

"Mission impossible!"

Are you struggling with an impossible-looking task? Don't give up just because people tell you, "It can't be done." Did you know that almost every great idea or invention in history started the same way?

When trains were first invented, several "experts" agreed that if a train went at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour, the passengers would get nosebleeds. In addition, they would suffocate when going through tunnels.

In 1881, the New York YMCA announced typing lessons for women. Protests were made on the grounds that the female constitution would break down under the strain.

When the telephone was first invented, Joshua Coppersmith was arrested in Boston for trying to sell stock in a company that would build them. The experts said that all well-informed people know it is impossible to transmit the human voice over a wire.

Now we are going to read about a man who was faced with many challenges in his lifetime which looked impossible.

Matthew 19:23-26 "Jesus then said to his disciples, "I assure you: it will be very hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of heaven. I repeat: it is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." When the disciples heard this, they were completely amazed. "Who, then, can be saved?" they asked. Jesus looked straight at them and answered, "This is impossible for human beings, but for God everything is possible."

You see just because things may look impossible for us, we just like Joshua had to trust God to do what only He can do, 'the impossible.' But as always if you're going to do something which looks impossible, your going need encouragement and some advice about to go about doing the impossible.

And that's exactly that God does with Joshua in Joshua 1:5+6 "Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you. Be determined and confident, for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land which I promised their ancestors."

You see God has a promise to keep, a promise which was first told to Abraham in Genesis 12. You remember the promise don't you? Genesis 12:1 "The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you".

God promised Abraham a land for his people and now years later after Abraham has died, God still stuck to His promise. That land was a place called Canaan and after the people failed to enter the first time and ended up wandering around and around for 40 years, a journey which should have only taken a couple of months but the time has now come where God needs someone to get them into Canaan and that man was Joshua. And so God tells Joshua to be brace himself and trust God.

Now I don't know about you but I think I would have been scared. Scared not only with the Lord speaking to me directly but scared because of what He wants me to do. He wanted Joshua to go to a land where everyone hated him; He wanted Joshua to go into a land where everyone wanted to kill him. And that's scary.

And God may call upon us to go places which frighten us. And we're not just talking about places either. For some people getting old frightens them. For others dieing frightens them. Or maybe it's simple things which frighten you. I'm not telling my friends I go to church! I'm not telling anyone that my parents are Christians! If anyone asks me what I did at the weekend I'm not telling them I was at a fellowship meal!

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Or maybe if you're already a Christian someone asks you about your faith and the very prospect of sharing your faith with someone scares you.

You see guys its times like that you should remember the encouragement God gave Joshua in **Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."**

You see we all need encouragement at times especially in times of uncertainty. We all need to know that God is with us, that's one reason why when you become a Christian you receive the gift.

You remember on the day of Pentecost after Peter preached the very first gospel message, many people believed what they heard and were pricked in their heart and they asked Peter, **'brothers what shall we do to be saved?'** And Peter replies in **Acts 2:38 "Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven"**.

Now loved ones why do we stop emphasising there? Why don't we read on and truly emphasise what's been said?

Read it again, **"Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit"**. We go on and on about repentance and baptism but we neglect the part which talks about you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit.

Why is the Holy Spirit important? Haven't you had times when someone was talking to you about God and couldn't remember any Scripture? Haven't you had times when you just didn't know what to say to God in prayer because you're really struggling with something? Haven't you ever been afraid since you've become a Christian? Haven't you had times where you think I just don't have the strength to deal with all these troubles? Haven't you ever thought, I just can't make it on my own?

Well bless your soul Christian; those are just some of the reasons why we are given the Holy Spirit. God knew we can't make it on our own, that's why He lives in us in the form of His Spirit. He's there to encourage us to be Christ-like; He's there to whisper Scriptures in our ear to encourage us to live the Christian life. And if you're not a Christian this morning you need to know that God doesn't expect you to go through life alone, He wants to send His Spirit to live in you to help you too.

