

# “NEVER GIVE UP”

(Joshua)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

**Key verses: Joshua 10:7-15, 29-43**

**Objective: To realize that we “win”/overcome when we don’t give up, and to persevere through hardships in our own lives**

**The Set up:** Minimal

**The Plan:**

- **Hook:** Perseverance Game (10 mins)
  - The principle here is that as long as you keep trying, you win.
- **Book:** “As long as we fight, we win” Joshua 10 (10 mins)
  - Following the story of Joshua’s campaign to conquer the Promised Land, we learn that perseverance what it takes to win, and God does the rest.
- **Look:** Never Give Up (20 mins)
  - Clips from the movie “Facing the Giants” about perseverance
  - Discussion about the areas we need to keep trying in, whether it’s overcome sin or a hardship
- **Took:** Perseverance Cards (10 mins)
  - Write a note of encouragement and prayer to someone who is in a hard circumstance

**The Supplies:**

- Copy of lesson
- Stack of plain white paper
- Trashcans (or buckets, or bowls... 1 for every 4 students)
- Bibles (or verses projected or printed on handouts)
- AV Equipment
- Whiteboard/Flip chart & marker
- Greeting Cards & pens/markers

**Set-Up:**

Test out how far to have the youth stand to shoot paper balls into the trashcan, so that it’s not necessarily easy, and takes a few tries.

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## **Perseverance Contest** (Hook, 10 mins)

In this section, youth will do a simple task, playing trashket ball (ball up a piece of paper and shoot it toward a trash can). When setting up, you want this to be challenging so that most youth will need to try multiple times. You'll tell them that they get 5 points if they make it in the basket, and they can have as many tries as they want. What you won't tell them is that they get 2 points for every time that they try (so even if they never make it in, they still could win)

- Put the youth in teams of about 4. Tell the youth that we're going to have a contest to see which team can get the most points in trashket ball.
- Have the youth make their trashket balls. Make lots per team, so they have plenty to try with.
- Tell the youth that they get 5 points if they make it in the trashcan, and that each youth can have as many tries as they want when it's their turn. If youth are tired of trying they can let the next person go at any time.
- Have one trashcan per team, and one adult per team to keep score for that team.
- Tell the score-keeping adults (but not the youth) that they also get two points per try, regardless of if it goes in or not. So the adult needs to count tries as well as baskets.
- Put 5 mins on the clock, and have them take turns trying until time runs out.
- Announce the scores at the end. Then explain how things were calculated.

**Transition:** When it comes to spiritual principles in our relationships with God, it's not whether or not we are good enough, but often, it's about if we keep trying. God is good enough, so we've got the win, but it's up to us to keep trying and persevering as we face trials in life. He's got it and He'll take care of us, but we can't give up; we've got to persevere. In God's game, you're winning and overcoming the hardships you face as long as you're trying.

## “As long as we fight, we win” (Book, 10 mins)

In this section, we follow the story of Joshua’s campaign to conquer the Promised Land, and we learn that perseverance is what it takes to win, and God does the rest. Discussions on the ethics of this war aside, the principles are that when going through hardship or battling sin, we have to try...God miraculously takes care of the outcomes of the battles and divinely intervenes on our behalf, but we still have to show up and try and not give up. The principle is that as long as we are fighting, we are overcoming. We’ll see from following passage from Joshua that he marches all night, fights all day and an extra day, and then just keeps on fighting, town after town. It’s about perseverance even when we’re tired and the fight is seemingly endless.

- Read the Passage.
- Answer some questions as a group:
  - How long did Joshua and the army fight (how many hours or days)?
    - *At least 3 days.... All night march, full day, and another full days’ worth cuz the sun didn’t go down*
  - What did they do after they won the battle of the longest day?
    - *Returned to camp, then took another city*
  - Is there any mention of the army resting or taking a break?
    - *Not really*
  - How many cities did they fight against?
    - *At least 9 mentioned: Gibeon, Beth Horon, Azekah, Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir*
  - Do you think they were tired? How could they have won if they were so exhausted? Why do you think they kept fighting?

