

“Engaging the Battle”

Made For More Sermon Series | Week Seven | Newbreak Church

February 20th, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to their spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about seeing all battles as spiritual battles as we look at the famous “battle of Jericho,” which really isn’t much of a battle at all!

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What sport do you think is the most rigorous? Why?
- What is the strangest weapon used for warfare in all history? Why that one?

Going Deeper Into the Message

How do we engage the battles that come our way?

Read Joshua 6:1–20

Point 1 – Fight from God’s victory, not for my victory.

Joshua had to shift his mind in a few ways: the first being that God would be the one who would provide military victory; and second, that victory would be determined by God’s agenda, not Joshua’s, or anyone else’s.

We, too, have to walk through this transition of thinking. It is tempting for us to determine the parameters of what the “win” looks like and then walk with confidence that God will deliver that particular victory into our hands. But is that the promise? Nope! Not only can that lead to a life of disappointment, but also one where we end up trying to glorify ourselves instead of glorifying God. Like Joshua, we are incredibly dependent on God to provide the victories we need in the battles we face in life (*more dependent*

than we are comfortable admitting!). However, just as important as depending on God for the victory is the precursor of discerning what God's agenda is for the battle.

- *What outcome is God trying to produce here?*
- *How does this advance His kingdom agenda?*

These are important questions to ask!

Perhaps the genesis of this whole conversation is a recognition that **all battles are spiritual battles**. The first battle in the promised land would be against a well-fortified city, Jericho. Yet, God's instructions in Joshua 6 clearly reveal that God doesn't want Joshua to approach this like he would any ordinary battle, with the strategy and weaponry that would ordinarily be deployed. Rather, God wanted Joshua to see this as a battle in the spiritual realm, requiring a spiritual strategy (*more on that in the next point!*).

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What are the differences between "Fight from victory, not for victory," and the way that point 1 is worded: "Fight *from* God's victory, not *for* my victory"? Why are these differences crucial?
- Have you ever depended on God, but for the wrong win? Perhaps you had great faith, but the "victory" you sought was serving your own agenda and not God's agenda. What happened? What did you learn from that experience?
- "All battles are spiritual battles." What does this look like when applied to one of the battles you are facing in life right now? How does this perspective help you approach the battle properly?

→ Trust God's "how" even when I don't know the "why."

"...march around the town once a day for six days...On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can" (Joshua 6:3-5, NLT).

Imagine telling the commander of the Marines that the next great strategy they needed to employ was a religious ritual involving musicians and relics. How do you think the commander would respond? Our bet is that the familiarity you probably have with the battle of Jericho lulls you from seeing how odd these instructions are! *(But hey, if you read it and thought these were odd instructions, kudos!)*

Now, imagine Joshua hearing such strange instructions. What do you think his “knee jerk reaction” was? We can only speculate. What *we do know* is that Joshua took these instructions seriously. The point is that we will hardly ever be privy to knowing the full scope of God’s unfolding plan in our lives when we are walking according to His instructions. Typically, He gives us enough to go on so that our faith is rational (*contrary to popular belief: the Bible doesn’t promote blind faith*), but He does not give us so many instructions that we no longer need to trust Him. This works out that we either understand “why” God is asking us to do something, but we don’t understand “how” it will all pan out. Or, to flip it, we understand “how” God is asking us to take action, but we don’t know “why” it is the way He is asking.

God’s “how” for getting victories in our lives won’t always make sense to us either:

- “I’m supposed to forgive what they did, even when they’re not sorry?”
- “I’m called to tithe 10% of my income? How does that help me?”
- “I’m supposed to save sex for marriage?”
- “You want me to go on a mission trip to that place way outside of my comfort zone?”
- “I’m called to love my neighbor to the same extent as myself?”
- And so on... and so on...

We aren’t saying there isn’t wisdom, reason, and even benefit to following God’s design for life... *we are saying* that those things might be puzzling or mysterious to us in how it fits together. So, when you don’t know the “why,” stick to the battle plan—God knows what He is doing when He asks something of us.

