

Most Christians realize they are being spiritually opposed as they serve God. The fight we each face is part of a global war that has been rampaging through cities, churches and minds throughout earth for thousands of years. While understanding that spiritual powers are real, some may feel they have enough stress in the course of daily living without picking street fights with demons. Others are turned off by cartoonish caricatures of evil powers or by what appears to be superstitious speculations about what is haunting the neighborhood.

How can we go beyond waging spiritual war as a one-on-one defensive duel to keep evil from encroaching on our home? We must either overcome in the battle for whole cities or practically concede to house arrest, isolated in cocoon-like dwellings.

Our goal in this chapter is to learn from the life of Joshua important lessons about the tactic of prayerwalking.

Joshua's first footsteps on the land were not with the Israelites as they crossed the Jordan and began to encircle Jericho. Forty years earlier Joshua, Caleb and ten other leaders had surveyed the land afoot. Moses later pointed to the faith expressed on that foray as crucial for the entire future: "To him (Caleb) and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the Lord fully" (Deut. 1:36)



Surveying Value and Opposition

First, they were to assess the value of the land God was giving them. "See what the land is like...And how is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? ...Is it fat or lean? Are their trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land" (Num. 13:18-20)

Second, they were to survey the people. "See...whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many...And how are the cities in which they live, are they like open camps or with fortifications?" (Num. 13:18-19)

They went on an exploratory prayerwalk that lasted for forty days. At least two of them prayerwalked. Ten of them were perhaps just walking. We will see how their report suggests what happened as they walked the land.



Finding Early Fruit

They strained their muscles to exhibit the distinctive wealth of the land. Their orders were to "Make an effort" to get some fruit of the land. (Gen. 13:20)

It was early in the season for the first grapes. They didn't expect to find a full range of fruits, or even any at all in ripeness.

They brought home more than one kind of fruit, but the showpiece was massive bunch of grapes that took two men co carry.

The fruit was so phenomenal that the scouts named an entire valley after this cluster(They named it Eschol, which means "cluster.")



