



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE • THE BATTLE OF JERICHO •
JOSHUA 6:1-27 • 03/04/2018

MAIN POINT

When we approach obstacles with prayer, those obstacles become opportunities in the hands of a powerful and faithful God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What was a time or event that you eagerly awaited? What did the anticipation feel like?

How did you approach God as you waited? Was prayer easy or hard during that time? Why?

Looking back, how can you see God working in that time?

Anticipation is a part of life. We get fired up waiting for big moments— for graduations, weddings, or jobs. The nation of Israel had to wait 40 years to enter the Promised Land after leaving Egypt. But in their anticipation, they never imagined the obstacle before them or how God would see them through it. When we approach obstacles with prayer, those obstacles become opportunities in the hands of a powerful and faithful God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 6:1-5.

What does it mean that the inhabitants of Jericho were “tightly shut up”? What challenges, if any, did this situation create for the Israelites? For the Lord?

When the Lord spoke to Joshua, He told Joshua that the city was “delivered.” Why did God use the past tense when the Israelites had not yet conquered the city?

Jericho was well fortified with outer walls that were six feet thick and inner walls that were fifty feet high. It was an imposing structure. The city’s inhabitants saw the Israelites coming and hunkered down for a fight. This situation made the task of taking the city that much harder for the Israelites, yet not for their God. The statement in 6:1 shows a great potential obstacle that is effortlessly overcome by the all-powerful God.

Do you think it was easy for Joshua and the Israelites to follow these instructions given what they were facing? Why or why not?

What is your Jericho? How can you pray to God in faith that He will do what He has promised to do? What does confident prayer look like?

God's instructions to Joshua about the taking of Jericho contain no reference to military strategy but rather indicate that it is essentially to be a ritual ceremony. God was giving the city to Joshua and the Israelites; He did not require their plans and strategy. The use of the past tense "delivered" shows that while the event had not yet happened, the outcome was decided by the Lord. Prayer can reflect this type of confidence in God.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 6:6-11.

How does Joshua's order given to the people compare to the instructions God gave Joshua? What does that tell you about Joshua?

Why was the ark of the Lord marched around the city? What was the significance of the ark?

Beyond the instruction God gave him, Joshua gave further instruction regarding the armed guard that was to walk out in front of the ark. Joshua also expanded upon the way in which the ark was referred to: "the ark of the covenant" (v. 6) and "the ark of the Lord" (vv. 6-7), focusing the people's attention on it and its significance. The battle plan was God's and the success would be God's. Joshua had faith and was obedient. The ark was God's footstool; it was the location where the Israelites could encounter the one, true God. The ark led them through the wilderness and it would once again lead the march. God marched before His people.

Why do you think Joshua told everyone to be silent until the final shout? How did silence call on the people to have faith? If they could not speak to one another, who could they talk to?

When difficult issues and seasons of life arise, we would do well to first approach God in prayer. Then we can approach others who can give wise counsel. If we run to others with problems first, then our actions could reveal our faith is first in people, not in God.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 6:12-21.

How do you think the soldiers felt as they marched silently?

Why is it important to praise God as you pray and trust Him?

The priests blew the horns to praise God for what He was going to do. Likewise, our prayers can offer praise for the answers we know God will give.

| HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 6:22-27.

In what ways did God keep His promises?

Why is it important understand that God keeps His promises? How does that affect your prayers?

God kept His promises by delivering the city (except for Rahab and her family, who He had pledged to protect because they cared for the spies—Josh. 2:14, 17-20). We must always remember we are praying to God who keeps His promises. They may not be kept immediately, but in the end He is who He says He is and does what He promises.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are the Jerichos that you are going through right now? What is the hardest thing about being faithful while waiting?

How can you encourage someone who is going through a tough season to trust God in prayer?

How should you seek God when it comes to His promises? What does it look like to pray in a way that remembers God keeps His promises?

PRAY

Close in prayer, asking God to help you in your prayers. Ask that the Holy Spirit would guide you to pray for the things God wills. Pray for the concerns of your group and the Jerichos they are facing right now.

COMMENTARY

JOSHUA 6:1-27

6:1. This verse sets the stage for the episode at Jericho and is grammatically not part of the narrative story line. The problem was Jericho was “tightly shut up.”

6:2-5. God’s instructions to Joshua about the taking of Jericho contain no reference to military strategy but rather indicate that it is essentially to be a ritual ceremony. God’s words consist of an encouraging assurance to Joshua, instructions for Israel’s part in the episode, and a statement about the amazing results. The ritual nature of the episode is suggested by the absence of any military strategy, by the blowing of the trumpets, by the prominence of the priests and the ark of the covenant, and by the solemn processions.

