

NOTES FOR SPEAKING

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date & Time: 23/10/11 10.30am

Title: Crossing Over

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Introduction

What I am going to share with you this morning in one sense has been brewing ever since I took over leadership of Freshwaters, but actually only crystallised through the summer. Let's read from [Joshua chapter 1](#).

Poised to enter the Promised Land

This passage refers to a time when the people of Israel were poised on the east of the Jordan River before they entered into the Promised Land. Moses had led the people to this point east of the Jordan and they had been there for quite some time, but now the Lord spoke to Joshua and said it's time, lead this people over the Jordan into the Promised Land. The Lord encourages Joshua to lead the people with strength and courage and as it says at the end of [verse 9](#) '**do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**'

I believe that the A 414 is the Jordan River for us as a fellowship and I believe that the Lord is saying to us it's now time to rise up and cross the Jordan and enter into your Promised Land.

The tribes of Israel stopped east of the Jordan before entering into the Promised Land. It was never meant to be a permanent dwelling place but was a staging post to prepare the people to enter the land.

I believe that Freshwaters has not yet entered its promised land. Time and time again since taking over the leadership of the Fellowship I have felt that we have been called to the New Town, but somehow the time hadn't been right or the opportunity had not arisen. **I think I placed too much emphasis on a meeting place and not enough on the land and the people we are called to reach.**

I was challenged about this through a conversation with another Christian leader in the town, I felt that the Lord was saying that my heart and my calling and that of the Fellowship was more to the challenges and opportunities of the communities found more readily in the new town rather than primarily to those in Old Harlow. This does not mean at all that God does not have a heart for the people of Old Harlow, I passionately believe He does and that He will continue to work within this community through the excellent ministry of the churches who are called to minister here, particularly Harlow Baptist Church and St Mary's Churchgate Street that we have good relationships with. **However we need to be where the Lord is calling us.**

It's time to Cross Over!

While at Grapevine this year I felt the Lord was saying now is the time for us to cross our Jordan, to move from our temporary stopping place to our permanent home – that it is time for Freshwaters to move into the new town.

From comfort to calling

There are many reasons why it would be nice to stay 'East of the Jordan' as there were for Israel. For Israel they had established homes, planted crops, gathered herds and were living in relative security – why would they leave all of that behind to enter a land where they had no homes, where they would have to fight and drive out the enemy. For us we have a nice building to meet in with good relationships with the ARC staff and management committee. We have good relationships

with the other churches and have a degree of success with Kidz Klub, Revelation and work in Mark Hall. Why do we need to move to the New Town?

Well for us as for Israel, the only reason would be if that is where the Lord is calling us. If the question is 'where are you most comfortable' then maybe we would stay where we are. If the question is what would be easiest? Then we would stay where we are, but the real question is, where is the Lord leading us? What is our promised land? Now I believe that the New Town is the Promised Land for Freshwaters.

Now I recognise that this would be a difficult step to make for many – it was difficult for Israel and indeed 2 ½ tribes decided to settle rather than move into the Promised Land, and it may be that there will be those in Freshwaters who would prefer to settle rather than to rise up for a new challenge.

We would be taking a big risk, letting go of something we have to reach out for something that we can only see by faith. I think the Lord has already spoken to us about risk during the last year, that it spells our faith! – Now is the time to put it into practice!

I believe that if we settle where we are then Freshwaters will never fulfil its full potential. We may be able to maintain what we have, but are we really just about maintenance? I feel like I have just been maintaining and trying to preserve what was passed to me by Phil, but I know there is something more and I think it is time to rise up and to pioneer something new. My personal challenge is to lead rather than just to manage, but I believe the Lord called me to be the leader of Freshwaters and not just its manager.

I believe that there are a number within the Fellowship who are also fed-up with maintenance. Some of you are ready for an adventure and even for a fight. I talked recently on a Sunday morning about rising to meet our destinies, I believe that moving to the New Town is our destiny as a Fellowship and that it will provide a context for us all to stretch ourselves to take hold of in faith something beyond our grasp.

At the prophetic vision group without knowing anything about our potential move Graham shared about going in and taking the land – he said 'are we willing to cross to take the promised land or are we wanting to settle'.

That is the question for us all this morning – are we willing, are we ready.

Leaders consideration

Since Grapevine I have talked with the Leadership Team about what I felt the Lord was saying. After talking and praying about this over a number of weeks we have agreed that we should respond to what we believe the Lord is saying and move on to communicating with the whole fellowship.

Not abandoning people who live in Old Harlow.

Now I just want to be clear about a few things that I am not saying. **I am not saying that we are no longer interested in people who live in Old Harlow.** If you live in Old Harlow we hope and pray that you will want to remain with us as we cross the 'Jordan' and we will do everything we can to enable this. As for many years folk living in the New Town have happily worshipped here we hope you will join us as we move.

We also hope that other people from Old Harlow will join us in the years ahead.

