

Aug 4, 07 VBS

A Wild Ride Through God's Word

This past week has been an adventure in VBS. We've seen how a woman helped save spies from sure death. We've crossed the Jordan river as we watched God part the Jordan River. We marched around Jericho for 6 days, and on the 7th day, on the 7th time around the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. We then took time from that journey to mourn the passing of a good friend, who was in a tomb for 3 days before his resurrection. Finally, we journeyed to the Jordan River again where we watched a man get cured of his dreadful disease. It was a rough road this week, with many twists and turns, yet in the end our journey brought many of the kids, and hopefully the helpers a little bit closer to God. You see, this wild ride through God's Word helped us understand 5 things about our God. First, **God is real.** Second, **God is with us.** Third, **God is strong.** Fourth, **God is awesome.** Finally, **God is in charge.**

You know, those 5 points about God are not just for the little ones who attended VBS. No! I believe we can all learn from taking a wild ride through God's word ourselves. It was an awesome experience to say the least. So sit back in your pews while for the next few minutes we take a wild ride through God's Word so that we can learn more about this awesome God that we follow.

The first thing about God is that **God is real. (Wah-hoo)** I remember reading some place that in order to catch fake money people have to spend years studying the real money. You see, once you know what the real money feels and looks like, well you can spot a phony pretty quickly. Jeremiah 10:10 says, “The Lord is the only true God.”

When the Hebrew nation went into the Promise Land they encountered one false god after another. That is why God gave them the 10 Commandments for one of them says, ‘you can’t worship any other god than the true God of all gods.’ The Babylonians had their gods. The Assyrians had their gods. The Romans had many gods. So you see there are other gods. Pharaoh was suppose to be a god. Why in Japan during WW II it was said that the emperor was god on this earth. He certainly found out that wasn’t true. Some people believe gods are in nature, in the trees. For some, gods are everywhere, like in the ocean, in bunkers on the golf course. They certainly aren’t the true gods though. There is only one true God that brought things into creation. “I Am” is the true God of all Christians. There is only one true God that knit you together in your mother’s womb. There is only one true God who formed a group of people he called out of Egypt and told them He would be their God, and they would be his people. There is only one true God who loved us enough to send his Son to die on the cross for our sins.

You may not know about Rahab, but she found out who the only true God was. She lived in Jericho and she really wasn't a religious person. We'll just say most of her friends were men. She didn't think anything about worshipping any gods. And if she did, why, she worshipped the gods that were in her own town. When the spies went into the Promise Land to scope it out, they were caught in one of the cities. Well this lady of the night saw them try and hide from her country men. They told her if she protected them now, they would protect her later when they invaded the land. They told her that their God, the true God of all Gods was going to give this town to his people, so if she would help them, they would make sure she would be saved. Well to make a long story short, she hid the spies until her own people were gone and then she let them escape. Later on, when the Hebrews attacked the city, the two spies remembered Rahab and their promise to her and she was saved. To show you how much she was transformed we read in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab."

Next we learn that **God is with us. (Wah-Hoo)** Joshua 1:9 says, "For the Lord God is with you wherever you go." The prophet Isaiah writes, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God."

Joshua and his people found that out when they were getting ready to go into the Promise Land. Moses is no longer around and Joshua is in charge. God gave

him his marching orders and told him not to fear because he would be with them. His job was to take them into the Promise Land and secure it for God. Joshua had already known that, because over 40 years before, almost at the same spot, Joshua and Caleb were part of the 12 spies that checked out the Promise Land. While the other 10 told of giants too big to overcome, they said because God was with them, that their God was strong, that their God was an awesome God, that their God was in charge they could overcome any enemy. Well they lost the election and in God's anger he had them march in the wilderness for 40 years until those who defied his word were no longer alive. So now Joshua and the 700,000 or more people who had been wandering for 40 years stand at the river's edge wondering how they would get across. Joshua knew. The Priests carrying the ark were to stand in the water and when they did, the Jordan River would part, just like what happened to the Red Sea when Moses held out his staff. And sure enough, when the priests stood in the water carrying the ark, the waters parted and the ground became dry and they passed from one side to the other. God was surely with them. And to remember this event, and to remember God was with them, a member from each of the 12 tribes took a rock from the middle of the river and they made a monument on the Promise Land side so that when they, or others who saw it, they would remember God was with them and that he parted the Jordan River and led his people to the Promised Land.