So Joshua was not only given encouragement, he was given advice how to succeed and overcome his fears. **Joshua 1:7+8 "Just be determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go. Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."**

Joshua is told if he obeys the whole Law, and doesn't neglect any part of it. If he reads the Law out in worship so others can be reminded of it. If he studies it, day and night, and makes sure he obeys everything written in it. **What will happen?** He will be prosperous and be successful wherever he goes and in whatever he does. **Wouldn't you love to be successful in all that you do?**

You see Joshua was a great leader not because he was so strong. He wasn't a great leader because he was so smart. He was a great leader because he knew and understood that his strength and everything he achieved in his life came from the Lord. His courage to face his fears came from God; his success in life came because He studied God's word day and night. His success came from doing exactly what God asked him to do nothing more and nothing less.

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Proverbs 3:1+2 "My child, don't forget what I teach you. Always remember what I tell you to do. My teaching will give you a long and prosperous life".

You know people come up to me sometimes and say, *you guys really know your Bible don't you?* Or they will say things like, *oh you guys are so legalistic, you don't move with the times.* Well listen loved ones the world may change with the times but the Bible says in **Hebrews 13:8** "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever".

You want courage to talk to others about Jesus? Spend time with God and read His word and be encouraged. *You want to live a long life?* Spend time with God and not only study His word but live by it.

So Joshua is ready, he is encouraged and now has the answer in terms of how to succeed in doing the impossible. And so God wanted the Israelites to take the city of Jericho which was the biggest city in the land and so Joshua sent out a couple of spies to check out the land and the city. They managed to get into the city of Jericho and were taken care of by a woman named Rahab who helped them escape when the people found out they were in town.

And so the scene is set for *mission impossible*, crossing the Jordan River. **Joshua 3:14** "It was harvest time, and the river was in flood. When the people left the camp to cross the Jordan, the priests went ahead of them, carrying the Covenant Box."

Put yourselves in their shoes for a moment. You listen to what God has asked you to do and your standing next to the river and it's just raging because it's flood season. You see the floods of waves just raging down towards you, you hear the sounds of waves just bashing the river banks and you think to yourself, *'wow God wants us to cross this!'*

Now you've got a huge decision to make, do I look at this and think *this is impossible or do I trust the one whose mission it is to do the impossible?* Now again this would be another scary moment for everyone involved. Now if this was me I would be happy to be at the back on the procession *why?* Because the priests were to go first carrying the Ark of the Covenant. And if this was me I would be saying, *OK God, stop the river first and I will happily cross over to the other side.*

But then the Holy Spirit would remind me of my ancestors who walked through the Red Sea. The Holy Spirit would remind me of Rahab's words in **Joshua 2:9+10** "I know that the Lord has given you this land. Everyone in the country is terrified of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea in front of you when you were leaving Egypt."

Isn't it amazing how we're scared to do something when all the time others are more afraid of you because of the God you follow? Anyway as you can imagine, the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant are getting closer to the river and everyone around them is peeking forward to see if anything is happening. And as they move closer and closer they keep peeking round and still nothing is happening. And maybe many of them are beginning to panic saying, *'oh no, we're going to drown, we're going to drown.'*

But then as soon as the one of the priests carrying the Ark, as soon as his foot touches the water, *what happens?* The impossible happens. **Joshua 3:15+16** "As soon as the priests stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing and piled up, far upstream at Adam, the city beside Zarethan. The flow downstream to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and the people were able to cross over near Jericho".

God stopped the river from flowing, now not only is that a miracle but they even walked over on dry ground which is a miracle within its self. Because if the ground was all muddy people would have got trapped in the mud and they would have taken forever to cross over.

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Now if your ever looking for a lesson on faith, you won't find a better example anywhere in Scripture. Why was it important for them to step into the water before God stopped it flowing? Because God wanted to teach them about faith and trust. They had to trust him and take a leap of faith first by stepping into the water.

You see so many people today say the same old things over and over again. If God would just heal my daughter from this terrible disease then I would trust Him! If God would just fix all the problems I have in my life then I would trust Him! If God would just answer this prayer then I would come to church more regularly!

