



# Joshua: Prophet of Conquest

## Lesson Overview

### Week of March 14

#### 1 Life Need:

Discuss why God's agenda for our lives should be about Him and not us.

#### 2 Bible Learning:

Learn how Joshua discovered God's agenda is about Him, not us.

#### Suggested Material

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster and reproducible sheet—God's Faithful Prophets

#### 3 Bible Application:

Consider how God's agenda is about Him, not us.

#### Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—For His Good Pleasure

#### 4 Life Response:

Refocus our agenda to God's agenda.

**Church/Home Theme:**  
Revive Us Again,  
O Lord!

**Lesson Focus:**  
God's agenda is  
about Him, not us.

**Lesson Scripture:**  
Joshua 5:13-6:5,  
15-16, 20

**God's Plan**—After Moses died, Joshua continued to lead the Hebrews into the promised land. When they came to Jericho, it looked impossible to conquer. But God had promised the land to His people, and it's all about His plan, not about our capabilities.

**God's Battle Plan**—Joshua privately received a visit from a man with a sword. Joshua immediately inquired whose side this visitor was on. The visitor did not take a side but served the Lord alone. He was on God's side as commander of the Lord's army. Joshua bowed in utter submission because he recognized the divine visitation. The commander's instruction about the holy ground of their meeting confirmed this.

The Lord then directed Joshua to march his army around Jericho for six days, with the ark and priests in the lead. On the seventh day, the army was to march around the city seven times, the priests blow the trumpets, the fighting men shout, and the wall would collapse. To the human mind, this military strategy made no sense, but when Joshua and the people obeyed God's orders, they claimed the city.

**God in the Center**—"What about me?" "When am I going to get mine?" These are common daily mantras. Selfishness is considered acceptable in our society—almost expected. However, God's children should carry a different air, focused on establishing and building up His kingdom here on earth. This seems like an impossible task. But Joshua and Jericho are a perfect example of the victory believers can experience when they are committed to carrying out God's intentions His way and keeping Him in the center of what we do.

## As Your Students Arrive

Before class, write on a whiteboard or sheet of newsprint the question, "What is your agenda for your life in the next six months?" As your students arrive, ask them to reflect on this question, then ask several students to briefly share their agenda. Maybe it includes a vacation, a visit with relatives, or just to go to work and come home every day. This week's lesson provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how God's agenda in our lives is about glorifying Him, not ourselves.

**Link to Last Week:** Allow some of your students to tell about what they did this past week to hear God’s voice more clearly.

# 1 Life Need

Discuss why God’s agenda for our lives should be about Him and not us.

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## Joshua: Prophet of Conquest

Wendell Lee looked out over the empty chairs. It was a Saturday morning, and he had come to the sanctuary to pray for his church members and the upcoming pastors’ conference.

Pastor Wendell had been praying for God to grow his church. It had gone from 35 to 50 people in three years. The church held neighborhood outreach activities in the diverse surrounding communities, but in his mind, it had yielded little return.

At one of the conference sessions, Pastor Wendell sat next to a white pastor from the same county in St. Louis, Missouri. Pastor Rick had a white congregation of 75 people, and they were at a standstill, too. His church had also been praying for growth.

After the conference, the two men stayed in touch and began visiting one another’s churches. Six months later, Pastor Wendell and Pastor Rick were out having lunch.

“So what do you think?” asked Pastor Rick.

“I think my congregation would be open to talking about our two churches merging,” replied Pastor Wendell.

“I think my church will be on board with it,” added Pastor Rick.

“What we want to stress to everyone from the beginning,” offered Pastor Warren, “is that we want to see what God wants to do. It is all about Him.”

“Agreed,” said Pastor Rick.

**1. Why isn’t it natural to seek God’s agenda in our daily lives?**

**2. Why should we seek God’s agenda for our lives?**

**3. Why does God’s agenda for our lives bring glory to Him and not us?**

LESSON FOCUS: God’s agenda is about Him, not us.

