



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



HG65: Inhabiting The Promised Land (4/6)
Jericho: The Walls Come Tumbling Down

Joshua 6:1-27

Home Group Study Notes

26th February 2012 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

What do you think was the hardest thing for Joshua to get the people to do, get up early enough to all walk round (there were about 2,000,000 of them), be silent or keep going when nothing appeared to be happening?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1) Are there any walls in your life that you know need to come down before you receive more of what God has for you?

2) Do you find it easier to be busy for God serving him and doing things than taking time out to spend with him?

3) What do you think of what Hannah Whitall Smith said: *“For the most part, the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are satisfied with a life so conformed to the world in almost every respect that, to a casual observer no difference is discernible.”* Discuss among yourselves.

5. **We need to obey:** That day, Joshua the great leader, along with leaders generals and fighting men all walked together with the people, men women and children all behind the Presence of God, no ones position was of more importance, all had to follow the same instructions. God’s instructions were specific and detailed, faith was required, but so was obedience.

They knew from experience that in order to enter into the Promised Land with all the blessings that God had for them they had to honour Him, remain faithful and be obedient. God blessed obedient faith that day. God is looking for us to follow his instructions and be obedient to what he tells us even when what he tells us to do seems to be beyond us, or looks impossible and is out of our experience.

He is the Same Today

Joshua 4 24 says that God stopped the flowing River Jordan to let the people cross over and *“He did this so that all the nations of the earth might know the power of the Lord, and that you might fear the Lord your God forever”* The tumbling walls come under the same category, the power of the Lord was displayed. I can’t look at this passage without asking myself the question, where today is God is working in such a way through his people so that the nations of the earth may know and fear the power of the Lord?

In her book *The Christian’s secret to a happy life*, Hannah Whitall Smith says *“For the most part, the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are satisfied with a life so conformed to the world in almost every respect that, to a casual observer no difference is discernible.”* Joshua’s God was feared and recognised by other people who had heard of the way God defended and protected them, he was a God of the miraculous, who operated in signs and wonders, whose power over nature was displayed when he parted the Red Sea on their exit from Egypt and again on crossing the River Jordan and now with victory over Jericho as he brought the walls tumbling down.

Our God is the same God, He is a worker of miracles, he is a miracle making God and yet that same power that blessed the Israelites and caused the Canaanites to take notice and to fear him is relatively absent from our own experience today. At Pentecost the Spirit came and 3000 were added to the church, Acts 2:41, our message has POWER, we are empowered messengers. We are the only Christians some people will ever meet, if we proclaim the message Jesus will do the rest, we need to grow spiritually not only for our benefit but for the benefit of others who will be changed through the message we carry.

The Presence Of God

The Israelites took the city that day, God gave them the victory over their enemy but do you know what the greatest victory the people experienced? It was having the Presence of God in their lives. The *only* thing that makes God’s people different from all the rest, is the Presence of God with them. We need to serve God’s Presence in the inner room and to do what he tells us to do. It is through serving and seeking His presence that blessings will come and his divine power will flow through us.

Lets have a dream and make it our prayer that the walls that surround us now will, like those at Jericho, come tumbling down. That we and Christians everywhere may take the good news of Jesus out and into the world, as a church lets allow ourselves to dream, and then trust that the Father’s hand may reach out to heal and perform miracles and may Jesus Christ be lifted up and glorified for all the world to see.

In his book, *The Way in is the Way on*, John Wimber said. “*An early slogan of the Vineyard church was “What is the Father doing?” We tried to enter each ministry situation with that question foremost in our minds. Our experiences in spiritual gifts were an attempt to discern what the Father was up to. Whether the situation was evangelism, healing, budgeting for the poor or sending a couple across the country to plant a church, the important thing was to ask the Father what He was doing. To continue to listen is essential because Jesus is still owner-operator of the Church. It is after all his ministry and authority not ours. Our job is to cooperate.*”

God could have brought the walls down at anytime but his plan included 7 days. What would have happened to that plan if the people had given up before day 7? They would have missed God’s best for them, they would have missed the miracle. Instead, God was able to work through them because they trusted Him, they believed in Him and disregarded what they saw with their own eyes. They co-operated with God and they waited on Him to act.

