

*Get Ready!*

## The Walls Come Tumblin’ Down

By: Daniel Smead



### Text

Joshua 6:1-24

### Key Quest Verse

“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:57

### Bible Background

The Hebrew people had only recently entered the Promised Land, perhaps less than a month before our lesson text. That entry, in a miraculous river crossing, doubtless caused fear in their opponents. From the story of Rahab we know that there had already been great fear in the area about the coming of the Hebrews. The crossing of the Red Sea was still in their minds 40 years after the fact. The crossing of the Jordan mirrored the Red Sea event, punctuating the end of the wilderness wandering and emphasizing God’s willingness to act for the Hebrews’ success. Since their arrival in the land the people had been camped. They had spent time celebrating a Passover, and also recovering from the circumcision of many of their soldiers. That would have been the most vulnerable time for the Hebrew camp to be attacked, but it is hard to imagine God allowing an attack when the people were in the middle of renewing their relationship with their Lord. Now they were ready to begin to take the land God had promised. It seems like Joshua received his instructions for the conquest of Jericho during an experience with God near that city. This was to be the people’s first military encounter in the land, and the first after Moses’ death. It was not to be their first time being led into battle by Joshua, however, and God had already used the crossing of Jordan to build the people’s respect for Joshua. Probably there was great confidence in his leadership within the camp, and great confidence in God’s support.

We remember Jericho for its walls, but archaeology has suggested that these may not have been remarkable at that time for that area. Probably of more significance was the city’s location, and when the Hebrews reached it. It was important to defeat Jericho before moving on; simply to bypass Jericho would have been poor strategy. Yet Jericho was closed up (Josh. 6:1) perhaps having prepared itself to be besieged. God did not intend the Hebrews’ conquest of the land to begin with a long siege, but with a bold move. The dramatic fall of Jericho demonstrated that the Hebrews had been chosen to possess this area. Jericho may not have been more evil than many of the other cities in the land. Of course God directed the path the Hebrews took in entering the land, so maybe Jericho was particularly evil and it was made an example for that reason. Along with its dramatic defeat, a “ban” was put on all of the spoil of the city. Nothing was to be saved out of it to enrich the people of God, whether by taking people to be workers, or animals to be livestock, or other possessions.

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This showed that God did not intend for the conquerors to simply loot the vicinity and move on. Nor in moving in were they simply to use the current residents' wealth to make themselves great. They were there to stay, and God was going to enrich them by other means than from the labors of the idolatrous – they were to wipe out the dominant powers.

The idea of a “ban” (the committal of potential loot to destruction because of a deity), existed in other nations at this time as well. Perhaps the worshippers of idols saw this activity as a sacrifice given to their god, but that was not the view taught to the Hebrews. God’s people were only to sacrifice what cost them personally. When the very poor of Israel sacrificed, for example, they were not simply provided by their community with a “proper” sacrifice of “significant” value to give God at the altar. All people gave what they could, and to some extent how much you had determined how much you gave.

When the people burned a city, like Jericho, this was the people consciously surrendering any claim on the objects of value within it. They also were acknowledging God’s judgment that this place did not deserve to continue existing. Some of the objects within Jericho went to the treasury of God’s tabernacle, but nothing was to be used to enrich the nation. A ban was declared by God, and not by humans. It was a rare situation, and it called for self control on the people’s part. The idea was not always instituted cleanly, as was the case with Jericho – though the story of Achan is not part of our text. You could also consider King Saul’s failure to properly apply the ban at the defeat of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15).

Sometimes we are left wishing the Bible told us more about a subject, or wondering whether the connections we have drawn are accurate. We know that the priests’ trumpet call was established as a signal for some war-time events, to call for God’s favor (Num. 10:2, 8, 9). We can suppose it had some of that effect at Jericho. We know that rabbis established rules about the Sabbath, including what constituted a Sabbath-day’s journey. But we are left to wonder about what God really intended for that day. One of the seven days involved with Jericho’s defeat was the Sabbath, and at God’s command the people still marched around the city. Was this exceptional? Would such a parade normally have been against the “rule,” or would it not? We know that Rahab’s house was on or connected to Jericho’s wall, and that the city wall was destroyed. How did Rahab’s family survive? Would some detail of the city’s construction which the author never relayed have made the whole matter more clear? Frequently we are left with questions about the Bible, but we can see the main points of this lesson’s story.