Read the anecdote in *Comprehensive Bible Study*, then form small groups for discussion so students may respond to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

Question 1 directs your students to reflect on how naturally we tend to make plans and authorize decisions without considering what God’s agenda is for us. Encourage them to realize the need to seek God’s direction when making their agenda.

Question 2 provides an opportunity for your students to focus on the fact that God is our Creator and knows what is best for us. Guide your students to understand that we may have an agenda, but there is no guarantee that it will happen. However, God’s agenda for our lives will always be fulfilled when we walk in obedience to Him.

Question 3 guides your students to understand that our lives are not about us receiving praise and living in the spotlight. Encourage them to desire that God, rather than themselves, would be lifted up in all they do. For we are created to direct others to God, not ourselves. God’s agenda always directs others to look at Him and not us.

# 2 Bible Learning

Learn how Joshua discovered God's agenda is about Him, not us.



On the poster, note the photo of the excavation site of ancient Jericho, and on the

handout, read the third paragraph.

## JOSHUA ENCOUNTERS THE COMMANDER

Read Joshua 5:13-15 and note the following points:

- Before Joshua led the Israelites in the battle for Jericho, he had an encounter with a man holding a drawn sword.
- Joshua asked the man if he would be for the Israelites or against them in the coming battle.
- The man said he was on the Lord's side, and he was the commander of the Lord's army.
- Joshua then fell down in reverence and asked the man what message he brought from the Lord.
- The man told Joshua to remove his sandals, for he was standing on holy ground.
- Joshua's obedience to the Lord's command demonstrated his reverence for Him.

## BIBLE EXTRA

### The Importance of Being on God's Side

Someone reportedly asked Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War if God was on his side. Lincoln replied, "Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

This quote from President Lincoln illustrates the reason for the commander of the Lord's army to answer "neither" in verse 14. The Lord desired to know first of all if Joshua was on His side.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

The most likely reason for Joshua to be near Jericho was that of examining its wall searching for a way to attack the city. Although the Israelites had already defeated powerful enemies, they had not yet encountered a walled city. Jericho posed a new and difficult challenge for Israel. How would they attack such a fortress?

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## Joshua Encounters the Commander

*Joshua 5:13-15, KJV*

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

*Joshua 5:13-15, NIV*

<sup>13</sup>Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

<sup>14</sup>"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

<sup>15</sup>The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

As the battle of Jericho approached, Joshua went out for another look at the city's towering wall. Thoughts of how to conquer the city likely occupied his mind before he encountered the stranger with a "drawn sword in his hand" (vs. 13).

Joshua did not recognize his divine visitor at first and understandably sought to know if He was for Israel or her "enemies." The response of "neither" might seem confusing to us at first (vs. 14). Why would the Lord not be on the side of His people whom He had commanded to conquer the land?

However, the proper question for Joshua to consider was not whether the Lord sided with Israel, but was Joshua on the Lord's side? Was he willing to follow God's plan for the upcoming battle?

Joshua's reverence and obedience to the Lord's command





Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 395-400 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

The response of “neither” led to a more important question: “Was Joshua on the Lord’s side?” Would Joshua follow the instructions of the true Commander of Israel’s forces? There was a greater loyalty at stake, which consisted of serving and worshipping the Lord above all else. Once Joshua confirmed his allegiance through worship, he was ready to receive God’s instructions for the upcoming battle.

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to take off his sandals showed he had come to recognize the divine nature of his Visitor (vs. 15). Perhaps he remembered that when God appeared to Moses, He also commanded that he take off his sandals. In both cases, the Lord’s presence made the ground beneath their feet holy (Exod. 3:5-6).

**4.** *Why might Joshua have gone to the vicinity of Jericho ahead of the battle?*

**5.** *Why did the commander of the Lord’s army respond with the word “neither” to Joshua’s question regarding whose side He represented?*

## Joshua Receives Unusual Instructions

*Joshua 6:1-5, KJV*

1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up

*Joshua 6:1-5, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

<sup>2</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.” <sup>3</sup>March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. <sup>4</sup>Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark.

