

Jericho Falls

(Joshua 6)

Introduction

Have your parents ever asked you to do something that seemed silly (weird or dumb)? Did you question them or argue with them? [Teacher, let the children respond.] We don't always understand why our parents ask us to do things. In the same way, there will be times when God will ask you to do something that seems hard to understand.

You may wonder why God wants us to do things like be kind to people we don't even like or to forgive someone who was really mean to us. But when we choose to obey God's commands, even the ones that we don't understand, we are showing that we trust God. And trusting God even when we don't understand is always better than doing things our own way!

When the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, they faced an impossible situation: a huge fortified city that God wanted them to conquer. God gave them some very strange instructions on how to overcome it! Did they obey?

Opening Prayer

Father, You want us to live lives that are pleasing to you. Please teach us to trust and obey You even when it doesn't make sense to us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lesson

The Israelites were finally in the Promised Land. God had opened the Jordan River and the people crossed over on dry land. Now they were ready to take the whole land. But doing this would not be easy. The land hadn't been sitting empty all the years they had been in Egypt. It was full of the Canaanites! And they didn't want the Israelites to come in. They had strong armies ready to fight and they had strong cities with huge thick walls around them.

But God had instructed them to conquer the Canaanites because they were wicked. They worshipped idols and lived lives that were detestable to God. God wanted the Israelites to rid the land of all these evil people and their evil practices. He wanted the Promised Land to be a place where His ways would be carried out by His people.

The first city the Israelites had to conquer was Jericho. Jericho was a beautiful city with springs of water and many palm trees. It was known as the "City of Palms" (Deuteronomy 34:3).

But, Jericho was built like a fortress. It had huge double walls around it – making it one of the strongest of the walled cities. The walls were so thick and strong that houses were built right into the walls! The people of Jericho had their own army (6:2), too, so they felt like they were invincible!

The people of Jericho knew the Israelites were coming, so they shut the gates to the city and waited for the battle to begin. They were counting on their army, the thick walls of their city and the protection of their false gods.

Joshua 6:1

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in.

Jericho's gates were shut tight and their soldiers were standing ready to fight. To the children of Israel, it seemed there was no way to defeat Jericho. It seemed impossible, but God had a plan to help His people.

God hated the fact that the people of Jericho worshipped false gods. He wanted to punish the people in Jericho for their wickedness and prove that the land belonged to Him and not to the false gods the people of Jericho worshiped. So, God gave Joshua some very unusual battle plans.

Joshua 6:3-5

You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town."

These were very unusual battle plans, weren't they! What do you think Joshua thought when he heard these instructions?

I'm sure that Joshua thought this would be a very strange way to conquer a city. But he didn't try to argue with God! Joshua trusted God, so he passed the orders on to the people. And the Israelites listened to Joshua and got ready to do exactly what God had told them to do.

The Israelites were to march around the city in a great procession. Soldiers were to be at the front, then seven priests with trumpets of ram's horns, followed by more priests carrying the ark of the covenant (the golden treasure chest that held God's law). More of the army got in step behind them.

As the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho, the priests blew their horns; the only noise was the sound of the horns and the stomp, stomp, stomp of thousands of marching feet! No one said a word. After they had marched around Jericho one time, the Israelites went back to their camp without a word.

Six days in a row the people marched silently around the city of Jericho one time, just as God had told them to do. What do you think

the people in the city of Jericho were thinking? Everyone in the city must have heard the sound of the trumpets and watched as the Israelites walked around their city walls in silence. They probably kept waiting for the attack to begin. They might have thought it was funny that the Israelites were just silently walking around the city blowing their trumpets! But, they must have been terrified, too!

On the seventh day the procession marched around the city once like they had done the previous six days, but instead of going back to camp, the people kept walking. They marched around a second time, a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time, a sixth time, and a seventh time – then, as they completed the seventh time around, they did something different!

Joshua 6:16

The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the town!"

The people shouted as loudly as they could and the huge, strong wall around the city of Jericho began to crack! Suddenly the big, tall walls of Jericho crumbled and fell down and the army of Israelites marched straight in, just as God had told them to do!

God told Joshua to destroy Jericho and all the people in it because they had put their faith in false gods (see Deuteronomy 20:16-18). There was only one family that was saved – Rahab's family. She was the woman who had helped two Israelite spies because she trusted in God's power. So, the spies rescued Rahab and her family because they promised to take care of her.

Joshua 6:23

The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

Rahab and her family went to live with the Israelites.

Did marching around Jericho seem to make sense? God's battle plans seemed very strange, didn't they? Suppose the Israelites had said, "Let's not wait until the seventh day to shout. Let's shout on the third day". Do you think that God would have made the walls come tumbling down? Would they have been able to conquer Jericho?

The Israelites listened to God and trusted Him. And, even though it must have seemed strange, they did just what He had told them and the battle was won. Only by obeying God's instructions did Israel have victory over Jericho. They needed to know what God said, believe it, and act on it. Simply by marching, shouting and obeying, God gave them the victory!

We often have fears, frustrations, and problems in our lives that stand like fortified cities.

Do you have any "strong walled cities" in your life that you need to overcome?