2. We need to persevere: Jericho teaches us about the importance of persevering, it’s a story about repetition, doing a task again and again, nothing happens without effort which is often tedious and repetitious, you may not see any change at first, it may be difficult, tiring, relentless and discouraging but when we follow God’s instructions precisely repetition becomes faithfulness and commitment. Today we are so conditioned to wanting and expecting quick results, God seems to like to take His time and at times is elusive but He rewards those who persevere in their search for him, and gives the breakthrough in situations that appear in the natural world to be hopeless.

3. Our own walls need to come down: The walls also represent things that stand between us and God and in order to receive His best for our lives our walls need to be tackled and defeated. Its easy for sin and things that seem insignificant at first to grow and take hold in our lives, very soon we find that they have a stranglehold on us. Many things can become barriers that prevent us from going deeper with God and his plan being fulfilled in our lives, it may be some unrepented sin, or idols that we put in God’s place. Perhaps due to disappointments or past hurts our spirits have become hard and distant from God. It may be that anger or pride stops us from living the full life that Jesus died to give us. Whatever it is that stands before us from going deeper with God is a wall and that wall needs to come down if we are going to walk forward further into the Promised Land and receive Gods best for us. We need to come to the place where we understand who it is that we serve, who has ultimate authority over us and who expects us to bow in total surrender to Him.

4. We need to serve: This passage also speaks to us about how we serve, Jesus is our master and we are to do what he asks of us. For 3 years Jesus taught his disciples and followers about the Kingdom of God yet they misunderstood and believed it to be a worldly kingdom. They looked forward to having positions of authority as they jockeyed among themselves for good jobs, we saw this when James and John’s mother asked Jesus if they could sit either side if him. Jesus showed us the new model of servanthood. What does a servant do? He does what his master wants him got to do. We say that we want to serve the Lord but we rebel against submission even to God’s authority and control, we hate being off centre stage or out of the loop, we hate our service to be invisible to all except God. We cannot bargain with God and offer to obey him in something and not others and we certainly cant try to do deals with him where we will do something if he does something too, no our job is simply to obey. Jesus says “*Whoever hears my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love him and show myself to him,*” *Jn 14 v21*. There is a direct connection between our love for Jesus, and our willingness to obey His commands. We can be busy doing all sorts of things, seeing all number of people in an effort to serve and obey him but do you ever hear him say to you, “*Am I one of those people? Am I one of those people you are busy planning to spend time with?*”

4) If God is the same today as he has always been why do you think we see so little evidence of him working through signs and wonders, which according to Joshua 4:24, God did: “... so that all the nations of the earth might know the power of the Lord, and that you might fear the Lord your God forever.”

5) Can you think of an experience when your obedient trust and perseverance has borne fruit?

6) The only thing that make us different from other people is the Presence of God. How aware are you of His Presence? Help and encourage each other by discussing the things you do to deepen your experience and awareness of God in your everyday life.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG65: Inhabiting The Promised Land (4/6) *Jericho: The Walls Come Tumbling Down*

Joshua 6:1-27

Home Group Sermon Notes

26th February 2012 - Pauline Woolnough

The City of Jericho

The Ancient city of Jericho is situated in the western edge of the Jordan Valley, just north of the Dead Sea. It was, a very desirable place to live, with a favourable climate and its own strong spring inside the city walls which still provides water today, it was a great fortified city and considered to be invincible by the Canaanites. It had a double layer of protection. Around the outer edge there was a retaining wall behind which rose a steep embankment, and at the top of the embankment was the city wall, in some places the walls were 25ft high and 20ft thick and soldiers standing guard on top of the walls could see for miles. It was strategically located because any army attempting to penetrate the central hill country from the east would first have to capture Jericho. It therefore posed a problem for the Israelites, it stood in the way of them entering the Promised Land. If the Israelites wanted to go further and benefit from all that God had for them Jericho had to be tackled and defeated. It stood as a barrier between them and all that God promised them.