On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. <sup>5</sup>When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will

## BIBLE EXTRA

### Jericho

Although Jericho stood as an imposing obstacle facing the Israelites upon their entrance into the promised land. The violent history of the city makes it difficult to identify with certainty the wall that fell during the time of Joshua. At one time in its history, Jericho had a double set of walls separated by a grassy incline, but we don’t know if this was the situation in Joshua 6. In fact, the Hebrew word “for walls” does not appear in the Book of Joshua. The discoveries at the site of the ancient city do indicate that the wall Joshua encountered was likely six feet thick and as high as 15 feet. Jericho’s strategic location, however, made its defeat a priority in defeating the Canaanites.

From a human perspective, the wall left Israel with few options for conquering the city. Should they attempt to scale the wall with ladders? Could they break a hole in the wall? Was it possible to dig a tunnel under the wall without Jericho’s army seeing them?

Perhaps the great difficulty of the task accounts for Joshua’s visit to the vicinity of the city (Josh. 5:13). He might have had these very questions in mind when he encountered the commander of the Lord’s army (Josh. 5:14-15).

## BIBLE EXTRA

### Who Marched Around the City?

Joshua 6:8-13 tells us the order of the repeated treks around the city of Jericho: first an armed guard; then the seven priests, who were blowing trumpets; then the ark of the covenant; and lastly the rear guard.

It’s difficult to imagine all the Israelites took part in the march, especially on the seventh day, but the shout on the last day was likely quite intimidating to those inside Jericho.

## JOSHUA RECEIVES UNUSUAL INSTRUCTIONS

Read Joshua 6:1-5 with your class and highlight these important points:

- The Israelites' presence caused the

### BIBLE EXTRA

#### Why Kill Everyone?

Why did God command the Israelites to put to death everyone inside Jericho except for Rahab and those who sought refuge in her home? That question has caused many people to characterize God as a vengeful deity who ordered the death of innocent people.

However, there are several reasons why God could have ordered Jericho to be conquered and completely destroyed. First, we must remember the vile pagan practices of the Canaanites, some of whom sacrificed their children to Molech, a demonic deity they worshiped. Others made their first newborns foundation sacrifices; their bodies were incorporated into the foundations of the houses in order to bring good luck to the rest of the family. The Lord did not want anyone left alive who might tempt His people to serve pagan idols or engage in the wickedness of the people they disposed.

Second, God was the one commanding them to take such action. The Israelites did not do this on their own initiative, but carried out what the Lord told them to do.

Thirdly, the total destruction of a culture immersed in pagan idolatry and its accompanying wickedness would serve as a vivid warning to Israel regarding the consequences of such behavior. Death and destruction would be the result of copying the idolatry of the Canaanites and the evil behavior that went with such worship of foreign gods.

And finally, the Lord had been patient with the Canaanites. As He told Abraham centuries earlier, the "sin" in the land of Canaan "has not yet reached its full measure" (Gen. 15:16). However, by the time of the Exodus, God told Moses that the inhabitants of Canaan had "defiled" themselves and the land with "detestable" sexual practices, and He must "punish" them by clearing them from the land (Lev. 18:24-28).

people of Jericho to stay locked up in their city.

- God assured Joshua that they would be victorious and conquer Jericho before He instructed him on what to do.

- Joshua and the army of Israel must march silently around the city for six days, then on the seventh day march around it seven times, with the seven priests blowing trumpets, before the whole army gave a loud shout that would bring down the wall.

- This unusual instruction for conquering Jericho contained the number seven, which often represented the concept of "complete."

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*KJV*  
every man straight before  
him.

*NIV*  
collapse and the army will go up,  
everyone straight in."

Despite the wall surrounding them, the inhabitants of Jericho feared the Israelites so much that they took the unusual step of shutting up their city so no one could leave or enter (vs. 1). Perhaps the successful visit of the spies (Josh. 2) caused them to block all entry to and exit from their city.

