

Riverview Baptist Church  
Sunday School Teaching Plan  
June 1, 2014  
“A God-Sized Task”

**Memory Verse**

“Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6, NIV

**The Big Idea:**

Sunday School Scripture: Joshua 6:1-16, 20-21

Sunday School Title: “A God-Sized Task”

ESS: When we respond to God’s invitation with faith-filled obedience, we will be involved in God-sized tasks, which will attract the watching world to Christ.

Over the past few weeks, we’ve discussed faith. Today, we’ll look at Joshua’s example of faith-filled obedience to see how we can put feet to our faith and be involved in God’s amazing work.

1. When you were a kid, did you ever come up with a great idea and start to implement it, only to discover that the job was way bigger than your resources?
2. Describe a time when you were asked to complete a task that looked impossible.

Today, we’ll discuss how our faith and obedience, even in seemingly insurmountable circumstances, are absolutely necessary if we are to be a part of God’s work.

**READ Joshua 6:1-16, 20-21**

**INTRO:** After God rescued the Israelites from Egypt through his servant Moses, the people wandered in the desert for 40 years. At the end of the wandering period, Moses died and Joshua became the leader who would lead the Israelites into the land God had promised them. By chapter 6 of the book of Joshua, the Lord had already commissioned Joshua as the new leader and had miraculously led the Israelites safely through the Jordan River under Joshua’s leadership. Now, the promised land of Canaan had to be cleared of its pagan people in order for God’s people to inhabit it. The first city the Israelites had to conquer was perhaps the most difficult: Jericho. Though Jericho was not a large city, it is one of the oldest known fortified cities. Archeological digs have unearthed evidence of a wall that was 4.5 feet wide and perhaps as high as 30 feet tall surrounding the 8.5 acre city. The wall provided protection for the oasis city, which was well supplied with spring water. The surrounding wall also gave the Jericho warriors a superior location for attacks. As the leader of the Israelites, Joshua may have been forming an attack plan or brainstorming military strategies. But before he could implement any idea of his own, the Lord spoke to Joshua and gave him specific directions to follow for the conquering of Jericho.

The instructions God gave Joshua for conquering Jericho were strange, but simple. When God spoke to Joshua, Joshua realized several things. The same thing happens in our lives when God invites us to join Him at work.

**WHEN GOD INVITES US TO JOIN HIM IN HIS WORK, WE REALIZE:**

**1. A DECISION MUST BE MADE**

It’s simple, yet crucial. Immediately after the Lord spoke to him, Joshua had a decision to make. Was he going to obey God or ignore him? Joshua chapter 6 doesn’t tell us much about the thoughts going through Joshua’s mind or the fears or misgivings pulling at his heart. Scripture only tells us that the Lord spoke to Joshua, and the next morning Joshua immediately prepared the people to follow God’s instructions. Obviously, Joshua made the decision to trust and obey God.

This time of decision is called a crisis of belief. Just as Joshua had to decide whether or not He was going to follow God, we often have to face a crisis of belief in our own lives. This “crisis of belief” is when you and I make a decision based on our priorities and our faith. And the decisions we make at the “crisis of belief” points in our lives influence how deeply we know and love God in the future.

- *When you face a “crisis of belief” in your own life, what are some things that might tempt you to say “No” to the path you feel God is leading you to follow?*
- *At this point, many decide not to follow what they sense God leading them to do. What are some possible consequences of saying “No” to God at “crisis of belief” moment?*

## **2. THE TASK IS GOD-SIZED**

With its huge protective wall surrounding it, Jericho must have been a daunting adversary. Even with seasoned soldiers and effective weapons, the Israelites may have felt that conquering Jericho was impossible. But further still, attempting to bring down Jericho’s walls by simply parading around it, blowing horns, and shouting? The task must have seemed God-sized, indeed.

When God invites us to join Him in His work, he has a God-sized assignment in store. When we accept the invitation, we will realize that we cannot accomplish the task alone. Like Joshua, we quickly come to the realization that if God doesn’t help us, we will fail. This is the main obstacle to our involvement in God’s work: our self-centeredness. We often see the God-sized task and think *I don’t have the power or resources to accomplish this on my own. It’s impossible!* We forget that when God speaks, He always reveals what HE is going to do – not what He wants us to do for Him. We join Him so that He can do His work through us. We don’t have to be able to accomplish the task within our limited ability or resources. God will accomplish it!

