**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 4 of 4

# Jericho

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on following God, even through difficult or unusual situations.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 6

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

The story of the Israelites conquering Jericho is alien to our contemporary ears; we might find the unusual tactics surreal and the wholesale slaughter repulsive. It’s important to address these concerns if the young people bring them up, and reflect on what is going on and why. It would be worth digging deeper into this for yourself before the session, so that you have some theories and ideas to share.

However, God is still at work here. Joshua and the Israelites learn a valuable lesson in obedience (no military leader would think this a good approach to attacking a city). In our lives, while God won’t call us to the destruction we encounter in Joshua 6, he might call us to act in ways that might not at first appear logical. How do we react in such times?

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Have a drink and snack together. To lighten the mood and get everyone chatting, try playing the Malteser game. You have to tilt your head back or lie on your back and rest a Malteser on your lips. If you blow evenly but strongly enough you can cause the Malteser to float on a bed of air above your lips. Challenge them to see who can do it for the longest or get it the highest, but it only counts if they get it to drop back into their mouth afterwards! How difficult was it? Did the group think that it was impossible before they tried it?

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** football

Choose two or three ‘attackers’. Everyone else should stand in a circle facing outwards and link arms; they are the defenders. The three attackers must try to kick or roll a ball into the circle. They must not touch the defenders. The defenders can rotate, move and use their feet, knees and hips to keep the ball out, but must not unlink arms.

Once the attackers have been successful, change the attackers and play again.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

Before the session, practise telling the story below yourself, or ask someone else in the group to prepare it. Alternatively, you could film yourself or someone else telling the story.

Gather the group together and explain that Joshua and the people of God are ready to attack Jericho, the first major city in their campaign to take possession of the land God promised them. Invite them to listen to the story.

“The stones crashed around us, the walls were collapsing; figures were running in the dust cloud but I couldn’t make out who was who. It sounded like the world was caving in. It was deafening. Mayhem and panic all around, screams and the sound of swords clashing on stone as we clambered over the debris, searching out those who stood in our way, destroying everything, leaving nothing. It was exhilarating. Incredible. Carnage. God delivered the whole city into our hands and we made sure we took the opportunity. But it was gory – it was tough to see, to be honest.”

“Go on, Father. Tell me what happened.” Kadel looked up eagerly at his father across the campfire. The older man placed his small blade and handful of figs on his knee and ran his fingers through his greying hair, his scarred face toughened by years toiling under the uncompromising glare of the sun. He smiled and the scars and wrinkles faded, his eyes twinkling and soft towards his son.

“I’ve told you so many times!” he laughed. “You know the story better than me! But did I ever tell you how we got to that point?”

“Yes, of course you – I mean, no! No, I don’t remember, Father!” The boy smiled wryly. “Tell me again!”

Moash laughed again and threw a piece of fig at the boy, who caught it and popped it in his mouth.

“Fine! So…after Moses died, we were camped on the edge of paradise, as we imagined it. We’d spent nearly 40 years, some of us, wandering around in the sand and rocks, dreaming of this magical, mystical, idyllic place. We were all born out there. Not one person who’d walked out of Egypt was still living. Not one person who crossed the Red Sea made it across the Jordan and into the promised land. Apart from Joshua, of course, and Caleb.

“This was to be a land flowing with milk and honey, they’d told us. I used to dream every night, imagining houses – real houses, not tents to live in. Honey dripping from the walls, strange and wonderful fruits, meat of every kind, bread, cakes, little sweet treats, gold and silver just lying around the streets! Ha! I was only little; I couldn’t understand what it would be like to not have to struggle to survive. Searching out small creeks for drinking water, rationing thin gristly goats for food and relying on manna and quail that God provided that just appeared every morning and was mouldy and rotten by nightfall.

“So there we were, on the edge of a new life, and finally God had brought us to take possession of it. Our wildest dreams come true…but we had no way in, the Jordan in the way; armies determined to kill us and turn us back into the desert; fortified cities impenetrable and ready and waiting for us to spend ourselves on their massive walls.

“On the one hand, we were excited that finally God was taking us out of the desert, but on the other hand, we were gutted that really there was no way we could ever take cities like Jericho. I was elated and devasted all at the same time.”

“So, then Joshua had that great plan?” Kadel interrupted.

“Well, it didn’t feel like a great plan at the time, let me tell you: ‘Walk round the city in silence once a day for six days.’ That sounded like insanity, not a masterplan to me! We’d be letting them see exactly what our army was like, what weapons we had, what our strengths and weaknesses were. Plus, we’d be in range if they had any archers or spear-throwers. I have to admit, I thought it was ridiculous.”

Moash stretched out his legs towards the fire and popped a fig into his mouth, before continuing with his mouth full. “Still. God told Joshua to do it, so who can argue with God? God had often done crazy things and asked us to trust him, and he’d always come through for us. Perhaps we should have just trusted him from the beginning, eh?” He winked at his son.

“So, you just walked around the city. Nothing else. You didn’t look for weak points or pick off men on the walls?” Kadel asked, his eyes wide.

