I said, consecrate yourselves or commit yourselves to God, because tomorrow God is going to do amazing things among us. It was so exciting. The following day, God was going to do amazing things, but it was important that not only I was trusting in God as Joshua, the leader, but that everybody was trusting in God, even the boys and girls. And as everybody put their trust in God, then God would do amazing things.

Well, the next day, God did do amazing things. And I can't tell you all the amazing things, but I'll tell you one thing. We had to cross the Jordan River, and the Jordan River was full of water that day. It was just flowing down very fast and very dangerous. And we couldn't get into the promised land if we didn't cross the river. And how were we going to cross the river? Well, God had said we just needed to go in and cross. So what we did is we started walking towards the river. Maybe you could imagine the rivers over there, and we were getting closer, and the priests were going ahead, and they were getting closer, and we were wondering, when will the river open up, or how are we going to get across? And we got closer, and it's still nothing happened. And we got closer, and still nothing happened. And people were getting a little bit scared. What's going to happen now? We got closer, and we were right in the edge, and still the river was flowing down. And then the priests, they stepped into the water. And then, and only then, the water opened up. The river opened up, and we could cross over. Well, that was pretty exciting right at the last minute. And it's not just that it was exciting. I think God was teaching us something. He was saying, I want to see that you really do trust in me. I want to see how you really obey me, even when it's difficult, even when you're scared. And when I see that you're trusting in me, and you're willing to obey me, then I will honor that, and I will help you. And that's what happened. And we all crossed over into the promised land. Well, there were lots of other adventures that I could tell you about. But I don't have time to tell you all the adventures we had.

[18 : 33] And I think there's a prize giving that you've got to have in a few moments. So, if I told you everything that happened, there wouldn't be time for that. So, I'll leave it there. That was Joshua.

Well, you can think of me as David again, okay? I'm not Joshua anymore. That was Joshua. But I do want to say one other thing. Joshua was an amazing guy. He was an amazing guy that God used to rescue his people from slavery. Did you know that his name means God saves? In the Hebrew language, that's what it means, God saves. So, it was a very appropriate name for somebody who was used by God to save his people. But Joshua, though he was amazing, and though he was obedient and faithful, Joshua, like Moses before him, died. He got old, and eventually he died. And he couldn't help the people anymore because he was dead. But the Bible tells us about a Savior who came after Joshua. An amazing Savior, a Savior who's much greater even than Joshua, a Savior who also died, but who rose again from the dead. And you know who that is, don't you? That's Jesus. And did you know something interesting? That Joshua and Jesus is the same name, just in different languages. So, Joshua is the name in Hebrew, and Jesus is the same name, but in Greek. And so, Jesus means God saves as well. And Jesus is the most amazing Savior, and He still saves. There never comes a time when He grows old and dies and can't help you. No, He lives forever.

He came into this world to save us, to save us from our sin, to save us from an empty and a selfish life, to save us from a lost eternity. He came to save, and He saved us by dying on the cross for our sins.

And so, He is the best Savior, and the Savior that we can trust in, and as we do, He can be our Savior, and He can be your Savior. So, I hope you remember these things. I hope you remember some of the things that God told Joshua, but how important it is to trust in Him, to be strong and to be brave, and to know and to keep God's Word, but very especially that you would remember and know that Jesus is the greatest Savior, and He can be your Savior as you trust in Him, and as you confess your sins and ask Him to forgive you your sins. And that's something we all need to do always. So, that's what I wanted to share with you this morning. And what we're going to do now is we're going to bow our heads, and we're going to pray just for a wee moment.