

the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

The warrior leader

Joshua and the battle of Jericho, from Joshua 3 and 6

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main points of the previous stories: “We’ve been looking at the book of Exodus and we’ve learned that God rescued Moses and his people from being slaves and led them out of Egypt. Then God rescued his people again. He parted the waters so they could cross the Red Sea. Then God took care of his people as they made their way across the desert and he gave them the Ten Commandments. We memorized the first commandment.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Exodus 20:3 — ‘You shall have no other gods before me.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “We are now moving from the book of Exodus to the sixth book of the Old Testament, the book of Joshua. God’s people have been on a very long journey. They have been walking in the desert for 40 years. After 40 years of walking and walking and walking, they are almost at their new home . . . but first they have to do some marching. We’ll find out why in the story, but now let’s practice marching.”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and experience obeying commands and marching.

Materials: None.

1. Ask everyone to stand up in the circle. Say: “Let’s pretend we are soldiers in the army. What do soldiers do when they hear the word ‘Attention!’? Correct, they stand up very straight with their eyes forward and they do not move at all. Let’s try that now.”

2. Call out “Attention!” and comment on how well the children respond.

3. Say: “If you were in the army and I called out, ‘Forward march!’ you’d march forward. If I called out, ‘About face!’ you would turn to face the opposite direction. But the army in our story today had some other commands too. They were commanded to ‘Sound your trumpets!’ Do that now — blow into a pretend trumpet while marching in place. Very good. They were also commanded to ‘Sound the war cry!’ That meant they had to shout as loud as they could. You need to obey all those commands in our game!”

4. Ask everyone to sit down again. Ask every other child in the circle to stand up. Announce that the children sitting in the circle are the walls of a city and the children standing are the army. Let them know that you will switch around so everyone gets to play.

5. Ask: “Is everyone in the army ready to march around the city? Then, let’s play!”

6. Call out: “Attention!” then “About face!” (the standing children should now be facing the outside of the circle), then “March one step forward!” then “Right turn!” then “Forward march!” The children should now be marching around the circle. Continue to give commands at random, including: “Sound your trumpets!” and “Sound the war cry!” Comment appropriately and help those who may be struggling. After about 2 minutes, call out: “Company halt! You may sit down.”

7. Repeat with the other half of the circle.

8. At the end of the activity, say: “If you were an army and you wanted to knock down the walls of a city, what could you do? Imagine you got to a city with really high strong walls; how could you make the walls fall down?”

9. Get some ideas from the children, then say: “After their very long journey, God’s people are about to arrive at the new home God has promised them, but first they need to knock down some walls. Let’s see what they do.”

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 108–115 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD1 track 13.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

The book of Joshua is not merely a history book. It is not less than true history, but it is much more.

As the history of the Israelites unfolds, through Joshua and then the book of Judges, we see a people becoming increasingly dysfunctional and flawed. They do many appalling things, and their disobedience and sinfulness continually resurface. They constantly deviate from God's will and suffer deep moral lapses.

It is worth repeating that the Bible is not about emulating moral examples; it is about a God of mercy who continually works in and through us despite our constant resistance to his purposes.

With that in mind, these are a few of the themes that emerge from this history:

☉ God relentlessly offers his grace to people who do not deserve it or seek it or even appreciate it after they have been saved by it.

☉ God wants lordship over every area of our lives. God wanted Israel to take the entire land of Canaan, but instead they only cleared out some areas and they learned to live with idols in their midst. In other words, they neither wholly rejected God nor wholly accepted him. Their history shows that this halfway discipleship and compromise does not work.

☉ God is in charge, no matter what it looks like. God is never absent from the scene. He works out his will through weak people and in spite of weak people. His purposes are never thwarted, regardless of appearances.

☉ Again and again what emerges is that the only true hero is God; the only true savior is the Lord.

The Israelites are told to “take possession of their land,” as the nations are “push[ed] ... out” (Joshua 23:5) and “drive[n] out” (23:9) by God when the Israelites do battle with them. It is clear, especially from Joshua 23:5, that this is a very direct judgment of the Canaanites by God himself: “The LORD your God himself ... will drive them out before you.”

It is surprising how careful Joshua is in his wording. He never exactly says that the Israelites are to “drive out” the Canaanites. Rather, they are to be driven out by the Lord through the means of military action. So God is coming down to mete out justice against these nations, and the Israelites are his instruments.

It is also clear that the purpose for “driving out” the Canaanites is not vengeful or economic/political but spiritual. They are to be removed so the Israelites will thrive spiritually and not follow other gods (Joshua 23:7). The Israelites were instead to build a home country in which to serve God.

The text also makes clear that the Israelites are to be brave in their fighting, expecting God to give them military victory (Joshua 1:9; 23:3, 9–10). It takes strong faith in the Word of God to conduct a campaign in the way God wishes. Ordinary military policy dictates that you don't fight superior forces, but here even in the first battle at Jericho that is exactly what they are to do.

