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Joshua and Jericho

Scripture: Joshua 1:1-18; 6:1-27

Theme: When God commands, obedience brings victory

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Joshua and Jericho present a dramatic confrontation between divine command and human resistance, illustrating how obedience to God's will, even when it defies natural expectations, can achieve impossible victories. At the outset, Joshua is commissioned by God to take the Israelites into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:1, 9), a task that would have seemed impossible given the Canaanite strongholds and their fortified walls. Yet God promises Joshua that He will not only equip him but also be with him, assuring him that no task is too great if done in faith. The people's response is one of cautious obedience: they gather their belongings, but their hesitancy reflects a lingering fear of the unknown, a common struggle even among those who trust God. The turning point comes when God reveals His plan through a seemingly absurd command, Jericho's walls must be marched around seven days, seven times, with trumpets and priests blowing horns (Joshua 6:1, 5). The Israelites' obedience to this unconventional directive leads to an immediate and complete collapse of the city's defenses, proving that God's strength is not in human might but in His faithfulness to fulfill His promises. This event exposes the folly of relying on human strength alone and the necessity of trusting God's timing and method, even when they defy logic. The lesson of Jericho challenges high school students to confront the tension between God's commands and human desires for control or comfort. The Canaanites' rebellion, denying the Israelites access to the land, mirrors modern struggles where people resist God's will out of pride, fear, or distrust. Joshua's victory over Jericho is not just a physical conquest but a spiritual one: the city's fall symbolizes the collapse of idolatry and the triumph of faith over fear. The key verse, Joshua 1:9, serves as a reminder that God's promises are unshakable, but victory requires both divine trust and human discipline. For adolescents grappling with questions of faith, obedience, and the limits of human power, this story offers a chance to reflect on how God's commands may feel arbitrary or extreme but ultimately lead to freedom and purpose. The lesson invites them to ask: When God calls us to something seemingly impossible, will we obey, or will we question? The answer determines whether we experience His strength or remain bound by our own fears.

Bible Story

The story of Joshua and Jericho begins in a world where the Israelites have finally crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Moses, their leader and prophet, has passed away, leaving Joshua, his faithful and younger companion, to take up the mantle. God doesn't hesitate to speak to Joshua, promising him one simple command: "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life." This isn't just confidence, it's divine assurance. Joshua, now the leader of a people who've just survived the harshness of the desert, feels both fear and excitement. The challenge isn't just military; it's spiritual: Can they trust God to work through them, even when the odds seem impossible?

Jericho, the first city in Canaan, stands as a towering symbol of the land's rich resources, gold, silver, and the best timber, along with its sinister reputation for wickedness. The people of Israel, though weary, are still hesitant. But God, in His mercy, reminds Joshua that He has already prepared the way. The people's fear isn't dismissed outright; Joshua acknowledges their doubts: "The people are trembling" (Joshua 1:18), and God reassures him that the Israelites' fear is temporary. Yet, the real tension arises when Joshua assigns leadership roles, strengthening the people's resolve. God's plan isn't just to conquer Jericho; it's to train a generation to obey, to trust, and to see God's power in their own hands. The people's obedience isn't guaranteed, but their willingness to listen is the first step toward trusting God fully.

The moment of truth comes when Joshua commands the Israelites to march around Jericho's walls seven days, blowing trumpets and shouting. At first glance, this seems absurd, a military tactic that ignores the city's defenses. But God's way often defies human logic. The people, though nervous, obey, even as the walls tremble under their relentless march. The seventh day's final trumpet blares, and the people shout, a cry so powerful it splits the heavens. The walls of Jericho collapse in an instant, and the people rush in, destroying everything in their path. Yet, there's a twist: Rahab, the prostitute who hid two spies, is spared. Her faith in God's mercy proves that salvation isn't just for the righteous. Joshua's victory isn't just military; it's a demonstration of God's power to redeem even the most unexpected lives.

The fall of Jericho isn't just a triumph for Joshua or the Israelites, it's a declaration that God's promises are real. The people, now victorious, face the challenge of what comes next: faith without visible signs. Joshua's leadership here is both bold and humble. He doesn't celebrate victory in arrogance but commands the people to be diligent, to keep the covenant, and to remember God's work. The story ends with the Israelites taking the city, but the real question remains: Can they trust God's plan for the future? Jericho's fall is a microcosm of the broader story, God's power is present, but obedience requires more than just strength. The hard questions here aren't just about military strategy but about whether people will choose God's way, even when it's the only way. Joshua's victory is both earned and divine, a bridge between the past and the promises yet to come.

Key Verse

Joshua 1:9

Discussion Questions

- Joshua 1:9 says, "Be strong and courageous", a command repeated often in the Bible. How might this call to courage differ for someone today compared to the Israelites in the wilderness? What fears or challenges in your own life might make it harder to trust God's direction, even when the path isn't clear?
- In Joshua 6, the people follow an unusual plan to conquer Jericho: marching around the city seven times, blowing trumpets, and then shouting. What might this symbolic action teach us about faith and obedience? How could something that seems extreme or counterintuitive today still be a way to trust God's leading in our lives?
- After the fall of Jericho, Joshua and the Israelites experience both victory and confusion (e.g., the Israelites' fear of Ai in Joshua 7). How does this moment, where success leads to doubt, mirror struggles in your own faith?

journey? What lessons might Joshua's later failures (like the idolatry of the Golden Calf) teach us about humility and repentance?

- The Bible describes Jericho's destruction as God's work (Joshua 6:20), but the people's actions (e.g., the trumpet, the shouting) are also part of the story. How do you reconcile God's sovereignty with human obedience? In what ways do you think faith and action are intertwined, like the Israelites marching together for God's purpose?
- The story ends with Joshua appointing leaders (Joshua 1:14, 18) and the people committing to God's law. Some scholars argue this chapter sets up Joshua as a leader who fails later (e.g., in the Golden Calf). How does this tension, glory in the beginning, fall in the end, challenge us to think about leadership, legacy, and faith? What does it say about human (and spiritual) imperfection and God's grace?

Prayer Focus

"Lord, You call us to follow Your commands, and when we trust in You, we find strength and victory. Help us to obey boldly, like Joshua, and trust in Your power to lead us into a land of hope and freedom."

>> Missions Spotlight

The story of Joshua and Jericho demonstrates how God empowers His people to take bold, decisive action for His mission, even in the face of seemingly impossible walls. By faithfully following His commands (like the Israelites marching around Jericho), we see how obedience opens doors for the Gospel to reach the unreached, proving that God's power transcends human limitations. Just as the city fell, so too can His truth conquer spiritual strongholds when people are willing to trust Him and act in unity.

-> To the Cross

To the Cross Joshua and Jericho's walls fell because they trusted God, not their own strength. In the same way, Jesus conquered sin and death by trusting God's power through His sacrifice on the cross, offering hope to all who believe.