

Victory by Submission to God

STUDY TEXT: Joshua 6:1-27

PRINTED TEXT: Joshua 6:1-5, 15-17, 19-21, 24

Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

2 And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

15 It came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.

17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

19 All the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

24 They burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

BIBLE FOCUS: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
—Proverbs 3:5, 6



Lesson Objective

To realize we can overcome life's greatest challenges by submitting to God's plan and obey His instruction.

Central Truth

Victorious Christian living results from obedience to God's Word.

Evangelism Emphasis

Christians are to obey God's command to witness to the lost.

Lesson Outline

1. An Unusual Battle Plan. Joshua 6:1-7
2. An Obedient People. Joshua 6:8-19
3. A Victorious Outcome. Joshua 6:20-27

Study Helps for the Lesson

Clarifying the Text

Joshua 6:1 – “Now **Jericho** was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.” Jericho was a walled city about five miles west of the Jordan River. It was the most important city in the Jordan valley (Numbers 22:1; 34:15) and had the strongest fortress in the land of Canaan. It was the key to western Palestine.

Joshua 6:4 – “Seven priests shall bear before the ark seven **trumpets of rams' horns**: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.” A great variety of trumpets were used in the Old Testament, and they were made of diverse materials. Some were made of silver or other metals, but the ones mentioned here were made of rams' horns. Trumpets were blown at special festivals and to herald the arrival of special seasons.

Joshua 6:9 (not in **Printed Text**) – “The armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the **rearward** came after the ark...” The “rearward” meant the troops in the rear of an army on the march, or what might be called the rearguard.

Joshua 6:17 – “The city shall be **accursed**, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.” The word “accursed” is the same as the word “anathema.”

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These words convey the idea that something is morally worthless and is devoted to destruction.

Joshua 6:19 – “*All the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.*” This word means “devoted or set apart for the worship or service of God.”

Joshua 6:20 – “*...The people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city...*” Without an assault by any military or weapon, the walls fell down.

Historical Background

The children of Israel had lived for 400 years in bondage to the Egyptians. Then God sent them Moses, who led them to freedom. Through the leadership of Moses, God successfully brought them out of Egypt. Unfortunately, they heeded a bad report given by 10 spies who had gone into Canaan on orders from Moses. The people responded in fear rather than faith and decided they could not overcome the inhabitants of their Promised Land. Because of their unbelief, God had them wander in the wilderness for 40 years. During that time, most of the adult population who had come out of Egypt died. Before they entered the land of Canaan, Moses also died. Joshua, who had been set in leadership by God and Moses, heeded the instructions of his Commander in Chief and led the Israelites across the Jordan River, even though it was at flood stage. The lesson begins today with the Israelites poised outside the gates of the fortified city of Jericho.

Literary Background

Because there is frequent use of the pronouns “we” and “us,” it must be presumed that the author of the events of today’s lesson and, indeed, the whole book of Joshua was an eyewitness. This is supported by the fact that he mentioned many small details about the encounter that may not have been passed along if he had only heard someone else recount the story. The recorded stories were most likely edited and published in their final form after the death of Joshua.

Plan Ahead

☐ **SUPPLIES/EQUIPMENT:** You will need equipment to produce visual images for your students. An overhead projector would be ideal for using the overheads found in the *Adult Teaching Resource Packet*, but copies of the pages can be made to give to the students. You will also need a chalkboard, marker board, or flip chart to use while teaching. You and your students need Bibles and pens or pencils. Don’t forget chalk or marker pens.

☐ **RESOURCES:** For **Introducing the Lesson**, you will need to consult history books or the Internet in order to research previous wars or battles. In addition, prepare the teaching materials for this lesson provided in the *Adult Teaching Resource Packet*.

Introducing the Lesson

To introduce the lesson today, talk to the students about some miraculous events that have helped change the course of a war. To do this, you may have to familiarize yourself with some of the history of that event. For example, you can read how the decision of George Washington to cross the Delaware River in the dead of a winter’s night changed the course of the American Revolution. Or you can share many of the miraculous events that occurred in the Six Day War of 1967 when, in the face of unbelievable odds, the insignificant country of Israel defeated four powerful enemies in six short days! After discussing one of these historic events, **say:** This is similar to what happened in the lesson we are studying today. Against unbelievable odds and with a most unusual battle plan, the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua conquered the city of Jericho.

☐ **OVERHEAD:** Use the Overhead Transparency from the *Adult Teaching Resource Packet* to highlight points of the **Lesson Outline** as they are discussed.

