

Purpose

- To learn about Joshua

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**JOSHUA**

As we talked last year, the book of Joshua is really an adventure story. Spies are hidden and narrowly escape with their lives, the water of the Jordan River are pushed back, celestial being appear, the walls of a city actually tumble to the ground, the sun stops and stands still. This kind of sounds like a Stephen Spielberg story!!

The main character from this Bible book is Joshua and we are going to learn more about him. Joshua actually began life as a slave in Egypt. When God allowed the people of Israel to escape bondage in Egypt Joshua became one of Moses' assistants. Remember at Mount Sinai God gave The Ten Commandments to Moses. The Israelites tried several time to enter Canaan but could not. After Aaron died and was buried they tried to enter Canaan from the east. Here at the northern end of the Dead Sea (they could see the Promised Land but not enter it) Moses died and was buried.

Moses had great faith and respect for Joshua. Moses knew that Joshua had faith in God and respected his word so he selected Joshua as his successor. Joshua naturally had doubts but God reassures him that he will guide Joshua and his people into the Promised Land. He will cross the Jordan River and confront the armies of Canaan.

The conquest of Canaan involved overcoming several obstacles. First they had to cross the Jordan River. Joshua and the Israelites were on the east side of the Jordan River, but the land they wanted was on the west side. To make it even more of a challenge the river was at the flood stage. Now it is really up to God. God instructed the priests to carry the sacred Ark of the Covenant down to the river. When their sandals touched the water, the river was suddenly and miraculously dammed up. A wall of water began to form on one side while the rest of the water flowed on to the south. A wide road of riverbed opened in front of the people and they walked across on dry ground. The priests carrying the ark then followed the others to the shore. Before the priests leave their position in the river 12 men, one from each of the 12 tribes, take up a large stone from the bed of the Jordan and carry them ahead to that they can make a memorial marker commemorating this great event. They place the stones in a circle (called Gilgal) where the priest feet first touched the water. This becomes a sacred gathering place for the tribes. It is very important to the Israelites for centuries. This is also the place where Saul is formally installed as Israel's first king. This sounds a lot like

the parting of the Red Sea. This time there were no soldiers chasing the Israelites. Remember Moses had to hold up his staff until all of his people were safe on the other side.

The next obstacle was a walled city. Jericho was a very important city in Joshua's plan for conquering the land of Canaan. Jericho guarded the way into the center of the territory. God had a plan for taking Jericho and it was very simple. They are to march around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, march around seven times and then shout. The walls will fall down. Yeah right!!! Actually the warriors are divided into two groups, one leading the way and one in the rear. In the middle of these two groups the Ark of the Covenant is carried (by 7 priests each with a ram's-horn trumpet). Each morning for six days this procession moves around the city, with the priests blowing fiercely on the trumpets, but with everyone else marching quietly. On the seventh day, the procession goes around the city seven times. As the procession ends, all the people cry out with a massive shout at once and the walls of Jericho simply fall flat. The city of Jericho is taken with no opposition.

God also told the people of Israel that they were to keep nothing from Jericho. However one soldier (Achan) took some silver, some gold, and a really cool cloak. He hid them in his tent thinking no one would ever know. God knew! This one man's disobedience caused the defeat to the entire nation of Israel at the very next town on the conquest map. Talk about pressure.

Israel settles into their new home. Joshua divided the land among the clans of Israel and set up boundaries between them. This left the final mop up of the land to each individual clan.

Joshua was a profound influence on Israel's history. He influenced a whole generation for the Lord. He still stands as a great example of a man who served God courageously. Don't let this make you feel small and unable to do, as God wants you to do. Joshua's God is our same God today. If he helped and led Joshua he will guide and help you

Procedure

- Read handout 23-1 put in your folder.
- Do 23-2 and 23-3 for fun.