

=BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 6

Joshua

Objects to have:

Signs of the first five books of the Bible

The sign for the book of Joshua: JOSHUA  
Joshua, the Leader

Chalk and chalkboard

Something to represent the ark of the covenant

Twelve stones

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

What a wonderful book the Bible is! (Hold up your Bible.) It never grows old. Companies stop printing other books, but they keep on printing the Bible. That's because people keep buying it. After other books have been written and printed, people stop buying them, and then the printing company stops printing them. The Bible never has gone out of print. Wicked men have tried to make people burn all the Bibles, but God has watched over His Book to be sure that people can always have a copy of it to read. Other wicked men have changed some of the words in the Bible, and they have left out words in the Bible. But God has watched over the King James Bible so that we have His Word in our English language.

Do you remember how many books there are in this one book? Yes, 66! There are two main divisions to the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We know the names of the first five books of the Bible. (Repeat them with the children.) We have learned a word or two about each one, helping us to remember what is in each book. (Repeat the themes for these first five books.)

We have come to the sixth book of the Bible. The name of the book is the name of a man. The book is called Joshua. The theme of the book is JOSHUA, THE LEADER.

Telling the story:

At the close of our Bible story last Sunday, Moses was telling his people good-bye. It was time for the Israelites to go into the land of Canaan, but Moses was not going to be able to go in with them. Moses was helping his people remember the rules and the laws that God had commanded them.

Then Moses turned to Joshua. "Joshua, God wants you to be the new leader of the Israelites. Be strong and of a good courage. It will be a hard job to be the leader of these millions of people, but God will always be with you, and He will tell you what to do." Then Moses said good-bye. He went away from the people.

(As you talk, draw on the chalkboard. Draw the Jordan River to the right of the center of your chalkboard.) The people were on this side of the Jordan River. (Point to the right of the river.) Most of the Promised Land was on this side of the Jordan River. The people had put up their tents. (Draw a few tents on the right side of the Jordan.) They were camped there until they got their orders to move on. God was giving them part of that land. (Point to the left of the Jordan River.)

The Jordan River was flooding over its banks. It was deep at this time of the year, and the waves were big and strong. How soon would God have the people to move across that river and into the Promised Land?

Joshua sent spies into the city that was just across the Jordan River. The city was named Jericho. The spies returned some days later. They wanted to tell what they saw and heard in Jericho.

The spies told Joshua what Jericho was like. The spies said, "The city of Jericho is a huge city that has a high wall around it. There are huge gates on one side of the wall. These gates are open only during the day; men shut and lock these gates at night so that no one can go into the city or can leave the city. We spies walked through the gates while they were open. We went into a house that is on the wide city wall. The lady in that house hid us so that when some of the king's men came looking for us, we could not be found. The lady, whose name was Rahab, let us men down over the wall of the city by putting a rope out a window of her house. We promised her that if she had her mother and her father and her brothers and her sisters and all her relatives inside her house whenever we Israelites would come to Jericho, all of them would be safe."

Joshua listened to the spies. "All the people of the nations of Canaan are very frightened!" the spies told Joshua. "News has gotten around that we, God's people, are coming."

Joshua called the people together. Joshua said, "It is time for us to go over this River Jordan and to march into Canaan. It is time for us to start taking the land that God said is ours." The people were excited, and maybe a little afraid! Joshua said, "God is with us. He will give us the victory. Now, listen very carefully; God has told us exactly what to do."

The people listened as Joshua gave the orders that God had given him. "We will cross this river." I am sure that the people wondered how they could cross the river. The river was flooding; it was very deep. They had animals and children and luggage and tents and furniture. There was no way to swim! "I need seven priests," said Joshua. That was in the years before God said that priests were no longer needed. "Seven of your priests will pick up the Ark of the Covenant." (Pick up your "Ark of the Covenant.") That was the very important golden treasure chest that was usually kept in the tabernacle. "You will walk to the edge of the Jordan River. Priests, as soon as your feet get into the water at the very edge, where the water is shallow, stop. Stand still. People, you will see what God will do."

