

Lesson Twelve

Doing What God Says



Growing as a Teacher

Scripture

Joshua 5:13–8:35

Bible Truth

God gave the Israelites victory when they obeyed him, but when one man disobeyed God, the whole nation suffered.

Lesson Aim

To understand that obedience to God brings us joy but disobedience brings sorrow, and to ask God to help us obey him.

Memory Verse

REVIEW:

PSALM 121

Optional:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says.

JAMES 1:22

The Israelites knew that taking possession of the Promised Land meant defeating the peoples who were already there. The Commander of the Lord's army—an Old Testament appearance of Christ—reassured Joshua of what they were called to do. They obediently moved ahead, even though the high wall of the fortified city of Jericho loomed before them. God's instructions for its conquest were devoid of military strategy but required his people's obedience.

Encouraged by their victory when God caused the wall around Jericho to collapse, the Israelites set off to conquer Ai, a smaller, less fortified city, but they suffered a shocking defeat. The disobedience of one among them, not covenant unfaithfulness on God's part, had affected them all. Achan was sorry for his sin, but he and his family still paid the penalty—death. Our repentance doesn't cancel the penalty for our sin either, but we are spared because Jesus Christ paid our penalty. God later gave Israel victory over Ai, not because of their skill in the military tactics he taught them, but because of their renewed obedience.

Christians sometimes recoil from reading Old Testament passages that describe such destruction and violence, but the Israelites' actions were part of God's righteous judgment against the wicked people of Canaan. The war for the Promised Land, starting with the priests' trumpeting the presence of the Lord, represented by the ark of the covenant, suggests the struggle between God and Satan.

The Israelites were joined in making sacrifices to the Lord by "sojourners who lived among them," evidence that God's grace was reaching outside Israel and bringing others into his covenant fold. Those included Rahab and her family, the only Canaanites God had spared in Jericho. Everyone there had heard reports of God's power, but only Rahab was moved to turn to God, serving him in faith and obedience. Like all of God's people, she received God's mercy rather than his justice. That she would become the great-great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Christ foreshadowed the universal scope of the gospel of Christ, which is bringing together people "from every tribe and language and people and nation . . . to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God" (Revelation 5:9b–10a).

**Rahab received
God's mercy rather
than his justice.**

Lesson Twelve at a Glance

Step	Minutes	Children's Activities	Supplies (complete list, p. 11)
1 Welcome	5–10	Play <i>Joshua Says</i> to begin thinking about doing what God says.	○ List of commands (see p. 83)
2 Bible Time	15–20	Hear how God gave the Israelites victories as they began to take possession of Canaan.	○ TA 1a map* ○ TA 12 Jericho* ○ Optional: <i>First Catechism</i>
3 Memory Verse	5–10	Review Psalm 121 as a choral reading. Optional: memorize James 1:22 .	○ TA 1b Psalm 121** ○ Optional: James 1:22 poster ○ Optional: small rewards (1 per child)
4 Activities	10–15	Complete <i>God Gave Victory</i> and <i>How Did Israel Obey God?</i> activities.	○ <i>At Home 12</i> ** ○ Pencils
5 Final Focus	5	18 Sing “With My Whole Heart” (<i>Songbook</i> , p. 27). Give out the Psalm 121 poster and close in prayer.	○ <i>Songbook</i> ○ Optional: song poster ○ SA 12 Psalm 121 poster** (also TA 1b)

Total time: 40–60 minutes

* *Younger Elementary Teaching Aids Pack*
** *Younger Elementary Student Activities Pack*

Enrichment

Challenge students to think of movements and/or actions to accompany the words of Psalm 121. Allow them to perform their work during **Memory Verse**.



First Catechism is available from Great Commission Publications at 800-695-3387 or www.gcp.org.



Practical Preparation

As you pray in preparation for the upcoming lesson, thank God that even your teaching and the students in your class are part of his great plan that all people will hear the gospel.

As you read the Scripture and the background material, take some time to pray about areas of disobedience in your own life. Study the lesson well so that you can teach it with excitement and good eye contact.

Prepare for the **Welcome** game, *Joshua Says*, by making a list of commands so that you can use some creative ones. Suggestions are given in Welcome (p. 83).

Gather the supplies listed above. Consider buying small items at a Christian bookstore to reward the children for having memorized **Psalm 121** in its entirety. If you plan to work on **James 1:22** during **Memory Verse**, print the verse on a sheet of poster board so the children can read it with you. Look back at previous lessons and choose a method that seemed especially effective in helping them memorize Scripture. Prepare to hand out a **SA 12 Psalm 121 poster** to each student at the end of the class.



Welcome

5–10 minutes

Before the children arrive, arrange the chairs in a circle for the opening activity. After you welcome the children, tell them they are going to play *Joshua Says*. In this Old Testament version of *Simon Says*, the children are to do what you say only if you begin your order with “Joshua says.” Anyone who does the action when you don’t say “Joshua says” will be out of the game and should sit in a chair without participating.