We are also not saying that we will break our connections with Harlow Baptist Church and St Mary's Churchgate Street. We have built up good relationships and I believe this puts us in a good position to move to the new town and continue with good relationships, perhaps building more of a bridge between the Old and New town. You will remember that 2 ½ tribes stayed east of the Jordan

but remained part of the nation of Israel. There is one body of Christ in Harlow and we will want to continue in Fellowship and work together with churches throughout Harlow. Of course as our focus changes to the other side of the A414 some things will change, but we hope and pray that our good relationships will continue.

I am also not saying that we will abandon our work with Mark Hall. Mark Hall draws young people from both sides of the A414 and the Lord has given us favour in the School – we will want to continue building upon this in the coming years, wherever we may be in the town.

Details, Details, Who needs details?

Now I am sure that there will be a number of questions that are going through your mind, like where, what, when and how.

Go and as you go receive

Well to a large extent these questions are still to be answered but as Abraham was called to leave his home town without knowing where the Lord would take him, it took faith to go, but as he went the Lord revealed. We are not coming to you this morning with all the details sorted out because we don't believe the Lord has yet revealed those details. We believe that as we are obedient to what the Lord is saying, acting upon His word, then He will reveal to us more and more of those details.

We would like you to join us in praying and sharing what you believe the Lord may be saying. We want those with prophetic gifting to be praying over the New Town and asking the Lord to speak, in fact we want the whole fellowship to pray and seek the Lord and share with us what you believe the Lord may be saying.

The first opportunity for you to feedback to us will be next Sunday morning, we will be finishing the meeting slightly earlier than usual and will be sharing a meal together afterwards during which we will have groups that can give feedback and ask any questions.

Not just what we have transplanted

One of the big issues is that often we can only see what we have experienced so far. So when we talk about moving we think about taking exactly what we have now and planting it into another building somewhere in the New Town. Neither I nor the leadership team believe that this is all the Lord is saying. We need to be open to the shape of the Fellowship as we cross over. Yes there will be a place for Sunday gathering and worship, but there will also be other gathering places and times which may be very different.

During the SEERS meeting Helen had a picture of lots of balloons which together formed one big balloon that carried a basket high into the air. Each balloon is distinct and can fly, but the effectiveness is multiplied as it joins with all of the other balloons moving in the same overall direction.

I believe that the Lord has planted a vision in the hearts of his people in Freshwaters that will see a range of expressions of church coming together under the overall leadership of Freshwaters. What's God put in your heart? maybe it is time to take this forward from thoughts and dreams to action. Please don't come to me just with visions for other people to fulfil – what are the dreams and visions God has put in your heart that we can help you to fulfil.

In terms of when, there will be different things at different times. In a sense it starts now as we prepare and pray – as Joshua communicated to the people in **v 10 & 11** I am saying get ready, prepare to move.

What I believe is that the remaining months of this year will see us preparing, partly by taking in the implications of moving and partly by prayer and the prophetic to seek God's guidance and strategy to take the land. As Joshua sent spies to check our Jericho we need to send people to pray around

the New Town and to discern what is going on. We will want to talk to other churches and see how we can work with them. We also need to pray that the Lord will go before us and prepare the way.

I believe that as we enter the New Year we will make a significant move of some sort – and will see us beginning to work in the New Town.

I just want to share with you a few things that were shared at the SEERS prophetic group that I believe are of relevance.

We talked about sculptures in the town, some of which have links to freemasonry or other forms of enemy activity; we recognised that as the Lord leads us we may need to pray about these things declaring the authority of God. Joshua knew that there were enemies in the land that would need to be driven out – we need to be aware that we will face spiritual enemies as we move but the Lord will give us victory.

Barbara shared about the sculpture of the family group which a couple of times had been decapitated and linked this to the undermining of the authority of family life in our town. We will need to fight for what we believe in, including the importance of family in community life, we are not just driving something out and leaving a vacuum, we are establishing something better in its place!

Go for something more!

The SEERS group spent some time praying over a prophecy which Sharon Stone proclaimed over Harlow. She spoke particularly about the period running up to the Olympics and spoke about casting the net over the other side of the boat, the result of this would see fish leaping into the nets, to such an extent that the Worlds media who will be focussed on the UK because of the Olympics would begin to broadcast what God is doing in our town. We have spent many years casting our net over this side of the A414 but seeing very little response, it's now time for us to cast our net on the other side with an expectation of fruitfulness – the same fruitfulness promised to the Israelite as the Lord described the promised land as a 'land flowing with milk and honey'.

Another picture that emerged from the SEERS group was breaking through a bubble or membrane that limited our ability interact with the outside world – this is our chance to break through.

When I spoke a little while back I asked how many believed that 'there must be more than this!' Well now I want to declare there is, we don't have all of the details but what we do have is a clear command, it's time to rise up and cross over. Life will be different on the other side, there will be more challenges and opportunities, but as there was a place for every tribe there is a place for each of us and the vision the Lord has given to us.

For some the idea of moving may be exciting, for others frightening, but I promise you it won't be boring. I'm going; I hope and pray that you will all join me.