

## The Story – Chapter 7 – The Battle Begins

### Introduction

This week we take on some challenging stories as the Israelites begin to settle in the Promised Land and expel the Canaanites who lived there previously. And as is so often the case, we have a wonderful example of faith where we'd least expect it – a Canaanite woman who risks her own life to help two Jewish spies. If you don't have The Story book, you can read Joshua chapters 1-2, 6, 8, 10-11, and 23-24.

### Chapter 7 – In the book it's called The Battle Begins

After 40 years, the people of Israel are given a second chance to do what they failed to do the first time – to enter into the Promised Land. But the people who will not enter the land are not those who left Egypt 40 years ago. All of those who were slaves in Egypt had died, except for two, Joshua and Caleb. Upon Moses' death, Joshua becomes Israel's new leader. God's promise to Abraham over 600 years before was about to turn into reality. Joshua had spied out the land as a young man and trusted God to give it to the Israelites as God had promised. Now he sent two spies into Jericho to appraise the land. They were hidden in the house of Rahab, a prostitute who protected them from the king of Jericho. She boldly confessed her faith in the LORD as the one true God who had given the land to Israel. The spies responded to her faith by agreeing to save her whole family when they attacked Jericho. This new generation of Israelites had heard the stories about crossing the Red Sea on dry land; now, they experienced something similar as they walked across the Jordan River into the Promised Land on dry ground.

God's directions as to how to defeat the walled city of Jericho were pretty unorthodox. The priests marched the Ark of the Covenant around its walls each day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times, and on the seventh circle, they blew trumpets and shouted. Amazingly, the walls of Jericho collapsed! Jericho was destroyed and Rahab and her family were saved. (Good thing, because Rahab pops up later in Matthew 1:5, as one of Jesus' ancestors.)

This chapter describes Israel's many military victories in the land of Canaan and ascribes them to God, who brings God's judgment on the Canaanites. After taking the entire region by force, Joshua divided up the land by tribe as Israel's inheritance.

The chapter closes with Joshua's final words as he recounts the stories of God's faithfulness and deliverance, noting that while God will keep His promises, he will let people choose whether or not they will participate in what God is doing. He reminds that people that they must choose for themselves who they will serve.

### Discussion Questions

As you read, remember there are discussion questions for each chapter beginning on page 473 of the book and also questions that can be found on *The Story* bookmark (which are also on our website). Also, feel free to consider some of the questions below:

1. God called his people to take a big risk when he called them to take the land. They felt like grasshoppers among the people of that land (*The Story*, 61). Do you sense that God is placing some challenging opportunities in front of you or your congregation? What risks might God be asking you to take?
2. The spies entered Jericho secretly and were hidden from the king by the prostitute Rahab. What other choices could Rahab have made regarding the spies? What was the risk she was taking by hiding them in her home? Why do you think she took this risk?
3. God gave Joshua assurances to face the coming battles, but Joshua still had to act in faith. Are you facing any battles in your life right now? How can God's presence and promises impact the way you may choose to cope with them?
4. The annihilation of the Canaanites is understandably very disturbing. Much like the flood story, it is described as God using Israel to bring judgment on the Canaanites who were really evil. How does this image of God fit with popular understandings of God? How does it fit with your understanding of God?
5. What questions came up for you while you were reading this chapter?