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ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



MORE THAN A SHOUT:

THE BATTLE
IS NOT
YOURS

PART 1
JOSHUA 6:1-16

A SERMON BY
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Date: September 10/11, 2022

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard John Wesley

Sermon Title: *“More Than a Shout - The Battle Is Not Yours” - Part 1*

Scripture: Joshua 6:1-16

Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the Lord said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.”

So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant of the Lord and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it.” And he ordered the army, “Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the Lord.” When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of the Lord’s covenant followed them. The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. But Joshua had commanded the army, “Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!” So he had the ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the Lord and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets kept sounding. So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!”

SERMON SUMMARY:

This morning's sermon finds us at the entry to the city of Jericho. God had already given the city into the hands of Joshua and the people. They are directed by God to go in and take the city. God's instruction to the people includes critical, specific battle tactics. God tells Joshua and the Israelites to do the following.

- **Show up.** Each day, for seven days, show up consistently and confidently and make your presence known before the people of Jericho. Do this so the enemy might know you are not afraid, you will not avoid difficult circumstances, and I am with you. Show up, be present, so the enemy will see me in you.
- **Be Silent.** As you circle the city, show up in silence. Let your silence show that you obey me and need not respond to everything that is said about you.
- **Be Obedient and Persistent.** God calls the people to persist in their obedience to the divine instructions even though the walls do not fall on the first day, the second day or the sixth.
- **Praise God based on God's promise.** On the seventh day, on the 13th revolution around the city of Jericho, the people are to shout *before the walls fall*. God instructs the people to praise before the victory is accomplished, to praise based on the promises of God.

The battle tactics offered to the people of God as they face the fortified walls of Jericho are applicable to us no matter what obstacles we face. Pastor encourages us to know that God's word always works and if we will place ourselves in God's hands, God will fight our battles every time.

KEY POINTS:

1. Pastor Wesley reminds us that walking victoriously as a daughter or son of God requires more than "the penchant and the prioritization of knowing when to shout and say Amen."
2. Victory in God requires that we obey God's word. In this sermon, we are shown four ways Joshua and the people of Israel are called to obey.
3. In showing up at Jericho, the people exemplify a "ministry of presence" Their very existence is an indication that those who are in God have no need to fear. Those who are with God need not avoid the difficult or the ugly. The Israelites' trust in God shows that when one obeys God, God will exercise power over all circumstances.
4. They were told to be silent. Pastor reminds us that before the shout we have to learn the power of silence. Before we open our mouths, we have to learn to tame our tongues. The discipline of silence shows that God has power over God's people.
5. They were told to be obedient. Like the people of Jericho, we cannot see God's next move. Obedience to God in the face of uncertainty requires us to wait on God. We are able to do this because as Pastor preached, God's word always works.
6. They were called to praise before the promise was fulfilled. Like the people in this morning's text, as we believe God's word, we are called to praise God in the present based on the promises God has made about our future.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS:

1. Besides scriptures, what resources do you access on a regular basis to keep your hope, faith, and spirit at an optimal level?
2. Share a time with the group when you practiced the “ministry of presence”.

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the significance of the number 7 in the Bible?
2. What purpose did the Ark of The Covenant fulfill for Joshua and those walking around the city of Jericho?

Village Members and Facilitators,

The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions in the guide. We ask the facilitators to choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. God tells Joshua and the people the victory has already been given. They had to develop an “expectant spirit” in order to obey God for future blessings. What does the phrase “expectant spirit” mean to you? How might we develop an “expectant spirit”?
2. Pastor Wesley indicated he wanted a “witness” to the power of God in their lives. What is the role of a witness in the life of faith? Why do we need witnesses to the goodness of God? Can you share a moment when someone else’s witness was important in your walk of faith?

3. Pastor speaks about the discipline of silence. One of the many things remembered about the late Queen Elizabeth II was that she never gave interviews and was 'silent' about many things. How does the discipline of silence or lack thereof affect your life?
4. Pastor notes the bigger challenge in Joshua 6 is not the destruction of the walls, but the decision of the people to partner with and trust God. In moments of challenge and crisis, how do you strengthen your ability to walk with and trust God, as opposed to "leaning to your own understanding."
5. What does the "Ministry of Presence" mean to you? How can you exercise this power in your life?
6. Pastor indicates that "Nothing gets better by avoidance." How do you feel about this statement? Has it been true in your life?
7. Do you remember a battle you lost despite constant shout and praise? In defeat, did it shed any light on what you need to incorporate into your battles in the future? Please share any insights you gained regarding augmenting your future battle tactics.
8. Pastor makes the bold statement that "God will always intervene on our behalf." However, there are times when the loved one is lost, the child does not come home, the job ends in termination, or the lie takes hold. How do you interpret Pastor's statement in your life when things do not turn out as you hoped? In these moments how is God intervening on your behalf?

