

CONQUEST

God gives His people victory when they trust Him and obey His commands.

JOSHUA 6:12-25

MEMORY VERSE: JOSHUA 4:24

PREPARE TO LEAD THE GROUP TIME

- **READ** Joshua 2:1–6:27 and Understand the Context (pp. 24-25). Take note of how preparations were made to enter Jericho. Read Numbers 13–14 to see a comparison and contrast of the last time the people sent out spies. Notice in Joshua 5:13-15 how God communicated to Joshua the preparation for the task God had called him to do.
- **STUDY** Joshua 6:12-25, using Explore the Text (pp. 25-29). Take note of what the numbers and specifications reveal about the nature of obedience.
- **PLAN** the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 30-31). Consider ways to use the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 26) during the session. Customize your group plans using More Ideas (p. 32) and the ideas included in *QuickSource* and online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.
- **GROW** with other group leaders at the Group Ministry blog (LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).
- **GATHER** the following items: Personal Study Guides. Make copies of **PACK ITEM 5** (*Bookmark: Memory Verses*) for those who don't already have one. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: **PACK ITEM 1** (*Map: The Judges of Israel*); **PACK ITEM 4** (*Time Line: Joshua; Judges; Ruth*); **PACK ITEM 9** (*Poster: Family Tree of Boaz and Ruth*); and **PACK ITEM 10** (*Poster: Mighty Acts of God in Early Israel*).



FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

For additional context, read "Jericho: A Strategic Locale" in the Winter 2016-17 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

BIBLE SKILL

Study a Bible character.

Read these Bible passages: Joshua 2:8-11; 6:25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25. What do the verses reveal about Rahab? What words would you use to describe her life?

Have you ever thought about what it really means to believe something or someone? Some might say belief is essentially mental assent. That is, we merely agree something is true, and that's belief. For example, we may believe giraffes are tall. We may believe Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. We may choose to believe certain modern proverbs, such as "the early bird gets the worm." But what does it mean to truly believe?

Suppose your friend told you he really believes in his doctor. However, he never followed his doctor's counsel and never took any prescriptions the doctor prescribed. He did not have tests his doctor advised. You might wonder whether such a person really believes in his doctor.

(In PSG, p. 23) **How would you describe the relationship between faith and obedience? Can you have one without the other? Explain.**

Biblical belief comprises more than mere mental assent; it includes trust. It includes a confidence to obey God. It means we are ready to act on a conviction, because we believe in the One who issued the command. If we truly believe in God, we will submit to His counsel and follow His commands. Anything less suggests we don't really believe in Him as much as we say.

Today's session focuses on Joshua's leading God's people against the city of Jericho. God's battle plan was unusual, but as Joshua and the people followed it, they saw God bring an astounding victory. The wall of Jericho fell, and the people took the city.

Israel's battle against Jericho should encourage believers today in the battles they face. God gives His people victory when they trust Him and obey His commands.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOSHUA 2:1–6:27

Joshua sent two men to spy out Jericho as God's people prepared to cross into the promised land. The men hid in the home of Rahab, a prostitute at Jericho (Josh. 2:1). The king of Jericho received word of the spies' coming and ordered Rahab to turn them over, but she told him the men had already escaped (2:2-7). Because Rahab had saved the spies' lives, they would save hers, along with her family's (2:12-21).

After the spies returned to Joshua, Joshua prepared the people to cross the Jordan (3:1-6) and communicated the Lord's instructions (3:7-13). The people moved ahead, led by the priests carrying the ark of the

covenant, and God stopped the flow of the Jordan until the entire nation crossed (3:14-17). Joshua then established a memorial of 12 stones at the place the Jordan had ceased flowing (4:1-9). The memorial would serve as a testimony to future generations of God's faithfulness and power (4:20-24).

The people reestablished the covenant rite of circumcision at Gilgal (5:1-9). They also celebrated Passover for the first time in the promised land. The manna that had fed them every day for 40 years now ceased, because they were home in the land God had given them (5:10-12). The Lord further confirmed His presence by sending His angel to show Joshua the Lord would be fighting Israel's battles (5:13-15).