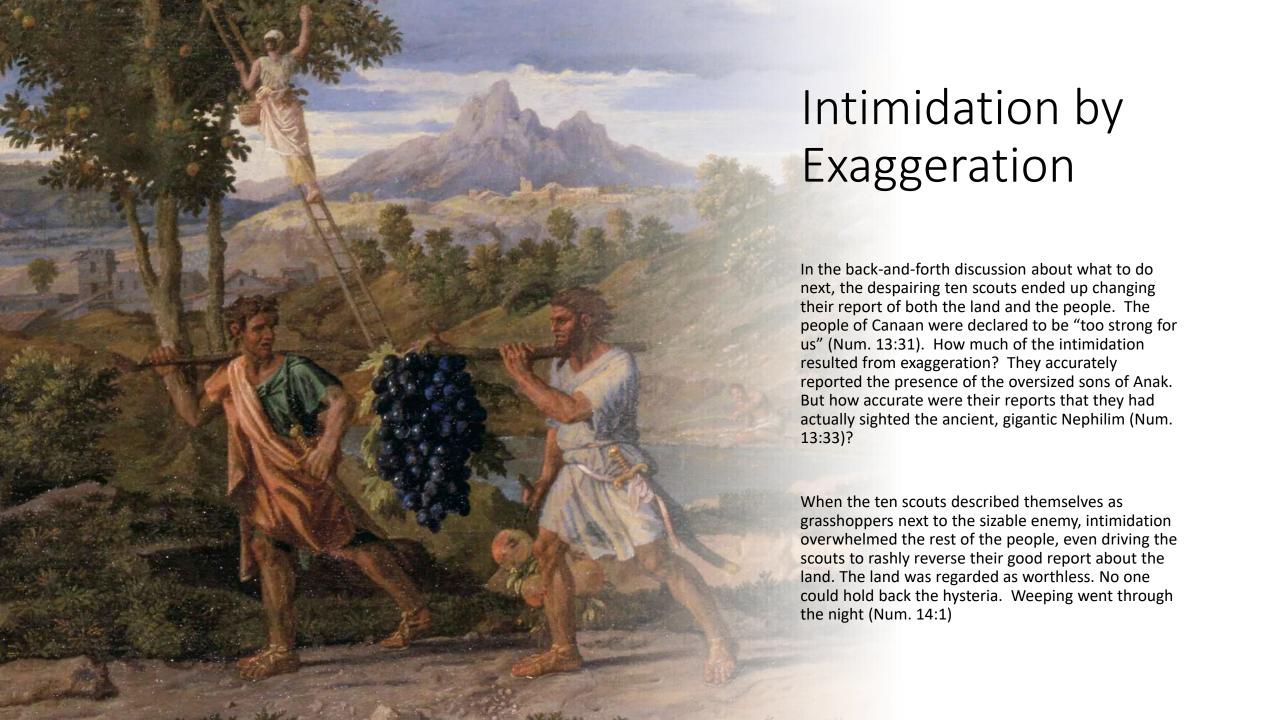
Assessing the Enemy

Regarding the second area of vision, that of the people arrayed against them, they brought a factual, but still rather intimidating, report.

The people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canannites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan (Num. 13:28-29)

Two features of their report stand out: First, the enemy had ranged the entire terrain, and all territory was already claimed. There were no unoccupied places, no niches in which to gain easy access. Second, they had perceived, with some degree of accuracy, that there had been a long history of spiritual evil reinforcing the defensive might of the cities. The city walls loomed so tall that they seemed to be "fortified to heaven" (Deut. 1:28). The institutions were imbued with ancient evil.





A Vision of Victory

Joshua and Caleb made a final effort to communicate vision.

They insisted that it was "exceedingly good land." (Num. 14:7)

Joshua could see that the Lord was involved. "Their (referring to the people, such as the Anakim) protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them" (Num 14:9)

Joshua's final plea is for the people not to fear. He read the situation well. The people refused to obey, not because of sinful pride or idolatry, but because of the terror triggered by the overblown report and their stubborn unbelief.

Caleb said later, "My brethren who went up with me (his fellow scouts) made the heart of the people melt with fear..." (Josh. 14:8). The distinct feature of Caleb and Joshua's report was their focus on God's power. "If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us" (Num. 14:8).

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Vision is an act of War. Spiritual reconnaissance is best accomplished by pursuing a vision of God. Walk to see something about God more than you walk to say something about evil. Intimidating "grasshopper vision" can result from looking through the wrong end of the telescope first. School yourself, as no doubt Joshua did, in the unfolding purposes of God as revealed in Scripture.

Discern Evil Carefully. Prayerwalkers often report a heightened sensitivity to spiritual battle as they intercede on the streets. Avoid the two extremes of ignoring evil or inventing phantoms.

We can't know all that our curiosity demands about spiritual war. For our sakes God hinders our voyeurism of spiritual violence. Be very cautious in seeking out evil powers. They love attention. Mapping the spiritual terrain is still a new art.

Recognize when you are going beyond the reconnaissance that is truly necessary. Precise naming of powers may not be needed to wage adequate battle. In most situations, knowing only one name is sufficient – the name of Jesus, whose name is far above every other name.

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Discover the fruit of the future. The lesson for prayerwalkers at war is to make top priority of discovering the future of a city.

God does not extend empty blessings. To those who look, God is pleased to give "grape-cluster" evidence of his highest intentions.

You may be moved during prayer to give a place or neighborhood an additional name with prophetic significance.

Lift your stated blessings to God in sincere prayer. Like Joshua, use wisdom and lift your report of the goodness of God to other warriors so that the battle will be directed beyond the expulsion of evil to the cultivation of God's abundant glory, flourishing like fruit.