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*Get Ready!***Bible Background Cont.****The Ark of the Covenant**

The ark had been created from a divine plan while the people were gathered at Sinai. It was a symbol of God's presence with the people (and more than a symbol). Basically it was an acacia wood box coated in gold, with a couple of figures of angels on top, having places to carry it on poles. The inside of the box initially held the Ten Commandments; further items were put into it over the years (Heb. 9:3-5 summarizes this). The ark was among the items for worship put into the care of the Levites, but only this one item was never to be touched except by Levites. That was at risk of a death inflicted by divine action, as in 2 Sam. 6:6, 7. (Notice that the ark also was never to be carried on a cart, Num. 7:6, 9, part of the problem in 2 Samuel.). The ark was normally to be kept in the tabernacle, in a special room. Its formal use in worship was restricted to one day out of the year, and even that was in its private room. There was apparently no particular need for the ark to be shown to the nation at any point, so once the people settled in the land it may have gone for long periods entirely out of sight.

We don't know how people perceived the Ark of the Covenant during the wilderness period. God was clearly evident through miracles and communications with Moses. The ark was more frequently made visible to the tribes. Perhaps the ark came to have a more impressive reputation after it ceased to be carried around so much in peoples' view. But leading into today's Bible story events at the Jordan had emphasized the ark's significance as a symbol of God's presence.

When the people violated God's instructions by *trying* to enter the land, rather than accepting their punishment and remaining in the wilderness, we are specifically told that neither Moses nor the ark went with them (Num. 14:44). The inclusion of that piece of information suggests that the ark was serving as a symbol of God's guidance and presence for the people. The movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* gave the ark of God's covenant a military purpose and suggested it was commonly present at the Hebrews' battles. This is overstated, but the ark's presence in a battle may have been construed as demonstrating God's support. That idea existed in the time of Eli. The people assumed they could co-opt God's attention by taking the ark into a battle with them against the Philistines, but they were wrong.

The Ark of the Covenant went ahead of the people on at least a couple of notable occasions, but apparently it normally was not. It isn't easy to tell, but it seems usually to have been in the middle of the procession as the Hebrews traveled, just as the tabernacle was when camp was set up in the wilderness (cf. Num. 2:17; 4:5, 15; 10:17, 21). Generally the pillar of cloud led the people when they traveled by day; it looked like a pillar of fire at night (compare Ex. 14:19, 20, 24; Num. 9:15-23). The ark is specifically noted as having been in front of the people when they first left Sinai; the pillar of cloud was over the people (Num. 10:33-36). After the people reached the Jordan we do not hear of the pillar anymore. The ark's position is noted specifically in today's text, though it did not lead the march around Jericho. We read of a forward guard and a rear guard, so perhaps the ark was in its normal central position.

*Get Ready!***Lesson Quest**

**What I want my students to:**

**Know:** The victory over Jericho was in God's hands, and called for trust and obedience.

**Feel:** Trust in God's help, particularly in times of trouble.

**Do:** Go to God when they need help, and pray for God's leading in their lives.

**Leader's Devotion**

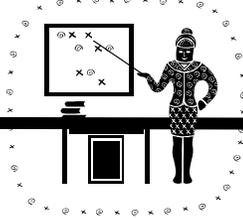
God provides power to tear down strongholds, both physical and metaphorical (2 Cor. 10:4). That may seem simple, even simplistic, but it is true. Jericho is one of the most basic examples the Bible gives us of a victory which clearly belongs to God and to no human being. It stands as that example because God brought down the city's walls. But even this event required preparation on the part of the people. As has been said many times, at the Jordan the water did not stop until the priests' feet got wet. At Jericho the walls did not fall until the people walked around and around the city to no apparent effect. They didn't refuse for fear of looking silly, and they didn't ask why they had to walk for God to act, they just did it.

Perhaps you will never be in the place of needing to physically demolish a city for God (*probably* not). But people still remember the story of Jericho and engage in prayer walks, singly or collectively pacing the perimeter of an area (perhaps a building) as they pray over it to the Lord. They rely upon God to bless this act of faith, and some remarkable things have occurred in these situations. Perhaps you should take a walk around your classroom this week, or around the entire building which houses it.

Perhaps there is a metaphorical stronghold which you need demolished within your life, an addiction, or some frustration or grief you have been unable to let go of. God is up for that. The power is there, and we are given the authority in Jesus to call for change. You have the promise that God will provide you what you need. Take the steps you have to take. You may not see an immediate change, but we are told to present our requests to God, not wait for God to ask us what we would like next.

Get Set!