God assured Joshua of a total victory over Jericho before revealing His unusual instructions for the upcoming battle (vs. 2). He instructed Israel's army and seven priests, along with the ark of the covenant, to march around the city once each day for the upcoming six days. On the seventh day, they were to encircle the city seven times before the priests would sound a long blast on the trumpets and the soldiers gave a loud shout.

One can imagine the ridicule of the city's inhabitants on the first day as Israel's army silently marched around Jericho but did not attack. While the unusual strategy might have brought the enemy's scorn at first, what might they have thought on the seventh day as the army paraded around the city seven times?

**6.** *How might the unusual battle plan have tested both Joshua and the Israelites?*

**7.** *How might the repeated circling of the city have affected the inhabitants of Jericho?*

### Joshua Obeys the Lord

*Joshua 6:15-16, 20, KJV*  
15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

*Joshua 6:15-16, 20, NIV*  
15 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. 16 The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

The unusual instructions regarding the upcoming battle for Jericho would have tested the obedience of Joshua and the Israelites. Would their faith remain unshaken as the army marched around the city so many times without attacking? Would they trust the Lord for a great victory on the seventh day?

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

As the army of Israel marched quietly around the city on the first day, it's easy to imagine it brought much ridicule from those safe and secure inside Jericho. It may have even relieved their fears. As

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KJV

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

Joshua's prompt obedience to the Lord's instructions (Josh. 6:6-7) confirmed his trust in the Lord. He, along with Israel, displayed great faith in the Lord as they carried out God's plan for the battle (see Heb. 11:30).

The Israelites needed to rise early on the seventh day in order to complete the seven trips around Jericho (Josh. 6:15). By the seventh time, those inside the city would have seen rows of soldiers encircling the wall, followed by the priests blowing horns and accompanying the ark of the covenant, and then another large group of soldiers.

In accord with Joshua's command, the trumpets sounded and the army shouted (vs. 20). The wall "collapsed" as God removed Jericho's protection. The stunned inhabitants could never have imagined that their wall would just collapse for no apparent reason.

The significance of the soldiers charging "straight in" (vs. 20) is that it left no part of the city unconquered and allowed no one to escape. Since the army of Israel had virtually surrounded Jericho, they easily defeated the shocked inhabitants. The text does not record any opposition as they captured the city.

**8.** How did the battle plan leave no room for anyone to escape from Jericho?

NIV

trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!

<sup>20</sup>When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.

it continued day after day for a week, however, their initial calm likely turned to panic as they witnessed the confident Israelites parade around their city day after day.

## JOSHUA OBEYS THE LORD

Read Joshua 6:15-16, 20 and note these points in your class discussion.

- In obedience to the Lord's command, on the seventh day, the army and priests went around the wall seven times instead of once as on the previous six days.

- Joshua had the army shout the affirmative that the Lord had given them the city even before it happened.

- After the Israelites had completed God's instructions, the wall fell down and the people conquered the city.

## SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

By the seventh time around the city on the last day, the soldiers of Israel would have encircled Jericho several times. With so many layers of armed warriors, it would have been impossible for anyone to escape as the soldiers went forward into the city. Jericho's soldiers and inhabitants, no doubt stunned by the total collapse of their wall, likely became easy prey for Israel.

## WINDOW ON THE WORD

### In God's Way and for His Glory

*Throughout the Bible, God demonstrated that victory will be achieved His way and for His glory. Consider the Israelites' deliverances from the Egyptians (Exod. 6–15), Gideon's victory over Midian (Judges 6–7), David's defeating Goliath (1 Sam. 17), and Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus' escape from Herod (Matt. 2:13-23). All those victories could not have been accomplished without the Lord's intervention.*



# 3 Bible Application

Consider how God’s agenda is about Him, not us.

This lesson step provides your students an opportunity to consider how God’s agenda focuses on Him, not ourselves. Copy this page and give the instructions to each group. Also make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.