Explain that they will sometimes use their imaginations and pretend to do what Joshua orders. *Say* **If I say, “Joshua says, ‘Dig a hole,’” what will you do?** (*act out digging a hole*) As you play, in addition to the usual game commands of standing, sitting, etc., use some that reflect the Israelites’ situation. Examples:

- Ride your camel.
- Play your trumpet.
- March.
- Shout “ho!”
- Pick grapes.
- Sing “Joy to the World.”

As you help the children get settled for the lesson, say **The Israelites did what Joshua said because God had made him their leader. When they obeyed Joshua, they were obeying God. Today we’ll hear how the Israelites obeyed God when he told them to fight some unusual battles.**



Bible Time

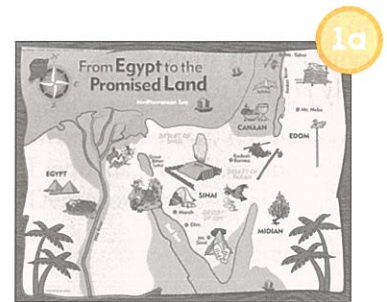
15–20 minutes

Display TA 1a map and refer to it as you begin the lesson. Say **From inside the Promised Land, the Israelites could look back at the water flowing through the Jordan River and praise God for miraculously leading them across it on dry ground. But as they looked ahead, they could see the stone wall around Jericho (*JER-i-cob*) and its tall towers where guards watched for enemies. The Israelites were a large group. More than a million people had crossed the Jordan River and set up camp in the countryside of Canaan. *Ask* **Did the people of Jericho know they were there?** (*yes*) **How?** (*The guards could see them; some people may have seen them crossing the river.*) **Do you think the people in Jericho were getting ready for battle?** (*yes*) **But the Israelites were courageous. God had promised to be with them and to give Jericho to them. They only had to obey God.****

The Lord told Joshua his plan for taking the city. It didn’t seem like a battle plan. God didn’t say the soldiers were to attack the gates of the city, climb the wall or knock down the wall with battering rams. The army was only to march around the city day after day—without saying a word. The priests would march with them, carrying the ark of the covenant and blowing trumpets. *Ask*



If your students will present the choral reading of Psalm 121 to the four- and five-year-old class or to invited guests next Sunday (see *Memory Verse*, p. 91), have them draw pictures that illustrate something from the psalm. Some may write a few words from the psalm across the bottom of their pictures. Display them in your classroom or let the children show them before the reading, with a few giving brief explanations of their pictures.



Teaching Tip

Visualizing a million people is hard for any of us. To help your students get a sense of the enormous size of this group of Israelites encamped in the countryside outside Jericho, compare it to the largest group of people they are familiar with—the crowd at a sold-out football game, in a packed circus tent or at the mall the day after Thanksgiving—and emphasize that the Israelites were many times that size.



Teaching Tip

Be respectful of other classes nearby. Either alert the teachers ahead of time to expect today's shout or caution your students to only *pretend* to shout.

Don't you think those were strange plans for capturing a city?

The march began early in the morning. Imagine the news spreading through Jericho that Israel's army was moving toward the city. Jericho's soldiers surrounded the gates and the wall to keep the enemy out. Israel's army arrived and began marching. *Display TA 12 Jericho.* First came the troops of silent soldiers. Then came seven priests blowing trumpets and four priests carrying the ark of the covenant. Behind the ark came more soldiers. The people inside Jericho must have wondered, "What kind of battle is this? How do they expect to get into our city this way?" After the Israelites had marched around the city once, they silently returned to their camp.

The next morning the silent marchers came back. Every day for six days the strange procession circled the city wall one time. But on the seventh day, Joshua told the marchers, "Today we will march around Jericho seven times. When you hear the loud trumpet blast, shout, for the LORD will give you the city." Then Joshua told them God's other instructions: "The LORD has said when you enter the city, everything must be destroyed. Only Rahab and her family are to be saved, because she helped us by hiding our spies. The gold and silver items are to be kept for the LORD and put into his treasury."

Say Let's pretend that we are part of Israel's army marching around Jericho on the seventh day. *Ask* How many times will we march around? (*seven*) When I pretend to sound the trumpet, what should you do? (*shout*) Remind the children not to talk as they march. Count out loud as they march around the room seven times, then pretend to sound a trumpet. After they shout, have them return to their seats.

When the loud shout came from Israel's army, the great stone wall fell to the ground. The soldiers walked across the piles of stones into the city and destroyed everything, just as God had told them to. But one soldier, a man named Achan (*AY-khubn*), saw a beautiful coat. He thought something that beautiful should not be destroyed. Then he saw a lump of gold and a pile of shining silver. Joshua had said these were to be given to God. But who would know if he kept a few things for himself? Achan took the things back to the camp, sneaked into his tent and buried them in the ground. *Ask* Since no one saw him, no one knew—except who? (*God*)

Meanwhile, the Israelites were happy because God had given them a great victory over Jericho. Spies reported that the next city, Ai (*A-eye*), was small and would be easy to capture, so the men confidently set off to fight. To their surprise, the gates of Ai swung open and soldiers poured out. They fought the Israelites and drove them back to their own camp, killing some of them as they ran. Joshua and the elders fell on the ground before the ark of the covenant and covered their heads with ashes to show how sad they were. Joshua cried out to the Lord, "Why has this happened to us? Now all the Canaanites will hear about our defeat and will laugh at our God."