Option A



SIEGE ENGINES

**Materials:** On a chalkboard draw a picture of a walled city or a castle; additionally have pictures of siege engines from history (you might check in books or on websites for some images, or sketch some on the chalkboard or marker board to give a rough idea of what is under discussion – you might even be able to have students sketch these things out for you)

**Procedure:** Castles and walled cities are pretty impressive things, with thick barriers, towers, and normally lots of soldiers and supplies inside. Back when people fought to take castles, how did they go about trying to conquer them? (Castles of the Middle Ages are a popular subject with young people. Maybe your students will know all about sieges and have lots to say, you will have to decide how much to get into at this point. If they don't come up with many ideas on their own you might raise some specific questions to lead the discussion, like "Do you know of any machinery they might have used? What would be a good way to remove part of a wall?" "What are some things the attackers would need to worry about?" "Could they get help from inside?" Some of the ideas they could bring up would include the use of trebuchets or catapults to throw stones, fire, and even diseased animals into a castle to convince the people to give up; rolling large towers up to the walls, or using ladders or grappling hooks to reach the top of the walls; digging beneath a wall to undermine it, which often involved setting fires in the tunnels to remove the supporting props after having gone far enough to sap the wall; the need to cut off all supplies, including shifting the flow of water from rivers; the danger of reinforcements arriving; the possibility of convincing someone inside to open the gate.)

Many of these ideas we have been talking about are from the years since Jesus lived in Israel. Cannon didn't exist until the 1100s, in China. They became widespread in Europe by the 1400s, and with them around the methods for attacking and for defending a walled area shifted a great deal. But some of what we discussed is very old. Some forms of catapults were used by the ancient Greeks and Romans in their wars. The battering ram is very old, but would probably be more useful for knocking down a gate than the wall it attached to. But at the time of today's Bible story virtually no ideas for siege engines had been thought of yet. We might suppose that the practice back then involved a lot of sitting around outside a walled city and blocking it from getting supplies. However today's Bible story relates to a far more dramatic way of defeating a city.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

*Get Set!*

**Option B**

**13 Times Around The Block**

**Materials:** None

**Procedure:** You might keep your students outside your normal room when they come for class. Once they have arrived say: **Let's go for a walk.** Make a circuit of some area, perhaps outside the church building, or perhaps up and down some hallway(s) that won't disturb other classes. Feel free to take five minutes walking, if there is a good area to do so in. This level of movement will help the lesson stick in your students' minds. Either while you are walking (if it won't disturb other classes) or after you have returned to your class area discuss the following issues with your class: **Have you ever been asked to do something that didn't seem like it made sense, and gone ahead and done it? Did it work out well?** (That second answer may relate heavily to who made the request in the first place.) **Sometimes with God we won't see immediate results from doing what we are asked to do, but growing with God can involve a process of obedience. Today's Bible story is about a time God told the Hebrew people to take a walk when it didn't seem like that was the obvious thing to be doing (sort of like just now, when taking a walk may not have seemed like it was going to get us into our class time any faster). Let's sit back down now and find out more.**

[Note: you could use the walk that sets up today's lesson as an opportunity to start your class somewhere different, perhaps outdoors. Just set up your activity in a location that is unusual for your students, and stop your walk there. This physical reminder of the fact that the Hebrews were moving into new areas they were unfamiliar with could help your students see today's class time differently. If there are two classes in your congregation which use the Teen level material you might arrange with the other teacher to switch class rooms today.]

**GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**



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**Get Set!**

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**Bible Story**

**Teacher Tip:** Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

**Joshua 6:1-24 (NIV)**

When beginning your discussion of the lesson text you might have the students form a circle (perhaps with each student facing clockwise along the circle, each looking toward the back of the person next to them). Then you could relay the story by reading it aloud to them as they imagine they are part of the camp of Israel. If you used Option B to start today's lesson you may want to let your students sit during the reading of the story to rest their feet. Alternately you could have the class stand and walk in a circle when the Israelites do (even taking time to go the full 13 revolutions, perhaps sitting down after each of the first six). If you are going to use Activity 1 after the Bible story you might already have your miniature wall of Jericho built in the middle of the circle of students.

**What do you think God was trying to do by giving the Hebrews victory over Jericho in this way?** (It made a point about God's power, and God's support for the Hebrews. That point may have been needed for some of the nations living in the area, to break their pride in walls and armies. The point may also have been important for the Hebrews as they began the conquest of the land – both to guard against cowardice and against pride, with soldiers thinking that they gained the victory themselves. Maybe God was making sure that the Hebrews wouldn't get held up at Jericho with a long siege but would be able to proceed with the plan right away. Maybe God disliked Jericho particularly. Maybe God was avoiding having Rahab and her family suffer the difficulties of a siege, so this was God helping to fulfill the promise the spies had made.)