The Plan

Thankfully there was a plan and as it was God's plan it was going to be good, even if it was a bit strange, and certainly not one that Joshua the great commander of the Israelite army would have thought up. At the centre of God's plan was the Ark of the Covenant, His Holy Presence among his people, - it involved priests blowing trumpets and the army and the people following the Presence of God as it was carried around the city for 7 days. God said to Joshua in Chapter 6, "this is the moment you have all been waiting for" (v2), God said "*See I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.*" The battle was already won and not a sword had been drawn, all they had to do was do what God told them to do, and follow His Presence and His instructions.

Jericho was a strong city and the people had supplies to last them years but they were already afraid. They would have heard about the River Jordan crossing so they knew that the flooded river was no barrier to the Jewish God. Chapter 2.24 says that "*they were paralysed with fear.*" Odd strange plans call for strong faith and this is what God expected of his people, this is what he was teaching them. God wants his people to do things His way even if His way looks odd, even if we don't understand, and even if we don't feel like doing it, after all who can understand the ways of God. He promised them the victory, but they had to do it his way and all they had to do was walk, however, even that required great discipline on the part of these people. The army alone was reputed to be numbered at 600,000.

God's Way Works

Ch 6.7 tells us that Joshua ordered the people to march round the city behind the armed forces, resulting in about 2,000,000 people men women and children marching silently. It would have taken them all day to get round once.

Jericho was not a huge city, it covered an area of about nine acres and with all those people marching round such a small area it could not have been easy, the heat, the dust, the sheer number of people, and then on top of it all they had to be silent but somehow they did it, they walked by faith, no talking, no discussing no complaining, just walking and trusting and doing it God's way. Day after day they marched round their city, and after the 7th circuit on the 7th day the priests blew the trumpets, the people yelled and shouted as loud as they could, Joshua shouted out "*the Lord has given you the city.*" and the walls collapsed. Surprise, relief, astonishment, it worked, following God's orders worked, doing things God's way worked!

Our Warrior God

The Bible says the walls collapsed, they fell down flat. The Hebrew suggests that the city walls of Jericho fell beneath themselves and excavations have shown that the bricks from the collapsed walls of Jericho formed a ramp against the retaining wall enabling the people to climb up over the broken walls and take the city. As instructed by God they charged in and put all the citizens of Jericho to death, apart from Rahab and her family who were saved because of the help they had given to the spies.

We may think it was mean of God to sentence them all to death but the message of this passage in Joshua, and the entire Bible, is that God is a mighty Warrior who will judge righteously and punish wrong. In *Revelation 19:11-16* we see "*... a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.... He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen.... He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'*" Here, the Commander is clearly Jesus Christ the Victor, the same Commander of the battle of Jericho, Joshua didn't fight and win the battle of Jericho...God did.

Christ the Victor

How did the walls collapse? Some theories are that the vibrations of the trumpets and the shouting caused the walls to weaken and fall, others that as more and more people gathered on the city walls to watch, the weight led to the walls collapsing and other still that they fell due to an earthquake, no matter, they fell, God's timing was perfect, it was a miracle that is sung of about 3500 thousand years later. Amazing, stories like this one should inspire us and remind us of the victories that we can experience through faith in Christ. Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross we have already moved into the Promised Land, all our battles have been defeated. When he died on the cross his last words were "*It is finished.*" In 19.30, he has beaten every enemy and every battle we face but deep down I wonder why it is that I still have problems that don't seem to have solutions. Why do I not experience the same victories in my life despite my belief that God does not change and he is the same today as he was 3500 yrs ago. Joshua teaches us several lessons that we may all know by now but which will help us venture further into the Promised Land that Jesus died to give us.

1. We need to trust and wait: This story teaches us that for every problem that we have, God has a solution, he has a plan and he has the power to accomplish his plan. God's plan involved Joshua having faith, what God was really saying was "*Trust me. Trust me and not what you see. The city may be fortified the walls may be thick, it may look humanly impossible, but I have already given you the city, just trust me.*" What often prevents God's plan becoming reality is our lack of patience, we look at difficult situations then make our own assessments, we often assume things look hopeless and so we give up. We need to wait on God. We need to listen to God.