

You can find a digital copy of this lesson plan and a co-teaching variation of the plan at myfairviewbaptist.org/small-groups

June 28, 2026

WINNING STRATEGY: JOSHUA 6:12-25

Introductory Activity

Before you begin, tell the group they will need their Bibles for today's lesson. If they normally only use their Personal Study Guide, ask them to pull out their Bible as well and turn to Joshua chapter 6.

Say: When young people are at summer camp, they might participate in activities like trust falls. In this activity, a group gathers behind one person standing on a chair and catches him or her when the person falls backwards into their arms. Insurance companies may not like these activities today, but they were meant to build trust in groups. It's really a silly activity, but it helps a person experience what it means to trust others. Trust is integral to our relationships, even as adults.

Ask: "What is involved in learning to trust someone?" (ETB PSG, 37)

Explain: Trusting someone is a learned behavior. We trust our mechanic because he has demonstrated his reliability in repairing our car's previous problems. We trust a cookbook because the recipes have proven to produce delicious meals.

Summarize and Transition: In today's lesson, we are going to learn that we can trust the Lord. In our focal passage, the Lord instructs the Israelites to "fight" a battle in a nontraditional and, frankly, illogical manner. Regardless of Israel's history of mistrust, their recent experience at the Jordan River and Joshua's leadership causes them to obey the Lord's instructions, and God demonstrates His trustworthiness through His actions. The Lord and His work are the central themes of today's passage. David Jackman says, "If ever there was a case study of the Lord as the hero of the narrative, it is [Joshua chapter six]." (Preaching, 67)

To bring us up to speed in our story, remember that the people of God had moved from the "wilderness" on the east bank of the Jordan to the promised land on the west bank through a miraculous work of God. He had stopped the flow of the flooded Jordan River and dried the riverbed, allowing the people to cross over. Upon entering the land, the people renewed their covenant with the Lord and participated in the Passover celebration. Now it was time to begin cleansing the land of evil so the descendants of Abraham could take possession of the land. The first obstacle is the walled city of Jericho. Let's dive into chapter six and see what God does.

1. INSTRUCTIONS OBEYED (JOSH. 6:12-14)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 6:12-14.

Explain: Our lesson picks up in the middle of the chapter. To understand what is going on, we need to go back up to the previous chapter. At the conclusion of chapter 5, Joshua leaves the camp and goes nearer to the walled city. The Bible does not tell us what Joshua is doing or thinking, but we can imagine that he is considering the coming battle. Maybe he is observing the walled city and contemplating the siege to come. Maybe he is observing the land around the city and developing battle formations. While he is there, the "commander of the Lord's army" stands before him with a "drawn sword in His hand." This is no angel. This is

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Joshua* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* (NAC)
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Joshua (TOTC)

the Lord Himself, possibly the preincarnate Christ. Upon encountering the Lord, Joshua asks Him, "What does my lord want to say to his servant?" Joshua chapter 6:2-5 are the instructions of the Lord. His instructions do not include plans for a siege of the walled city. Nor do they include battle formations.

Activity: (This is where your group members will use their Bibles instead of the PSG) Ask the group to examine Joshua 6:2-5 for a moment to discover God's "battle plan." After a few moments, ask them to tell the group what God instructed Joshua to do. (They will probably describe the 6 days that include one pass around the city and the seventh day that includes 7 passes around the city, culminating in a trumpet blast and a shout. *You are going to highlight the religious actions in the discussion below.*)

Explain: The first thing we should note about this passage and the "battle of Jericho" is that it required something of the people. "[Victory] was not delivered to them on a plate, as it were, by overwhelming supernatural intervention that required them to do nothing." (Preaching, 67) They had to do something, just not what they might have expected. They were not going to lay siege to the city or storm its walls. Instead, the battle plan is a religious ceremony focused on the Lord.

Activity: Ask the group to look at Joshua 6:13 and describe how the men were arranged in the march around the city. (As the men marched around the city, a column of soldiers marched first, followed by priests with horns. Behind these priests marched more priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant. They were then followed by another column of soldiers.)