Next we need to remember that **God is strong. (Wah-hoo)** Psalm 118:14 states, “The Lord is my strength.” When we think of the 3 pigs children story we think of the wolf that huffed and puffed until he blew the houses down of 2 of the pigs. But when he tried it at the third pigs house he huffed and he puffed until he was blue in the face and he collapsed because he ran out of air. He wasn’t so strong after all. Our example from God’s Word once more is Joshua. They are now in the Promise Land and they have come to the first city they needed to overcome. That city was Jericho. It was a walled city and pretty well protected. The enemy was behind it. God instructed Joshua that they were to march around the city one time for 6 days, and on the 7th day they were to march 7 times and blow their trumpets and the walls would come tumbling down and God would deliver their enemies into their hands.

You see, God was teaching his children to depend on him, that he was stronger than any walls that were built. I’m sure the enemy looked at the Hebrew army and realized their army was kind of weak. But it wasn’t their might that was at stake, it was Gods. The battle was and is the Lords, and nothing could stop him from tearing down the walls. And if he could do it here, then he could do it anywhere.

Here is a little ditty the VBS class learned as they faced the walls of Jericho and marched around it. “Ain’t no need to cry or frown... Jericho is coming down.

We don't fear a spear or sword.... 'Cause we're marching for the Lord." Will you try that ditty with me?

You know, many other walls might come down as well. You see, as people sometimes we build walls. Some of those walls are very hurtful. Some of those walls are so big you can't see over them any more. And sometimes there are people who add more bricks and build bigger walls because they don't want to deal with someone, or even deal with God. The thing we learned is this. Our God is stronger than any wall. If we allow him, and trust him, not only is our God real, not only is our God with us, but he is strong. We don't have to fear the enemy, because God is stronger than any enemy we face.

Next we found out **God is awesome. (Wah-hoo)** Psalm 47:2 states, "For the Lord Most High is awesome." There is a chorus that says, "Our God is an awesome God; he reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power and love, our God is an awesome God."

Our Biblical example is the death and resurrection of Jesus. You see, we learned how much God loved us. Who could get through Vacation Bible School without realizing that Jesus love you. And we here today could never get through our own lives without knowing that Jesus loves us. You see, he loved us so much he gave us his son. It's that simple story of Jesus going to the cross so that we might know his love, his forgiveness and his grace.

You see, how awesome he is? He is so awesome that before we were even born his son died for us. Though that was a tough time, and Jesus had to suffer many things on the cross, and on the way to the cross, the one thing we know is this...he did it out of love. He didn't do it for himself. He did it for his Father. He did it for me, and he did it for you. That tells me that his love was awesome.

And here is something we never should forget. And that is this...forgiveness is only a breath away for when we tell God we are sorry for failing him or for sinning against him, we hear those wonderful words, "my child, you are forgiven." How do I know that? Because the apostle John wrote a letter to the church to tell us how awesome our God is. And in that letter he writes, "If you confess your sins, God will forgive you." "But you don't know what I've done and how often I've done it," you might say. I don't need to know, because God already knows what you've done. He knows what separates you from him. And he knows the only way to bridge that break is the cross on which Jesus died. It's just asking God to forgive you. And folks, that's the whole gospel in a nutshell. The Good News of the Gospel is this.... John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him will have everlasting life."

That my friends, tells me how awesome a God we serve.

