

Small Group Study Guide: Joshua 6

Theme: Wrestling with the Violence of God - Conquest

Opening Reflection

“If you’ve wrestled with this, you’re not lacking faith—you’re simply paying attention.”

- When you hear passages like Joshua 6, what emotions or questions rise up for you?
 - Why do you think texts like this have caused both belief and skepticism (e.g., critics like Richard Dawkins)?
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Read the Passage

Joshua 6:1–27 (NIV)

1. Ownership — Whose Battle Is This?

“This is not Israel conquering—it is God acting.”

Observation Questions

- What stands out about how Israel takes Jericho? What is *missing* from a typical battle plan?
- What role do the people actually play?

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean that “the battle belongs to the LORD”?
- How does this challenge the idea that this passage justifies human warfare today?
- Preston Sprinkle writes:

“Seeing America’s military strength as the hope of the world is an affront to God’s rule...”
How does that critique modern uses of Scripture?

Application

- Where are you tempted to “fight your own battles” rather than trust God?
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2. Patience — Why the Delay?

“This is not divine rage—it is delayed justice.”

Observation Questions

- Why do you think God commands seven days of marching and waiting?

Discussion Questions

- What does this delay suggest about God’s character?
- How do passages like **Ezekiel 33:11** and **2 Peter 3:9** shape how we read Joshua 6?

Broader Biblical Pattern

- Noah (120 years of warning)
- Sodom (Abraham’s intercession)
- Canaanites (Genesis 15:16 — 400 years)

Application

- Where have you seen God’s patience in your own life?
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3. Mercy — Rahab in the Middle of Judgment

“Right in the middle of judgment... there is rescue.”

Observation Questions

- What do we learn about Rahab in Joshua 2 and Joshua 6?
- Who is included in her rescue?

Discussion Questions

- Why is Rahab such a surprising recipient of mercy?
- What does her story reveal about who God is willing to save?

Connection to Jesus

- Rahab appears in Jesus’ genealogy (Matthew 1)

Application

- How does Rahab’s story challenge assumptions about who is “in” or “out” of God’s grace?
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4. Restraint — Is This a Model for Violence?

“The conquest is limited, specific and time-bound.”

Observation Questions

- What limits or boundaries do you see in the conquest accounts?

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important that this is a **unique moment in redemptive history**?
- What goes wrong when people try to apply Joshua directly to modern conflicts?

Key Insight

“Militarism invites God’s wrath.” — Preston Sprinkle

Application

- How should Christians think about violence in light of Jesus’ teaching (Matthew 5:44)?
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5. Interpreting the Violence — Hyperbole & Ancient War Rhetoric

“Ancient war rhetoric → recognize hyperbolic language.”

Ancient Near Eastern war accounts often used **exaggerated language** to describe total victory.

Biblical Examples of Hyperbole

1. Joshua vs Judges tension

- Joshua 10:40 — “left no survivors”
- Judges 1:21 — same people groups still living in the land

2. “Totally destroyed” — but not really

- Joshua 11:21–22 — Anakites “destroyed”
- Yet **1 Samuel 17** — Goliath (an Anakite descendant) appears later

3. Cities “wiped out” — but reappear

- Joshua 6 — Jericho destroyed
- Later: Jericho is rebuilt (1 Kings 16:34)

4. Standard ancient rhetoric

- Egyptian and Moabite inscriptions used similar phrases like:
 - “We destroyed them completely”

- “None survived”
(Even when history shows they clearly did)

Modern Analogy

“The Anaheim Ducks DESTROY the Edmonton Oilers 7–4”

Discussion Questions

- How does recognizing hyperbole change the way you read Joshua 6?
 - Does this weaken Scripture—or help us read it more accurately?
 - Why might God allow Scripture to be written in the cultural language of the time?
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6. Bigger Theological Frame

“Not genocide... but judgment
Not reckless violence... but restrained justice
Not divine cruelty... but moral seriousness.”

Discussion Questions

- How does this passage fit into the larger story of Scripture?
 - What happens later when Israel becomes corrupt? (They face the same judgment)
 - How does Jesus reshape our understanding of power and victory?
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7. Christ-Centered Reflection

Read: Matthew 5:43–48

- How does Jesus’ command to love enemies shape how we interpret Joshua?
- What does it mean that **Jesus is the fullest revelation of God**?

Key Insight from Your Series

- We don’t take our marching orders from Joshua
- We take them from Jesus

Key Quote

“We... view the world... through the bright lens of resurrection, where suffering leads to glory and slaughtered lambs rule the earth.” — Preston Sprinkle

8. Final Application

Big Idea:

“God’s judgment is real, but it is never reckless, never rushed, and never without mercy—and it must never be used to justify our violence.”

Personal Reflection

- Where do you struggle most with the idea of God’s judgment?
- What helps you hold together both God’s justice and mercy?

Group Challenge

- How can we be people who:
 - Take sin seriously
 - Trust God with justice
 - Live out enemy-love in a violent world