Explain: The soldiers were told to march. "But not like soldiers typically march on the battlefield. Israel's army was to march like soldiers would march in a parade." (ETBC, 41) It was not just any parade; it was a religious parade, a religious ceremony. "The purpose of the parade is to focus on the ark and therefore on the Lord, so that both Israel and Jericho will know who is responsible for what is about to happen." (Preaching, 70)

Application and Discussion: Joshua 6:1 tells us, "Now Jericho was strongly fortified because of the Israelites—no one leaving or entering." The city was at Def-com 5. The citizens were on lockdown, and no one was getting in, especially the Israelites. We have already seen that Joshua was in planning mode. He knew that the city was impregnable and that Israel would be forced to fight hard if they planned to win the day. **Ask:** Have you ever found yourself in a "no-win" situation or a situation in which it was going to take all you had to figure things out? What are some situations like this that a person or family might find themselves in? (Examples might include: a serious illness, a financial emergency, a situation caused by a child's bad decisions.)

Explain: Like the highly experienced military leaders in Israel, we might come up with highly logical ways to "solve the problem." However, God had another plan for them, and He has another plan for us. He probably will not tell us to march around the hospital after receiving a dire diagnosis. He probably will not tell us to pile our bills on the kitchen table and march around it. But He does tell us to follow His instructions given to us in Scripture. **Read Proverbs 3:5-6** (See Notes Box above.)

In the following verses, Solomon tells us to trust the Lord and follow Him when we face health troubles and address financial situations. These are fortress walls that might seem impregnable to us, but like the Israelites,

Notes:

Notes on the Commander of the Lord: We know it is the Lord because Joshua falls in worship, and the commander tells him to "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." This is similar to the events that took place when the Lord met with Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:5).

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

we are to rely on the Lord. Instead of relying on their own strength and their own plans, they simply had to practice worshipful obedience. It was not a logical plan, but it was the best plan. The same is true for us.

Summarize Transition: The ways of the disciple are not always logical or aligned with the ways of the world. When we face financial problems, the ways of the world might encourage us to dial back on giving to the church or others. The ways of the world might tell us to fret and worry excessively during medical situations. The world might tell us to turn our back on wayward kids or, conversely, to acquiesce to their every whim. The disciple of Christ continues to practice biblical stewardship, faithful trust, and godly boundaries during these situations. The ways of God do not always fit with the logic of this world. Nevertheless, “We should obey God’s directions, even when they don’t make sense.” (ETB LG, 51)

In the next passage, we are going to see that victory is assured. We will also take a moment to discuss why God instructs the Israelites in the ways He does.

2. VICTORY ASSURED (JOSH. 6:15-19)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 6:15-19.

Explain: It might not be obvious, but this passage is about faithfulness. Verse 15 demonstrates the people’s faithfulness to God’s plan. They have consistently followed His “battle plan” and marched around the city once a day for six days. Now on the seventh day, they have marched around the city 7 times. Verse 16 demonstrates God’s faithfulness to give them the city. We will see this gift actualized in the following passage. In verses 17-19, we see two more forms of faithfulness: God’s faithfulness to Himself and God’s faithfulness to Rahab. We will address His faithfulness to Rahab later in the lesson. Here will focus on His faithfulness to Himself.

God’s Faithfulness to Himself:

One of the most difficult aspects of the book of Joshua for modern readers is God’s command to completely and utterly wipe out the people of Canaan. We do not have time to discuss this at length, but we need to address it because it can be confusing. God’s command demonstrates His Faithfulness to Himself. We see this in three ways.

God’s Command is Protective: First, we see that God’s command is protective. On multiple occasions in the Pentateuch, God tells the people that He has called them to be a holy people. One example is Leviticus 20:26. (Read it to the group or have someone prepared beforehand to read it now. See Notes Box.) The people were to be different from all the other nations.

They were to be holy (set apart to God and set apart by their righteous living). God knows that the people of the land would be a corrupting factor if Israel settled among them in the land. In Deuteronomy 20:26-18, God explains this. (See Notes Box.) God knew that the pagans in the land would “teach” Israel how to sin and worship their false gods. Therefore, He instructs them to rid the land of the corrupting influence.

Notes:

Leviticus 20:23

²⁶ You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be mine.

Deuteronomy 20:26-18

¹⁶ However, you must not let any living thing survive among the cities of these people the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. ¹⁷ You must completely destroy them—the Hethite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, and Jebusite—as the Lord your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ so that they won’t teach you to do all the detestable acts they do for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God.