**Would the victory over Jericho have been an impressive event to witness?** (Yes, definitely; of course if you were inside the city it would have been a terrifying event.)

**What were some aspects of the event that would stand out to those seeing it?** (The silence followed by sound; the coordination of this marching; the oddity of the military strategy, having the entire wall fall rather than just a section of it – of course the entire city was surrounded at the time; the violent fall of an entire city wall.)

Get Set!



**Bible Story Cont.**

**What do you think was the significance to having the people go around the city on seven days, finishing with a longer march?** (It demonstrated obedience from the people before they received a response to their obedience from God – it sounds a little like Naaman’s situation, when Elisha told him to dip in the Jordan seven times to be cured of leprosy; the defeat of Jericho took a week, an amount of time defined by God at

**What do you think was the significance to having the people go around the city on seven days, finishing with a longer march?** (It demonstrated obedience from the people before they received a response to their obedience from God – it sounds a little like Naaman’s situation, when Elisha told him to dip in the Jordan seven times to be cured of leprosy; the defeat of Jericho took a week, an amount of time defined by God at creation, so maybe there is some significance to the length of time in God’s eyes that we don’t understand; the attack on Jericho involved the people walking a fair distance on the Sabbath, though we don’t know if they fought the battle on the Sabbath, this may involve a subtle demonstration that the conquest of the land was more worship to God than the prohibited “work” of man; finishing with a long march on the seventh day was certainly more dramatic, and it showed that there was no concern about tiring out the soldiers before the battle since their victory was in God’s hands anyway.)

**What are some examples of things that God could have done differently in this situation?** (God could have had the people simply walk right up to the city and blow the trumpets, and then just knocked the walls down. God could have ignored the spies’ promise to Rahab and just blown up the city.)

**What are some possible negative results if God had done things differently at Jericho?** (Get your students to really brainstorm on this question. Some things they might come up with, or which you might toss out there, include:

If God did it all without the Hebrews’ being involved, just blowing up the city or having a plague strike it, the Hebrews wouldn’t be participating in taking the land. It could make them think that God would always do everything for them and they would not grow as a nation.

Similarly God could have skipped the seven-day waiting period for the city’s fall but still have the Hebrews fight. We could contend that reasonably the defeat of the city might occur in one day if they walked around it seven times, or in seven days without the extra trips on the final day, but where do we draw the line of what is “required”? What plans would have the people do too little toward their success? For an example on hurrying things up, if God resurrected Jesus an hour after his death on the cross would there be a lessened impact of that event?

God could simply have destroyed the entire city, including Rahab’s family. If God didn’t take seriously the promise that the spies swore in the name of the LORD that would bring disgrace on the Hebrew people. Also an opportunity to demonstrate God’s mercy would have been lost. As destructive as this event was, in the middle of it Rahab’s story reinforces God’s merciful nature. If God had permitted the Hebrews to take captives from Jericho to use as laborers this would have spread the Amorites’ religious ideas in the nation – of course that occurred over time anyway, but it was not God’s desire.)

Get Set!



**Bible Story Cont.**

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**It seems like the emphasis of this story is how God prepared the people for a victory but at the same time called on them to follow a process of obedience before they received it. What do you think would have happened if some of the people got tired of walking around and wouldn't go along on the seventh day, or if they decided to chat on the march instead of keeping quiet?** (It would have been similar to many of the cases in the wilderness when some portion of the tribes wouldn't do what God commanded. Sometimes there was a punishment only of those immediately involved, but often the result was disease or defeat for the nation as a whole. Right after today's text we learn that Achan violated part of the instructions in today's text, taking loot for himself. The immediate result was not that God punished Achan. Rather the people lost a battle at Ai. Achan's own punishment was left for the people to carry out. They were viewed as a group that was to be judged for its overall conduct – it was like they were being held accountable for failing to successfully teach and encourage everyone to serve the Lord.)

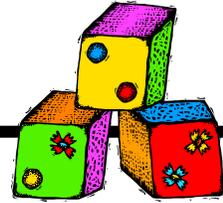
**Have you had any experience with trying to get a group of people to do the same things? How hard was that?** (Students' responses will vary, but they may sympathize with Joshua and Moses, or be impressed at how *well* these two did.)

**What about personally, do you have difficult getting yourself to follow a process of obeying God's will?** (Probably pretty much everyone does, frequently, at least in some area of their life.)

**Do you try the same things to get yourself to pay attention to God as you would try with a group?** (This may result in some interesting discussion, and you can take time to have students list suggestions on things that they could try but currently do not. Often people know how to solve problems but don't act on their knowledge. One good suggestion might be for everyone to follow their own advice, but we are very quick to give it to other people.)