The Power of the Word



1. An Unusual Battle Plan (Joshua 6:1-7)

COMMENTARY

a. Assessing the Problem – Joshua 6:1-4. “*Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in*” (v. 1).

After crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites set up camp in Gilgal. Immediately, God started preparing them for their coming battles. One of the first steps was circumcision (Joshua 5:2-8). The external rite of circumcision was to symbolize an internal change and the state of being set apart for God. The Jewish men were circumcised at this time because all the men of war had died in the wilderness after coming out of Egyptian bondage, and none had been circumcised during the 40 years of wandering through the wilderness. Joshua used the time during their healing from the circumcision to assess the problem of capturing the city of Jericho.

Unit 1: Joshua and Judges

The gates of the city were shut, and the inhabitants had prepared for a long period of siege. Because it had its own natural flowing springs and many granaries filled with food supplies, the people of Jericho felt they could live within its protective walls for a long period of time. They feared the Israelites, but they felt some measure of security because they had made preparation for encounters like this.

While Joshua was on a reconnaissance mission, determining how to penetrate the walls of the city, he was met by a “man” with a drawn sword. Astonished, Joshua asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” Many Bible scholars believe this “man” was Christ. He answered, “Neither... but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come” (Joshua 5:13, 14, NIV). “God manifested his presence [here] not as a mere ally but as their leader. It was *his* war, for the iniquity of the Amorites was now full; and the Israelites were only a division of his great army, along with his angels and forces of nature.”¹

When we face a situation or a problem that seems enormous, one of the first steps we should take is to make sure that all is well internally (in our spirits) by asking questions. Is there unforgiven sin in my life? (Nehemiah 13:22) How is my attitude? (Psalm 139:23) Do I have unforgiveness toward anyone? (Mark 11:25) In reality, this is a checkup we should give ourselves daily, since problems come on a regular basis.

b. Planning the Strategy – Joshua 6:5. “*It shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*”

Whether it was at this same meeting with Joshua or later, God gave Joshua a plan, and Joshua had enough wisdom to scratch any plans he had made and to go with God’s. God’s plan was unheard of, untried, illogical, and unbelievable, but it was perfect! His plan was that the people would walk silently around the city once each day for six days. They would follow behind armed men, seven priests who would blow seven trumpets made from the horns of rams, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant, and a rear-guard who followed the Ark.

On the seventh day, they would march around the city seven times, and when the trumpeters gave the sound, everyone would shout with a loud voice. They could then expect God to fulfill His promise and give them the city. “Militarily, Josh-

ua and Israel [had] to conquer this strong point and quickly establish control of the passes. Delay could be fatal to the conquest.”² Fortunately, God knew how to take the city quickly and easily and without any hurt or loss to the children of Israel. His plan, as always, was the best!

God does not always lead us in ways that seem natural or normal to us. He answers our prayers, but often not in the way we think He should. Fortunately, God sees the big picture. He knows the destiny He has for our lives from beginning to end. He knows the future. Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for our good, not necessarily our momentary pleasure or desire, but as *The Amplified Bible* puts it, “...*All things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.*” God has a plan and, as it always is, His is the best plan for our lives!

c. Executing the Plan – Joshua 6:6 (not in **Printed Text**). “*And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD.*”

Joshua shared the information about the strategy with the people. Everyone had to learn the plan in order to know what to do. Communication must have been an imposing matter: getting the word out to 2 million people without the aid of radio, TV, or even microphones was a formidable task. Even with all our modern communication systems, getting the word out to 2 million people to meet together in one place to carry out an assignment would be an enormous undertaking.

It’s still that way today. God wills for everyone to know his Father and live with Him one day in heaven. But how will everyone get word of the Plan? When Jesus said, “...*Ye shall be witnesses unto me...*” (Acts 1:8), He was indicating that everyone who gets the word has to pass it along. That’s why we should inform our families, tell our neighbors, go on mission trips, support evangelists and missionaries, and be diligent to spread the gospel – so that all will know the plan. Everyone needs to know.

The people were told they must march silently around Jericho once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they would march around the city seven times. “...The fact that Joshua’s army could march around the whole of Jericho seven times in one day suggests that it was a small place. Sir Charles Marston (*New Bible Evidence*) echoes

the reports of other archeologists when he says the whole circumference of the city was about 650 yards.”³ Yet though the circumference of the city was not as long as we might have imagined it to be, the walls of the city were imposing. The gate of the city was 54 feet x 24 feet, and ruins of the walls of that city which are still in existence today are 16 feet high: much too high to be scaled without serious injuries and possible loss of lives. But God’s plan eventually led them to walk across the walls.