God's Command is the Accomplishment of Prophecy: Second, we see that God's instructions were a fulfillment of prophecy. In the book of Genesis, God promised Abraham that his descendants would possess the land. In Genesis 12:7, God says, "To your offspring: I will give this land." And in Genesis 17:8 He says, "And to you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing—all the land of Canaan—as a permanent possession, and I will be their God." In Deuteronomy 9:5, Moses speaks to the people before they enter the land. There, he tells them that, among other reasons, God is bringing them into the land "in order to fulfill the promise he swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The people could not fully possess the land if others possessed it as well.

God's Command is Purifying: Third, we see that God's instructions were a command to purify the land. This might be the most important reason for God's command to remove the Canaanites from the land. God is bringing judgment on the Canaanites. "Judgement is always God's final resort, and in this case it came after generations of provocation." (Preaching, 72) In Genesis 15:13-16, God again promises the land to the descendants of Abraham. There, He reveals the nation will spend 400 years in captivity, after which they will come out with many possessions. (v. 14 see also Ex. 12:35-36). Lastly, God's words to Abraham reveal His mercy and patience with the people of Canaan. In verse 16, He says, "In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." Amorite is another word for Canaanite. From the time of Abraham to the time of Joshua, God gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent and turn to Him. In Leviticus 18:24 and following, God speaks of the detestable acts of the Canaanites and how they have defiled the land by their actions. God was using Joshua and the army of Israel to cleanse the land of evil. (See notes box on the culpability of the Canaanites.) In conclusion, while God's tactics might be distasteful to the 21st-century mind, we should not judge them. God had a plan to save humanity that required His people to be in the land. God had promised they would have the land. Lastly, the people of Canaan were evil to the core. Jackman writes, "All that has been discovered about Canaanite paganism only serves to confirm the gross and barbaric manifestations of evil that were endemic in their idolatrous culture." (Preaching, 72)

Summarize and Transition: The faithfulness of the people to follow God's commands enabled God's faithfulness to keep His promise to give them the land. We, too, can experience the faithfulness of God when we remain faithful to Him. The disciple's life is one of struggle over sin and the world.

Notes:

The Culpability of the Canaanites:
In Romans 1:19-20, Paul teaches us that the General Revelation of God in creation, history, and mankind is enough to hold mankind responsible for its sin. This applies to the Canaanites. Moreover, they not only had the general revelation of God, but they also had Special Revelation. Jackman writes, "They were not without the knowledge of God, both through his general revelation and through the residue of the image of God within every created human being, however rebellious and depraved. Moreover, they received the specific revelation of God's redemptive deliverance of his people from Egypt and had themselves witnessed the miraculous crossing of the Jordan." (Preaching, 73) We can consider Rahab's experience at this point. In chapter 2, she revealed that the mighty acts of God were known by all in Jericho. The king and the city responded by shutting the gate to God and His people. She, on the other hand, opened her home and her heart to God and His people. The people of Canaan rejected the Lord, and therefore, they faced His judgment.

Notes:

But, “We experience victory in life when we obey God completely.” (ETB LG, 53)

3. WALLS DESTROYED (JOSH. 6:20-21)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 6:20-21.

Explain: In just two verses, the writer gives us the fall of Jericho. The people shouted, and the walls fell. The more literal translation describing the collapse of the walls is “fall down under itself.” The image here is of them being pushed down from above. This, along with the brief description of the victory, highlights the general theme that it is God who fights and brings victory. Paul speaks similarly in 2 Corinthians 10. There, he speaks of those opposed to the gospel and his “battle” against them. He says in verse 4 that the “weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds.” Paul faced the strongholds of sin in the Corinthian church. We face different strongholds or walls in our lives. The strongholds we face can be those of habitual sin or negative attitudes that restrain our Kingdom work. We can also face walls to spiritual growth or Kingdom work, like insecurity, unforgiveness, or the trauma of past experiences.

Discuss: What are some “weapons of warfare” made “powerful through God” that we can use “for the demolition of strongholds?”

Explain: The most powerful weapon at our disposal is the cross itself. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul writes, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved.” The gospel truth that we are forgiven, adopted by the King, and destined for glory gives us power to overcome the strongholds in our lives. We also see in the New Testament that “prayer, divine wisdom, and holy conduct may also be assumed to be part of [our] arsenal.”¹ The Israelites did not bring down the walls of Jericho; the Lord did so. However, the people did play an essential role in the effort by obeying God’s battle plan.