The Significance of the “Sevens”

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! - Joshua 6:15–16

Whenever you study the Old Testament you will be hard-pressed to find the number “7” used arbitrarily. It is used to convey much more than just the number that comes sequentially after “6.” Joshua chapter six mentions the number “seven” 12x. The number seven originates back in the creation account where the seventh day was the capstone day and declared holy by

God. Seven is the number of divine perfection and completeness. In the course of six days, God invested His creative work into forming and filling the cosmos and the world, or as the Hebrew idiom goes: “the heavens and the earth.” But there are seven days in the week. And the seventh day does not have morning and evening to it as the others do, it is the day without beginning and end, an echo of eternity in real space and time—the eternal day!

So, the six days circling Jericho are to find their completion, their culmination, in the seventh day with its seven circuits around Jericho. This shows that the ridiculous military strategy is actually to make a point that the Israelites are passive concerning their victory. It is the seventh day and seventh circle (representing the Sabbath) that shows it is God who provides the victory.

Among the instructions for the ritual involved ram’s horns, which are used for quite a few things, relevant here was its usage in announcing the beginning of the Sabbath, and also to announce a war or God’s judgment. This makes sense since we see God tear down Jericho’s walls on the day that is dedicated to Himself, the Sabbath day. The Sabbath is not so cheaply a day of “rest” if we consider rest as synonymous with sleep. Rather, while six days of the week are filled with toil, one day is a day where we cease the activities of commerce and struggle to simply receive that which could never be received on our own. It is not so much a day of rest as it is a day to receive. Receiving the delights of fellowship with God and one another that money and toil cannot buy; taking time to enjoy that which transcends time; resting in God’s providence.

By the text showing us that the day of victory came on the Sabbath, it is an emphatic declaration that Israel did not exert themselves for the victory; they received it as God gave it to them.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- When was a time you were convinced that God was giving you directions that were odd? Talk about that experience. What was the situation? What were the directions? Did you obey them? How did it turn out?
- What’s an example of something in the Christian life that you once questioned the reason for but since have come around to seeing the benefit for doing it God’s way?

How do we engage the battles that come our way?

Read Ephesians 6:10–17

Point 2 – Put on the “armor” God gave me.

Just as every one of Joshua's soldiers needed to be properly outfitted before going into battle, we also need to be properly outfitted before we go into the spiritual battles we are called to fight. We are to put on the "full armor of God." Pieces of armor will not suffice. God has given us a full kit of armor, but in order to be fully protected, we must use all of it.

- Belt of truth. (v. 14) Truth holds everything together; without it we are aimless and lost and will be picked apart by the enemy.
- Breastplate of righteousness. (v. 14) Here righteousness fits Paul's theme of right standing before God. Since we stand in the right with Him "in Christ," we are protected from anything that directly tries to attack our status or assurance.
- Shoes of peace. (v. 15) Everywhere shoes go they leave an imprint. Have you ever mopped the floors only to have your own or someone else's shoes come through and see every step they took? In a similar sense, our "shoes of peace" leave an imprint of peace—shalom—everywhere we go. We enter a place and leave peace as we come and go.
- Shield of faith. (v. 16) Faith in Jesus has a way of keeping the arrows of the enemy at a distance. They are not permitted near us anymore. While spiritual warfare is still a reality for us, the devil no longer is allowed close enough to touch us. He can only fire arrows from a distance, only to be quenched by the faithfulness of Jesus, which shields us.
- Helmet of salvation. (v. 17) The helmet protects your brain, the faculty of your mind. The lies that try to reach us are blocked by the reality that God's deliverance is effective for us.
- Sword of the Spirit. (v. 17) This is the word of God. The Sword of the Spirit looks like the fruit of the Spirit. That's why your offensive weapons are the fruit of the Spirit.

God does not always tell us when those battles will be. But He does tell us to be ready. "and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15 NIV) It's interesting that our feet would be fitted with the *readiness* that comes from the gospel of peace. We can have peace, even going into battle, if we stand ready, because we have armed ourselves with the gospel.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What does it look like to put on the armor? Is there a routine or regular preparation that you do that does this?
- Which piece of God's armor are you always "wearing?" Which piece do you forget to put on? Why is this?

- Why do you think preparing to engage in spiritual battle should start with preparing your mind? How do you think a mind focused on God can help you be victorious?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?