

# God Fights for His People

June 21, 2020



## Daily Devotionals

As an individual or as a family, use these daily devotionals and reflection questions to connect with Jesus each day this week.

Each day, there will be a thought stemming from our Scripture passage along with 2-3 questions. Our hope is that as we journey together through the book of Joshua, we'll be able to come out the other side knowing how God wants to take new ground in and through our lives, groups, and church.

Be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, passages, and each of the questions. If you are a part of a life group, let these devotionals stir your thinking and be the foundation for your group conversation.

Additionally, we've added a section to each day called "Evening Reflection + Prayer." This section of the daily devotionals is intended to help you reflect on your day with God in prayer to notice where he was active in your life.

Our prayer is that these devotionals, questions, and reflections will help you love God, love people, and make disciples.

## Day One // A Second Chance

Led by Joshua, the Israelites have crossed the Jordan River ready to conquer the land God had promised. Before they “take new ground”, we come to a particularly *painful* section of scripture. God tells Joshua to have all the Israelite men circumcised...OUCH!

To understand God’s reasoning, we need a bit of context.

Back in Genesis 17, God told Abraham he’d be the father of a nation (Israel) and God himself would be their God. It was an “everlasting covenant” (**Genesis 17:13**) and the sign of this covenant would be circumcision of all men.

And **Joshua 5:6** tells us why Israel needs to do this now.

“The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years ...”

What was the reason? They’d been traveling! Even newborn boys have a bit of a healing process when this procedure takes place, and they’re not typically trekking across the desert when it happens. So, God had Israel wait to keep the covenant until they arrived in the Promised Land.

What’s interesting is that at the same time God reminds the reason for having them wait, God also reminds them of the reason for their long journey in the first place. It was because Israel had to wait “until all the men who were of military-age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord.”

Do you see what’s happening here? God is teaching this new generation that:

1. Disobedience has a price.
2. Even after they disobey, he is still their God.

As we pause, consider these questions in today’s evening reflection + prayer:

- The price for Israel’s disobedience was wandering in the desert for 40 years. What have been recent consequences you’ve experienced for disobedience or not trusting God?
- God gave Israel the chance to recommit their lives to him. What areas of your life do you need to recommit to God? How does that make you feel?
- Our “covenant” with God exists through Jesus who promised to “be with us always to ends of the age” (**Matthew 28:20**). Spend some time in prayer about the following:
  - Thank God for his faithfulness
  - Confess your own struggles with obedience or trust and be specific
  - Ask for strength and relationships to hold you accountable
  - Remember: he is always our God, even when we doubt or disobey

## Day Two // Things Taken for Granted

We are all guilty, to some extent, of taking things for granted.

When we turn on the water faucet at home, we expect clear water will come out (seriously, when was the last time, if ever, you wondered about that?).

When we open our refrigerator, we assume (unless we have teenagers) that the food we bought the previous day is still in there.

When we wake up in the mornings, we assume the sun has risen (even if it's behind some clouds).

Face it...there are some things, even God-sized things, we take for granted.

I think that's why I'm fascinated by a single verse from our reading this week. The Israelites have crossed the Jordan River, and are getting ready "to take new ground". They recommit themselves to God and are celebrating the Passover feast from food gathered from this new land when we read this from **Joshua 5:12**, "The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan."

How long had they been in the desert wandering? Forty years.

How long had God been providing manna daily for over a million people? Forty years!

This one verse tells us two very important facts about God:

1. God had been doing a massive miracle, every day, for 40 years.
2. Once they reached their destination, God stopped the miracle to show he'd been in control all along.

Spend some time this evening pondering on the following questions:

- Are there provisions from God you've taken for granted? If so, what are those?
- What are some of the everyday "miracles" of God you want to thank him for? Take a moment and write those down.
- How does remembering God's provision and promises prompt you to "take new ground" in different areas of your life?

Spend a few moments praying that God would open your eyes today to see, in big ways or small, his provisions and promises.

## Day Three // A Wall Too Tall to Fall?

If you know anything about the Great Wall of China, you'd know it's a MASSIVE structure that took 2000 years to build, spans 12,000 miles, and at some points is 30 feet thick and 45 feet high. You'd also know from history the reason it was built was to stop invasions from nomadic tribes and other forces.

It must have been an intimidating sight to an approaching army.