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

□ **HANDOUT:** Give each student a copy of Hand-out A from the *Adult Teaching Resource Packet*, entitled “Emergency Broadcast System.” Divide the class into two teams to write the script for two competing news stations. Their goal is to communicate the plan for taking the city of Jericho. This exercise will take from 8 to 14 minutes.



2. An Obedient People (Joshua 6:8-19)

COMMENTARY

a. Following the Orders – Joshua 6:13, 14 (not in **Printed Text**). *“Seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rearward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets”* (v. 13).

God’s plan, as given to the people by Joshua, included everyone. It encompassed the priests, the armed men, the bearers of the sacred Ark, the older people, the youth, the women, and the children. It is significant that the Ark continued to be center stage in this offensive. The Ark represented God’s presence and acknowledged to the Israelites that Joshua was not going out on his own, but following the orders of God. The Ark is mentioned 10 times in this chapter.

Joshua set the plan in motion, and the people followed the strange orders he gave. Mutely they walked around the city for six days. In the Old Testament, the people were required to follow their God-given leaders without question. Today, we have the Holy Spirit to give us guidance when something seems out of the ordinary. Our role is to pray, ask the Holy Spirit to give us guidance, expect Him to do that, and then walk in the peace He gives. We are not to walk in the same old rut every day, but to realize that God does new things; He gives new ideas to His people.

Change is not bad, and everything and everyone but God changes. Methods change; they may not be the same as what we have always done, but God can improve them! We must get our marching orders, take our place in the line as God directs, and see what He has in store for us and for our fellowships.

b. Walking the Walk – Joshua 6:15. *“It came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.”*

The children of Israel listened to their leader; they got the word and acted on it. Around the city they marched, every day for six days. They set out early on the seventh day because the city must be compassed seven times. Surely anticipation was in their hearts, but maybe there was also some speculation about how this was to come about. But they marched silently. Could it be they were getting tired after about four times around? Were they apprehensive that some of the children would get fussy and start crying? Were they getting more excited each time they made a lap? Did most of the crowd realize what an astounding military achievement this would be? Did they wonder what effect their daily treks were having on the inhabitants of the city?

Often we have no idea how our obedient walk affects others. Nor do we stop to contemplate how our obedience (cooperation) with the plan of God brings the fulfillment of God’s promises and blessings to our lives. “Walking the walk” involves faithful meditation on God’s Word and faithful obedience to His commands. These are the keys to His blessings.

c. Anticipating the Victory – Joshua 6:16-19 (v. 18 not in **Printed Text**). *“All the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD”* (v. 19).

God planned to give the Israelites the spoil of the land, but He had one more test of obedience for them. As they anticipated the victory of the upcoming battle, perhaps they thought of the material goods that were housed in the city. After all, when the children of Israel made their exodus from Egypt, God had caused the Egyptians to give them gold, silver, and many precious treasures.

But in this instance, the instructions from God were clear: they were to destroy almost everything that was in the city. Rahab’s household (because she had aided the men when they came

Unit 1: Joshua and Judges

to spy on the city) and the silver, gold, brass, and iron were all that was to be saved. These material goods were to be set apart for the use of the Lord. “All who took any of these banned goods would themselves become infected and thus come under the same ban as the objects themselves (Deuteronomy 7:26). This ban and involuntary dedication is the flip side of the voluntary offering of Romans 12:1-2. Since the whole earth and all that is in it belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1), God has the right to reclaim it at any time.”⁴

Most of God’s people passed the test; the exception was a man named Achan (see Joshua 7). He became greedy and took for himself some of things that had been devoted to destruction and hid them in his tent. His actions caused 36 men of Israel to be killed in the battle following that of Jericho. He also caused his whole family and everything he had to be wiped out. It was a serious lesson on obedience. Anyone who thinks disobeying God is something to take lightly should contemplate the serious consequences that came to Achan and others because of his greed.

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

□ **ASK:** *Have you ever thought you had a problem facing you, when it turned out to be a problem within you?* Have the class discuss the kinds of problems that might fall into this category and how those problems can be overcome (e.g., maybe someone has thought another person was deliberately doing things to hurt him, but discovered it was a chip on his own shoulder or prejudice in his own mind that was causing the so-called problem). **Ask:** *How do your feelings of self-esteem (whether high or low) affect how you look at problems?* Give students time to discuss each feeling.

