

B.
A Good Shepherd
Sacred Story

Walls of Jericho

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WALLS OF JERICHO MATERIALS

- large wicker basket to hold:
 - 2 wooden figures of priests blowing rams' horns
 - wooden ark of the covenant carried by 2 priests
 - 3 wooden people of God figures
 - wooden figure of Joshua
 - wooden figure of Rahab
 - wooden city scene

C.

D.



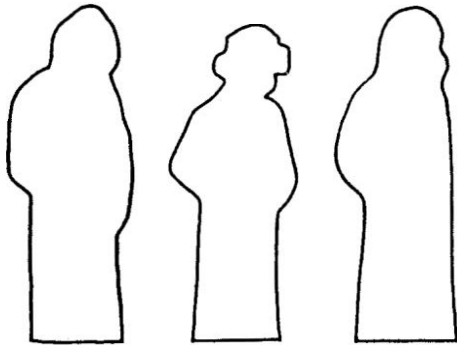
Joshua



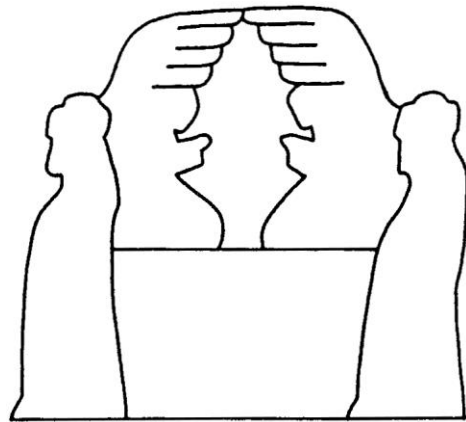
Rahab



Priests



People of God



Ark

WALIS OF JERICHO JOSHUA 6:1-25

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from it's shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

Gently stroke one or more of the wooden figures as you center yourself and the children in silence.

Place the city slightly to your left. Place Rahab in the city.

Indicate the inside and outside of the city.

Place the Joshua figure slightly to your right. Point to the city of Jericho.

Lean forward and lower your voice slightly.

Place the priests, the ark of the covenant and the people of God figures near Joshua.

Circle the city with your hand, then hold your finger to your lips for silence.

Move the figures around the city in the order given. (This will take some time, but be intentional.)

Move the figures back to their starting places.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

After the spies returned from Jericho the people of that city were afraid.

They stayed in the city, no one came out and no one went in.

Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "See I have given you the city of Jericho with all it's brave men."

Then Yahweh told Joshua to do something very strange.

So Joshua called together all the people of God and told them what Yahweh had told him to do.

He told the people, "March around the city one time. Don't say anything. Don't sing and don't shout."

First, went the priests carrying rams' horns. Then came the other priests carrying the ark of the covenant. And finally marched the people.

None of them made any sounds. They just marched around the city and went back to their camp.

Again move the figures around the city and back to their starting places.

Move the figures around the city and back to their starting places once as you say these words.

Shake your head as you speak of the silence.

Move the figures around the city once and then indicate five more circles around the city with your hand.

Move the figures around the city and back to their starting places again.

Raise your voice considerably as you speak.

As you speak, lay the city down with the top toward you.

Bring your hands together in front of you and move them quickly apart to indicate the destruction.

Place two of the people of God figures next to Rahab.

Move the Rahab figure and the two people of God figures out of the collapsed city and set them in the upper left of the storytelling area.

The second day they did the same thing.

On the third, fourth, fifth and sixth day, they did the same thing again.

But they never said a word.

Then, on the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. The first six they did as they had before, marching silently.

But the seventh time Joshua had told them to blow on the rams' horns and shout.

So the people shouted and the rams' horns were blown.

As the people shouted an amazing thing happened. The walls of the city of Jericho fell down.

Then the people of God went into the city and destroyed it and almost everyone in it.

But the two spies who had gone to Jericho earlier remembered their promise to the woman named Rahab.

They saved Rahab and her entire family. They went to live in Israel because she had saved the spies when they were in Jericho.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder if the people felt silly walking around the city?

I wonder if Rahab was afraid?

I wonder how the walls could fall down like that?

I wonder why Yahweh sent the people of God to a land that already had people?

Carefully replace all the materials in the basket.

Watch carefully as I replace these materials so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and return the story to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Be sure each child has had the chance to choose their work before dismissing the entire group.

I wonder what each of you will choose for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each person will do.