- Maybe you are trying to learn something that is hard, like the violin or a foreign language.
- Maybe there are scary things that you are facing in life, like parents that argue.
- Maybe you have had your heart broken because a friend said mean things to you.
- Maybe you are having trouble with a sin that you just can't overcome, like being selfish or disobedient to your parents.

Whatever fear or frustration or problem you face, you can overcome it by listening to God and obeying His word.

As I said, many of the God commands can seem hard to understand. For example, in Matt 5:44 He tells us to love your enemies and to pray for those that are mean to you. But it's important for us to obey God just as He requests even when we don't want to. We must always trust and obey God. Remember, God only wants the best for us.

Closing Prayer

Father, there are many obstacles in our lives that seem impossible to conquer. But today we've been encouraged to have faith in Your word and to obey You, even when we don't fully understand why You ask us to do the things You do. Please help us to trust and obey You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Act out the Story

Materials:

Cardboard tubes, old sheets, markers, and masking tape.

Actors:

- Joshua and his fighting men
- Priests with rams' horns (cardboard tubes)
- Priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant
- The rear guard
- "Wall" (children holding up a sheet)

Experience:

Optionally, allow children to make "trumpets" by decorating the cardboard tubes with markers and to draw large stones on the sheets to look like city walls.

Tell children to pretend that it's the seventh day in the story. Teacher is to count out loud as they silently march around the "Walls" seven times blowing their trumpets. When they complete the final time around, say, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!" to signal the "Walls" to fall down.

Response:

Ask: How do you think the Israelites felt while they marched around the walls? How did they see God's power on the seventh day? When have you seen God's power in your life?

Attach the wall sheets to a wall in your classroom. Have children use markers to draw or write their fears, frustrations, and problems on the wall sheets.

Closing:

Say: The Israelites might have been afraid of the people in the mighty, walled city of Jericho. But when they followed God's instructions, they saw that He was more powerful than anything. Point to the wall sheets. God is more powerful than our problems, too. Let's shout and watch them fall down.

Lead children in shouting, and then pull the sheets off the wall.

Game Center**Musical Chair Game**

Play a game similar to Musical Chairs, but do not remove a chair each round of play. Set up a circle of chairs facing out, one chair per review question, and number the chairs. (Do not put the chairs in numerical order; mix up the numbering.)

Children "march" around the circle of chairs while music plays. When the music stops they quickly sit down. (You might want to play the song "*Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho*" as the children march: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3QUS4B0iaM>.)

The first round of play, the child seated in chair #1 answers the first question. The second round of play the child, the child seated in chair #2 answers the second question, and so forth, until all the questions have been answered.

Or, use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

1. How did Joshua show that he trusted in God's commands? What happened because the Israelites obeyed and did things God's way?
2. What kinds of decisions do children your age have to make? What could a child your age choose to do in that situation that would show he or she trusts and obeys God?
3. How could a child your age show that he or she trusts God with all of his or her heart when he or she is at home or school?
4. When might other children your age think that doing things God's way is silly or wrong? (When everyone is teasing an unpopular kid and you know God wants you to be kind. When another child is doing something dangerous and you think you should tell an adult about it. When a friend has the answers to a hard test you have to take and you don't want to cheat.)
5. Why is it a good idea to obey God's commands?
6. What good things might happen when a child your age does things God's way? (Other people will trust him or her. Others will respect him or her. That person won't have to worry about getting caught doing something wrong. That person will know that God is happy with his or her actions.)

Sword Drills

1. Read **Proverbs 3:1-2**. What does it mean to keep God's commands in your heart? What does verse 2 name as benefits of obeying God's commands?
2. Read **Proverbs 3:5-6**. What do these verses say that God will do when we trust Him? Why is a straight path better than a

crooked path? (It is shorter and easier to follow.) What does it mean to say that God will make our paths straight? (God will show us the right way to live.)

3. Read **Romans 13:9-10**. How does obeying the command to love our neighbor help us obey all the other commands in these verses? What can you do to show love to others?
4. Read **Ephesians 4:29**. How can you obey God with what you say? When is it hard for you to remember to obey this command?

Other Game Questions:

1. What do you think Joshua thought when he heard God's battle plans? (He might have thought they were unusual.)
2. How did Joshua react when he heard God's unusual battle plans? (He didn't question God or argue with Him, he acted in trust and obedience.)
3. What do you think the people in the city of Jericho were thinking as they watched the Israelites circling their city? (First, they were afraid, then probably confused, then possibly mocking.)
4. How do you think the Israelites felt while they marched around the walls?
5. How do you think the Israelites felt when the walls came down? (Amazed, glad)
6. How do you think the people of Jericho felt when the walls came down? (Stunned, scared)
7. How many days did the Israelites circle Jericho? (7)
8. Why did Joshua save Rahab and her family? (The spies had made a promise to her.)

9. How many times did the Israelites circle the city? (13)
10. Why did the Israelites circle the city? (It is what God told them to do.)
11. Why did God choose to defeat Jericho without using Israel's army? (To show both Israel and Canaan that it was God, not Israel's army, that defeated Jericho.)

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