

SESSION 4

Winning Strategy

JOSHUA 6:12-25

GOD GAVE HIS PEOPLE VICTORY WHEN THEY TRUSTED AND OBEYED HIM.



Parents of toddlers want to teach their children to trust them. Building this trust involves providing for their needs and protecting them. Some parents build trust by encouraging their child to leap into their arms. When the child makes the jump and the parent catches him, both the parent and the child are exuberant. God often calls upon His children to make what appears to be giant leaps to demonstrate that they can always trust Him as they obey Him.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LEARNING TO TRUST SOMEONE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

About seven hundred years had passed since God promised Abraham He would give “this land” to Abraham’s offspring as their inheritance (Gen. 12:7). The Lord was about to fulfill that promise.

God determined that it was to be Joshua who would lead the people across the Jordan into the promised land to defeat the Canaanites and then settle into the land as the Lord had commanded them. In Joshua 1, God promised Joshua that He would always be with him and give him victory over Israel’s enemies. But He told Joshua that it would be essential for him to study and meditate on God’s Word so that he would obey God and be successful in everything that God was calling him to do.

In chapter 2, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho on a reconnaissance mission. The spies came upon Rahab. There, Rahab told the spies that the people in Jericho had heard how God saved Israel at the Red Sea and how the Israelites soundly defeated the Amorites east of the Jordan River. News of these events had struck fear in the hearts

of the men of Jericho. Be that as it may, God was not finished demonstrating His might and commitment to Israel overall and to Joshua in particular.

In chapters 3–4, God exalted Joshua as His ordained leader over Israel as He parted the flooded waters of the Jordan River and led the Israelites into the land of Canaan on dry ground.

In Joshua 5, the men of Israel renewed the covenant with the Lord by being circumcised as He had commanded. They celebrated Passover and ate from the bounty of the land of Canaan. A mysterious figure identified as the “commander of the LORD’s army” (5:14) appeared to Joshua, confirming the Lord’s presence with Joshua as they prepared for the conquest of Jericho.

Chapter 6 recounts the dramatic and miraculous conquest of Jericho, the first major Canaanite city the Israelites faced after crossing the Jordan River.



Joshua 6:12-25

12 Joshua got up early **the next morning**. **A** The priests took the ark of the LORD, **13** and the seven priests carrying seven **rams' horns** **B** marched in front of **the ark of the Lord**. **C** While the rams' horns were blowing, the armed men went in front of them, and the rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD. **14** On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. **15** Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city **seven times** **D** in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. **16** After the seventh time, the priests blew the rams' horns, and Joshua said to the troops, "Shout! For **the Lord has given you the city**." **E** **17** But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only **Rahab** **F** the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent. **18** But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and **make trouble** **G** for it. **19** For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and must go into the LORD's treasury." **20** So the troops shouted, and the rams' horns sounded. When they heard the blast of the ram's horn, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. **21** They **completely destroyed everything** **H** in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey. **22** Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her." **23** So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them **outside the camp** **I** of Israel. **24** They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. **25** However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

Key Words

A. The day before, God had given Joshua and the people specific instructions for capturing Jericho (6:1-11).

B. Known as a *shophar*. Often used to call Israel to battle, these trumpets also were used in worship (Ps. 81:3; Joel 2:1,15).

C. A reminder of the Lord's presence among the Israelites (Ex. 25:10-22; Num. 4:5). It had led the way across the Jordan (Josh. 3:1-4) and was prominent in the strategy against Jericho.

D. A symbol of God's perfection. Seven appears prominently in Joshua 6 with trumpets (v. 4), priests (vv. 4,13), days (v. 15), and times around the city (vv. 15-16).

E. Joshua kept the focus on God. He was the One who would fight the battle and conquer the city.

F. Rahab had protected Israel's spies from being captured in Jericho. In return, they promised to spare her family (2:1-13).

G. Disobedience would lead to judgment (Josh. 7).

H. The total destruction of Jericho demonstrated the Israelites' total obedience to God.

I. As Gentiles, they had to remain outside Israel's main body for a time. However, Rahab became part of Jesus's genealogy (Matt. 1:5).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Instructions Obeyed

(Josh. 6:12-14)

We should obey God's directions, even when they don't make sense.

- **Have you ever been given an instruction or command that didn't make sense in the moment? What happened?**
- **How do God's unusual instructions test our faith?**

2. Victory Assured

(Josh. 6:15-19)

We experience victory in life when we obey God completely.

- **Why did God set the treasures of Jericho apart for Himself?**

3. Walls Destroyed

(Josh. 6:20-21)

We can trust God to do what only He can do.

- **What potential victory is God asking you to trust Him to provide?**

4. Promises Kept

(Josh. 6:22-25)

We can live in victory by trusting in God's promises.

- **What victories does God promise His people today?**

Apply the Text

As a group, discuss ways that the people of God in general and you as a group in particular can and should unite together to demonstrate their trust in and obedience to God.

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. (See Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1.)

BIBLE SKILL: Examine New Testament passages to better understand an Old Testament passage.

The writers of both Hebrews and James referred to Rahab in their letters to first-century believers. Examine Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 to see what these passages say about her. What are some key points each writer draws out? What are they trying to emphasize with their readers? How does that help you understand Rahab better?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 6:12-14

Reflect on how God's instructions would have challenged the faith of His people.

