

# Google Earth

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4-27-08

Joshua 6:1-5

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Has anyone else seen this thing that is called Google Earth? It's a wild program on the internet that lets you look at the earth from satellite images taken from outer space. Kind of creepy, if you think about it. I can look down on the earth and see things like our house we used to own in Shippensburg. I can look at a picture of the church from about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile in the sky. Or a snapshot of Eastern University where Heather attends college. But better than that is the ability to map out a trip from one place to the next. And that's just what I did for our trip to Annual Conference this year. Not only do I get a fancy line drawn on a map, but I also get turn by turn directions for the journey. I guess it's a guy thing. It's one of those ways we can avoid having to stop and ask for directions.

Knowing where we are going and knowing our destination gives us a sense of comfort; a feeling of security. We can make more informed decisions and can prepare ourselves for what lay ahead. And that's what most people want. They want to know what to expect and how to plan. Very few people enjoy beginning a journey not knowing where it will lead and what they will encounter along the way. That's why Google Earth, Map Quest, and portable navigation systems like Tom Tom are so popular. But in the Kingdom of Heaven, we are not so privileged. Following God is more like setting out on a journey without a map, and having the faith that God knows what He's doing and where we are going.

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. <sup>2</sup> But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. <sup>3</sup> You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. <sup>5</sup> When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud

as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town.”<sup>1</sup> (Joshua 6:1-5)

As a child, I learned all about how Joshua fought the battle at Jericho. First of all we need to get the story right. Joshua did NOT fight the battle at Jericho. He and the army simply showed up. God did the rest. God says “I have given”, not “I will give”. And this city was taken by perhaps the most unorthodox method in the history of warfare. But something has always puzzled me about this story. Why would God give these strange instructions in the first place? He could have leveled that city with just a word from His mouth. Instead, He tells these people to march around the city 13 times.

Okay, so here’s Joshua, the next great leader of Israel; the man who would lead them into the Promised Land. He would be the man that would lead Israel’s armies against all sorts of “Ites” (Amelekites, Hittites, Canaanites, etc.). I can just picture Joshua sizing up the city, drawing his battle plans, working out a strategy. And you can be sure that he never planned to march the half mile around the city. But that’s exactly what God says to do; go and march.

I can just picture Joshua after he went back to his tent that day. “March? You want me to march? I’m supposed to go and tell the Priests and the fighting men to get all dressed for battle just to spend 15 minutes each day walking around the city in silence?” But notice that this is exactly what Joshua does. The chapter goes on to say that Joshua obeyed these rather strange instructions, and so too did the rest of the gang. They did exactly as the Lord had commanded, even though it seemed quite strange at the time. I believe this story is more than a demonstration of God’s power but also a demonstration of Joshua’s faith.

The Bible is full of stories like this (not the marching part, but the faith part). God gives a command that seems a bit strange, but people would follow it none the less. Even the Priests who were carrying the Ark had to take that first step into the rushing waters of the Jordan River before God stopped the flow (Joshua 3:15). And I am learning that not much has changed.

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Jos 6:1-5). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

For most of us, we almost expect God to do a Map Quest of our journey. That way we can see all that lay before us and we can plan accordingly; we know what we're getting in to. We want all the answers and all instructions up front. But our God is asking us to walk by faith, not by sight. He is asking us to trust Him in our journey. God calls us on a journey of faith, illuminating things just enough for us to see a few steps ahead. **"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."**<sup>2</sup> writes the psalmist. And if you've ever walked with a small lamp in your hand, you know it doesn't light too much of the pathway. But it will light the next step. So you take that step, and suddenly that second step, which you could not see before, is now illuminated before you. And so you take the third. And on and on you journey, one step at a time; following the pathway by faith.

Almost two years ago the leadership of this congregation heard a call from God. It is time to broaden our reach; to enhance the depth of our ministries. Through prayer and listening, your Church Board sensed the direction God was leading, and took the first step. Today, we will take another step as we look for leadership in two individuals. And they too have been following God's leading, taking one step at a time; following the path that He has illuminated at their feet. Together, we will follow where He is leading; listening for His instruction, taking this journey one step at a time.

I confess that I do not have all the answers, I do not know what all lay ahead of us. None of us do. But then if we did, we would be walking in our own confidence and strength, not by faith. Like Joshua, God is simply asking us to be a vessel of faith; to trust Him enough to take that next step even though none of us knows where it will lead. But our God is good, and our God is loving. Our God desires to work through us. Even though it is within His power to change this community through a single word from His mouth, He has chosen to work through people like you and me. He has plans to transform our neighbors lives from darkness into glory. Do we have enough faith to let it happen through us?

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<sup>2</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Ps 119:105). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.