Do you see how over and over again people, even Christians get it the wrong way round? God says, you step into the river first to show that you trust me and then I will do what I promised to do. Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Jesus says, you step into His kingdom first to show that you trust Him and then He will do what He promised to do.

Now let me ask you church, when was the last time you stepped out in faith like that? Because there's a time coming when we're all are going to have to do what the Israelites did. It's been no secret what the plans of this congregation are. When this congregation grows as much as it has done these past few years we plan to step out in faith and plant another congregation over the Wednesbury area.

And it's at that moment we need to trust God to show up and do the impossible. We need God to raise up another Joshua to help with the leadership within this new congregation. We need God to help that congregation settle in and grow both spiritually and numerically like He has done here at Great Barr. We need God to show up and help us take the land for Him.

And when we do that, when we keep God's commands and study them day and night, we will succeed. And do you know why? Because God is right smack in the middle of everything we do. Joshua 3:17 "While the people walked across on dry ground, the priests carrying the Lord's Covenant Box stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan until all the people had crossed over."

The priests stood right smack in the middle of the Jordan until everyone had crossed over. And loved ones, what we see as impossible is possible in God's eyes because He is smack in the middle of everything we do and say. Because our encouragement comes from reading His word and because our strength to do what He wants us to do comes from Him not in ourselves.

Admiral Nelson was one of Britain's best-loved heroes, who fought valiantly for his country and won four notable naval battles, at the personal cost of losing an arm and one eye. Nelson's last and most famous battle was fought off the Spanish cape of Trafalgar, when he defeated Napoleon and the French and Spanish fleets; during which he lost his life, dying aboard H.M.S. Victory.

He has a monument in the centre of Trafalgar Square in London. It was built between 1840 and 1843 to commemorate Admiral Horatio Nelson, who died at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. It consists of an 18ft statue of Nelson on top of a 56 m granite column.

The top of the Corinthian column is decorated with bronze acanthus leaves cast from British cannon. The square pedestal is decorated with four bronze panels, cast from captured French guns, depicting Nelson's four great victories. And on the bottom are written these famous words, 'England expects everyman will do his duty'.

Now people from all around the world come to see this monument and have their picture taken next to it but the reason it is there is so that we will never forget what he did for his country.

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Well in much the same way when the Israelites crossed the Jordan, it was an event in history which must never be forgotten. Joshua 4:19-22 "The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month and camped at Gilgal, east of Jericho. There Joshua set up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan. And he said to the people of Israel, "In the future, when your children ask you what these stones mean, you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground."

Joshua built a stone memorial with the rocks taken from the centre of the Jordan. It would be a memorial which would remind people of the wonders God had done for the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land. It was a memorial for their children and their children's children that the 12 stones together would remind them of the 12 tribes joined together as one nation.

And loved ones the same God who dried up the Jordan is the same God in which we serve and worship today. Now let me ask you, [why did the chicken cross the road?](#) To get to the other side. [But why did God dry up the water of the river Jordan?](#) To get the Israelites to the other side.

Well if you're going to settle for the answer to get to the other side, I don't think you've read on. Joshua 4:23+24 "Tell them that the Lord your God dried up the water of the Jordan for you until you had crossed, just as he dried up the Red Sea for us. Because of this everyone on earth will know how great the Lord's power is, and you will honour the Lord your God forever."

God wanted his people to fear Him and to give Him the worship and service He deserved. Remembering what God had done would give them encouragement and faith when faced with the difficulties in conquering this new land. And that's the key to do the impossible loved ones; it's remembering what God has done for each and every one of us in the past.

So let me finish by asking, [are you willing to be like the priests to take that first step out in faith into the waters of baptism? Are you willing to step out in faith first into His kingdom to show that you trust Him?](#)

If you're willing, Jesus is willing and more than able to accept you just as you are and then go on to help you through any and every situation you might find yourself in. You can't make it on your own that is why He promises you the gift of the Holy Spirit to help you. Let me encourage you to step out in faith today and trust the God who doesn't know the limits of the word impossible.