

Life: Stick to God's plan

June 5, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 21 focuses on Joshua 6:1-5, 12-16, 20.*

Robert was one of the first people my husband and I met when we moved to downtown Dallas six months ago. Every morning, he stood on the corner of a busy intersection just a block from our building, selling newspapers produced by the homeless community under the guidance of a local ministry. An approved vendor with the ministry, Robert purchased the newspapers for a few cents, and then "sold" them for any amount people wanted to give.

I soon began buying newspapers and chatting with Robert when my dog and I passed by his corner on our afternoon walks. He had experienced tough times, struggled with an alcohol addiction and had lived in his truck until he wrecked it. After that, he slept in a tent (he did not like shelters). However, Robert always was clean and shaved because the corner store manager let him clean up in the store's restroom in exchange for helping to restock the shelves each morning.

Robert presses on

Within a few weeks after we met him, the car rental shop across the street hired Robert to clean cars and prep them for the next rentals. I saw Robert less often, but he still appeared on the corner occasionally with his newspapers, taking advantage of time off to make some extra cash. A few months later, however, we lost contact with Robert completely. My husband and I would say to each other, "Wonder how Robert's doing?" I prayed for him whenever God brought him to my mind.

Just this morning, my husband bumped into Robert in the park in front of

our building. He wasn't sleeping there. He was working as an employee of a company that has a contract to clean our downtown parks. My husband reports Robert loves his new job, because he likes being outdoors. No longer homeless, he rents a home in a nearby neighborhood. Robert is doing great. He is a wonderful example of a believer who keeps on doing the next thing God gives him. Newspapers, cleaning cars, landscape crew. Truck, tent, home with a door. Sometimes his progress stalls out for a while. Regretfully, he might take a few steps backward. But he keeps pressing on. God provides a way for his children who seek him first and trust him.

After crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites faced a formidable enemy, the Canaanites. The Canaanites likely had inhabited Palestine—the Promised Land—for about 2,000 years before the Israelites arrived. They were merchants and traders who [worshipped a pantheon of gods](#). One of their major cities, Jericho, was strategic militarily and thus required conquering by the Israelites. However, it was surrounded by stone walls [at least 13 feet high](#). In addition, gates in the walls were “securely barred,” to keep out the Israelites (Joshua 6:1). The city leaders must have been aware the Israelites were on their way, because the Bible tells us no one was leaving or entering the city as the Israelites approached the town.

Marching orders

Joshua and his army faced a tall wall, locked iron gates and a prepared enemy. But God had a plan. “March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days,” God said. “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. 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” (Joshua 6:3-5).

Imagine telling an army of well-trained fighting men, toughened from years of traveling in the Sinai desert, that the way to take the city was simply to march with the priests around the walls for a week. However, the miracle of the parting of the Jericho River was still fresh in their memory. They knew to trust the Lord, even if their marching orders were not typical military strategy. They marched once around the city, every day for six days. Then, “on the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times. ... The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!” (vv. 15,16). The wall collapsed, and Joshua’s army took the city just as God had said.

Stick to God’s plan

What battle are you facing? A difficult family relationship? An addictive behavior? Illness? Homelessness? These walls may seem intractable. However, God provides a way over, around or through them. Joshua’s God is your God. He will not leave you on the outside looking in, longing to enter his kingdom. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Keep stepping into the water and marching around the walls as you follow the Lord. The way may not look reasonable to others, and victory might look different from what you expect. However, by making Spirit-led decisions and subsequently acting in ways that honor God, barriers to joyful living can be overcome.