Joshua

Lesson 1: God's Power in Action

**Lessons in this series:** **1**

LESSON OBJECTIVES
Goals

1. To examine God's power at work in the Old Testament story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho
2. For students to connect the story with their own lives by exploring how modern Christians knock down walls
3. To inspire students to identify and knock down walls that keep people away from Jesus

Topics

Difficulties, Obstacles

Scripture Memorization

Psalm 77:14

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 to 15 minutes)

**The Human Wall (Game)**

The Human Wall

A game to show how we must penetrate the walls blocking our spiritual path so we can share the truth of Christ more effectively.

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| Topics:Difficulties, Obstacles, Walls, Witnessing Materials:NoneDuration:From 10-15 minutes | Battering Ram |

What you will do:

(This is similar to the familiar game called *"Red Rover"* with a few significant changes. This game carriers some risk of injury, so please use adult supervision and caution.)

First, form two teams consisting of at least four students. Have the students of each team build a wall using their own bodies by standing arm-in-arm next to one another. The opposing team sends one or more members into the wall of the defending team. They can send anyone or any number they want. If the opposing team penetrates the other team's "wall," they get one point. If the defending teams holds their wall together, then they get one point. No matter who gets the point, the teams switch roles for the next attempt. Play until one team gets 10 or 15 points, and if they had fun, play again.

When finished, share one of your own stories about a time when you were personally hindered by a wall in your life. Then go on to the discussion questions.

(As an option, you can get into small groups of 4 or 5 students to cover the questions.)

 **Discussion Questions:**1. Do any of you remember being personally hindered by a wall in your life?
2. How did you feel as a result? How did you respond?
3. What makes some walls so intimidating?
4. How are these walls hindering your effectiveness in sharing Christ with others?

Like the walls of Jericho, we must destroy the walls blocking our spiritual path so God can be glorified more and more.

GETTING STARTED (10 minutes)

We’re going to take a look at walls today and the affect they have on people who seek the Lord.

Allow me to get right to the point: When a wall acts as a barrier to reaching the lost, it must be destroyed.  The power of hell cannot defeat The Church when The Church is focused on bringing down walls.

Walls are popularly viewed as a defense mechanism.  The Great Wall of China, for instance, was built to prohibit invaders.  The Berlin Wall once separated East and West Germany.  Prisons have tall walls topped with razor wire to defend those outside the walls from those within.  Walls are a defense, and a useful one at that.

**General Discussion:**
• What walls do you think exist in the modern American church that keep those outside from coming in?
• What walls do you think exist at our church in particular?
• In our youth group?
• Within yourself?

The story of Joshua bringing down the walls of Jericho is a story that most five-year-old churchgoers are familiar with. What strange means God used to defeat the foes of Israel—marching, shouting, etc.

And yet, a closer look at this passage reflects some deep spiritual truth about the walls in our own lives. While Joshua is commissioned to bring down the walls of Jericho so that Israel can invade and conquer, we are commissioned to remove obstacles in our spiritual path so that God can be glorified more and more.

In this study we’ll explore this popular Old Testament story, digging deeper for points of application for the 21st-century Christian. We’ll also build a bridge to the New Testament, where Jesus Himself affirms that no wall is impenetrable by the Gospel or The Church.

Keep in mind that walls are obstacles, and removal of them is a must if our influence as Christians will continue to move forward. Any wall that prohibits someone from getting to Jesus must be destroyed.  As we examine these texts, think of walls that need to be brought down around us.

DIGGING IN (25 minutes)

We’re going to read through a popular story, but probably in greater detail than you have before. Afterward, we’ll seek to apply this ancient story to contemporary life.

**Read Joshua 5:13-6:5**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. Put yourself in Joshua’s shoes. What would you be thinking during this encounter? *(Allow for discussion.)*2. What is the Lord’s message to Joshua? *(The Lord would provide the victory if the Israelites acted in obedience.)*3. What do you make of the Lord’s military strategy? What if such methods were employed in modern warfare, would such directions be taken seriously? *(Allow for discussion.)*

**Read Joshua 6:6-14**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. What role does the Ark of the Covenant play in this narrative? *(God was with the Israelites.)*
2. Do you think this strategy got old after one day? Two? *(Allow for discussion.)*
3. What do you think the people were thinking? *(Allow for discussion.)*

The first installment of marching and circling goes off without a hitch. But the plot is beginning to thicken. Let’s read on.

