**Joshua 3:1-17**

*Take the Next Step*

Introduction:

1. For forty years there was no next step for Israel
2. Progress stagnates when disobedience reigns

Transition: How to get from here to there (four steps of preparation/one step of action)

1. The first step of preparation engages our sight (vv. 1-4)
   1. Faith is non-existent without focus upon the Lord
      1. The ark of the Lord represented His presence with them
      2. God’s Spirit will guide, but we must follow
   2. There is a way that leads to unchartered territory (v. 4)
      1. For the Israelites it passed through the Jordan and into walled, fortified cities
      2. For us the way leads through both milestones and ordinariness of life
2. The second step of preparation engages our heart (vv. 5,6)
   1. God commanded His people to consecrate themselves for the wonders that lay ahead
   2. The Lord’s people could not walk in faith while yet entangled with the world
   3. God yet calls His people to set ourselves apart for the next step of the journey- “Be holy, for I am holy”)
3. The third step of preparation engages our will (vv. 7,8)
   1. Someone has to take the first step of faith
   2. The Lord commanded the priests to take a step into the swelling waters of the Jordan
   3. The first step is the most important step because without it you can’t take any other steps
      * 1. Illustration: My first step in asking Shyre on a date (without that first step, none of the succeeding steps could have followed)
4. The fourth step of preparation engages our hands (vv. 9-13)
   1. Before Israel could possess the promised land, they first had to prepare to dispossess the evil inhabitants of the land
   2. It is impossible to claim the blessings of God w/o first kicking out what hinders us from taking possession of them
5. The one step of action engages our feet (vv. 14-17)
   1. God’s people stepped across in faith and they didn’t stop stepping until everyone made it across the Jordan
   2. The way is made clear by the Lord Himself when we step forward in obedience
   3. Faith on our part is amazed by what the Lord does, but never surprised by what the Lord does

Conclusion/Invitation: Someone has to lead

1. Joshua (exalted by God- v.7); the Levitical priests (walking first w/ the Lord- v.6); a man chosen from each of the twelve tribes (chosen- v. 12)
2. Will you lead out in taking a first step of faith? (Your family, your class, your church)