WALLS OF JERICHO .•• TEACHER HELPS

This story is a favorite of children and adults. Though we don't pretend to understand how it could happen, it still fascinates us. Perhaps that is the fascination; that we can't understand. There is no doubt that the walls of Jericho had to have the help of Yahweh to collapse after the people of God finished their march around them.

Let's first address the theological implication of this story. Remember that when we speak of theology we speak of that which is related to God. All through the Old Testament we find what some scholars call "the mighty acts of Yahweh". These are events that are extraordinary and are used to point to Yahweh as the all powerful God who will help God's people and confound the enemies of God's people. In this story, the people of God are told they can conquer the city of Jericho easily because the people there are afraid of them. But Yahweh

wants it made very clear to whom belongs the victory. The army is not allowed to attack the city as would a regular army. Instead they are commanded to follow the priests and the ark of the covenant and walk around the city. They aren't allowed to say ANYTHING. They are just to march around the city once and go back to their camp. This continued for six days. Imagine the puzzlement of the people of Jericho as they watched from their strong walls as this band of nomads walked around their city, not responding to their insults or making any move on the city itself. Then on the seventh day, Yahweh instructs the people to shout and blow the rams' horns and take the city. It is at this point that one of Yahweh's "mighty acts" occurs. There is no reason for the walls to collapse, no matter how we try to explain it away. Oh yes, it may have been an earthquake; it may have been because of the strategic way the people of God marched around the city; or it may have been because that's how Yahweh moved in the lives of those people. And that is how we tell the story. We allow it to stand in all it's ridiculous wonderment. God's ways are not always the ways of the people of God, but if we learn to trust in God's ways, amazing things can happen.

The first of the wondering questions is probably one with which we can all identify. Did the people feel silly walking around the city? Probably yes; although some children will respond that since God told them to do it, they would have felt OK about it. Children will recognize themselves in this question. They will think of times when they felt silly about doing something. It may be what they wore because their mom or dad said they had to or it may be because of something they chose to do. I've used the term "silly" for young children. For older children you may choose to change that to "foolish". I would encourage you to stay away from the use of the word "stupid".

The second question wonders if Rahab was afraid as she watched the people march around the city. The children may respond by saying that she might have been afraid the spies would forget their promise. Adults or peers forgetting is a common theme for young children. They fear being left alone and they fear not having promises fulfilled. So they may readily identify with a possibility of fear of the same on Rahab's part.

The third question is the crux of the whole story. There will be some children who will try to explain away the collapse of the walls while others will be comfortable saying, "God did it." Much of this thinking reflects developmental stages and growth. Some also reflects previous teaching and societal attitudes. All the wonderment of how God accomplishes the "collapse" stands. Yahweh is indeed "a mighty God" and when we believe that, we can teach that.

When we wonder why God sent the people of God to a land that already had people, we are wondering why God commanded the people of God to kill the inhabitants of Jericho. The concept of Holy War is a very difficult one for us. And it is difficult to teach to children. We don't know why the people of God had to destroy entire nations, but we know that they are promised a land and according to the scriptures they are "given" many cities and kings to conquer by Yahweh. It's important not to explain away the problem of God's justice and fairness in this or other stories. Each child will deal with his or her own reality as they wonder

why one kind of people had to die, while others were allowed to live. This question will face them from now until they, themselves die. On the whole, children seem quite capable of leaving the question open when they don't know the answer. It is usually the adults who have to close the question. The question of Holy war, the total destruction of a people and all that they possess, cannot be understood. Such violence can be abhorred and spoken of very sadly. Children and adults may both finish with, "I don't know why God would send the people of God to Jericho when there were already people who lived there."

The story is exciting and alternately fast and slow paced. The children will love to tell this story because of the sameness in the routine of moving the people around the city many times and the excitement of the walls crashing down. Truly, Yahweh is "a mighty God", who takes care of the people God has chosen.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

What is the point of this story?

- A. There are military maneuvers that are effective even if they are strange.
- E. The walls of the city were not built to take the pounding of so many people's feet for a whole week.
- F. When we obey God we allow God to work in wonderful, although sometimes strange ways.

How do you feel about the fact that all the people of Jericho, including those who were not soldiers, were to be killed as God commanded? Does this mean that God wants people to have wars that kill entire cities? Why would God want all the people of Jericho destroyed?

How would you have felt if you were one of the people of God and your leader told you that God wanted you to march around the city for six days without saying a word? Would you have done it? Why or why not?