The Lord gave Joshua unusual battle instructions to defeat Jericho (6:1-5), and the people followed Joshua's directive. Each day for six days they circled the city once with the priests blowing the ram's horns (6:6-14). On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times, the priests blew the ram's horns, and Joshua instructed the people to shout because the Lord had given them the city (6:15-16). The wall fell, and Israel won the victory (6:20-21).

The Israelites spared Rahab's family in accordance with the spies' promise (6:22-23,25). They then destroyed the city and deposited the valuables in the treasury of the Lord (6:24).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PATIENT OBEDIENCE (JOSH. 6:12-14)

VERSE 12

Joshua got up early the next morning. Certainly Israel's leader was eager to accomplish God's purpose. As the sun rose over the mountains of Moab, Joshua readied his army for the second day. His faithful, confident leadership was key to Israel's success.

The priests took the ark of the LORD as God had instructed them through Joshua (6:4), and as they had done the day before (v. 8). The ark of the covenant was a wooden chest overlaid with gold. On top of it rested the cherubim, winged angelic creatures who represented God's presence (Ex. 25:10-22). The ark was a visible reminder of God's presence with His people. It normally remained in the tabernacle, but at this defining moment, God commanded that it accompany the army into battle.

VERSE 13

The text records the people's obedience in complete detail. They trusted in God's command even though it may have seemed unusual. God would reward their faithful obedience. When believers obey God's commands, they demonstrate their trust in Him.

The **seven priests** marched in procession as they had done the day before. As God's earthly representatives to the people, their presence in the processional reminded everyone the victory was the Lord's. They were **carrying seven trumpets** made from ram's horns as God had instructed (v. 4).

JOSHUA 6:12

¹² Joshua got up early the next morning. The priests took the ark of the LORD,

JOSHUA 6:13

¹³ and the seven priests carrying seven trumpets marched in front of the ark of the LORD. While the trumpets were blowing, the armed troops went in front of them, and the rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD.

JOSHUA 6:14

¹⁴ On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

JOSHUA 6:15

¹⁵ Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times.

JOSHUA 6:16

¹⁶ After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

The priests **marched in front of the ark of the LORD**, announcing God's arrival at Jericho. The time of Jericho's judgment was at hand!

Joshua's **armed troops** protected the priests and the ark by marching **in front of them**, while the **rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD** to protect it from any attack from behind. The prophet Isaiah would later use this imagery of the Lord fighting His people's battle and bringing them home as both their front and rear guard (Isa. 52:12). The verses also remind us that God is always with us as we follow His leading. No earthly or spiritual resistance can defeat those who move in step with God's purpose (Isa. 54:17).

VERSE 14

Verse 14 records the fulfillment of the actions of verses 12-13. **On the second day**, as they had done the day before, Israel's army **marched around the city once**. The only sounds came from the ram's horns and the footsteps of those who marched (v. 10). No doubt the people marched far enough away from the city wall so as to avoid any archers who might shoot at them. When they had completed their circuit of Jericho, they **returned to the camp** at Gilgal. The note **they did this for six days** again stresses the people's complete obedience to what God commanded.

Some interpreters have suggested that perhaps the silent marches around Jericho afforded the Israelites the opportunity to inspect Jericho's defenses. Others have suggested it may have provided the citizens of Jericho the opportunity to surrender. Such interpretations are possible, but the text provides no answer to these questions. We probably should assume God had His own reasons for instructing His army as he did. Certainly it challenged their faith to adopt this alternate strategy.

Recall a time in your life when obeying God's command required patience. What lesson or lessons did you learn during this time of following the Lord patiently? How does God sometimes have a purpose for the process as well as for the final result?

FINAL PREPARATIONS (JOSH. 6:15-19)

VERSE 15

The words **early on the seventh day** may suggest two things. First, they suggest an eagerness on the part of the people to accomplish God's plan. Second, the seventh day was the day of battle and would require more time to accomplish God's agenda. **They started at dawn** as the sun rose behind them over the mountains of Moab. As the citizens of Jericho looked northeast toward the Israelite camp at Gilgal, they would have seen the army approaching as they had done before.