## **3. FAITH IS REQUIRED**

God’s directions for the conquering of Jericho required the soldiers and priests to march around the city one time for six days. Then, after marching around seven times on the seventh day, the people were to wait for a loud ram’s horn blast before screaming and running straight into the city. God’s plan did not involve military power or strategy. The simplicity of the plan emphasized the enormity of the task, the weakness of the Israelites, and the unlimited power of God. Faith that stirred them to obedience was all God required of the Israelites.

- *If you had been an Israelite under Joshua’s leadership, how would you have felt when Joshua delivered God’s instructions for defeating Jericho?*
- *How would you define faith?*
- *Describe the lifestyle of a person living a life of faith in God.*

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass. Sight is an opposite to faith. If you can see clearly how something can be accomplished, more than likely faith is not required. When God invites you to join Him in His work, He will ask you to accomplish something that only He can do. And it will require faith. Without faith, it’s impossible to accomplish God’s work or please Him!

*At times when you lack faith, what can you do?*

## **4. OUR ACTIONS REVEAL OUR BELIEFS**

Put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites. How would you have felt walking around the walls of Jericho each day for a week? I can imagine feeling foolish, scared, and doubtful. But the important thing about the Israelites is not the feelings or thoughts they might have struggled with. The important thing to notice is their obedience. God’s instructions may have seemed odd, but these people trusted completely in their God. Regardless of the strange instructions, the Israelites’ faith in God led them to obey. And when they obeyed, Jericho was conquered, the Israelites were victorious, and the surrounding nations heard of the Lord’s power.

- *Why is obedience important?*
- *As a parent, what does obedience reveal about your child?*
- *As a Christian, what does obedience reveal to God about us? What does it reveal to the world about us?*

How you live your life is a daily testimony of what you believe about God. What you do, not what you say, reveals what you believe. When God reveals what He has purposed to do, you face a crisis of belief – a decision time. God and the watching world can tell from your response what you truly believe about God. Your obedience reveals your faith; your disobedience reveals your lack of faith.

When God's people and the world see something happen that only God can do, they come to know God. Our faith, obedience, and involvement in God's work creates a living testimony for the watching world to see our powerful, loving God! What our world often sees today is devoted, committed Christians serving God. But, they are not seeing GOD!! They do not see anything happening that can only be explained in terms of the activity of God. Why? Because we are not attempting anything that only God can do. Our world is not attracted to the Christ we serve because they cannot see Him at work. Let the world see Christ at work, and He will attract people to Himself.

**CONCLUSION:** When we respond to God's invitation with faith-filled obedience, we will be involved in God-sized tasks, which will attract the watching world to Christ.

#### **APPLY IT!**

- When was the last time you were involved in a God-sized task?
- Is God calling you now to be involved in a work that only He can accomplish?
- Pray and ask God to open your eyes and heart, strengthen your faith, and help you obey.
- Read Joshua 1:6-9. Pray that God would help you be strong and courageous in obedience to Him.

#### **STUDY NOTES:**

(These are for your own study. This is NOT the lesson. Commentary written by David Guzik and available online: [http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/guzik\\_david/](http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/guzik_david/))

---

**Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel:** Jericho itself was on full alert; from a human perspective, this would be a hard, if not impossible, battle. Yet from God's perspective, the battle was already over, because He can say to Joshua **I have** (in the past tense) **given Jericho into your hand**. Up to this point everything had been more or less preliminary and preparatory. Now the real task before them must be faced and tackled. The Canaanites must be dispossessed if Israel is to occupy what God has promised them. Jericho was not an exceptionally large city; but it was an important, formidable fortress city. If Israel could defeat Jericho, they could defeat anything else that would face them in Canaan. Again we see the wisdom of God as opposed to human wisdom, in that Israel faces their most difficult opponent first.

**You shall march around the city:** The method of warfare was one that made absolutely no sense according to military intelligence. It required total dependence on God. It required great faith from Joshua, because he had to explain and lead the nation in this plan. It required great faith from the elders and the nation, because they had to follow Joshua in this plan.