**Go!**

### Stronghold Demolished



#### DRAMA

**Materials:** Wooden blocks, or other simple construction materials; a kazoo, harmonica, toy trumpet or other similar instrument (two, if you have a large class); one or more toy swords (you could construct this from some cardboard and duct tape); optional: a little red yarn or red thread

### Quest Connection

When Jericho was demolished the Hebrews had to fulfill a process of obedience before God acted. But God did the heavy lifting, knocking down the walls of the city.

**Procedure:** It may be good to do this activity outside. Prepare a miniature Jericho in advance. Put your small city where it won't be in the way during the start of the lesson time, but somewhere with enough space to walk around it. If you choose to, put some red yarn or thread at a "window" in the wall. Set the musical instruments and swords aside.

When you are ready for the activity, tell your students: **We are going to reenact the destruction of Jericho.** Ask one or two students to be priests (and give out a musical instrument or two). Other students will receive toy swords. You could begin by having the students walk silently around the city and then sit back down, repeating to simulate the first six days. Or go directly to the seventh day. Instruct the students that they are to walk around the toy city seven times in silence, and then the musical instrument is to be played.

At that signal declare: **Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!** Then knock over the toy city's wall. If you have a red thread to suggest the presence of Rahab's family set that on the ground away from the city before knocking over the wall. Then the students with swords use them to strike at the city. After the "attack" is finished have your class sit down in a circle around the city, or near it.

**Wasn't God able to take care of the walls? Wasn't God able to take care of the walls pretty simply? Of course that makes sense. God is *God* after all. Jericho is a clear example of a victory which belongs to God. The people would have needed to take a long time to deal with the walls of the city. But this event still required preparation from the people. It has been said many times, but at the Jordan the water did not stop until the priests' feet got wet. And at Jericho the walls did not fall until the people walked around and around the city. It says in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that God's power can deal with strongholds – that is true for physical strongholds and it is true for metaphorical ones as well. But we need to call on God.**

**Go!****Quest Connection Cont.**

People today remember the story of Jericho and do what are called “prayer walks.” As individuals or in groups they go around an area and pray about it. They rely on God to bless this as an act of faith. Some remarkable things have happened with prayer.

Is there a metaphorical stronghold you need demolished in your life? Maybe it is an obstacle in your path, or maybe it is something in your life you have been unable to let go of. We are given the authority in Jesus to call for change. You have the promise that God will provide you what you need. Take the steps you have to take. You may not see an immediate change, but present your requests to God. Today’s memory verse says “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:57). That is very true, but sometimes we have to consciously accept that victory.

**Close**

Spend time memorizing 1 Corinthians 15:57. Close with prayer, thanking God.

**Go!****Dear Diary****CREATIVE WRITING**

**Materials:** The worksheet “Seven Day Diary”; writing utensils

**Quest Connection**

The book of Joshua, from which today’s lesson text came, was written for people to read in later years, telling them what God had done for the people of Israel. As part of the history of the Hebrew people it let them know where their origins as a nation were. But on an individual basis it helps people make choices about how they will trust God and what they will do with their lives. Like many Old Testament books of history Joshua shows signs of having been written after the fact, though it used information from the time (we get comments like “and that is still there today” and “like it says in the Book of Jashar”).

What if we didn’t have the book “Joshua,” with its perspective on the situation at Jericho? What if what we did have was a diary which recorded one person’s perspective on what took place, written down as the events were happening? In this activity you are going to attempt to simulate what such a diary would look like.

**Procedure:**

Distribute the worksheet “Seven Day Diary” and writing utensils. If your students are unsure what to write about ask them some questions to get them thinking. Among the things they could consider are whether they want to write the diary of an adult or a young person in the Hebrew camp, or perhaps even Rahab or one of Rahab’s relatives (who wouldn’t be aware in advance of what God’s plan was). Your students could think of this diary as having been new when the people were arriving at Jericho, so the first entry in the diary could be the author’s self-description about who they were and what their situation was. The diary author might include not just their own thoughts about what God was doing, but also the thoughts of their friends, relatives, etc. Is the diary author in some special position, like a priest responsible for blowing a trumpet? Might the diary author be confident or unsure about what their future held? Which day of the seven will your student have be the Sabbath, and how much difference would that make in the author’s experiences that day?