**Read Joshua 6:15-21**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. What do the Israelites do on the seventh day? What happens? *(When the trumpets sounded, they gave a loud shout, and the wall fell down.)*2. What details about this story are you realizing for the first time today? *(Allow for discussion.)*
3. The actual conquering of Jericho was a gruesome event. How does the brutality of the events attest to the importance of removing this barrier? *(Allow for discussion.)*

Nothing could stop Israel from conquering the city. The demolition of the walls was a necessary precursor to that.  Annihilation was the goal.

**Read Joshua 6:22-27**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How do you think Rahab and her family reacted to what was going on around them? How do you think they felt once they had been saved? *(Allow for discussion.)*
2. Why do you think Joshua pronounced an oath against the rebuilding of the walls? *(Allow for discussion.)*
3. How did Joshua’s life change as a result of these events? *(Allow for discussion.)*

There’s one undeniable truth to this story—the walls of Jericho were an obstacle that God wanted destroyed.  Though He employed strange methods to make it happen, there can be no mistaking His desire for His people to overtake the obstacle in their path.

MAKING IT REAL (25 minutes)

We are the people of God, and God has a purpose for our lives too.  The questions that we must begin to ask after reading this story are numerous:
• What is it that God is calling us toward?
• What obstacles are in our path?
• What unorthodox strategies might God employ to see those walls brought down?
• How might those outside of Christ also view walls which inhibit their access to The Church, the Gospel, even Christ?

Before we tackle some of these tough questions, let’s look at one more passage of Scripture. Turn to Matthew 16.

**Read Matthew 16:17-19**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How is the language and theme of this passage similar to Joshua's story? *(Allow for discussion.)*
2. How can Christ’s identity be a force against obstacles in our own lives? *(Allow for discussion.)*

I’d like to focus on one word in this passage to heighten our sensitivity to our present mission, which isn’t all that different from Joshua’s task at Jericho.

The word “gates” is used only here in the New Testament.  The gate of hell is obviously a symbolic gate, a fortress against the power of God through His Church.  However, in this passage—just like the walls of Jericho—Jesus declares that hell stands no chance of defending itself from the power of the Gospel through The Church.

3. When you consider the many walls which block The Church from influencing the surrounding fallen culture, who would you say is winning: The Church or the powers of hell? *(Allow for discussion.)*
4. Does this passage communicate that God will win in the end, or that committed Christians who proclaim Christ in truth and courage can destroy the powers of hell? Why do you think that way? *(Allow for discussion.)*
5. Do you think The Church ever unknowingly assists the powers of hell by keeping non-believers out? If so, How? If so, what can be done to correct this? *(Allow for discussion.)*
6. How intent are you on tearing down walls versus building them? How might you be constructing walls without even knowing it? *(Allow for discussion.)*

One of the most important steps in tearing down walls that obstruct people from truly knowing Jesus is identifying walls which are in place. I asked you earlier what walls you think the modern church has.  I also asked you which of these walls is particularly present in our church, our youth group, and even your own life.

Let’s get really practical here.

 **OUR OWN WALLS:

Discussion Questions:**
1. What is one wall our church could tear down so that more people could get to Christ? How might we do that? *(Allow for discussion.)*
2. What is one wall we’ve constructed that prohibits people from getting plugged into our Bible class? How can we tear down that wall? *(Allow for discussion.)*
3. What is one wall you’ve put up in your life that actually reinforces the enemy instead of defeating him or her? *(Allow for discussion.)*
4. What do you need to do to flatten it so that others will see Christ in you? *(Allow for discussion.)*

The promise that the gates of hell will not stand up against the powers of Christ is certain. What is uncertain is our own resolve to see it happen through The Church.  Contemplate your own dedication to flattening walls as we close with prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Allow a few minutes for your students to think and pray on their own, then close with an audible prayer for them all.