Chapters 6–12 describe Israel's conquest of Canaan. Chapter 2 anticipated that the first city the Israelites would need to conquer was Jericho. Verse 1 indicates the city "was strongly fortified because of the Israelites—no one leaving or entering." This recalls the city being on high alert because of the two spies who had been spotted infiltrating it. Rahab reported to the spies that the victories God had already given Israel over their enemies had completely sapped the residents of Jericho of their courage (Josh. 2:1-11).

God laid out the plan for Joshua (6:2-5). Of first importance, the Lord told him that He had already given Jericho to Joshua. When God makes a promise for the future, it is as good as done. What the Lord required of Joshua and the people was their trust and obedience. God commanded Joshua that he and his army were to march around the city with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant in the front and seven priests ahead of the ark carrying rams' horns. Verses 12-14 indicate that "early the next morning," on the second day, Joshua, the priests, and the army arose and repeated what they had done the previous day. They continued doing this for six days just as the Lord had commanded them.

How does this passage challenge you to trust God's plans even when they don't make sense to you?



Day 2: Joshua 6:15-16

Underline "the LORD has given you."

All the instructions and activities that were given and transpired during the previous six days were in anticipation of what happened on the climactic seventh day. On the seventh day, they did not march around Jericho only once as they had done the previous six mornings; they marched around it seven times just as the Lord had commanded them.

After marching around Jericho for the past six days, marching around the city seven times on the seventh day must have been exciting to the Israelites while at the same time disconcerting to the residents of Jericho as they undoubtedly watched the circling spectacle transpire before them. After they completed the seventh lap, the priests blew the rams' horns. Then Joshua told the troops, "Shout!" But before the soldiers had an opportunity to shout, he repeated what the Lord had said to him before they started marching around Jericho on the first day: "the LORD has given you the city" (v. 16). The event in the future is already as good as done since God said He would do it. Every Israelite needed to know that what was about to happen was because of what God had already done; they needed to act in light of it. Furthermore, they needed to learn that when you follow God's plan, you will enjoy His victory.

What promises of God are awaiting your step of faith?



Day 3: Joshua 6:17-19

Underline each occurrence of the words “set apart.”

Because Rahab put her faith in the God of Israel and her life on the line to save the two Israelite spies, Joshua declared she and her family were to be spared (2:1-22). Everyone and everything else in the city were to be “set apart to the LORD for destruction.” This command refers back to the Lord’s instruction to Israel through Moses that when they entered Canaan they were to destroy all its inhabitants. If the Israelites disobeyed God in this, then the people groups in Canaan would teach the Israelites to worship idols and Israel would sin against the Lord (Deut. 20:16-18). This should serve as a reminder to believers today that we are to be separated from the world system that is under the power of the evil one (1 John 2:15-17).

Finally, Joshua told the Israelites to understand the importance of keeping themselves away from everything that was “set apart” for the Lord. If they didn’t, they too, along with all the camp of Israel, would be “set apart for destruction.” The Israelites would have opportunities to plunder their enemies in other cities they would conquer. However, given Jericho was the first, the principle of firstfruits surfaces here. Dedicating the first of what one receives acknowledges God as the Giver and also demonstrates one’s trust in Him for the future. Firstfruits are also an acknowledgment of one’s responsibility to be a faithful steward of what one has received from God to be used to serve and honor Him.

Why did God command that everything in Jericho be devoted to Him? What does this say about holiness?



Day 4: Joshua 6:20-21

Take note of how the Israelite troops did everything just as the Lord had commanded.

Verse 20 provides a summary of the fall of Jericho. The seven priests blew their rams’ horns and the army “gave a great shout,” just as Joshua had commanded them. The magnificent wall surrounding the city of Jericho collapsed. The collapse was so sudden that their war shout very likely turned into a shout of victory as they witnessed what the Lord had done for them. After that, every soldier advanced into the city and together captured it.

The Israelites did exactly as the Lord had commanded them. They “completely destroyed everything in the city.” No person or animal was spared. God’s judgment was complete as was His victory. The text gives little attention to Israel’s warriors. Instead, the emphasis of the narrative is that this victory over the people of Jericho as well as the execution of judgment on them belonged to the Lord. If only others in Jericho had put their faith in the Lord like Rahab did.

What does the fall of Jericho reveal about God’s ability to overcome obstacles?



Day 5: Joshua 6:22-25

Compare verse 24 to verse 19.

In verse 17, Joshua instructed his men to spare Rahab and her family because she protected the two spies from the king of Jericho. Therefore, it was fitting that Joshua instructed those same two men to retrieve Rahab and her family. The men brought them out of the city and settled Rahab and her family outside Israel's camp, probably because of ceremonial uncleanness according to God's law. Regarding the city of Jericho, the Israelites "burned the city and everything in it" except for all the items of silver, gold, bronze, and iron. These items were to be set apart, dedicated to the Lord, and put into the Lord's treasury as Joshua had instructed in verse 19.

In this message of God's righteous judgment of the Canaanites, we must not overlook the message of God's wondrous salvation. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who, like all the other residents of Jericho, was deserving of God's wrath. However, by God's mercy and grace through faith in the God of Israel, Rahab was saved from the wrath that was to come. Rahab not only declared her faith in the Lord but demonstrated it when she saved the spies. By faith, this outsider became part of the Lord's covenant people. Moreover, Matthew indicates Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon and became an ancestress of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

What does Rahab's story teach you about God's grace and redemption?

APPLY THE TEXT

When was a time you trusted and obeyed God even when at first it was difficult to believe God would intervene or act on your behalf, but you saw that He did? Is there anything happening in your life right now where you are struggling to trust in God's promises and obey Him?

JOURNAL