**Go!****Quest Connection Cont.**

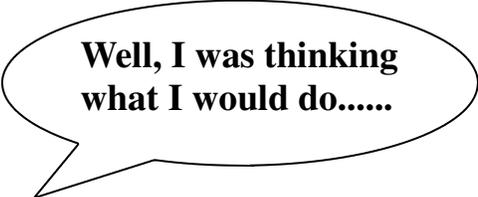
When your students have finished their diary entries ask if any of them would like to volunteer to tell about what they wrote. After whatever sharing is offered there could be a time for discussion about what these fictional versions would reveal about Jericho compared to what the biblical account tells us. That discussion could include listing off some of the personal kinds of things that the Bible tends not to mention but which a diary might, like what the individual people were feeling, or what they ate, or what hopes they had for their lives in the new land.

When your students are finished discussing those issues you might ask them: **Do you ever find it is difficult to relate your life with what the people in the Bible experienced? Would it be easier to do so if we had more stories like the ones we just created, where people spoke firsthand about how they felt? We can be sure that the Hebrew people had emotional reactions to what they experienced when they were conquering Jericho, and in other situations from Joshua, but we can't always be sure what those reactions were. In the end probably part of what we can learn from the Bible is that regardless of what situation a person is in the key thing is to maintain a good relationship with God. The Bible doesn't always try to address specifically what is going on inside a person's life.**

The same kind of situation sometimes exists with other people in the church today, of course. We know that Christians (and also those who have not accepted Jesus) feel grief and anger and pain and joy and depression and love, but we don't always know when they are feeling these ways. We may have a general idea that people who come to church with us are here because they care about God, but we can forget that they are here because they believe that they *need* God in their lives. The kinds of stories that the Bible could contain about people's feelings are the kinds of stories that Christians are meant to be sharing with each other as part of the body of Christ. Like Paul wrote, we are supposed to rejoice along with people who are rejoicing, mourn with the mournful, and altogether help each other to live as believers. (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1, 2, etc.)

**Close**

Close with a time of prayer offered by you and your students for each other.

**Go!**

Well, I was thinking  
what I would do.....

**“Well, If You Want My Advice..”****CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**Materials:** The worksheet “What I Learned in the Wilderness”; writing instruments; optional: note cards

**Quest Connection**

Read the following to your students: **Joshua had to deal with many situations we probably will never face, and saw things we probably will never see. But the same is true about us in comparison with him. Joshua lived about 3500 years ago, that is like a whole different world; the area, culture, and technology Joshua knew were different from our lives in hundreds or thousands of ways. How much stays the same? In this activity you are going to try to imagine that Joshua had the chance to give you some advice for living your life, and write that for yourself.**

**Procedure:**

Distribute the worksheet and writing instruments, and have your students read the information at the top of the worksheet. Give them time to work, and when they are done you might ask if any of them would like to share their advice from Joshua.

**Optional:** Have your students copy their completed advice onto a note card so that they can keep it in their copy this week.

**Close**

**It really is difficult to imagine what Joshua would think of our world, but we can hope that he would be pleased about our faith. Let’s try to live this week imagining in each situation that Joshua has something to say about it.**

**Go!**



## Total War

### RESEARCH

**Materials:** None; optional: Bibles

## Quest Connection

**The Hebrews killed almost everyone in Jericho, among other cities. But God gave the instructions.**

**Procedure:** You will discuss the violence of Joshua with your students and try to help them understand how this goes along with God’s mercy. **The destruction of Jericho is a pretty violent story, isn’t it?** (Yes; some students may claim to have seen worse in movies, but that doesn’t actually make this event any more peaceful.) **God has a poor reputation with some people based on stories like this one. An entire community was to be killed, and their city burned.**

**Do you think that God is bloodthirsty?** (Hopefully your students will say no, particularly as the story includes Rahab and her family being saved, but some may say that it sometimes seems like God is. That is alright. People have to work through questions, they can’t automatically agree with things.) **How would you show someone that God is *not* bloodthirsty?** (Along with the story of Rahab there is the fact that God waited hundreds of years before dealing with the Amorites for their sinfulness, see Gen. 15:16; there is the fact that God specifically rejected the idea of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, see Gen. 22:12; there is the fact that God created us in the first place, and that God worked to be able to save us from death through Jesus.)

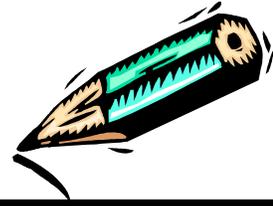
**We know God as being merciful, so what does how God dealt with idolatry in the land tell us?** (It tells us that to God holiness really does matter; worshipping things other than God, even things that have no real existence, matters to God; it shows that God wants to keep us pure; it also suggests that things were really bad, perhaps in terms of their idolatry. Whatever form the idolatry took, it was a deadly sinful worship which cost the lives of some of the Hebrews when they joined in it.)

