

Aim of lesson

To show that the victory at Jericho was achieved when, as a nation, the Israelites responded in faith to God’s commands.

This, and the following lesson, show vividly that with God all things are possible but that when we leave him out of our lives even apparently straightforward tasks can end in disaster.

Bible background

Joshua 5; 6; Numbers 33:50-56.

Outline of lesson

The battle ahead

From the information on the fact sheet, discuss with your group the task that lay before Joshua and the Israelites. Ask them to suggest how they would have set about the conquest of Jericho. Put the suggestions on a large sheet of paper to compare them with what actually happened. This will show that our ways are seldom the way that God acts.

Introduce the section in the workbooks on Caleb’s diary. Forty years ago he had been a spy himself, and now at last he was entering the land that he had tried to persuade a previous generation to enter.

Refer back to your lessons on Rahab and Joshua and briefly help the group to set the scene of the attack on Jericho.

Eating the Passover (Joshua 5:10-12)

Try to help the group to stand ‘in the shoes’ of the Israelites when on the 14th day of the first month (Abib) they kept the Passover. Remembering God’s past deliverance would be important to them as they faced Jericho. Help them to feel something of the Israelites excitement as they ate the food of the land for the first time, knowing that the manna from God would then cease to be provided.

The Commander of the Lord’s army (Joshua 5:13-15)

Ask the class to think how Caleb would feel when Joshua returned from the country near to Jericho and told him of the angel’s visit. Had Joshua’s view of his own position changed? Had he previously thought that he was the ‘commander of the Lord’s army’?

Joshua’s orders (Joshua 6:1-7)

Again, help the group to listen to Joshua giving God’s orders about the attack. How did the people react to the strange instructions?

Walking round the city (Joshua 6:8-12)

What was that first circuit like? What were the reactions of the people on the walls? How did they feel when walking round the city in silence except for the sound of the priest’s horns?

The walls collapse (Joshua 6:15-21)

Help the young people to capture the excitement of that seventh day; with seven marches around the city and then the collapse of the walls as the Israelites shouted at Joshua’s command. How might Caleb have felt as the Israelites poured into the city?

If this was not covered last week, complete the story by telling the class how Rahab’s family were rescued by the spies. How would she feel seeing the city destroyed which had been her home?

Recipe for victory

Use the ‘recipe for victory’ section in the workbook to discuss the key factors in the victory at Jericho. Compare them with the original ideas put forward by the class at the start of the lesson. (Section 1).

- You may find these suggestions helpful;
- Dedicating themselves first to God.
- Remembering God’s past deliverance. (Passover)
- Recognising that God is in charge. (Captain of Lord’s host).
- Listening to God’s instructions.
- Doing it God’s way.
- Recognising it as God’s victory and devoting all to God.

Ask the class if they think this victory applies to them. If so, how?

Digging deeper

Good friends, bad friends

God knew the inhabitants of the land would lead the Israelites astray, so his command to have nothing to do with them is quite clear. This could lead to a discussion about how we choose our friends.

Relevance to our lives

Lead the group towards an understanding that with God nothing is impossible. Ask them about the things in their lives that they would find it difficult to pray about. Tell them about your own experiences of answered prayers.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to turn to you before we get ourselves into difficulty. Guide us so that we may learn to trust you to lead us day by day.

Other suggestions for activities

Discuss the reasons why God had commanded the Israelites to destroy the nations in the land of promise. Questions will be raised about seeing a God of love and compassion against this background. The issue of God's justice could provide a valuable stepping stone in your group's development. Whilst we may not have all the answers, an important element in God's decision to destroy the nations of Canaan would have been his abhorrence of idolatry and the evil, inhuman, practices which accompanied this way of life.