Hebrews tells us that it was by faith that the walls of Jericho came down (Heb. 11:30). Had they not trusted the Lord and followed His battle plan, the walls would not have come down. We also see that the people did not stand idly by. Victory was not handed to them on a plate. Not only did they have to follow God’s battle plan to march around the city, but they also had to participate in the “mop-up” operation. After the walls came down, they had to storm the city. We can assume they faced resistance and had to fight in the streets. The Bible does not detail that for us because the point of the passage is God’s work. Nevertheless, we can learn here that while God might bring down the strongholds and collapse the walls in our lives, the disciple must do his or her part to pursue holiness and Kingdom ministry.

Summarize and Transition: God brought the walls of Jericho down just like He had said. His action was a response to the people’s faithfulness to follow His plan. He can bring down the walls in our lives if we are faithful to follow His plan. These walls and stronghold before us might seem impregnable, but “We can trust God to do what only He can do.” (ETB LG, 55)

¹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 435. J. Cardinell, 2026

4. PROMISES KEPT (JOSH. 6:22-25)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 6:22-25

This passage reveals God's Faithfulness to Rahab. We saw in chapter 2 that she was promised physical salvation because of her faith demonstrated through her righteous actions. In this passage, Joshua and God keep that promise. While those who closed the literal gate of the city to Israel and the gate of their heart to God were judged, Rahab and her family were saved both physically and spiritually. They were saved physically from the destruction wrought upon the city. They were saved spiritually by coming into the Israelite family. Verse 23 tells us they settled "outside the camp of Israel." This might have been because of regulations regarding ritualistic cleanliness. It might also have been because they were not actually participants in God's covenant at this point. Rahab had expressed her faith in Yahweh God, but she had not yet entered into the faith tradition of Israel. However, verse 25 tells us that "she still lives in Israel today." Clearly, Rahab expressed a true faith in God and followed that up with a commitment to the ways of God and His covenant law. We can see at least three things here.

First: God Keeps His Promises. God, by way of the two spies, had promised to protect Rahab. Rahab had expressed her faith in God and lived that out by bringing her family into her home and tying the red cord in her window. (see 2:21) God kept His promise. God promises us many things in Scripture. By faith and through faithful living, we can experience those promises.

Second: Evangelism and Discipleship are a Process. Rahab had the general revelation of God available to everyone, and she had the special revelation of God through the works of God at the Red Sea and in the wilderness (see 2:8-11). However, she did not have the law of God or a fuller understanding of His character. After settling "outside the camp," she would have learned more and, after time, entered into the covenant with God. We see a similar process among people today. They know about God and have a desire to be among His people (i.e., come to church). However, they really do not know the gospel. Over time, they begin to learn more about God, His character, and His gospel. We should love people and walk with them through this process, even when it is slow and sometimes painful. The movement doesn't stop when someone gets saved. The road to Christlikeness is long; it is a process of slow growth over time.

Third: Faith has Long-Lasting Ramifications. The text tells us that Rahab was still "in Israel today." Whether that means she was still alive at the writing of the book of Joshua or that her descendants were still there does not matter. The point of the passage is that her faith had long-lasting ramifications. We know that she married and had children in Israel. She was the great-great-grandmother to King David, and we know that from the line of King David came King Jesus. A decision made by a prostitute in a frightened city to trust Yahweh God enabled her to become an ancestor of the Savior of the World. Her faith had long-lasting ramifications. We do not know the long-term effects of our faithfulness to God. Only in eternity will we truly understand and see the ramifications of our faithfulness and faithful ministry. We should be encouraged to live faithfully every day.

CONCLUDE

In our lesson today, we have two major points. (1) Following God is not always "logical." Actually, being a disciple of Christ will cause us to live counter to the logic of this world. However, when we follow Him, we will have victory. (2) God is faithful. He is faithful to bring down strongholds when we have faith and live faithfully. He is also faithful to keep His promises. When we live in the victory He provides, we can have a great positive impact on those around us and those who come after us.

Challenge: Distribute the handout "Winning Strategy" included in the ETB Leader Pack and encourage the group to fill out the sheet during their time with the Lord this week.