*Go!***Quest Connection Cont.**

**Let's look at Exodus 34:5-7.** Have a student read this aloud. This is one of God's self-descriptions. It starts with several comments about mercy and love but adds that God "does not leave the guilty unpunished." (The text goes on to talk about God remembering sins for generations. If you feel the need to, address that issue by having your students look at Ezek. 18:19, 20 where God pledges not to judge the righteous for the sins of their wicked fathers. Perhaps this is a change in policy. Or perhaps the sins of the past never were going to have their impact in a future righteous generation, only a sinful one.) Discuss the text with your students, and help them to understand that God works on a very large scale. In that scale mercy is a dominant force over punishment, though punishment can't be ignored.

**Close**

**Pray: Lord, thank you for your mercy. You have shown us what is right, what is true and good. You have given us your Spirit, which strengthens us to serve you, and guides us away from evil. Please help us to place our trust even more fully in you, and to live in a pattern of obedience to your love.**

**Go!****Poor Strategy****WORKSHEET**

**Materials:** The worksheet “One Step at a Time”; writing instruments; Bibles

**Quest Connection**

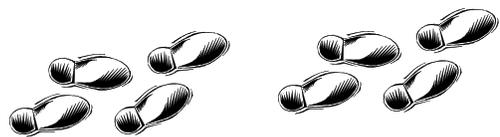
**The Hebrews began their campaign in the Promised Land by conquering Jericho, but what if they hadn’t?**

**Procedure:** Discuss an alternate scenario with your class to help them recognize the importance of dealing with issues rather than leaving them to fester. **What do you think would have happened if the Hebrews chose to ignore Jericho?** (Maybe they would never have felt able to move forward; or if they did go forward they would always needed to have watched behind them. They might have isolated themselves among enemies, having no clear place to go next and no place as their main camp.) **Many problems could have emerged from such a poor strategy. But people do that kind of thing all the time. Have you ever passed by a problem and then regretted it? Well, this activity is about exactly that.**

Distribute the worksheet “One Step at a Time” and Bibles. Give your students time and space to consider the questions. When they are finished, go to the closing. Be prepared to offer advice to students who are not sure how to deal with a situation. This may require wisdom, some situations are not feasible to reopen, and sometimes people need to deal with their feelings on their own rather than bring more pain on someone else by interacting with them about it.

**Close**

**Let’s have a time in quiet prayer today.** Maybe tell your students that you will say “Amen” after a couple of minutes, then have the prayer time. You could also open it with a comment like “Lord, you desire us to live in your Spirit; please guide us by your Spirit this week in whatever situations we need to deal with.”



**Go!****Follow Instructions****GAME**

**Materials:** The worksheet “Numbering the Words”; pens; NIV Bibles; assorted candies or other treats, of different degrees – perhaps a large candy bar, a small candy bar, a lollipop, a stick of gum or piece of bubble gum; a piece of hard candy (have enough of each for all class members)

**Quest Connection**

**The Hebrews had a lot of things they needed to remember to do, and frequently they did not follow those instructions properly. In today’s Bible story they had a victory, but it was quickly followed by a loss at the town of Ai because not everyone obeyed God. Experiences like that, and their time in the wilderness, taught them caution.**

**Procedure:** This worksheet is designed to demonstrate the danger of not carefully noting what you are told to do. Students will run the risk of reducing their candy reward by not paying attention.

Distribute the worksheet “Numbering the Words” along with pens (not pencils) and NIV Bibles. Try not to give away the true situation with the worksheet by reacting if students don’t follow the actual instructions. Just tell them to read the worksheet on their own, then make yourself busy with something else. Perhaps you could contrive to be called away (or be called into a conversation at the doorway) just as the students are beginning their work and return shortly only after they have started writing.

**Close**

When your students turn in their pages, judge their progress toward the goal and distribute your candy supply accordingly. If you need to you could give multiple small pieces of candy as a middle ground. (Or do this if you only have one or two kinds of candy.)

You might toss out at some point that when Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him it was good that he was open to listening to later instructions.

**Say: God’s instructions aren’t always what would be obvious or seem to be “common sense” in the eyes of the world. Walking around a city is not the advised method of getting inside. Dying on a cross is not a commonly accepted route to life. This worksheet was just a game, but understanding what God desires for your life is very important. Hold up a Bible. Sometimes you will need to read the directions.**

Close with prayer. If you wish, you can go ahead and distribute additional candy to those who did not “earn” it and declare that grace rules over law in your classroom.