"CAN I PUSH IT?" QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley spoke about the book, Where Have All the Prophets Gone by Dr. Marvin McMickle. When you think of the term "Mini-Gospel", what does that mean for you according to your experience?

2. Also in Dr. McMickle's book, we note there is a phenomenon called "Praise Craze". This phenomenon reduces the Gospel to "sanctified entertainment". As you consider the worship experience what is a proper balance between praise, challenge, study, and transformation?

3. Do you believe the presence of praise and worship on social media can unintentionally hinder a Believer's spiritual growth and development? Do you see instances where Believers may get addicted to the energy and/or adrenaline contained in clips of shout and praise?

ACTIVITY:

Please share a "go-to scripture" to which you turn in times of challenge or fear. Why is this scripture important to you?

SPIRIT WORK:

Pastor references Matthew 5:38-39, "Turn the other cheek". Meditate on this text, asking God for a personal revelation. Write down your thoughts. Next, translate this text into modern language. How do you hear the text now? Are there any shifts in your understanding? Are there other texts in the Bible that might aid your understanding or application of this text? Please see References for Further Study.

Additional Questions for Married Couples:

1. When was the last time you and your spouse had "heated fellowship" and you realized it would've been better to be silent?

2. The Ark of Covenant is the place where the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments and other artifacts of Israel's life with God were kept. The Ark signaled God's presence among the people. What in your home signals the presence of God? Is it an artifact? Is it an atmosphere? Is it a practice? Please share with your Village how God is present in your home.

Additional Questions for Young Adults:

1. Pastor Wesley encourages us to “learn to be persistent in obedience to God’s word”. How do you exercise this in your life? How do you “wait” on God? What have you learned or practiced to help you wait on God?
2. Pastor Wesley reminds us that those poised for battle in Joshua 6 were children when their parents proved afraid of the “Jerichonians” in Numbers 13. Are there “examples” set by your elders that you have had to overcome in order to go forward with your life? What have you learned from this observation and experience? What decisions have you made?

Additional Questions for Parents:

1. Please share a personal childhood memory of an adult, other than a parent, who offered you the ministry of presence. How did this affect you? Now, who are the adults you place in the lives of your children who offer a ministry of presence to them?
2. If you are a single parent, are you able to share instances when your children benefited from you showing up in aspects of their lives? How did you feel when your presence was a blessing to your child? Ultimately, was this moment impactful for you?
3. The people of Israel had to wait seven days before they saw the blessing of the Lord in the destruction of the walls. Share with the other parents in your Village the ways in which you help your children to wait for the things they would prefer to have materialize immediately. How do you “wait” on God, as an adult and as a parent?

Additional Questions for Women:

1. Sometimes we struggle with the way we speak. If you have experienced struggling with your “tongue”, what do you do to gain control over your language? As the old folks would say, how do you tame your tongue?

2. Think of a moment when you truly shouted praises after a victory. Did you take the time to look back over that experience and learn? Did you privilege the praise over the parts of your passage to the praise? Think about that time of praise and list two things you learned on your way to the praise.

Additional Questions for Men:

1. Sometimes we struggle with the way we speak. If you have experienced struggling with your “tongue”, what do you do to gain control over your language? As the old folks would say, how do you tame your tongue?
2. When was the last time you felt the need to defend yourself and later wished you had stayed “silent”? If you are able, please share what you learned from that experience?

Additional Questions for Returning Citizens:

1. Pastor Wesley encourages us to “learn to be persistent in obedience to God’s word”. How do you exercise this in your life? How do you “wait” on God? What have you learned or practiced to help you wait on God?
2. The sermon suggests that the Jerochianians inside the wall taunted the Israelites marching outside the wall. In your life, have there been people who taunted, teased, or talked about you negatively? If so, how have you responded to them? What have you learned from these experiences?

Additional Questions for Differently Abled Person:

1. Are there tools you have obtained to help you “block, ignore, and keep silent” when it is necessary? What are they? What impact have they had in your life?
2. Where does your hope come from when it seems that God isn’t answering your prayer?

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Ark of the Covenant. For a description of the Ark of the Covenant, please enter this link.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjGJ2MSpauk>.
 - b. For a Jewish perspective on the Ark, please enter this link.
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-ark-of-the-convenant>

2. The Number Seven in the Bible. The Bible Project reports the following.
 - a. Seven was symbolic in ancient near eastern and Israelite culture and literature. **It communicated a sense of “fullness” or “completeness”** (שבע “seven” is spelled with the same consonants as the word שבע “complete/full”). This makes sense of the pervasive appearance of “seven” patterns in the Bible.
 - b. <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/significance-7/>

3. Matthew 5:38-39. For a list of translations of this text, please enter this link.
 - a. <https://biblehub.com/matthew/5-39.htm>

4. Waiting on the Lord. Gospel artist Juanita Bynum offers a musical meditation on waiting on the Lord.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEiGEfm2uE>