

PART 3

Men and women have different preferences in movies. Women like emotive movies; men like active movies. Women like enchantment; men like engagement. Women like “Chick-flicks;” men like Chick-fil-A!

Action is the key word for men when choosing movies. Things happen in male movies! People get beat up, things blow up, lots of shoot ‘em up, etc.

The book of Joshua is like an action adventure—a war story and Joshua is the action hero.

Read [Joshua 1:9, 11](#).

In our previous studies, we have already learned two important lessons about courage:

1. Courage is a voluntary risk to do what is right despite the momentary fear of what could go wrong.
2. Courage is having the audacity to believe that the majority is not always right, but God is and His Word endures.

We learned that Joshua was being shaped and prepared for the task ahead. And today, we will see whether Joshua has the courage to stand and face walls of opposition.

“It’s easy to be brave at a distance.”

Canaan was a region of cities/states, each ruled by a king. The city of Jericho was the “gateway” fortress to Canaan and the walls of Jericho were the strongest in the ancient world: 2-3 stories high, 20 feet wide. The walls were intimidating barriers positioned to weaken the resolve of adversaries entering the land.

Joshua’s first challenge? The walls of Jericho!

The walls of Jericho present a powerful image for us today. We all battle strongholds in our lives. Your “walls” may involve finances, health, goals, family crises, issues of character, etc. “Fortresses” can keep you from experiencing victory in life. But when you exercise and activate the courage God provides, even the most isolating, impenetrable and intimidating circumstances can be overcome.

“Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around.”
—Henry David Thoreau

The way to overcome obstacles is to engage in the battles. Too many people cultivate a sentimental emphasis on “peace and goodwill” and ignore the reality of spiritual conflicts and battles in the fight of faith.

Read [Ephesians 6:12-13](#) and [2 Corinthians 10:3-5](#).

“You are a poor soldier of Jesus Christ if you think you can overcome without fighting, and suppose you can have the crown without the conflict.”
—Chrysostom
4th Century Believer

Being a man of courage means facing up to conflict and challenge. But be prepared, it is much harder in the real action than in the movies!

Joshua followed the will of God, even when facing this wall.

The activation of courage involves several key life principles I want to share you.

Read [Joshua 5:13-6:5](#).

As we read the story, there are three distinct postures that capture our attention.

BE MEN'S FORUM COURAGEOUS

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. —Joshua 1:9 ESV

¹³When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” ¹⁵And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

¹Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. ²And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. ³You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. ⁴Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.”
—Joshua 5:13-6:5 ESV

1. Kneel Down

The first step in activating courage is to give up! So often we think it is to stand up. Before you stand, though, you have to surrender. You have to *give up* to *go up* in life, to be willing to risk the loss and even failure to experience the power and the victory.

I love this part in the story: "Whose side are you on?" Response: "I did not come to take sides; I came to take over" (*paraphrase*). God is in charge here!

In the next scene, Joshua surrenders and takes off his "army boots."

Even though I am pastor of Warren Baptist, this not my church; it is God's church. I am not *in charge*, but I am *charged with* roles and responsibilities. I have to learn to *come under* so that I can *be over*.

We can't change things just because we muster our own strength, but God can and does change things when we recognize and rely on His strength. One of the most difficult things in life is to get small enough for God to use. God does big stuff with little people. Don't move forward without Him!

Do you lack courage because of authority issues? Are you so busy asserting yourself that you fail to see the power and authority of God? True surrender to the authority of God results in uncommon courage. Once you have the fear of the Lord, you won't have a problem with the fear of men.

2. Step Up

Surrender = Kneel Down

Obey = Step Up

What was the strategy? March around the city once every day for six days. No catapults. No battering rams. No ladders. No bows. No armor. No midnight siege. And no discussion. Then on the seventh day, march around the city seven times. When the priests give one long blast of the rams' horns, everyone shout. What a weird and unusual strategy!

It is interesting to note the numbers used here, though: six days and then seven times on the seventh day with the trumpet blast of the rams' horns on the final rotation. "7" is the number of perfection or completion used in the Bible: creation, etc.

Courage is an act of faith more than an act of reason. It is moved by a heart that believes more than by a mind that understands. I'm not against understanding and reasoning, but God is honored and cities are changed by faith.