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Give a useful, balanced report. Tremendous ministry opportunities can alternately thrill you or overwhelm you with false pressure to make things happen. God may indeed impart to you a sense of divine assignment. But if you are praying on a large enough scale, you are probably anticipating matters well beyond your power to enact. Carry out your responsibility before God to encourage others to faithful action.

Your communication to others is incomplete if it amounts to a satanic damage report. It may be wise to limit your statements with this revised maxim: If you can't say something about what God is doing, don't say anything at all. Major on the great value of the faith-future. Display samples of the fruitfulness that is already visible. Of course, be faithful to give the dark side of the picture, but use caution in speaking about evil powers that hold sway over cities or territories. If you do speak of the enemy, follow Joshua's example. He spoke without exaggeration or excessive detail.

Please don't fabricate feelings or circulate rumors when speaking of what you sense God doing in your city.

Stepping Into the Story



Scripture mentions their footsteps on the soil, but the key was not in their feet. Other people who were with them set foot and laid eyes on the land. The difference was that Joshua and Caleb followed God fully.

Follow God Personally and Purposefully

What did it mean to follow the Lord fully? What was this "different spirit" (Num. 14:24)? The original Hebrew expression is rare, used once to describe Joshua and five times for Caleb (Num. 14:24, 32:11-12: Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:8-9,14). This phrase is used only one other time, of King David (1 Kings 11:6)

Literally translated, the expression says that Joshua and Caleb "fulfilled after the Lord." To fulfill probably means to complete a task in a maximal way. After the Lord suggests a holy friendship. Combining the word fulfill with the phrase after the Lord gives Joshua's way of following a dimension of passionate intimacy united with a determined pursuit to complete God's mission. Joshua's following was personal as well as purposeful.

The Israelites were not a horde of homesteaders, just warfaring for the fun of grabbing land. They knew the advance into the land helped extend God's glory among the nations, "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty" (Josh. 4:24).

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Make your prayerwalking humbly historic. Joshua recognized his day as a crucial juncture of history. God may choose to pivot his great plans upon you small steps, plans he has been unfolding for centuries.

You aren't the first to pray for your city, and you won't be the last. Make a balanced attempt to place your city and your generation in the history of God's purposes.

Think of your day's prayerwalk as a significant, but brief, item on a heavenly calendar that marks time in generations. Everyone can join in by actively remembering what God has done and what he has promised to do. Step into the story by soaking in the entire saga of the Bible. Frame prayers for your day from the stories of Scripture.

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Get ready for the surprise God has in store. Exercise the power of looking forward in patient anticipation. As clear as his promises are, God delights in surprising us beyond what we could have ever asked or thought (Eph. 3:20). Go after it (the ark of God)...that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before (Josh. 3:3-4)

Break away from retrograde wishing to get back to the "good old days." A few sincere spiritual warriors have glibly deputized themselves as the spiritual police of their hometowns. Intentions are good, but with a short horizon of history some would be vigilantes might do little more than perform citizen arrests on a few interloping demons who are disturbing the peace. Restoring the quietude of bygone days is too small a goal. In doing so we may be missing God's heart to lead our cities to where they have never been before.

Encountering the Councils of God

Joshua didn't storm Jericho right away. He had completed gathering needed intelligence to form a workable strategy, but he hadn't yet put any plan into action (Josh. 2). At this time of waiting, we find him doing something similar to what we know as prayerwalking. The record says that he was "by Jericho" with his eyes open (Josh. 5:13). While gazing at Jericho he suddenly encountered a figure like a warrior with a drawn sword. Coming closer to discern the allegiance of the mysterious soldier, Joshua saw that he was standing before someone of angelic order, or perhaps even greater, the "captain of the host of the Lord" (Josh. 5:14)

Implications for Today's Prayer Walkers

Seek guidance beyond strategic information. As Joshua sent scouts to gather helpful information, we need to do our homework for entering new areas to advance the kingdom by getting pertinent research accomplished. On the other hand, prepare yourself with a holy hesitancy to seek God for his unique orders. He may well augment your plan about how to reach your city.

