

## LESSON 2

March 14, 2021

Unit I: Faithful Prophets

Making Wise Choices

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:23-31

Background Scriptures: Joshua 5:13–6:27

Print Passages: Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1-5, 15-16, 20

**Key Verse**—The LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. (Joshua 6:2, KJV)

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The LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.” (Joshua 6:2, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explain how Joshua acted obediently to the vision from God.
- Reflect on our inefficiencies when challenges overwhelm us.
- Commit to obeying God especially in challenging times.

### KEY TERMS

**Holy(5:15)**—Hebrew: *qodesh* (ko’-desh): apartness; sacredness.

**Jericho (6:1)**—Hebrew: *Yericho* (yer-ee-kho’): a city in the Jordan Valley captured by Joshua.

**Joshua (5:13)**—Hebrew: *Yehoshua* (yeh-ho-shoo’-ah): “the LORD is salvation”; Moses’ successor.

**Rams’ horns (6:4)**—Hebrew: *yobel* (yo-bale’): wind instruments.

### PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG

## **WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS**

In every area of life, people face choices. How do we discern what choices are best and organize our actions accordingly? Joshua and the people of Israel chose to honor a covenant with God, obeying God's instructions perfectly.

## **THE LESSON IN FOCUS**

Whether you realize it or not, you make thousands of conscious decisions in a day, including decisions about what you will or will not do, how you will do it, when, why, how long, and so forth. If we seriously consider the consequences of the choices we make, especially as believers, we will realize how important it is to make wise decisions. For the believer, it is a matter of consistently making choices that are within God's sovereign will. Even when we have a definite awareness of His unique will for our individual lives, there are times when He will prompt us to follow a path He has not made clear or one that appears to make no sense from our human perspective. At times like these, we must rely on what we know and have experienced about Him and obey in faith.

## **THE LESSON IN CONTEXT**

The book of Joshua is a record of Israel's incomplete conquest of Canaan, the land promised to them by God through Abraham. Joshua, Moses' successor and military leader, is the principal character, but this book primarily emphasizes the faithfulness of God to fulfill His covenant promises. Each recorded military victory is really God's because they learn through Joshua that faith in God and His word are more powerful than any military might. Joshua leads the second generation of the nation of Israel, descendants of those who died in the wilderness because of making the unwise choice to disobey and rebel against God. As they faced Jericho, the first obstacle to entering and possessing Canaan, Joshua made the wise choice of obeying God's unusual strategy for conquering this impregnable city. He did not understand how, but he chose to trust Who would cause it to happen.

## **OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the items below.)**

1. How was Joshua assured of victory over Jericho before the battle began?
2. What was Joshua's immediate reaction after he learned the identity of the man?
3. Why was it necessary for Joshua to remove his sandals and what does it imply about entering God's presence?
4. What assurance did the presence of the ark of the covenant provide for Joshua and the people?

## **INSIGHTS**

We are bombarded by the urgency of making a wide array of daily decisions—what to eat, what to buy, what to wear, job and career choices, etc. Despite our free will, the critical consideration is that every choice we make carries with it a consequence. Wrong choices related to our physical bodies can lead to poor health. Likewise, wrong choices can have negative effects on our emotional and mental health as well. Believers should seriously consider making wise choices because of the

eternal nature of the consequences accompanying them. Wise choices for the people of God are those that are in agreement with His will, whether fully understood or not. Making the right choice even when God's will is unclear requires surrendering to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

## **EXPLORATION**

**Invite your students to recall how many choices they had to make before or after arriving to Sunday school. Ask for a few persons to share how those choices affected them and their attitudes. Make a transition to the lesson by emphasizing the Christian's need to prioritize making wise choices. This is especially true when one does not have complete clarity about the way God may be directing. Unpack the lesson content, focusing on Joshua's unquestioning obedience to such unusual instructions for getting past the walls of Jericho. Ask your students to suggest why he was able to do so. Emphasize the need to have a faith that trusts God without understating God's plan. This kind of faith is only possible when one's life is totally committed to doing God's will. Challenge your students to intentionally seek to strengthen their relationship with God through prayer and the study and application of His Word so that they will be able to consistently make choices that are consistent with His will for their lives.**

## **ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER**

### **Commentary on Joshua 5:13-15**

#### **KJV**

**13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?**

**14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?**

**15 And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.**

#### **NIV**

**13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"**

**14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"**

**15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.**

Joshua, Israel's new leader and military commander, had successfully led the crossing of the Jordan River into Canaan. As the military leader, his charge was to lead the conquest and possession of this land that God had given them as an inheritance. Joshua had been assured that God was with him and would give him success if he faithfully obeyed His word (see Joshua 1:1-9). Israel had also agreed to obey all that he commanded and to kill any who refused to obey him (verses 16-18). They now faced the city of Jericho, the first major obstacle to their military campaign to dispossess the inhabitants of Canaan.