The army **marched around the city seven times** in the same way following the specific instructions God had given (v. 4). The words **that**

was the only day they marched around the city seven times may seem unnecessary to us, but the biblical text is emphasizing the people's complete obedience to every detail of God's command. God was about to achieve an amazing victory, but He was counting on the people's faithful obedience. Today, God still stands ready to respond to the prayers of a faithful, obedient people.

VERSE 16

The seventh time around the city was finished; the time had come for God's victory to begin. **The priests blew the trumpets** (literally "ram's horns") while Joshua encouraged the people to shout a ringing war cry, thus breaking their ominous silence of the past several days. Joshua's declaration **the LORD has given you the city** reminded the people that the battle was God's; therefore, the outcome was not in doubt. God wanted the people to claim what He had already given them. He had promised the land to Abraham centuries earlier, and He had promised to bring victory for His people as they fought Jericho.

VERSE 17

Joshua gave the people instructions regarding **the city and everything in it**. The army was not to loot or plunder the city as enemy armies often did (Deut. 2:32-35; 3:3-7). The words **set apart to the LORD for destruction** describe God's holy judgment against the sinful citizens of Jericho. God had told Abraham his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years, but He would bring them out in His timing (Gen. 15:13-14). The Lord's comment, "the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Gen. 15:16), indicates God's desire to give the inhabitants of Canaan time to repent. They had not, and consequently, the time of their judgment had come. The citizens of Jericho and their property would be given over to the Lord; God's people were to keep nothing for themselves.

Joshua gave special instructions for **Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house**. Joshua 2 records that Rahab's house was along the wall (2:15). God graciously did not allow that portion to fall. Rahab had shown kindness to the spies by hiding them and saving their lives (2:2-7), and the Israelites would keep the agreement by sparing her life and the lives of those in her household.

VERSE 18

Joshua warned that if the Israelites kept any items from Jericho, they would potentially set apart the camp of Israel for destruction. God wanted a pure people who would honor Him by serving as His instruments of judgment. He did not want the lifestyle of the citizens of Jericho to continue in any way through the Israelites. The words **bring disaster on it** describe the potential consequences that would come to Israel if they disobeyed God's command. The same Hebrew word also occurs twice in Joshua 7:25 ("troubled," "trouble"), where it describes Achan, one who kept some of Jericho's treasure and paid with his life (Josh. 7:1,16-26). God desires complete obedience from His people.

JOSHUA 6:17

¹⁷ But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the men we sent.

JOSHUA 6:18

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 bring disaster on it.

JOSHUA 6:19

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."

JOSHUA 6:20

²⁰ So the people shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the people gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The people advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city.

JOSHUA 6:21

²¹ They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey.

JOSHUA 6:22

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 promised her.”

VERSE 19

Joshua described in general terms the precious items the people might covet and want to keep for themselves. Certainly in such a wealthy city there would be much **silver and gold**. Moreover, **articles of bronze and iron** might include various tools and implements. Of course all these materials could be used to fashion idols—something the Law of Moses condemned (Ex. 20:4-6). Rather, the spoils of war needed to **go into the LORD’s treasury**. Perhaps the metals later were melted down and used for another purpose.

When people obey God completely, what does that reveal about their character? Are there areas of life in which you are only giving God partial obedience?

OBEDIENCE REWARDED (JOSH. 6:20-25)

VERSE 20

The words **the people shouted, and the trumpets sounded** provide a summary statement of what happened next as they obeyed Joshua’s command. What follows records the precise fulfillment of God’s command to Joshua in 6:5. **The blast of the trumpet** heralded the moment of God’s impending victory. Anticipating this victory, **the people gave a great shout**. In response to His people’s faithful obedience, God caused the wall of Jericho to collapse. No doubt the scene overwhelmed both the citizens of Jericho and the Israelite army. Nonetheless, in accordance with God’s command, **the people advanced into the city**. They moved methodically as God had commanded. Soon **they captured the city** and Jericho lay in Israelite hands. Israel’s conquest of Canaan had begun.

VERSE 21

In accordance with the command to devote the city to destruction (Josh. 6:17), the people **completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword**. The slaughter of all people and animals seems brutal to many modern readers. At the same time, we must remember that God was using His people to bring judgment against the evil populations of the land. He had given them time to repent, but they had refused. God also desired for His people to remain pure from the wickedness of Canaan. One generation later, God’s people began to intermingle with the local population and thereby fell into sin. The Book of Judges describes this period with its sad consequences (Judg. 2:11-23).