The people were packed, their tents were folded up, the children and the animals were in line with the mommies and the daddies of each family. The priests marched in front of them, carrying the Ark of the Covenant. (Have four children carry your Ark of the Covenant.) The priests came to the edge of the water; they waded into the shallow water. They stood still as they had been commanded to do. Suddenly, the waters stopped flowing down to where they were standing. The waters flowed only to a certain place, and then they stopped. As they stopped, they got deeper and deeper in that place until there was a huge wall of water. Where the priests were standing with the Ark of the Covenant, the ground was getting dried up.

Then the order was given. "March on, Israelites. Priests, stand still with the Ark of the Covenant. The other priests and Joshua and the mommies and the daddies and the animals and the boys and the girls started to walk. They walked right across the Jordan River, but they were not walking in water! The riverbed was dry where they were supposed to walk. All the Israelites walked across the Jordan River. Then the priests who had been standing there all that time, holding the Ark of the Covenant, walked across the Jordan River behind everybody else. As they went, they put 12 great big stones in the middle of the riverbed. (Pick up 12 twelve stones, count them as you put them back down again in a pile.) God commanded that those stones be there so that nations around would always remember that God made the waters pile up as they flowed down, thus making that spot of the riverbed dry. When the priests got the Ark of the Covenant safely to the other side, then God let the waters of the Jordan River flow back down again. The Israelites were safe on the other side of the Jordan! They were in an open place of the land of Canaan, by the Jordan River. The Israelites put up their tents.

The people in the city of Jericho were scared to death! They would not leave the city; not even the king would leave. He and the people of the city of Jericho knew that the Israelites were camped in their tents very near the walls of their city.

God said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage. Listen to the plan. Then tell the people the plan. Follow orders exactly. I will give you the city of Jericho."

Joshua lined up the soldiers, and the soldiers were carrying their swords and spears. Next in line came seven of the priests; these priests were carrying trumpets that were made of the horns from daddy sheep—they were rams' horns. Next came the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant. The last in line were the soldiers who were to be the last to watch for escaping enemies. All the other people stayed at their tents.

Joshua said, "We men who are in line are going to march around the city once. While we march, the trumpets will blow." I imagine the blowing of the trumpets helped the men to march in step, don't you? "Everybody else," Joshua said, "has to keep his mouth shut. Not one person will say one word the whole time that we are marching around the city of Jericho. After we march around the city once, then we will come back here to our tents. We will sleep for the night, then we will get up the next morning and line up the way that we have lined up for today's march. We will march around the city again on the second day; we will march around it once and then come back to our tents. The trumpets will blow while we are marching, but not one man is allowed to say one word all the while that we are marching. We will march around the city one time every day for six days."

What a strange way to capture a city, but the Israelites did just as they were commanded by Joshua who had been commanded by God. Once each day for six days they marched once around the walled city of Jericho.

On the seventh day the command was different. The lining up was the same: the armed soldiers first, the priests blowing trumpets second, the Ark of the Covenant third, and the rear guard last. The command for the seventh day was that the Israelites march around the city seven times. At the end of the seventh march around the city the trumpets were to sound a different tune, and the men marching with them were all to shout. Then they were to see what would happen to the walls of the city of Jericho!

(While saying the following, you could march around in a circle, making the circle seven times. Then you could pretend to blow a trumpet and then maybe you could shout, "Praise the Lord.") The march began on the seventh day. The Israelite procession went once around the city. Nobody said a word, only the trumpets were making a sound. They marched around the second time. They marched around the third time. Don't you wonder how the people who lived in Jericho were feeling about this? The Israelites marched around the fourth time and the fifth time and the sixth time and the seventh time. Joshua gave the signal! The trumpets blew a different sound! Joshua signaled to all the other people who were in line. They shouted! Immediately the huge, strong walls that were around the city of Jericho fell down flat! It's a good thing that the Israelites were not marching too close to them, or they would have been hit by them, for the walls fell flat, outward. Immediately the armed soldiers ran into the city, killing all the people who lived there. The only people who were allowed to stay alive were the people who were in Rahab's house with her. The only things that the Israelites were allowed to take were things made of silver and gold and brass; these things were to go into God's treasury.

The battle ended. The Israelites set the city of Jericho on fire and burned it completely. Why did God want that city so completely destroyed? It is because the people were wicked; none of them would trust God.

What an exciting story! What wonderful things God can do.

LEARN OUR BIBLE VERSE: Joshua 1:9, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."