Finally, **God is in charge. (Wah-hoo)** John 14:15 states, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” Our Bible illustration is one you know for I preached about him a few weeks ago. Let me refresh your memory. There was a guy from another country who had a terrible disease called leprosy. He came to Israel to see what a prophet named Elisha could do for him. When he got there he was told to go to the Jordan river, the same river the Israelites crossed way back when they were led by Joshua. He was told to dip 7 times in that river and he would be cured. But he didn’t want to do it. You see, being the general of the army he gave the orders to do this or do that. He commanded his troops to move out into battle and they would obey. He was in charge and when he spoke, people listened and obeyed. So it was a struggle for him to know that with this disease he wasn’t in charge. He could see the disease, yet he could not control it. He could call for his medics and demand they do something for him, but he could not command a cure. Even when he came to Elisha the prophet he just was waiting for the spoken words, “you are healed,” but they never came. Instead he heard from Elisha’s servant that he needed to go to the crummy Jordan River and dip himself 7 times. Well, if you remember he didn’t want to do that because he had nicer, cleaner rivers where he came from. But because his servant talked him into it, he dipped the 7 times and was healed. What Naaman learned was that he was not in charge, nor was Elisha in charge. God was in charge. And when God deemed the time

was right, he would be healed. The time for healing was not in the first dip nor the second, nor the third or fourth or fifth or sixth. God said it would not happen until the 7th dip. And when Naaman came up from the 7th dip, sure enough he was cleansed. Folks, our God is an awesome God!

We need to realize our God is in charge of everything, after all he created all things. He could have healed him on the first dip, or the second dip, or the third, or fourth, or even the fifth or sixth. But God chose not to. You see with each dip Naaman had to exercise his faith in a God he did not know. He could have given up and thought it was hopeless, and he may have come to that point after the sixth dip. But it was that one last dip that made a difference in his wellness and his faith. On that 7th dip he was cured. Nothing else changed. There was no new water, but the same old water. The only thing that changed was he had to dip the 7th time. God was in charge of his healing.

What we learn is that God wants us to love and trust him and to know he is in charge. That's why we have his word in the Bible, all those stories that remind us that God is still in charge. Sometimes when lots of stuff happens we can't understand we begin to wonder who is in charge. With all the crime, all the immorality, all the evil that goes on, we wonder if anyone is in charge. When things like that bridge falling in Minnesota, hurricanes that destroy homes and peoples lives, God is still in charge. When fires and tornadoes hit and people loose

everything, God is still in charge. He will always be in charge. Satan may think he is in charge. He may laugh in the face of God when this happens, but God just puts up his hands and tells Satan, “you’ve given it your best, but I am still in charge.”

So let me wrap this wild ride through God’s word up for today.

First, as I said, **God is real.** (Wah-hoo) We don’t have to go to VBS to understand that. All you have to do is look around at all the things in creation and you know God is real. We see all those answers to prayers and we know God is real. We serve the one true God who loves us, the one who comes after us and wants to provide for us.

Second, **God is with us.** (Wah-hoo) Man, what a great thought. You see, no matter what we face, or what danger we find ourselves in, God is with us. And if God is with us we have nothing to fear.

Third, **God is strong.** (Wah-hoo) I mean if storms and winds cease at the mention of his name, and if seas and rivers can be parted by using his name than he must be strong. He is so strong that he can tare down any wall you build with just one blink of his eye, or movement of his hands. God is so strong, nothing, nor anyone can stand against him.

Fourth, **God is awesome.** (Wah-hoo) Man, he is so awesome that he does things for us that we don’t even know he does. He helps us even though we don’t

see his handiwork. He is so awesome that he just reaches out and opens windows and doors for us to walk through so that we can be safe and find safety in our walk with him.

Finally, **God is in charge. (Wah-hoo)** Knowing that and trying to live that is the difficult part. You see, knowing and allowing God to be in charge frees me, frees you to be who you are. You see, we are his children saved by the Grace of God.

So I don't know about you, but knowing that God is real, that he is with us, that he is strong, that he is awesome, and that he is in charge, brings me hope and comfort for today, for tomorrow, and for the rest of my life right into eternity. You see, these things remind me that I can trust in my God every day. You see, God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.

I hope these brief words have helped you today to know God's great love for you as well. You see, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong they are weak, but he is strong. Yes Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me the Bible tells me so." Would you sing that song with me.....?