

Celebrate!

At the beginning of the book of Joshua, the people of God are facing pressure as they continue to journey in pursuit of God's calling to a new place. This time they reach the Jordan river – a huge obstacle, that appears un-crossable. In Ch 3-4 we read how as they followed the presence of God toward this overwhelming place the circumstances changed – the water parted, and they passed through to the other side!

Notice how God prompts his people to **stop and reflect** on what he has done – on how he has led them forward. They gather stones a build a cairn, stones of **remembrance and celebration**. Stones that speak of how God is with them, and that in the future will be stones for others to see and celebrate the endless faithful presence of God in the journey, and his power to act and provide and enable every generation to follow him!

Joshua 4

¹⁹On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. ²⁰And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. ²¹He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, '**What do these stones mean?**' ²²tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' ²³For 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^[b] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. ²⁴**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.**"

Look back at how you have followed Jesus Christ over the years. Consider specific moments of change and challenge and how these impacted your faith journey.

Stop to give thanks to God for how he:

- has been present with you
- showed you how to navigate the journey
- given you others with whom to travel
- shaped and transformed you through those experiences
- given you stories of faith to share with others

What challenges and changes have 'your church', or the circuit experienced over the years? As you look back have there been specific moments when the life of the church has been 'hard', when difficult decision had to be made, or when the church was struggling?

Pause to reflect upon

- How God led your church through those times?
- What you celebrate about him as he has 'led you on'

What words would you use as prayers of thankfulness?

Write them down, tear the paper up, scrunch up the words and build a little cairn to remind you of 'hand of the Lord is powerful'!

Lament & grapple as we journey with God

Psalm 42

¹As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.

²I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I go and stand before him?

³Day and night I have only tears for food,
while my enemies continually taunt me, saying,
"Where is this God of yours?"

⁴My heart is breaking
as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of worshipers,
leading a great procession to the house of God,
singing for joy and giving thanks
amid the sound of a great celebration!

⁵Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Saviour and ⁶my God!

Now I am deeply discouraged,
but I will remember you —
even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan,
from the land of Mount Mizar.

⁷I hear the tumult of the raging seas
as your waves and surging tides sweep over me.

⁸But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me,
and through each night I sing his songs,
praying to God who gives me life.

⁹"O God my rock," I cry,

"Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I wander around in grief,
oppressed by my enemies?"

¹⁰Their taunts break my bones.

They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?"

¹¹Why am I discouraged?

Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again—
my Saviour and my God!

Shape your own Psalm (song) of lament to God: notice the different sections in this Psalm (by colour)

- Longing: What do you long for in your faith just now - from God?
- Lament: Express honestly to God your emotions and burdens - sadness, loss, cares, anger, questions, hurt, fear...
- God: Note down something you believe to be true about God's character and Jesus' power in your life (However cautious, stuttering or doubtful you may feel!)
- Faith: Offer a simple phrase of faith to conclude your Psalm

Write more Psalms! (they don't have to 'lament' but they do offer a way to 'talk out' your faith, both in good and not so good times)

HOPE! 'All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it' - 1 Corinthians 12:27

One Body with Many Parts

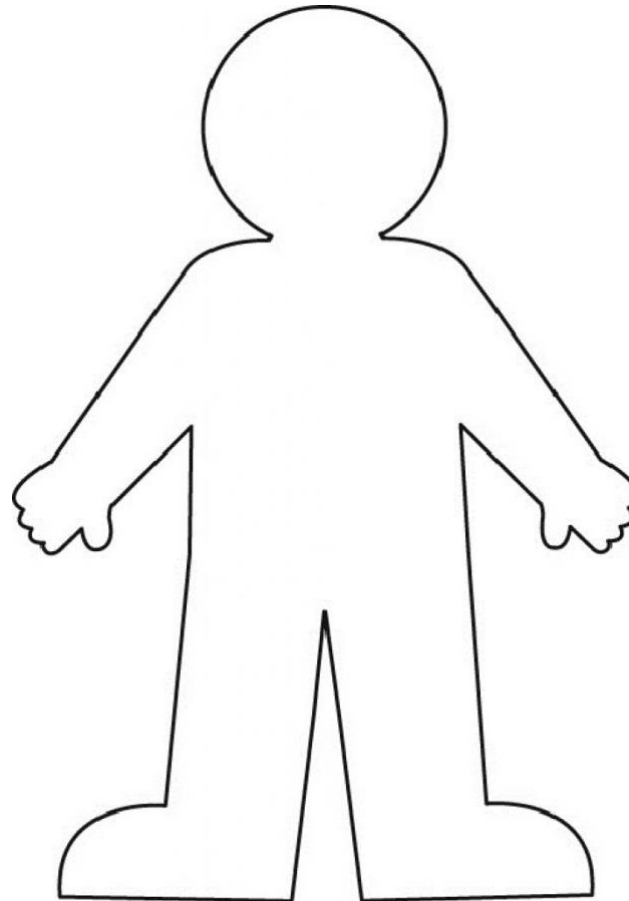
¹²The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,^[6] some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.^[7]

¹⁴Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

¹⁸But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

²²In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³And the parts we regard as

less honourable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴while the more honourable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honour and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad.²⁷ **All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.** ²⁸Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership.



- **Write your name** on the body outline, then add words that describe your giftedness – 'encourager', pray-er', coffee maker, befriender, preacher, listener
- **Pause to reflect:** What 'part' is God prompting you to play in the life of the church or circuit at present? Is it something new, is it time to stop playing one part, and take up another...