

STEP UP 4 LIFE 2023 BIBLE STUDY

We live in a complicated and confusing world, one where sin abounds all around us. Christians who value the sanctity of all human life may experience times of frustration, maybe even despair. Will it ever turn out better? Are the actions and activities through which we are engaging the culture effective? Are we winning hearts and minds for life?

Times like this call for a reminder that faith triumphs. God has already won! He will not give us over to the will of our enemies (Psalm 41:2). God does consider the poor estate in which we live and congregate. He even delivers us in our own days of trouble (Psalm 41:1). As Lutherans For Life, we trust in the guidance of God's Word and the power of the Gospel to change hearts and minds, not our own actions. Death is not the solution to life problems. It might seem like a little thing, even an unimportant thing, but staying in God's Word and following His commands for our life matters. God declares, in Him, that we are "Blessed For Life" (Life Sunday 2023 Theme).

Scripture encourages and informs your walk of faith. Your efforts are important, even when they seem obscure or ineffective. There is great importance in staying the course, continuing the race, holding fast to your beliefs when all around you is shifting sand. That you may remain encouraged as you strive to serve others, recognizing that in Christ we are all 'Blessed For Life':

Read Joshua 6.

- Describe what the young nation of Israel is facing. What is their challenge? Knowing their history, their unfaithfulness to listening and doing that which God commands, what difficulties might this episode uncover? What if you were the one receiving these commands, how might you respond? What might you question? Where might you struggle to be faithful?

Exegesis is a bible study technique of reading/pulling information "out of" the text. Read Joshua 2 and especially pay attention to what you can pull from the text to learn about the wall that surrounds the city of Jericho.

- What was built into the city wall? What does that tell you about the size of the space?
- Where did Rahab hide the men who were spying on the city? What does that tell you about the size of the space?
- How were the men spying on the city to leave and head into the hills? What does that tell you about the size of the space?
- Putting all the exegetical information gleaned from Joshua 2 together, what can you conclude about the size of the wall that surrounds the city of Jericho?

Eisegesis is a bible study technique in which you "read into" the text that which isn't specifically said or indicated but may be a possible conclusion. Eisegesis is an opinion and shouldn't be taken as fact. However, it can be useful in helping describe a situation based on the opinions and experiences of your own life as example.

Pretend you were one of the Israelites crossing the Jordan and looking at the huge fortress wall of Jericho. Now, using eisegesis (your own opinions or experience), what might you be thinking? Consider the Word of God and instructions from Joshua 6; what might your response have been to such instructions considering the enormity of the task that lay before you? In what ways may your own faith in God's Word and promises be challenged today, especially considering the full scope of challenges facing the sanctity of life?

Make a comparison between the enormity of the task of bringing down Jericho's walls and the task that lay before the for-life community following the Supreme Court's 'Roe v. Wade' decision of 1973.

- Those of you alive at that time, what were you thinking? What were your emotions? What did you expect?
- How might our nation's abortion policies from a federal level have been compared to a giant fortress wall? In what ways may they have seemed impenetrable by those holding steadfast to the sanctity and worth of all human life regardless of circumstances?
- What challenged your hope that our nation would ever see the fall of the 'Roe v. Wade' decision? What evidence did you have to support the way you thought?

Joshua 6 tells of the incredible conclusion brought about as God's people listened and followed the commands of God. The walls of Jericho came tumbling down – with a shout!

- Compare the 'shout' to end our nationwide abortion on demand policy. Israel marched around the city for 7-days. For-life advocates marched around our capital nearly 50-years. What other similarities might you identify?
- What might have been some of the thoughts of the Israelites as they marched (in your opinion)?
- Compare your own thoughts and struggles as you 'shouted out against abortion'. As you do, confession and absolution may be helpful/necessary! (cf., 1John 1:8-9)

Read Joshua 1. Describe the promises of God that went with Joshua and with the people he commanded.

- Joshua 1:8 outlines an important aspect of God's promised support and care. Describe what resource is highlighted and how we are to continually draw from it. How can this resource be applied to life issues today?
- Joshua 1:9 gives a fantastic promise for God's people. Describe what this promise means to you. How can you apply this promise to every life situation you face? How can you encourage others struggling with life issues using the hope and promise of Joshua 1:8-9?

Read Hebrews 11. Describe 'faith' based on the accounts of scripture outlined. Describe the importance of faith when advocating the value and preciousness of all human life regardless of circumstances, especially considering what you hear and see in the culture of death that surrounds you.

Read Hebrews 12. Describe how faith and hope are strengthened through these words. Who is the object of your faith? What assurance do you have in a pleasant future? How are you called to live now in evidence of your faith and hope? What great promises accompany your life of service to your neighbor? Brainstorm the meaning of "equipping others to be Gospel-motivated voices for life" through your Lutherans For Life groups?

Read Philippians 4. Describe some of the actions of faith and hope. Where does St. Paul receive confidence? How is St. Paul assured that no matter what the situation, he will be provided for abundantly?

- Make the comparison to your Life Advocacy, your Life Teams, and your Life Chapters. Describe how maintaining the message concerning the sanctity and blessedness of all life is also blessed by God.
- Describe ways your own for-life advocacy might benefit when applying the thoughts of verses 8-9.
- How do the promises proclaimed inspire a sense of hope for all life regardless of circumstances?
- How can you pray, praise, and give thanks to God for all that Lutherans For Life continues to do?
- Brainstorm ways you could serve and/or financially support Lutherans For Life and its mission.