Take your shoes off before you put them on. Build worship into the tactical plans of any prayerwalk. Warriors must be worshippers, not just to get divine data for battle plans and not just because praise "works," but because of God's great worthiness.

Cultivate lifelong disciplines of Worship. In God's ways, it may not be possible to learn war without practicing a life-style of worship. The confusing noise of battle is not the place to learn the potent intimacy of worship.

Joshua learned the practice of worship from Moses, from whom he also learned the arts of war. Joshua consistently lingered in the tent of meeting, learning the grandeur and fear of God in his holy place (Ex 33:11). Today those who worship through Jesus by faith come before God through the torn veil to his dwelling place on high.

Simply and earnestly love and listen to God. He is well able to bring heavens near you.

Prayer by Action: Prophetic Symbolism



The parade was not designed to be a war dance to intimidate enemies or psych up the warriors. The marches, the shouts, the trumpets were in fact demonstrative prayers, enacted statements of faith.

In every battle that Joshua won there is indication that God was sought for wisdom.

Somehow our praying in genuine trust opens the affairs of earth to the will of God in heaven. When we pray according to his will, God delights to answer in a marvelous sort of joint endeavor which no one yet has fully explained. Heaven is never coerced, and human will on earth is never violated.

Prophetic action is not magic. Prophetic actions were not to be repeated with false reliance on the act itself.



Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Every step a prayer. The act of walking is perhaps the simplest prophetic symbol. You can express faith with your feet.

Do as God gives. Seek God for his unique battle plan. Be content if he gives you no particular physical prayer, but don't hesitate to carry out his will as you know it. You do not need to fully understand what prophetic actions mean in order to do them in faith.

Don't fight by formula. Resist and engage evil powers only with the captain of hosts, using the means he gives us for every distinctive battle. A good rule of thumb is to assume that most prophetic actions are intended for one time use.

Magic is the performance of rituals that are thought to wield power over affairs of people or invisible entities. Steer clear from an extra-biblical fascination with invisible realms that supposedly correspond with realms that we see.

Let's go back to Joshua's encounter with the heavenly warrior. Joshua demanded that the soldier announce his identity by declaring his loyalties in the battle ahead: "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" The first word of reply must have rung like a bell in Joshua's mind for years: "No" (Josh. 5:13-14)

What did this person mean by saying no to the basic question of allegiance? His drawn sword was evidence that he was on the scene for the purpose of war. How could he avoid taking sides? Was he from a distant place, perhaps putting up his military services for hire? Who was this person?

"Rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord" (Josh. 5:14). The heavenly leaders owed no allegiance to any people or city. He served the Most High. He outranked all skirmishing factions of earth. Joshua's encounter with the heavenly warrior helped him wage war with a noble humility. Although Joshua was fighting in league with angelic majesties, he had not recruited God to fight on his side. In fact, Joshua had been enlisted himself to serve God's greater purposes.



Encountering the Councils of God

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Know Your Leader. Spiritual war is never truly staged as if it were a sporting event with two opposing sides neatly uniformed in black and white. The very nature of God's war is to redeem beloved people who are presently in vicious rebellion against him.

For a simple conquest, "know your enemy" might suffice as a maxim for war strategy. But for spiritual war, to know your leader is the basic requirement. "the people who know their God will display strength and take action" (Dan. 11:32).



The Unique Battle of Jericho. First heavenly powers were manifest. Second, Jericho stood out as the watershed battle that shook the defensive might of the entire land. Third the battle of Jericho was for God alone. "And the city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the Lord..." (Josh. 6:17).

Joshua's Assignment. Joshua was never commissioned to come against any spiritual entities (Josh. 23:6-7; Deut. 12:29-30). Joshua was assigned to destroy the devices of false gods which had held people captive and would certainly ensnare the Israelite people.

God had a second objective in calling for the annihilation of the people throughout the land: He was punishing the sin of the Canaanites which had taken centuries to come to a "filled up" point where it could get no worse (Gen. 15:15, literal translation). God had allowed sin to run its full course.

