

Before You Cross

Life Group Discussion Guide

Joshua 3–4

The Heart of the Message

God brought Israel to the edge of the Jordan after four hundred years of slavery and forty years in the wilderness. The promised land was finally in view — but before they could cross, God gave one instruction: *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you"* (Joshua 3:5).

The message walked us through a simple but powerful truth: **the crossing is not just about arriving somewhere new — it's about who we become before we get there.** God doesn't want to move us forward while we still carry the desert inside us. So He calls us to consecration first — and consecration has two sides. There is the part *we* do (naming and confronting the desert thinking), and the part *only God can do* (the actual freedom, healing, and transformation). And the purpose of the whole crossing is not just personal freedom — it is so that living water can flow through us to serve and love others.

Key Scriptures

Read 2–3 of these together as a group:

- Joshua 3:1, 5, 13 — the consecration and the crossing
 - Joshua 4:20–22 — the stones of remembrance
 - Romans 12:2 — transformed by the renewing of the mind
 - John 7:37–38 — rivers of living water
 - Isaiah 61:1–3 — what flows from a consecrated life
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What This Means for Us

A quick recap to align the room before discussion. As you read, think less about the information and more about where you find yourself in the story.

The desert changes how we think — not just where we are. Israel spent forty years in the wilderness, and it shaped them. Scarcity, complaint, fear, and a slave identity became so normal they felt like wisdom. We pick up the same patterns in our own hard seasons.

A new season won't fix an old mindset. This is why God stops Israel at the river before they cross. He knows that moving them forward without changing them on the inside would just mean recreating the desert in the promised land. The same is true for us — God loves us too much to move us geographically and leave us unchanged.

Consecration is how we get ready — and we're not alone in it. There's a part we can do: honestly naming and confronting the desert thinking in us. And there's a part only God can do: the actual freeing, healing, and transforming. We bring our honesty; He brings the miracle.

The crossing is for others, not just us. We're not freed simply to feel better. We're freed so that living water can flow through us — to comfort, to bring freedom, to serve the people God has placed around us.

The Call Ahead — Becoming an Isaiah 61 People

There is one more thing we cannot miss. God is not bringing Oakhill across the Jordan simply so we can enjoy a better season. He is preparing us for a purpose.

When Jesus stood up to announce His ministry, He read from Isaiah 61 — *"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, to comfort all who mourn, to bestow a crown of beauty instead of ashes."* This is the heartbeat of what a consecrated, crossed-over people carry into the world.

And that is the call on us in this next season. As we cross — as God does His work in us — He is shaping us into a people who carry His presence outward. To the broken. The captive. The grieving. The people in our families, our workplaces, and our city who are still on the other side of the river.

The crossing is not the finish line. It is the preparation. Isaiah 61 is where we are headed — not as individuals only, but as a church learning to minister out of overflow rather than effort.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever stood at the edge of something God promised you and sensed Him asking you to get ready for it? What did that feel like?

Going Deeper — The Desert 2. The message described "desert thinking" as scarcity, complaint, fear, and a slave identity that becomes so familiar it feels like wisdom or just "the way things are." Which of these do you most recognise in yourself? 3. Why do you think a change of circumstances so often *doesn't* change the way we think? Have you seen this in your own life?

The Two Dynamics of Consecration 4. Consecration has a part we can do (naming and confronting) and a part only God can do (transforming and freeing). Why is it important to know the difference? What happens when we confuse the two — trying to do God's part, or waiting passively for God to do ours? 5. Is there something you've been trying to fix in your own strength that you may need to bring to God and trust Him to do?

The Step 6. The waters parted *after* the priests stepped in — "obedience precedes clarity." Where might God be asking you to take a step before you can see the full picture?

Crossing Into Purpose 7. The message said the crossing isn't just for personal freedom — it's so that "living water" can flow through us to others (John 7:37–38; Isaiah 61). Who in your life right now might God want to reach through you? 8. If Isaiah 61 describes the kind of church God is shaping us to become, what would it look like — practically — for our group to live that out in

this next season? Who are the broken-hearted, the captive, or the grieving that God might be putting in front of us?

Personal Application 9. What is one specific piece of "desert thinking" you want to name and surrender this week? What would consecration look like for you practically in this season?

Stone of Remembrance

In Joshua 4, Israel built an altar of twelve stones so future generations would remember what God had done. Close your time by inviting each person to name (out loud or silently) one thing they want to mark — *"this is where God met me."*

Praying Together

Keep this simple and unhurried. Some ways to close:

- Pray in twos or threes — invite people to share one thing they're surrendering and pray for one another.
 - Encourage listening prayer — be gentle, ask consent before praying over someone, and don't force a moment.
 - Speak a closing declaration together: *"We consecrate ourselves — because new ground requires a new heart. We refuse to carry the desert into the promise. We will step in, even before we see the full picture."*
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Leader's Notes

A few gentle reminders as you lead:

Don't rush the silence — consecration happens in unhurried space, so let pauses breathe. Lead from overflow, not pressure — your group receives what is genuinely flowing in you, not what you manufacture. And remember the message's own caution: minister to one another because you've heard God, not just because the moment is there. Listen first.