This section of the text opens with Joshua's conducting a personal survey of Jericho. His strategizing is interrupted by the appearance of a man with a drawn sword (verse 13). Like a well-trained sentinel on guard duty, Joshua challenged the man to identify himself as either friend or foe. The man responded that he had come as the commander of the army of the Lord (verse 14a). Joshua was the human commander of Israel's army, but he was now in the presence of the true Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Himself. This unexpected appearance was a theophany, a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. His appearance at this crucial time reveals that those who commit themselves to doing God's will are assured that He will show up or make His presence known to encourage and strengthen just when it is needed most. The message of the drawn sword is also significant. It signified that God would fight for Joshua and His people. Centuries later, another of Israel's leaders would be specifically told that the battle they faced was the Lord's not theirs (see 2 Chronicles 20). Believers who wisely choose to stay in His will have this same assurance today.

Joshua, discerning that he was in God's presence, prostrated himself in a position of worship and requested guidance (verse 14b). The angel of the Lord did not refuse Joshua's worship and instructed Joshua to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground (verse 15). The only fitting response to God's presence is worship. However, approaching God's holiness is never to be done frivolously or taken lightly. Joshua's sandals symbolize the contamination of the world that must be removed before God will accept worship. Joshua wisely chose to focus on the task before him, humble himself in God's presence, and worship in reverent obedience. These actions positioned him to receive the power and protection of the supreme commander and the assurance of victory. The community of faith both collectively and individually can expect the same assurance by following Joshua's example.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

*(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)*

- **Adult Questions:**

*How does Joshua's encounter with God compare with that of Moses' at the burning bush? What spiritual lessons does the text teach us?*

- **Young Adult Question:**

*How might the outcome of the battle at Jericho have unfolded if Joshua had refused to surrender to the commander of the Lord's army?*

## Commentary on Joshua 6:1-5

### KJV

**NOW *JERICO* was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.**

**2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.**

**3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.**

**4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of *rams' horns*: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.**

**5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.**

### NIV

**NOW THE gates of *Jericho* were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.**

**2 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.**

**3 "March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.**

**4 "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.**

**5 "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."**

Real worship is always followed by real service. Joshua's worship was followed by detailed instructions from the Commander-in-Chief regarding how Israel would proceed to overthrow Jericho. This great city would fall, but in a very unusual manner. The city was securely shut up from a military perspective (verse 1). In another sense, Jericho was also shut up spiritually by its own refusal to be swayed by the message of God's deeds through Israel's exodus from Egypt. Thus, Jericho became a significant barrier to Israel's possession of Canaan. Physically, Jericho's dual walls and prominent location on a hill made it seemingly impossible to overthrow, especially since Israel's army would have to struggle uphill to fight against it. God did not leave it to Joshua to decide how to conquer the city. After reminding Joshua again that He had already given them the city (verse 2), God provided a detailed battle strategy (verses 3-4). God instructed Joshua to have Israel's armed men, seven priests with trumpets, seven priests bearing the Ark, and the people to march around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they were to march around

the city seven times. When they finished on this day, the priests were to blow their trumpets and the people were to shout—upon which God promised that the walls would fall.

Why did God employ such an odd method of waging war against an enemy? First of all, God is sovereign—He accomplishes His will using any means or methods that please Him. God’s strategy at Jericho was designed to show His grace and faithfulness to fulfill His covenant promises. The people would learn that without God’s presence and guidance they could win no battles—they could do nothing. Israel’s victory was not so much in the marching, blowing of trumpets, and shouting as it was in the people’s choice to obey God’s instructions unquestionably. Joshua felt no need to challenge, debate, or second-guess God’s instructions. The results speak for themselves. Joshua and the people received and believed God’s instructions and, by faith, chose to obey them. God does not require that we always understand His will. What He does require is that we obey His commands even if they appear to be unclear or unreasonable from our perspective.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

*(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)*

- **Adult Question:**

*Why does God call us to follow directions we may not fully understand?*

- **Young Adult Question:**

*Discuss a time when your obedience to God ended with success even when it seemed questionable or unlikely to work.*

## Commentary on Joshua 6:15-16, 20

### KJV

**15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.**

**16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.**

.....