God's retribution was just.



Same War, Different Battle. The battle at that city was just as real as the struggle for God's glory in your city today. It's not idle speculation to say that we fight in the same war as Joshua, only we're in a much later battle.

The battle of Jericho indicates the contours of later battles, but it will never be fought again.

How do we know that we now stand at a later stage of God's purposes? Because God has exalted Jesus to his right hand. The Father has promised to bring the earth under the headship of his Son. The very name Jesus in Hebrew is Joshua. Jesus has inherited complete leadership in God's war. He has brought the entire conflict very close to its culminating victory.



Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Discern your own spirit. Prayerwalkers who set out to cleanse the land of "enemies," spiritual or otherwise, can possibly open themselves to be influenced by "another kind of spirit." We are told to confront sin with a "spirit of gentleness" and with a view to restore people trapped in it. This exhortation comes with a warning to examine yourself "lest you too be tempted" (Gal 6:1). Apparently, when bringing healing to sin afflicted lives, we're susceptible to the same disease. For example, when praying against heartfelt hatred, be sure that hatred finds no foothold in your prayers. Another example might be the Christ-imparted purity required to prayerwalk through red-light districts. Praying against sexual impurity can backlash in subtle ways.



Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Abandon any semblance of search-and-destroy missions. Prayer walkers at this time don't continue in Joshua's war assignment. You don't carry the burden of meeting out God's punishment for sin; neither should you assume that you have the job of wiping out the paraphernalia of false worship.

Be wise in territorial war. As a gateway city, Jericho often comes to mind when Christian workers seek to bring permanent entry for the gospel in a territory long given over to false worship. Remember that the show of force at Jericho was God's idea. Allow God to stage whatever showdown might be necessary, and even then be content to see little of the closed-curtain drama in the heavenlies.

Soften your celebration when forceful power encounters bring devastation to God's enemies. Celebration is the cleanest when focused on God's gain.



Joshua 1:3 ranks highest in popularity among prayerwalkers: "every place which the sole of your foot tread, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses."

Let's lift our attention from the apparent power of falling feet to the heart of the promise: God's long-standing pledge to give the land to the people as an inheritance. God had summarized the goal of Joshua's warfare as bringing about inheritance. "He shall cause Israel to inherit (the land)" (Deut. 1:38).



Inheriting from God

Many present-day societies restrict the idea of inheritance to that of shuffling unspent assets after the death of a relative. We all realize that God was not passing on leftover portions of his estate because he was about to pass away.

Biblical inheritances were often apportioned while the senior figure of the family was still living (Luke 15:12). When a person was given responsibility over a portion of the family's land, immediate stewardship was realigned, but family honor and ownership continued. The land and its fruit were viewed as ultimately belonging to the fathers of the family, though these ancestors may have lived generations before (Num. 36:1-17; 1 Kin. 21:3-4)

When God gave inheritance to Israel, he was entrusting family wealth as if to his own sons.



Possessing the Land

Possessing land meant taking charge of territory which had already been assigned to them as an inheritance. We could easily surmise that their feet were empowered to possess land just by steppin on it. But God did not say, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads is yours." He said that every place they walked "I have given it to you." God was doing the giving.

Neither were they licensed to seize whatever they wanted. In the very next verse God gave clear boundaries to contain their conquest, according to ancient promise (Josh. 1:4).

The process of receiving inheritance went through two stages under Joshua's advance: First, based on the authority of God granting the land as an inheritance, the entire nation of people was charged with possessing it as a united force (Josh. 1:11).

After they had subdued a major portion of the land together, they divided it into specific inheritances for the different tribes.(Josh. 11:23 and all of chapters 13-19) Then the second stage began, with each family or tribe pushing onto their allotted terrain and pursuing whatever warfare was necessary to subdue it. (Judg. 2:6; also Josh. 24:28).