In Joshua 6, Israel is ready to "take new ground" by conquering the land God had promised...and the first city they arrived at was Jericho.

Most scholars agree that the walls of Jericho were 12-17 feet high and were double-layered—meaning they had an outer wall, followed by an even taller inner wall, with a trench dug out at the base making each wall seem even taller.

It's certainly not to scale with The Great Wall of China, but to the Israelites, it had to be an imposing sight.

Tomorrow, we'll look at the specifics of how Israel conquered Jericho, but I think it's important to pause here today and ask an important series of questions.

1. What are "walls" in your life that seem too tall to fall? To put it another way, what situations are you facing where victory doesn't seem possible?
2. Do your "walls" come in the form of a relationship that's fractured, a child that's living differently than you'd hoped, a financial crisis that feels too big to overcome? Essentially, *what are your current "walls"?*

Today's evening reflection is pretty simple.

- Write out any area, struggle, fear, task, relationship, where you doubt in God's ability to provide victory...where "the wall looks too tall to fall."
- Ask God to bring victory to those battles, while yielding to him with a "thy will be done" mindset, if the answer is no or not yet.
- Mediate on **Isaiah 55:8-9** and ask God for help in trusting him in the battles.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.  
"As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

## Day Four // “You want us to do WHAT?”

In the days before satellite TV, your picture quality depended solely on an actual antenna connected to the TV. When the picture got bad, you’d have to physically adjust the antenna to clear up the image. If there was a big game on, and the TV was acting up, people often wrapped aluminum foil around the antenna or they’d hold onto it while they watched, trying not to move or else losing the image completely. Not the way we’d normally choose to get the job done.

Isn’t that a lot like faith?

The Israelites are ready to “take new ground” in Joshua 6 and conquer the mighty fortress of Jericho. I imagine the warriors waking up for the big battle, playing their favorite song to psych themselves up, doing some stretches, making sure their swords were sharp...then they get this word of the Lord in **Joshua 6:3**; “March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.”

Okay, not the game plan they were expecting...but if God wants us to march around and scare them a bit, that’s cool.

Then came more strange instructions in **Joshua 6:4-5**.

“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.”

Suddenly, a fierce attack has turned into a drive-by parade. You’ve seen these, or at least heard of them, lately for sure.

All I can imagine the soldiers saying is, “you want us to do WHAT?”

But that’s not what anyone did. In fact, they carried out God’s instructions to the letter and the walls fell.

If you read yesterday’s devo, we talked about Jericho’s double-layer walls. Recent digs revealed collapsed parts of the wall that fell OUTWARD which ironically would have made entering the city much easier than if they’d collapsed inward.

**Take today’s lesson into your evening reflection and prayer—God’s plans are always better than our own.**

1. What is God calling you to do that feels difficult or even a bit strange?
2. Do you have a sense of resistance to some things God is calling you to do? What are those and why are you resisting?
3. Radical obedience often precedes radical provision. Would you take a moment and pray, asking God to forgive you of the times you question his instructions, and ask for

the strength to do what might seem weird or difficult? Then, ask God to remind you of the ways he's shown up in unexpected ways in the past, and ask him, in humility, to do it again as you walk in obedience today.

## Day Five // Praying Around Our Strongholds—Spiritual Practice

In **Joshua 5**, when Joshua and the Israelites finished celebrating Passover and before they conquered Jericho, Joshua was approached by the commander of the Lord's army.

The conversation that ensued raised a question that *Joshua* had to answer in his own mind:

*Am I fighting for God and in God's strength or for myself and in my own strength?*

For Joshua, the question wasn't, "Is God on *our* side?"

The question had become, "Are we on *God's* side?"

In **Joshua 6**, we see that God didn't big-bad-wolf the city of Jericho and blow it right down with a great, big puff. Instead, God had the Israelites march around Jericho seven different days and blow their trumpets, all the while following behind the arc of the covenant (God's presence) to *then* knock down the walls of Jericho and defeat this stronghold.

As we learned in *Rooted*, something constitutes a stronghold when we realize the thing we keep struggling against is beyond our control. We simply need help overcoming it. Willpower isn't cutting it anymore, trying harder has failed countless times, and self-control is in short supply (a stronghold is called a stronghold for a reason, after all).

This was Jericho for the Israelites.