However, the text makes clear that this military activity is to be accompanied by a very close and vital spiritual life—a walk with God. This implies that they are not to expect success if they do not accompany all their work with meditation on God's Word with the mind (Joshua 1:8), obedience to God's will with the life (Joshua 1:7), and love to the Lord with the heart (Joshua 23:11). This is a very complete description of the life of faith.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To understand that Joshua and the people obeyed God and that God won the battle for them.

Materials: Nametags/labels with names from the story (see below); crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: "Isn't it amazing! Only God can knock down the walls of a city by people shouting and blowing trumpets. Let's retell the story."
2. Announce that everyone will get a name from the story. Assign two children (preferably seated opposite one another) the name **Joshua**. Assign another two children the name **city**. Assign another two the name **Jericho**. Continue in a similar manner, using names from the story (e.g., **walls**, **home**, **desert**) until you have four to six children left. Assign the last four to six children the name **people**. Give the relevant name label to each child.
3. Make sure the children with the same name know who their counterpart is.
4. Explain the game: You will call out the main points of the story. When you say one of their names (e.g., "the big, scary **walls**"), the children assigned that name will swap places by jumping up, marching around the circle, and then sitting down in the other person's place.
5. Say: "You need to try and sit down before the other person. Of course, when I say the word **people**, then lots of you will be marching around the circle. Again you need to try to sit down before anyone else. But you must not bump into or touch or overtake another player. And you must march; you cannot run. Ready? Listen carefully so you don't miss hearing your name."
6. Call out the story, using the assigned names as much as possible and pausing in between to allow the children to march around the circle. For example:
 - ☉ Forty years had passed in the **desert**. [pause to let them march]
 - ☉ After Moses died, God gave his **people** a new leader. [pause to let them march]
 - ☉ The name of the new leader was ... [take a dramatic pause] **Joshua**. [pause to let them march]
 - ☉ He was going to lead God's **people** [pause to let them march] into the special land God had promised to give them for their new **home**. [pause to let them march]
 - ☉ They were so happy to reach the edge of the **desert** and see their beautiful new **home**. [pause to let both names march]
 - ☉ There was only one problem: **Jericho**. [pause to let them march]

☉ This wasn't just any old **city**. [pause to let them march]

☉ **Jericho** was a fortress with big, giant, scary **walls**. [pause to let both names march]

☉ What would they do? No one knew. But God knew. He promised them that he would always be with them. And God had a plan. And God told the plan to **Joshua**. [pause to let them march]

☉ The plan was about trusting God and obeying what God said. Day 1, the **people** and **Joshua** obeyed God and marched around the **walls** of the **city** of **Jericho**. [pause to let all names march]

☉ Day 2, the **people** and **Joshua** obeyed God and marched around the **walls** of the **city**. [pause to let all names march]

☉ Day 3, [take a dramatic pause] they did the same. Day 4, they did the same. Day 5, they obeyed God and marched around **Jericho**. [pause to let them march]

☉ Day 6, they did the same. Day 7, they obeyed God and marched seven times around the **city**. [pause to let them march]

☉ Then God told them to make as much noise as they could and the **walls** fell down flat. [pause to let them march]

☉ So after 40 years in the **desert**, they entered their new **home**. [pause to let both names march]

☉ The end.

7. At the end of the activity, say: "God knocked down the walls of the city by having his people shout and blow trumpets, so that they could enter their new home."

8. Give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: "You can see a picture on your paper of the city of Jericho. There are two questions for you with some possible answers. I will read them to you. Circle the correct answer."

9. Read each question aloud, allowing time for the children to circle their answer. Ask them what they circled and comment appropriately.

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into two and have one half play while the other half watches, and then reverse. This also allows you to tell the story twice.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: “Joshua and God’s people obeyed God. Joshua and the people didn’t have to follow battle plans; they just had to do what God said. Only God could make the walls of Jericho fall down by having people shout and blow trumpets. And he did! So the people entered their new home.”

Say: “But remember the end of the story? The people soon stopped obeying God; they didn’t do what God said; and many years later they would lose their home. But God promised he would always be with them, so one day he would give them another Leader and another home. We all know who that Leader is, right?”

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: “What did we discover about Jesus from today’s story?”

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, asking God to forgive you and the children when you have not obeyed him and asking for help to obey him in the future. Thank God that he promises to always be with everyone who believes and trusts in him.

Ask the children to think of one specific thing they need God’s help with (for example, telling the truth) and ask them to pray that God would help them to obey.

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: “Joshua and the people obeyed God. We prayed that God would help us to obey him. We should also pray that God would help us to obey the first commandment, which is the verse we memorized.”

☉ Announce the verse: “So, your verse to practice at home is Exodus 20:3 — ‘You shall have no other gods before me.’”

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.