**20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.**

### NIV

**15 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.**

**16 The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!”**

.....

**20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.**

Joshua 6 details the defeat of Jericho, the first obstacle to their entering and possessing Canaan. God’s battle plan was flawlessly executed by Joshua and the people. Day 7 arrived and the people circuted the city not once, but seven times as instructed (verse 15). At the seventh time around, the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua issued the command to the people to shout (verse 16). Shouting was their final test of obedience and God used it as His weapon to bring down Jericho’s walls. Their unquestioning obedience secured the victory. Now, the people could enter and take the city as He had promised (verse 20). Two things can be cited about the people’s obedience: (1) their faith to believe God without fully understanding His instructions; (2) Moses admonished this new generation to follow the path of total obedience to God if they expected to be blessed. If they chose to disobey, they would suffer the same consequences their ancestors had because of their disobedience in the wilderness. At this time, it is apparent that they learned this lesson. Another valuable lesson this experience taught them was the benevolence of God’s grace toward those who obey Him. Jericho was His gift to them, illustrating the blessings that were in store if they continued to follow the path of submissive obedience. Our Lord did not ask us to perform noteworthy deeds to prove our love and loyalty to Him. He instructed that obedience to His commands was the only visible proof. Victorious living is assured for all who accept Him as Lord and Savior and choose the path of obedience.

## **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

*(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)*

- **Adult Question:**

*What was Christ’s purpose for making obedience a proof of our love for Him?*

- **Young Adult Question:**

*Israel won the battle at Jericho because Joshua and the people trusted God. What lessons does the story teach about approaching life’s battles?*

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

- **Refer to Adult Book**

*(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)*

— It is inevitable that we will face times in which we will have to make difficult choices. The key to making wise ones, especially in difficult circumstances, will depend on the strength of our



relationship with God. The more intimate the relationship with Him, the more discerning we will be and the easier to trust Him even when we don't fully understand His agenda for our lives.

*(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)*

— Obeying God without questioning is a difficult challenge, especially when what He asks us to do seems to be outside the ordinary. Recalling His past works on our behalf and internalizing the promise of His presence, power, and protection will enable us to obey His commands or directions on faith without having to completely understand them.

• **Refer to Young Adult Book**

*(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)*

— You will encounter many battles in life. As you reflect on your inadequacies, remember that God never meant for you to go into battle alone. When you are faced with overwhelming circumstances, surrender your will to God and fully commit yourself to humility and obedience to God.

*(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)*

— Joshua followed the Lord's instructions directly as revealed to him. Whatever you encounter in this world, know that God has a perfect plan. Even when God's plan seems impossible to you, step out in faith, trust God, and watch God take charge.

## **NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

The lesson topic for Sunday, March 21, 2021, is "Seeking Wisdom for the Future." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 25:1-10, the Background Scripture is 2 Kings 22, and the Printed Text is 2 Kings 22:14-20.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Dear God, forgive us when we attempt to try to make sense of things before choosing to obey Your will. Help us to continue to grow spiritually so that our obedience will be immediate and unquestioning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

*(March 15-21, 2021)*

### **Huldah: Prophet of Wisdom**

MONDAY, March 15: "God Loves Covenant Keepers" (Psalm 25:1-10)

TUESDAY, March 16: "Entering God's Promised Rest" (Hebrews 4:1-11)

WEDNESDAY, March 17 "A New Covenant Made with the Israelites" (Deuteronomy 29:1-6)

THURSDAY, March 18: "Josiah Prepares to Repair the Temple" (2 Kings 22:1-7)

FRIDAY, March 19: "Josiah Seeks Guidance to Confront Disobedience" (2 Kings 22 8-13)

SATURDAY, March 20: "Josiah Leads in Covenant Renewal" (2 Kings 23:1-3)

SUNDAY, March 21: "Huldah Confirms Coming Judgment; Josiah Is Spared" (2 Kings 22:14-20); Josiah Spared" (2 Kings 22:14-20)