□ **DISCUSS** what it means to “walk the walk” and how that affects others. Let the class have a few moments to discuss what greed and disobedience brought to Achan and his family. **Ask:** *What effect does disobedience by one member of a family have on the rest of the family?* Possibilities for discussion may include adultery, drugs, other addictions, etc.



3. A Victorious Outcome (Joshua 6:20-27)

COMMENTARY

a. The Final Assault – Joshua 6:20. *“So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell*

down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.”

At the end of the seventh lap on the seventh day, the priests blew the trumpet, and the people shouted. It was victory time! The walls fell down, and the people ran into the city. They took it quickly. It was a great triumph and an unforgettable conquest. The door was now wide open to the Promised Land.

In the future, God’s people will hear another trumpet sound. This one is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52, 57. It will be victory time for all the saints of God. Every wall surrounding us will fall down, and we will enter the Eternal City. The door will be wide open to our Promised Land.

b. Remembering the Promise – Joshua 6:22 (not in **Printed Text**). *“Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot’s house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.”*

Because Rahab had hidden the spies Joshua sent to check out the situation in Jericho, she had been promised that she and her household would be saved. But the initial responsibility for her safety had been left to her. The spies had told her, “We can promise you safety, but only if you take responsibility for yourself. You must mark your dwelling place with the scarlet rope with which you let us down over the wall. And neither you nor anyone you want to be saved must be caught outside your house” (Joshua 2:17-21, paraphrased).

Joshua gave the two men who had served as spies the task of finding the right house and bringing Rahab and her family to a safe place. They brought her to a place outside the camp at Gilgal, and, just as she was promised, she and her family were saved. Rahab’s act of obedience to God gave her one of the most significant honors possible. “What the blood on the doorposts on the first Passover night in Egypt was to the houses of Israel, the scarlet cord in the window was to the house of Rahab. Her sinful years of ignorance God ignored (Acts 17:30, 31); she became an ancestress, as did Ruth, of David and of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 1:5, 6)”⁵

c. Enjoying the Victory – Joshua 6:27 (not in **Printed Text**). *“So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.”*

Unit 1: Joshua and Judges

The title of today's lesson is "Victory by Submission to God." Joshua and the Children of Israel won a strategic battle when they conquered the Canaan land simply by walking in obedience. The victory came not because of Joshua's military expertise in drawing up and executing a plan. It did not come because he had many highly trained soldiers; probably most of them had little or no training. It did not come because of their superior weapons. No, the victory they enjoyed came because they chose to walk in obedience.

Because they followed the Lord in His simple yet extraordinary orders, a great victory was accomplished, and the news of that victory permeated the land of Canaan. Our guidelines for obtaining victory are the same as theirs: surrender to the Lordship of Jesus and allow Him to work through us to overcome any obstacles or adversities we face. Acknowledge that He comes as the Commander in Chief of God's army to lead us to victory after victory. Know that without God, we will have no success.

TEACHING HINTS AND APPLICATION

□ **ASK:** *If Rahab saved her family by hanging a scarlet rope in clear view outside her house, what steps could we take to see that our families are saved?*

Discuss what it means to surrender to the Lordship of Christ and how that will bring victory into our lives.

□ **ASK:** *What do you think would have been the ending of the story if the leaders of the Israelite army had worked out their own military strategy and tried to execute it at Jericho? Would there have been injuries or casualties? What would have happened in further skirmishes if this victory had not been complete?*

Closing the Lesson

Close your lesson by assuring your class that, as part of God's army, they will be victorious if they keep their eyes on Jesus, their leader. Have them take a moment to pray and "hang the scarlet cord" around their families, praying for their sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters. □ **HANDOUT:** Give your students copies of the song "God's Got an Army," which is printed on Handout B in the *Adult Teaching Resource Packet*. Ask someone to lead you in singing it before you conclude your time together.

Looking Ahead

Next week we take a look at what happens when we fail to seek the counsel of God. We will see this happening in the lives of Joshua and the children of Israel. We will also find out what the costs and consequences of that action were. Finally, we will learn more about God's eternal faithfulness. Encourage the class to read chapters 9 and 10 of Joshua before the next class period. Remind them of the **Daily Bible Readings** found in the *Adult Student Guide*.



ENDNOTES

1. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1962, p. 212.
2. Jack W. Hayford, editor, *The Hayford Bible Handbook*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1995, p. 49.
3. *The Everyday Life Bible*, notes by Joyce Meyer, Warner Faith, New York, 2006, p. 344.
4. *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*, HarperSan-Francisco, San Francisco, 1989, p. 316.
5. *Ibid*, p. 338.