“Nothing. The trumpets sounded, but that was it. No one talked. No one laughed or taunted or screamed or anything. We didn’t try anything – and strangely, neither did they. The first day or two they jeered a bit and a few women spat at us before their husbands hushed them away from the walls, but to be honest, they seemed more scared of us than we were of them. It took us nearly all morning to walk round the entire city, then we’d go back to camp and wonder what on earth we thought we were doing! Some people started moaning about Joshua and the leaders, but we did it. Anyway, day seven arrived and we were up earlier than usual. Before we broke camp, Joshua addressed the army, saying we would walk around the city seven times that day. People groaned. To be honest, it was a bit boring just walking all day. But on the last time round, he said we were to shout and scream as loudly as we could and bash our shields and just make as much noise as possible.”

“Why?” asked Kadel. That stopped Moash in his tracks.

“Er, well, I’m still not entirely sure, to be fair, little man. The power of the army of God is in his worship so I think it was just about raising the glory of God in front of them – showing them what the people of God look like. Maybe. Something like that. The scriptures say that God inhabits the praise of his people, so...Anyway, that’s what God told us to do, so that’s what we did. And it worked. On the seventh time round, we made a right racket! Smashing things, yelling, screaming, singing and dancing. Stamping our feet and playing music to the Lord – we did it all! You should have heard it!”

He laughed, looking up at the stars, lost in the memory. “It felt like it lasted an age. I was starting to wonder what would happen next. Whether we’d just have to stop and wander off. But the cracks started appearing in the walls. God was there amongst us. Pockets of brick dust started showering us from above, the ground felt like it was shaking itself. He pushed down the walls! We had to get back just so we didn’t get crushed ourselves when the whole thing collapsed. It just came down. The entire city wall. Well, all except one section where Rahab lived.’

“Rahab who lives on the corner? She was in the city?” Kadel asked, surprised.

“She and her family were the onlysurvivors. The *only* ones. That’s because she helped us when we sent spies in first. She protected our men and got them away, so Joshua promised her safety and she lives with us now.”

“What happened when the walls came down?”

“Well, like I told you at the beginning, we all rushed in, but they were a spent force. They were weak and tired, scared and had basically given up. We left nothing standing. It was one of the greatest days in Israel’s history – and we’ve had a few good days, that’s for sure! But after that everyone was scared of us; every city we came across, they’d heard of how we took Jericho and it was a breeze. That one city was like a gateway into the promised land. God was true to his word and we went in and took it all. And here we are!”

“It’s an amazing story!” Kadel smiled. “I wish I could have been there.”

“Well, there’ll be more battles, more wars to fight and more glory for God. Just remember, son. It wasn’t us that won the victory. Not really. Carrying the presence of God is what makes us unique. Now, that’s enough for tonight. Off you go.”

Once the story is over, ask the young people to give their first impressions on what they have heard.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Use the following questions to start discussion. Encourage everyone to contribute:

* What is your first thought about the story? What emotions does it cause in you?
* How do you feel about the violence that God ordered?
* How was being a follower of God different in those times to now?
* Would you have had the courage to trust God and order the Israelites to walk around the city instead of attacking it?
* Why do you think God asked them to walk around the city in the way he did? What did it achieve (apart from that the walls fell down)?
* What importance does this story have for us as Christians?
* What does Jericho symbolise for you, or for us?
* Have you ever felt God has asked you to do something strange or something that you didn’t understand why?
* What things do we do because we are Christians that non-Christians wouldn’t understand? How do you feel about that?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** art materials; large sheets of paper; notebooks; pens; Bibles

Spread out the art materials and journalling notebooks, and encourage the young people to create or write something that reflects what God has been saying to them through the story of the Israelites conquering Jericho. Have some Bibles so that the group can check out Joshua 6 as they reflect and work. Don’t give any guidelines as to what the young people have to do, simply give them the time and space to respond.

In activities like this, the end product is not the important thing (some might produce great stuff, others might not come out with anything). What is important is the process that the young people go through. Creating something with our hands gives our mind and soul time to process what God is saying.

In this session, the story and the discussion in ‘Chatting together’ might have brought up things the young people need to reflect on more deeply, and this activity will help them do that. Make sure you and the other leaders are free to chat if the young people want to talk about any of the issues.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** wooden blocks (giant Jenga would be best, but ordinary Jenga, Lego or Duplo would be suitable); small blank stickers; pens

Give everyone a pen and sticker. Ask the young people to write a word on a sticker that gets in the way of them being a radically obedient Christian. Use these bricks to build a wall. Spend a minute or two quietly alone looking at the words and praying. When everyone has had a chance to do that, invite them to smash the wall down.

Tell everyone to get another sticker and write a word of thanks or praise, something they are grateful to God for, and stick these over the previous ones on the bricks (it doesn’t need to be over your own sticker). Arrange these bricks into a cross shape and all stand in a circle around it. Go around the circle with everyone reading a word off a brick and praying a sentence of prayer thanking God for it or using it to praise him in prayer.

**JOEL TOOMBS**

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