God told Joshua, "Israel has sinned; they have violated my

covenant.” God said that Israel had taken things from Jericho that should have been destroyed or put into his treasury. God declared he would not be with Israel anymore until that sin was taken out of the camp. Joshua was shocked. Who had dared to disobey God? God showed Joshua the guilty man. Achan admitted, “I have sinned against the LORD. I saw beautiful things and wanted them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent.” Since Achan had disobeyed God, he had to be punished. He and his family were taken outside the camp and killed.

Now the Israelites were ready to obey God again. God told Joshua to plan a surprise attack on Ai. In the darkness of the night, some of Joshua’s soldiers hid in the hills behind the town. Early in the morning, Joshua took the rest of his men and led them up the hill toward the gates of Ai. The gates swung open and soldiers poured out of Ai to drive the Israelites back. The Israelites pretended to run away. But while the soldiers were chasing them, Joshua’s men who had been hiding in the hills went through the open gates and captured Ai and set it on fire. When the soldiers of Ai looked back and saw clouds of smoke rising from their city, they cried, “We’ve been tricked.” But it was too late.

The Israelites built a great stone altar to praise God for giving them victories over Jericho and Ai. Then Joshua read to the people the Word of God, the Book of the Law that God had given to Moses to write down. They listened carefully so they would know how to obey God. They heard God’s promises to bless his people if they followed his Word, and his warnings that he would punish them if they didn’t. God wanted his people to obey him. *Ask*

- Who are God’s people today? (*Christians*)
- Does God still want his people to obey him? (*yes*)
- How can you learn to trust and obey God? (*by reading the Bible and doing what it says*)



Memory Verse

5–10 minutes

If you will present the reading of **Psalm 121** to the fours and fives or to guests next week (see **Memory Verse**, p. 91), spend this time rehearsing it. (See pp. 79–80 for instructions on how to use **SA 11 Psalm 121 choral reading sheet**.) Remind the children that they are reciting God’s Word, and briefly review the meaning of the psalm. If students did the **Enrichment** activity (p. 82), allow them to share their work.

If you are not planning a presentation of the choral reading next week, you may want to review it by reciting it as a choral reading once and then use most of this time to memorize **James 1:22**. Briefly explain the verse and use one of the memorization methods from earlier in the quarter.



First Catechism

This is a good time to learn or review *First Catechism Q/A* 11, 12 and 14 (also on p. 93).

11 Q. *Can you see God?*

A. No. I cannot see God, but he always sees me.

12 Q. *Does God know all things?*

A. Yes. Nothing can be hidden from God.

14 Q. *Where do you learn how to love and obey God?*

A. In the Bible alone.



God’s Word

Joshua read to the people the Book of the Law, which was composed of five books of Scripture that Moses had written: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.



Something Extra!

Give stickers, pencils or other rewards to the children for having memorized Psalm 121 in its entirety.

Optional Memory Work

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

JAMES 1:22



4

Activities

10-15 minutes

Give each child a copy of *At Home 12* and a pencil. Read aloud the title and directions for the part(s) you choose to do.

In *God Gave Victory*, provide help to the children as needed.

Answers: (across) 1-Joshua, 2-trumpets, 5-obey, 6-Achan (down) 1-Jericho, 3-shouted, 4-wall

In *How Did Israel Obey God?* read aloud the word choices, then the sentences. Help any who need assistance. **Answers: Jericho, six, trumpets, word, seven, shout, loud, fell; listen, do**

5

Final Focus

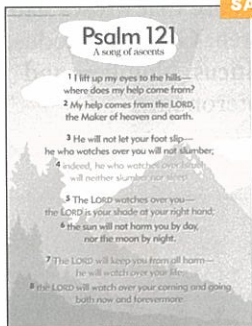
5 minutes

Using a song poster if you made one, teach the children the second verse of "With My Whole Heart." The first verse speaks of loving and hearing God with our hearts, and the second of loving and hearing God with our minds. Explain that we hear God when we read the Bible because it is his Word to us. Through reading and memorizing the Bible, we learn with our minds how to obey God, and we show that we love him by the things we do and say.

Give each child a **SA 12 Psalm 121 poster** to take home (also **TA 1b**). Suggest that the children display the poster on a wall or door to remind them of God's promises to always take care of his children. Encourage them to go over their *At Home* papers with their parents.

As you close in prayer, be sure to thank God for taking care of us and pray that he will help us to obey him.

18 "With My Whole Heart" Songbook, p. 27



Items to Send Home

- At Home 12*
- SA 12 Psalm 121 poster