*Note: You may have come to a place where you've given up on trying to overcome your stronghold. Jericho may feel too large, too scary, or too fortified. Maybe you've even befriended your stronghold and consider it an inevitable part of your existence. Christian, this is not the case for us! By God's Spirit, we have the resources necessary to put to death the deeds of our sinful nature (**Romans 8:13**).*

What does Joshua teach us about overcoming strongholds? As we see in **Joshua 5-6**...

1. Strongholds are overcome by us fighting *for* God and *in* God's strength.
2. Strongholds are overcome through daily, habitual discipline.
3. Strongholds are overcome by being in God's presence.
4. Strongholds are overcome in community with people fighting alongside you.

For this prayer and stronghold experience, let's begin by looking back at the strongholds we talked about in *Rooted*. As you think about your stronghold(s), write out your reflections to the questions below:

**STRONGHOLD****FREEDOM**

<b>BITTERNESS</b>	<b>FORGIVENESS</b>
<b>CONTROL</b>	<b>SURRENDER</b>
<b>IDOLATRY</b>	<b>CONTENTMENT</b>
<b>DESPAIR</b>	<b>HOPE</b>
<b>JEALOUSY</b>	<b>GRATEFULNESS</b>
<b>SEXUAL IMMORALITY</b>	<b>PURITY</b>
<b>FALSE TEACHING &amp; RELIGIONS</b>	<b>GOD'S WORD</b>
<b>INSECURITY</b>	<b>SECURITY IN CHRIST</b>
<b>REJECTION</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>
<b>DECEIT</b>	<b>TRUTHFULNESS</b>
<b>FEAR</b>	<b>TRUST IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>HUMILITY</b>



## **EVENING REFLECTION**

- What strongholds do you identify with today? Are you still fighting the same strongholds that you did in Rooted?
- Truthfully, what is your disposition towards your stronghold? Have you befriended your stronghold? Do you feel broken by it? Are you convicted because of it? Explain.
- What would your life (emotionally, relationally, spiritually, mentally) look like if you didn't have the stronghold you have now?
- What could the consequences (emotional, relational, spiritual, mental) be if you continue to struggle with the stronghold you currently wrestle with 3-5 years, 10-15 years, or even 20-25 years down the road?
- In Joshua, it was the whole community that marched around the walls of Jericho. No one person did it alone. Who are 2-3 people that are going to march around your stronghold with you? What are practical ways they can join you?

## **PRAYER**

Next, get a piece of paper or a card and write your stronghold(s) on it. Commit to praying against your stronghold for seven minutes for six straight days starting today. On the seventh day, pray against your stronghold for seven minutes seven times that day (you can pray this in one sitting or spread it throughout your day).

You might even use the Scriptures below and use one each day to be the foundation of your prayer time each day.

- **John 8:36**
- **Romans 8:12-15**
- **2 Corinthians 10:4**
- **Ephesians 6:10-18**
- **Galatians 5:1**
- **Galatians 5:16-18; 6:8**
- **James 4:7; 5:16**

As you pray, be honest with God about your past struggle with this stronghold. Invite his loving presence to pervade your innermost self and root out those ugly desires, those evil prejudices,

those harmful ideas put there by the enemy. Imagine God standing in between you and your stronghold. Imagine him tearing down the walls of your stronghold right before your eyes. Imagine the power of the cross wiping out sin in your life.

This practice is not a quick-fix solution to overcoming a stronghold. But let this practice of praying against your stronghold lay a foundation for continued war against the stronghold you find in your life in conjunction with the Spirit of the Lord.

The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of freedom. We believe that by God's spirit you can put to death the deed of the flesh (**Romans 8:13**).

## **CONCLUSION**

One last note about strongholds...

Notice in Joshua how the people of Jericho never once threatened Israel as they marched around the city and blew their trumpets. This was because these people had already heard of how powerful God was. Earlier in Joshua, Rahab described what the people of Jericho thought of the LORD. She said,

"I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (**Joshua 2:9-11**).

The disposition of the Canaanites we read in this passage is the same disposition of our enemy too. Jesus has conquered the grave. Jesus has defeated sin. Jesus has shamed the principalities and powers of this world. Jesus has overcome death.

Satan's heart has melted in fear. A great fear has fallen on him. Because he now knows what you and I know: "**The Lord your God is God...in heaven above and on the earth below.**"