*What I LEARNED IN THE  
wilderness. . . .*

Joshua was a man with many experiences; he learned from Moses, heard the voice of God from Mount Sinai, led the Hebrew people in battle and challenged an angel. And today you will be trying to guess, if Joshua could learn about your life situation (and understand it well enough to comment) what could be some advice from Joshua to you. Joshua lived about 3500 years ago, in greatly different circumstances, but hopefully one big thing remains as a constant between him and you: both of you are concerned about having a good relationship with God.

You might find it helpful to look at some of these Bible passages where Joshua spoke or was spoken to (a couple of good possibilities are Joshua 1 and 23-24). You can try to summarize what Joshua learned or taught in each passage on the lines that follow the biblical reference. What you write here may help you to develop your advice in the lines at the bottom of the page. Aim for 25 words of advice.

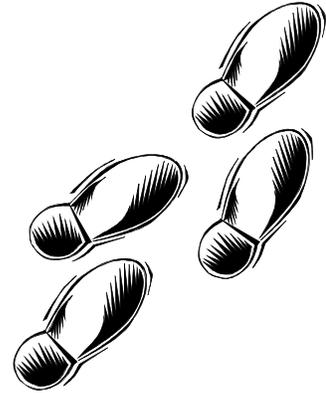
# ONE STEP AT A TIME

When the Hebrews entered the Promised Land they dealt with the problems that were right in front of them, using God's power to do so. That is a good plan for anyone. Take some time to examine your heart as you answer the following questions.

Have you ever not addressed a personal issue with someone else? What was your reason, was it because you were uncomfortable doing so, or you didn't feel that you had the time or the wisdom to do so? (And did it get better on its own?)

Read Matthew 5:21, 22; Ephesians 4:26.

How do you normally deal with your anger? Does it last long?



Do you have any grudges you are holding onto? If so, what do you want to do about them?

Read Matthew 5:9, 23, 24.

Do you try to make peace with people? Or do you ignore others' problems with you?

Do you think anyone has a grudge against you at this point? Is there anything you can or should do about this? (We can't always affect other's feelings about us, but we can try to be peacemakers.)

This week take some time out to decide if there are some things in your past lying in wait for you, and see about dealing with any you find there. Pray over this. Don't go into anything with a chip on your shoulder, and don't treat this as a time to stab old wounds. But this could be a good spur toward freeing up your heart (and/or someone else's). Look forward to being able to say that you have cleaned out some of the rubble from old situations, so you will be better able to deal with new ones. (Also, take some time this week to pray for your classmates, as they may be dealing with some issues just like yours.)

# NUMBERING THE WORDS

In the period before printing presses Bible texts were always copied by hand. This was true for Christian and Jewish scribes, but the Jewish system in particular was very cautious about getting every letter correct. One incautious action on a scroll or a page could mean discarding hours of work. A system was worked out that involved counting different aspects of a text. Knowing how many letters, sentences, etc. were supposed to be on a page made it easier to compare the duplicate to the original to test it. To be particularly careful they might have multiple people check the same page. One useful way to keep track of such things is the old “tick mark” system where you put four lines down and then one diagonally across to count five.

Read all the instructions for this activity before beginning. 1) Look up Psalm 136 in an NIV Bible. (It tells the story of the Exodus in poetic form.) Read through the Psalm. 2) Count the number of times that the Psalm says “His love endures forever” and note it on line “A” below. 3) Count the words which have capital letters (like Egypt or God) but which do not begin a new sentence, and note that figure on line “B” below. 4) Count the number of verses in the Psalm and note that on line “C” below. 5) Add the three figures from lines A-C together. 6) Turn to Psalm 119, and count the section headings. Write that number on line D. 7) Check if the number on line E matches the number on line D. 8) Pay no attention to the comments in instructions two through seven, and ten and eleven. 9) Remain seated for three minutes after you finish reading Psalm 136 and notice if anyone else followed the instructions. 10) Tally your score, which is whatever difference exists between the numbers on lines D and E. 11) Now calculate your score using the comments at the bottom of the page. If you need to start over you might want to be sure this time to use the tally section for your numbers.

A \_\_\_\_\_  
+  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
+  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
+  
D \_\_\_\_\_  
=  
E \_\_\_\_\_

**You can tally figures with the  
“tick mark” system here:**

**Score** \_\_\_\_\_

If E is the same as D, score yourself excellent: your copying is preserved for future generations!

If E is one of two different from D, score yourself good.

If E is between three and five different from D, score yourself fair

If E is more than five different from D, try again.

# JOURNAL PAGE

Jesus give us the victory! Hallelujah! Have I given Jesus the thanks He deserves for all He has done for me? What ought I to say to Him?

