

This week we will read the first 5 chapters of Joshua. This will set us up for the story we have all heard about - the walls of Jericho falling. As you think about your "Jericho" falling, may you think about what transpired and the preparation that was needed before the Israelites were able to enter the Promised Land.

Monday, May 7 – Read Joshua 1. The book of Joshua opens with the children of Israel standing before the Jordan River for the second time in 40 years. They had been in this position before, but the last time they chose to turn around and walk away. They saw the beautiful fruits that grew there. They knew about the great abundance of food and water in the land God had promised, but they chose to focus on the problems they saw. They ignored God's promises and saw only the giants that inhabited the land. Forty years before the story of the battle of Jericho, Moses was the leader of Israel. All the adults from the former visit to the Jordan River had died off except two men: Joseph and Caleb. These were two of the original twelve spies who had gone into the Promised Land and tried to convince the people they should trust God to give them victory over the enemy. Now Joshua leads the country in the absence of Moses. What verses in this chapter stand out to you? There is a phrase that is repeated in this chapter – obviously something they didn't do 40 years ago. What does this mean to you?

Tuesday, May 8 - Read Joshua 2. Joshua sent two spies into the land to check out the walled city of Jericho. They entered the city and met a woman named Rahab. We know from later scriptures (Joshua 6, Hebrews 11 and James 2) that she was a prostitute. The early church historian Josephus suggests that she may have also been an inn keeper which would explain why the spies went to her house. Rahab hid the men on the roof of her house when soldiers from the city came to inquire about the strangers in town. Rahab told the city soldiers that the men left before the closing of the gates and that they needed to hurry to catch the men. Rahab waited for the soldiers to leave and then she uncovered the spies. She told them what she and the people in the city knew about Joshua and the coming armies. The people in Jericho and the surrounding area were terrified of Joshua and Israel because they knew that God had promised the land to the children of Israel. Before leaving Rahab's house, the spies promised that she and her family would be spared the coming destruction. She was to hang a scarlet thread, or cord, out her window so that the Israelite soldiers would know which house belonged to her so that they could save her. How was it that Rahab recognized in a brief time, what a generation of Israelites had missed? What do you recognize about God?

Wednesday, May 9 – Read Joshua 3. Joshua gathered the people into various groups. There were three main groups: the priests, a man from each tribe, and the rest of Israel. The priests took the Ark of the Covenant and stepped into the river. The river opened up to one side and dried up to the other. The people of Israel crossed over on dry land. But before they crossed, they were to perform a consecration (purification) ceremony. These types of ceremonies had been used before (cf. Leviticus 11-14). The consecration ceremony pictured the importance of approaching God with a pure heart. Like the Israelites, we need God's forgiveness before we approach. We need to be open and honest to God before any of our "Jericho's" will fall.

Thursday, May 10 – Read Joshua 4. Before the priests stepped away from the river, twelve men (one man from each tribe) picked up a boulder from the dry riverbed and carried it out. These twelve stones were placed in the Promised Land as a reminder to future generations of how God lead Israel out of the wilderness into the land of promise. What kind of reminders do you have of God’s hand in your life? What can you do now so that your family will be able to recognize God’s provision for you? Notice they didn’t automatically head to conquer the land. They were to focus on God and remember that it was God who was guiding them. If we want our “Jericho’s” to fall, where then should be our focus?

Friday, May 11 – Read Joshua 5. Many things changed for Israel the day they crossed into their new home. Besides the new lush land and the promise of a permanent dwelling, the manna which they had eaten every day for forty years immediately ceased. They never ate manna again. Another change was that the practice of circumcision which God instituted with Moses had been previously abandoned by the people. Joshua reinstated it. After these changes took place in the lives of the people of Israel, Joshua got a surprise visit. He had been in communication with God (Joshua 1), but he had not had a personal visit up to this point. Joshua was deep in his thoughts looking at the city of Jericho when a man appeared before him with a drawn sword. Joshua asked a simple question, but got a confusing answer. Joshua asked, “Are you for us or against us?” The answer was that the one standing before him was the captain of the Lord’s host and Joshua needed to decide the answer to his own question—was Joshua and Israel on God’s side, or the side of the enemy? Joshua answered wisely by bowing before the Lord (we believe this was a theophany—an appearance of God). Joshua pledged his allegiance to the Lord. He removed his shoes as instructed and worshiped God on holy ground. Before any of our “Jericho’s” fall, we **MUST** and **ALWAYS** worship God.