**The wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him:** It was a plan for victory whereby it would clearly be the work of the LORD. Yet God gave them something to do, so that Israel could work in partnership with God. Obviously, it was something that God could have done without Israel's help at all, but He wanted them to be a part of His work - as He wants us to be a part of His work today.

**Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests:** Joshua had to tell the priests, because what they were asked to do was unusual. Normally, priests and the ark of the covenant did not go with Israel to battle.

**Take up the ark of the covenant:** The ark would be prominent in this victory, even as it was in the crossing of the Jordan River. Israel had to keep their hearts and minds on the LORD who was present with them, instead of putting their hearts and minds on the difficulty of the task in front of them.

**And he said to the people:** Joshua had to tell the people, because what they were asked to do was unusual. This was no customary way to conquer a walled, fortified city.

**When Joshua had spoken to the people:** Joshua does not hesitate to do what the LORD has told him to do. Often, our delays to obey God show that we really don't believe Him.

**So he had the ark of the LORD circle the city, going around it once:** Jericho was not a large city; they could easily march around it in a day's time. As the people of Jericho saw the Israelites marching around their city, they probably had a sense of both awe and horror. It took *courage* for Israel to do this; Israel was wide open to attack during this time, and it would have been easy for the people of Jericho to attack them from the high position of the walls. It took *endurance* for Israel to do this; the march was for six days, and they had to persist in something that didn't seem to make much sense. In this, the *helplessness* of Israel was revealed; through six days of silent marching, they had a good look at the walls that seemed to be impenetrable - they knew that this was a battle bigger than they were.

**On the seventh day:** This march took place over a period of seven days, meaning that Israel had to have marched on a Sabbath; but this would be a work of God's sovereign grace and power, not of human works.

**Shout, for the LORD has given you the city!** The command was given for the people to **shout**. After the days of silence, this comes as a recognition that God would now give them what He had promised. **The LORD has given you the city!**

**Only Rahab the harlot shall live:** Joshua is careful to take care of Rahab. Her faith in the living God would find support by God's people.

Joshua had to command the people of Israel to stay away from **the accursed things**. By this he means the idols and things associated with the demonic and depraved worship of the people of Canaan. The severe judgment that is brought against Jericho, and all of Canaan didn't come because they were in the "way" of God's people. It came because this was a people who were in total rebellion against God and in league with the occult, as the artifacts recovered from this period demonstrate. **But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD:** All the valuables belong to God; Jericho is the "first fruits" city of Canaan, and so the valuables are set apart to **the treasury of the LORD**.

**The wall fell down flat:** We are not told that Israel knew this would be the result of their obedient marching and final shouting. They may have been as surprised as the people of Jericho were at the way God decided to deliver Jericho into their hands.

**They utterly destroyed all that was in the city:** Why was Israel commanded to practice such complete destruction? Because the greatest sins of the Canaanites were spiritual: *When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.* (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)

Such judgment seems harsh to us, because it *is* harsh - and we must recognize, that at unique times, God has commanded that such judgment come to pass. It may happen either through an army that He has used (as is the case here), or through judgment that He directly brings (such as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:24-25).

Israel **took the city:** They **took**, after God had *given* (Joshua 6:2). It was clear that God gave, but that Israel had to *take* by obedient, persistent faith. So it is with all victory in the Christian life - God gives it to us in Jesus Christ; but we must take it from Him by obedient, persistent faith.

**Bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her:** Rahab and her household were saved. They coupled their faith in the God of Israel with a willingness to follow through on what God's messengers told them to do: stay at the house with the scarlet cord hanging from the window (Joshua 2:17-19).

**They burned the city and all that was in it with fire ... Joshua spared Rahab the harlot:** In this, we see a contrast between judgment and salvation. All of Jericho heard about the God of Israel (Joshua 2:8-11), but only Rahab responded positively in faith towards God with that knowledge.

**So she dwells in Israel to this day:** This shows that Joshua was written at the time of Joshua; this was not the fanciful re-construction of an imaginative writer working centuries after the fact.

**Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho:** This was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34, which says *In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.*