VERSES 22-23

Joshua summoned **the two men who had scouted the land**. He sent them to go to **the prostitute’s house** and bring Rahab out. They alone would recognize her, so rescuing her became their task. The words **just as you**

promised her reveal Joshua's desire to follow through on the promise the spies had made to Rahab. She had saved their lives, and now he commanded the sparing of Rahab and her family.

The text mentions **Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her** as the ones who were spared. No doubt Rahab and her family felt much sorrow at the deaths of so many fellow citizens of Jericho. At the same time, Rahab had come to know the Lord as her God, and she had cast her lot with God's people over her own (Josh. 2:8-11). The text records how the soldiers **brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel**. She later would become part of the nation (6:25).

VERSE 24

Again in keeping with God's command, **they burned up the city and everything in it**. All valuable items were spared and deposited **into the treasury of the LORD's house**. Again, the text takes great measures to demonstrate the faithful obedience of God's people to His command through Joshua. Sadly, Joshua 7:1 reveals that one man did not completely obey this command, and the man, his family, and the nation suffered God's wrath because of his disobedience.

VERSE 25

Once again the text reminds us that **Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's household, and all who belonged to her**. And once again, her act of faithfulness was recorded—**she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho**. Some commentators have noted the extent to which the text describes Rahab's deliverance. Almost as many words describe Rahab's deliverance as describe the conquest of the city.

The closing words **she lives in Israel to this day** end the mention of Rahab in the Book of Joshua. However, Rahab appears many more times in the biblical record. She appears again in the Gospel of Matthew, where Matthew records her as an ancestor of King David and of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). What a testimony to God's grace on her life. The writer of Hebrews also commended Rahab for her faithfulness in hiding the spies and honoring their God as she cast her lot with God's people (Heb. 11:31). The apostle James likewise highlighted the example of Rahab's faith (Jas. 2:25).

No one's life is beyond the touch of God's grace if they are willing to repent and place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps you know someone with whom you need to share the good news of God's forgiveness.

(In PSG, p. 29) **How does obedience demonstrate what we really believe? Can we have genuine belief or faith without obedience? Explain.**

JOSHUA 6:23

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 of Israel.

JOSHUA 6:24

²⁴ They burned up 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.

JOSHUA 6:25

²⁵ However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's household, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she lives in Israel to this day.

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

BEGIN: As the group arrives, direct them to share an experience of being an underdog. Ask: *What would it be like for a country or a group of soldiers to know they were going to face a battle and win no matter what?*

EXPLAIN: *For the soldiers who are facing battle, knowing that they would win and conquer their enemy without casualties is cause for celebration. The matter then becomes one of simply executing the plans for winning.*

TRANSITION: *In today's study, we will see that when the people entered the promised land, the Jordan River was behind them and the city of Jericho stood before them. By God's promise and Joshua's leadership, this was a time for the people of Israel to faithfully trust and execute. Through their obedience, the Israelites would win the battle. Faith also provided salvation to Rahab and her family, because they saw the power of God.*

GUIDE: Use Understand the Context (PSG, pp. 23-24), **Pack Item 1** (Map: The Judges of Israel), and **Pack Item 4** (Time Line: Joshua; Judges; Ruth) to make the connection between Rahab and the children of Israel.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call on a volunteer to read Joshua 6:12-14. Point out that there was no delay in Joshua's obedience.

ASK: *What was the significance of taking the ark of the Lord into battle?*

EXPLAIN: Verse 12 shows us that the priests carried the ark of the Lord, which contained the Ten Commandments, the law for the people. Compare this to putting on the armor of the Lord in Ephesians 6:10-20.

ASK: *How was the obedience of the people an act of celebration? How should our faithful obedience be an act of celebration and worship to God? From the PSG (pp. 25-26): What potential disasters await believers who refuse to wait for God's plan and timing? Does obedience always require patience? Explain.*

TRANSITION: *The people were obedient by waiting. They had done what God commanded for six days. God would call for them to march one more day, this time in even more unconventional ways.*

READ: Direct a volunteer to read Joshua 6:15-19, as the group takes note of what happens on the seventh day.