Ousting Enemies Little by Little

Overcoming opposition and settling the different portions became a lengthy process. "I will drive them (Israel's enemies) out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land" (Ex. 23:30). God had slowed the conquering of enemy forces so that the Israelites would establish themselves as fruitful in every way. He did this so that one enemy wouldn't be replaced by another.

God designed the inheritance process to balance the confrontation of enemies with their displacement by his heirs. As God's people matured in their strength to bring forth the fruit of the land. God gradually expelled enemy forces.



Abraham's Family Inherits the World

Abraham and his descendants were promised that he would be "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). The entire earth! God ultimately intends to entrust the world earth to his priestly people (Rev. 1:6, 5:10,22:5).

There is one descendant of Abraham who opens inheritance of the world to all peoples: Jesus. By God's choosing, Jesus in effect became the sole heir of Abraham. He has been "appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). But Jesus opens his inheritance to any person who trusts in him.



Our Most Ancient Mandate

Our authority to possess the cities of earth as an inheritance has roots in our most ancient mandate: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (gen. 1:28,9:1,7).

God has never changed that purpose. Deuteronomy 32:8 says that "the Most High gave the nations their inheritance when He separated the sons of man." At the tower of Babel God assisted the human race in spreading out over the earth as distinct peoples (Gen. 11:2-9). Our race was not scattered just to wander, as Cain feared (Gen. 4:14). God dispersed the nations to enter lands where each people could ultimately be fruitful unto God. God intends inheritance for every people group.



The Greater Joshua

Jesus is the greater Joshua who now leads God's people in a concerted effort to fill the earth. In Psalm 2:8 we read of Christ's conquest for inheritance. "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession" (NAS revised)

This promise is only directed to one person: Jesus. He is the one who would be called "his Anointed" (Ps. 2:2), to be installed by God as "my King upon Zion, My holy mountain" (Ps. 2:6). He is the only one who could truly be addressed as "My Son" by the Lord himself (Cps 2:7).



Implications for Prayerwalkers

The meek inherit the earth. Focus on inheriting from God more than on invading enemy camps. Your meekness might be reflected in some of the language you choose. Belligerence can backfire. Language of assault on God's enemies can sometimes generate a momentum of cocky supremacy which is powerless.

Aim your claims. If you use the language of "taking" or "claiming" streets or territories, be sure to stipulate that you are "taking" this or "claiming" that for the Son of God. Steer clear of wording that might imply that you are claiming things for yourself. Instead of saying, "We claim this high school," try praying something like, "We lay claim to this high school for you, Lord Jesus. These students and this place is yours."



Implications for Prayer Walkers

More than conquerors. From Joshua's experience we can expect that God will allow us to be as victorious as we intend to be fruitful. Prayerwalking works best when incorporated into plans to further Christ's kingdom.

Plan on the process of warfare to be slow and sure, paced by the emergence of fruit. God could easily vanquish spiritual enemies in a flash, but among other purposes, he delights in seeing wickedness displaced by spiritual fruitfulness.

Don't load your prayerwalking plans with hopes that evil will be suddenly eradicated. God has not unveiled prayerwalking as a secret weapon late in the game to force the devil to capitulate abruptly. The struggle has many dimensions, of which prayerwalking is only one. God works through his people in a thousand different ways to bring the full power of the gospel to every community on earth.



Implications for Prayerwalkers

Take cities for them, not from them. Stand with others in their struggle to receive their inheritance. Joshua rallied different tribes to fight as one, even though it was known that the target city would be inhabited by only one of the tribes (Num. 32:18; Josh. 22:3-4) In a similar way we have a responsibility to help residents of distant lands to contend for the inheritance God has for them in their own cities.

With Christ's open inheritance in view, we can pray with authority that the current inhabitants would inherit their own city. Ask God to restrain spiritual forces which have tried to thwart his will that the people would seek God and find him in Jesus. Pray for thousands to be added to the family as joint heirs with Jesus. Ask Jesus to grant worthy disciples the stewardship of cultivating the life of God in their city.