### Mini-Lecture

1. Background. In the Old Testament, all of the Israelites’ blessings were tied to the land (see Deut 28); if they weren’t in the LAND, they couldn’t get the blessings. In the Old Testament, battles were against idolaters who were trying to keep the LAND and its blessings from the Israelites. In the New Testament, our blessings are tied to being IN CHRIST; if we’re not in CHRIST, we can’t get the blessings. Battles are against idols that would draw us away from our position of being IN CHRIST, and the blessings tied to being in Christ. Ethics of OT battles over land aside, in the New Testament, we have the same PRINCIPLES, but it’s tied to being IN CHRIST rather than IN THE LAND.
2. Principles. Given the above, here are some principles we learn from this story of Joshua that we can apply to our lives IN CHRIST as Christians.
  - When we have a battle to fight, whether it’s against sin/eradicating a bad habit in our life, or if it’s just enduring a hardship while keeping the faith, there is our part, and there is God’s part.
  - Our part is to show up, to try, to keep fighting
  - God’s part is to miraculously make our fight into a win. God does whatever it takes to make it be enough, even if it isn’t enough...(Examples: need more light to fight? Sun stands still. Enemies getting away? Let me help you out with some hail)
  - We will get tired, but that is when we have to keep fighting
  - As long as we are fighting, we will win. If we give up, we’ll be overcome for sure.Let’s take a look at what those principles might look like in modern day life.

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## Joshua 10 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. <sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.”

<sup>9</sup> After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. <sup>10</sup> The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, so Joshua and the Israelites defeated them completely at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. <sup>11</sup> As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

<sup>12</sup> On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon,  
and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.”

<sup>13</sup> So the sun stood still,  
and the moon stopped,  
till the nation avenged itself on<sup>[a]</sup> its enemies,  
as it is written in the Book of Jashar.

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. <sup>14</sup> There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!

<sup>15</sup> Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

...  
<sup>28</sup> That day Joshua took Makkedah. He put the city and its king to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it. He left no survivors. And he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>29</sup> Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. <sup>30</sup> The LORD also gave that city and its king into Israel’s hand. The city and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>31</sup> Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish; he took up positions against it and attacked it. <sup>32</sup> The LORD gave Lachish into Israel’s hands, and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he put to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah. <sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army—until no survivors were left.

<sup>34</sup> Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Lachish to Eglon; they took up positions against it and attacked it. <sup>35</sup> They captured it that same day and put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it, just as they had done to Lachish.

<sup>36</sup> Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it. <sup>37</sup> They took the city and put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.

<sup>38</sup> Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned around and attacked Debir. <sup>39</sup> They took the city, its king and its villages, and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors. They did to Debir and its king as they had done to Libnah and its king and to Hebron.

<sup>40</sup> So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. <sup>41</sup> Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. <sup>42</sup> All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

<sup>43</sup> Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

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## **Never Give Up** (Look, 20 mins)

In this part, we'll give an example of what perseverance might look like in a situation the youth are in or can relate to more easily (football). You could also easily reference some of the stories from the most recent Olympics about perseverance and never giving up (like runners who finish the race after falling or getting hurt).

### **Movie Clips** (10 mins)

- Play clips from "Facing the Giants". It's kinda cheesy, and just name that and own that before you start. But it does illustrate the PRINCIPLES about persevering through battles in a modern day way. Play two clips:
  - Death Crawl: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sUKoKQIEC4>
  - Stonewall: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTaHhL7X3SM>
- Observations. Ask youth for similarities between the Joshua passage and the football scenes. Hopefully they'll come up with some like:
  - Didn't give up or hold back
  - Gave it all they have even though they were tired
  - Did their best and left the rest up to God

### **Discussion Questions (10 mins)**

(These can either be done with the entire group while you facilitate, or the questions can be printed up ahead of time as handouts or projected, and they can do this in small groups)

1. Where do you need perseverance in your life? How are you going to work on it?
2. What stories have you heard about perseverance that inspire you not to give up?
3. Who do you know that needs encouragement to persevere?

## **Perseverance Cards** (Took, 5-10 mins)

This is the at-home challenge. Their job is to encourage someone they know who is facing a trial and needs encouragement to persevere by writing them a card, using Scripture from Joshua 1:9 (as appropriate).

Leaders can help identify people in the church or community (teachers, military personnel, rescue workers, etc.) that the youth can write cards to. If you do people in the community, you will have to find addresses.

- Pass out greeting cards, and either assign youth people to write cards to, or allow them to identify someone they know
- Instruct in an appropriate example message for the recipient (as applicable: offer appreciation for the person's sacrifices, prayers for their trials and endurance, etc.)
- Give example Scriptures they can include, like Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

**Close in prayer**, thanking God that He shows up and miraculously intervenes when we need Him the most, and asking for endurance to persevere and keep fighting through the trials that we face.