EXPLAIN: *God requires complete obedience from us. In turn, we can have confidence in God's perfect plan for our lives.*

REVIEW: Read Joshua 6:17b-19. Then lead the group to list the conditions given for the people to conquer the city.

ASK: *How did these conditions reflect God's desire to see salvation even in the darkest of places? What was significant in that the people did not keep the items of gold but rather dedicated them all to the Lord? From the PSG (p. 28): How is a warning also a promise? Can a promise also be a warning? Explain.*

EXPLAIN: *God was showing that the victory was not for the soldiers to have the spoils of the war; rather, the victory was His. It was a testimony to the fact that the soldiers were not only fighting for God but also fought with Him on their side. Direct attention to **Pack Item 10** (Poster: *Mighty Acts of God in Early Israel*) to discuss other great acts God had done for Israel. Ask: *Why is it important to remember God's past acts before the battles we face in life?**

TRANSITION: *The people had been obedient. They were making their final preparations. Now would come the time to see God's hand at work.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Joshua 6:20-25, as the rest of the group notes what happened after the wall fell.

LIST: Guide the group to provide evidence from the passage that the wall's collapse was a miracle. Lead them to see the effect of the wall's collapsing: marching, trumpets blowing, the people shouting, the fact that only the wall fell (not Rahab's house, which was built in the wall), and the fact that the wall seemed indestructible and yet still fell.

EXPLAIN: *Verse 20 states that the Israelites charged straight in and took the city. There was no delay in their obedience because everything had been done as God had said. There was no reason for them to delay.*

ASK: *How does obedience demonstrate what we really believe? Can we have genuine belief or faith without obedience? Explain. (PSG, p. 29)*

LECTURE: *God calls for complete holiness from His people. Read Leviticus 19:2 to emphasize the command from God for holiness. Because God is holy, He is not going to allow His people to be contaminated by foreign cultures. This call for holiness calls for our own separation from sin as well. All believers have received the exhortation to be holy (1 Pet. 1:13-16).*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

REVIEW: *Even though we may not be called to capture cities literally, there are enemies we face spiritually every day. How we face those battles—either with delay, a lack of trust, or by faith—will determine whether or not we see these battles as God's victories.*

DISCUSS: Read the first paragraph under In My Context (PSG, p. 30). Create smaller groups and direct each group to discuss the first question set: *Describe what God is specifically asking you to do with your life. What steps are you taking in preparation and out of obedience?*

PRAY: Direct the group to reflect on acts of obedience they have taken that opened new opportunities of service for them. Thank God for those opportunities and for His faithfulness.



PRACTICE

- Send postcards, emails, or text messages to remind your group about key truths discovered during the week. Encourage them to memorize this week's memory verse (Joshua 4:24).
- Contact those not present, asking them for prayer requests. Use the opportunity to encourage them in their spiritual lives.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

Collect a war story that ended in victory when the odds seemed stacked against the soldiers. Be ready to explain what happened and the moment the battle changed from the perspective of the soldiers.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To enhance the study of Joshua 6:15-19, discuss: *How is Rahab's story connected to 2 Peter 3:9? How is she connected to Jesus?* Read Matthew 1:5 and point out **Pack Item 9** (Poster: Family Tree of Boaz and Ruth) to visually show Rahab's connection to Jesus' genealogy. Explain that Rahab's story is one of faith (Heb. 11:31) that would become an example to all believers. Use the Bible Skill activity on page 26 of the PSG to understand Rahab and her significance in this story. Ask: *How does the saving of Rahab speak to the grace and mercy of God?*
- To supplement the teaching of Joshua 6:17 for the sparing of Rahab, read Joshua 2:12-21 to portray the scarlet cord as a symbol to the people of Israel of grace and mercy. Ask: *How does the cross carry this significance for us today?*
- To supplement the teaching of Joshua 6:21,24, read Deuteronomy 20 to understand how God called for interaction in war.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Lead the group to record in the margin of their PSG a battle they currently face. Point to the memory verse for this session (Joshua 4:24). Direct the group to identify how the memory verse addresses that battle.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Lead the group to sing "It Is Finished," by Bill and Gloria Gaither, to close the session.