The outcome of the entire affair is announced to Joshua at the outset: God had already given Jericho, its king, and its warriors into Joshua’s hands. Thus, the extensive marching, blowing of trumpets, and shouting that the Israelites were to engage in is shown to be essentially ceremonial because God was giving the victory. This is reinforced by the comment at the end of v. 5, where God stated clearly that the wall would collapse through no effort on the people’s part beyond the ceremonial actions just mentioned. Seven priests blowing seven trumpets were to march in front of the ark around Jericho for seven days, once each day and seven times on the seventh day.

6:6-7. As he did several times earlier in connection with the crossing of the Jordan, Joshua passed along to the people what we are told God had commanded him. Beyond

this is the instruction in v. 7 about the “armed guard” that was to walk in front of the ark, along with the priests. Joshua also expanded upon the way in which the ark was referred, focusing the people’s attention on it and its significance.

6:8-11. Little new substantive information is found here except that, in addition to the armed guard and the trumpet-blowing priests preceding the ark, there was also a “rear guard” following the ark. All this time the horns were sounding. The noise appears to have been solely from the horns, since v. 10 states that Joshua had previously instructed the people that they were not to make any sounds until the day on which he would instruct them to shout. The silence is enjoined in three ways: (1) they were not to raise a shout, (2) they were not to make their voices heard, and (3) they were not to utter a word. Verse 11 prosaically tells of the circling of the city one time on the first day and the return to spend the night at the encampment.

6:12-14. The activity on the second day was exactly the same as on the first, and it is reported as such (v. 13 echoes vv. 8-9 very closely, and v. 14 echoes v. 11). The narrator, now that the pattern is established, states that the same happened on the first six days, and the stage is set for the climactic seventh day. Verse 12 begins with the statement that “Joshua got up early in the morning,” which is exactly the same wording as we find in 3:1, another passage where an important march was to be taken.

6:15-16. The marching action on the seventh day is described much more quickly than for days one and two, since the story’s climax quickly approaches. In strict accord with God’s instructions (vv. 4-5), Joshua commanded the people to shout when the priests gave one long, sustained blast on their horns. Once again, the already-accomplished fact that the Lord had given Israel the land is reported (now, “the city”). The report of the execution of his command is delayed until v. 20, however, by his instructions regarding the Israelites’ treatment of Rahab and their handling of the things that had been devoted to destruction.

6:17-19. The bulk of Joshua’s instructions had to do with how the Israelites were to deal with the city of Jericho, its inhabitants, and its booty once these fell into their hands. First, he made it clear that these all were to be completely destroyed. Rahab was specifically exempted from this destruction in the first reference to her since chapter 2. These verses contain the first significant discussion in the Book of Joshua of the related

concepts of “devoted things,” “devoting a city to the Lord,” and the complete destruction of the Canaanites. We have already noted the instructions in v. 17 to devote the entire city of Jericho to destruction.

Certain items were to be set apart for destruction, and if they were not, Israel itself would be subject to the same fate; Israel itself would become “a devoted thing.” Verse 19 continues to develop this idea. The treasures of Jericho were to be set apart for the Lord, since they were sacred, that is, holy. As such, they were to go into His treasury. The term here for “treasury” is the same one used for those in Solomon’s temple, built many years later (1 Kgs 7:51). However, since no temple stood in Joshua’s day, the exact nature and location of this treasury is unknown.

6:20-21. The actual “battle” of Jericho is described very briefly in v. 20, and the story line suspended after v. 16 is now resumed, with the report of the execution of Joshua’s command that the people should shout. Verse 21 expands on the description at the end of v. 20: the Israelites’ taking of the city entailed their devoting everything in it to destruction. The totality of the destruction is reinforced by the two word pairs in v. 21—“men and women,” “young and old”—and by the listing of the animals, which can be translated as “and even including cattle, sheep, and donkeys.”

6:22-25. Joshua instructed two spies—the spies who had earlier made the oath with Rahab to spare her and her family on the basis of her faith, which had been demonstrated in her actions and her words. The instructions were that they should bring Rahab and her family out of the city alive, in accordance with their oath to her, and they did precisely that. The entire city was put to the torch, except for the articles that had been mentioned in v. 19—the valuables that were saved for the Lord’s sanctuary: the articles of silver, gold, bronze, and iron. Rahab and her family and extended household were spared because of what she did for the spies, and, the author tells us, she still lived there until the day that he wrote those words.

6:26. Joshua pronounced a curse against anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho. Many years later, this curse found a fulfillment when Hiel, a man from Bethel, “rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun” (1 Kgs 16:34). The key words of the curse are found in both texts, showing the strict faithfulness of the Lord to His own words or those legitimately spoken on His behalf.

6:27. The statement here about the Lord's being with Joshua and his fame spreading throughout the land echoes two earlier statements, where God promised Joshua His presence, just as He had been with Moses (3:7) and where God began to exalt Joshua in the eyes of the people (4:14).

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 8:1-29