Too many people try to *understand* the Bible rather than *obey* the Bible. God's commandments are God's enablements. What God tells you to do, He ultimately enables

you to do and blesses what you do. Obey first; understand second.

Faith is not *believing in spite of the evidence*; it is *obeying in spite of the consequence*. From a circumstantial perspective, we're sitting ducks!

"You shall not... make your voice heard...until the day I tell you to shout" (Joshua 6:10 *ESV*). When I read this, I often wonder if the citizens of Jericho were taunting them? This "military strategy" had to appear foolish to them.

Today, Christians are so often the laughing stock in the media, late night television shows, etc. If we are not careful, we can be deterred by the voices of those who seek to taunt us. Faith is contagious, but so is doubt. We must continue "marching" day after day by faith, remaining steadfast and strong, obeying God and honoring Him.

3. Walk On

Keep on keeping on! God is never in a hurry. We often are, but God is not. God's timing is more important than time.

Joshua refused to be ruled by his senses. Instead, he was ruled by a steadfast heart. Courage is usually something seen in the rear view mirror and not in the moment.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9 *ESV*).

Courage is choosing the right posture when faced with obstacles and turning them into opportunities.

"Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be better men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for power equal to your tasks." —Phillips Brooks

What is it in your life that has made a coward out of you? What is it that is keeping you from going forward with God? Is it lust? hatred? envy? unforgiveness? a bitter, critical spirit? Whatever the stronghold on your life, it needs to be conquered. Will you bring it to the Lord and defeat it His way?

Some of you are trying so hard. I invite you to come to Jesus, lay down your sword, hand Him your shoe, and say, "Lord, I can't do it, but You can."

God will change your life. He will enable you to live for His glory.

Some here have never had that first confrontation with the Lord. You are not saved. If you died tonight, you would be lost and you would go to Hell. It doesn't have to be that way! If you will come to Jesus Christ, He will receive you and save you! (See "God's Plan of Salvation") ■

God's Plan of Salvation

There are defining moments in history, but none compare to the day when God, the Father, sent Jesus Christ, the Savior, into the world to confront the greatest of all human needs: to be forgiven of sin and to be reconciled to God.

Why is that needed? The Bible tells us that every one of us lives with an unresolved conflict with God. In Romans 3:23, we read that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the standard of God's glory. Literally, God is a God of character and principle. He is holy and righteous. We are not. The Bible makes it very clear that there is a great deficit, a great fault, between who God is and what He demands and who we are and what we are able to do about it.

The wonder of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that God does not look at us and say, "Come up to My standards based on your own best effort. Climb the steps to Me if you can. Do religious things. Be a better person." Instead, God saw the helplessness of our situation in conflict with Him.

2000 years ago, God stepped out of heaven and stepped on earth in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came as the ultimate Conflict-Solver. He came to confront our sin and to offer Himself as a sacrifice.

What does God think about sin? Look at the cross. Sin brings death. Sin brings suffering. Sin brings shame. No one is exempt. However, Jesus Christ came to be the Sin-Bearer. He confronted and bore our sin on the cross. He died, was buried and rose again on the third day. He destroyed the power of sin, rendering it inoperative. Through the sacrifice and

resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is able to give us the gift of eternal life and a forever future with Him in a place called Heaven.

That is the Good News of the Gospel! That is the message we proclaim! We venerate Good Friday as a holy day of shadow and suffering, but we celebrate Easter Sunday. We celebrate the remarkable reality that God confronted our greatest problem and has provided our greatest benefits—forgiveness, hope, peace in life. My simple prayer is that this is a gift you have received.

You may ask, "How do I receive this gift?" Simply open your heart to receive it. It is not something you do in any fashion other than just recognizing your need and calling upon the Lord. The Bible says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:21). If you have never done this personally, now is the time. Open your heart and receive Jesus Christ.

"God, I know who I am—I am a sinner. Christ, I understand who You are—You are the Savior. I can't fix myself, change myself, save myself. You have done it for me. Today, I want to receive You as my Savior and Lord."

Your salvation has everything to do with who God is and what His Word says. He will come into your heart. He will change your life, and you will live with hope and the satisfaction of the greatest conflict in your life resolved. It will change your life! I pray this will be a reality in your life today.