## Handout:

### ‘For His Good Pleasure’

Read the handout and follow the instructions. Share your answers with one another and with the whole class if there is time.

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Group

Read “It’s Not about Me!” from the student book and respond to **Questions 9, 10, and 11**. God’s agenda is always the best for us, and He knows the future—we don’t. The more we pack our agenda with what we want to do, without praying to Him first, the less likely we are to be following Him. We don’t set the agenda and then ask Him to bless it. He will let us know His agenda when we come to Him through prayer and reading Scripture.

### Walk in the Israelites’ Shoes

Imagine you are one of the soldiers under Joshua’s command at Jericho. Write a single-paragraph journal entry for each situation below:

- You arrive at Jericho and see its fortified wall. You hear that the city must be defeated in order to get to the promised land. What are you saying to yourself? What are you saying to those around you (family, fellow soldiers, friends)?
- Joshua announces the plan given to him by the commander of the Lord’s army and you begin marching around the wall. What are your thoughts while walking around the wall for seven days? Imagine Jericho’s inhabitants are mocking and insulting you. How are you handling it?
- The plan works! The wall comes down! The Lord grants victory! What is your reaction?

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## It’s Not about Me!

I can’t remember a time I wasn’t planning my life agenda. Even at age 10, I was planning which junior high school and high school I would attend. Living in Detroit during the 60s required me to plan ahead to guarantee the best education as a black child. But, even then, God started to whisper to me that my agenda was not to be about me, but about Him.

My plan was to attend Cass Technical High School, the best high school in Detroit, as a Science and Art honor student. Despite my high GPA, my average standardized test scores kept me from the honor program. But I was accepted into the Chemistry/ Biology major. This major made me depend on God more for the grades I needed for university study.

Howard University was my dream school, but God made it clear that I was to accept admission at Western Michigan University (WMU). It was there that I learned the importance of the Holy Spirit in my walk with God and how to share my faith with others. In my first year, I led my roommate to the Lord and had a great small group Bible study.

My present position as director of a special needs school in Nigeria clearly demonstrates that God’s agenda is about Him, not me. My agenda was to return to Nigeria at the age of 62 after retiring from the Los Angeles Unified School District, take care of my husband, and write books. But before I returned to Nigeria, the Director of Open Doors for Special Learners asked me to take over her position because she had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s. My first response was “No!” But she told me every time she prayed about who was to take over for her, God gave her my name. Once again, God was teaching me that His agenda for my life was not about me, but about Him.

- 9.** Why do you think God’s agenda is about Him, not us?
- 10.** How can we know that our agenda is about God and not us?
- 11.** What role does prayer and reading God’s Word play in knowing God’s agenda?

# 4 Life Response

Refocus our agenda to God's agenda.

Your class has discovered and studied why God's agenda is about Him being glorified and not themselves. Now they will have an opportunity to choose to refocus their agenda to God's agenda.

Ask your students to read "Refocus" in the student book, and make sure they have paper and pencil in order to follow the instructions. God may desire that we spend time with Him immediately when we get up in the morning, so that He can direct us throughout the day. Or maybe, He

wants us to let go of a certain dream and allow Him to give us a bigger dream. Whatever God calls us to do in order to live His agenda in our lives, it will be worthwhile knowing that we are being obedient to God. Remind your students that God desires for us to know His agenda more than we desire to know it. Therefore, if we ask God to help us refocus our agenda to seek His will, He will guide us to know His agenda for our lives.

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## Refocus

Whether using a professional camera or a simple phone camera, focusing to get a clear picture can be difficult. The same is true when we focus our lives on our agenda instead of God's agenda. If God is not in the center, then you need to refocus your agenda so that it's about Him and not yourself.

► *What can you do to refocus your agenda to God's agenda? Take time now to pray for God to direct you on what you need to do in order to live His agenda in your life.*

### KEY VERSE

And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

—Joshua 6:2, KJV

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."

—Joshua 6:2, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 15 through March 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 25:1-10—God Loves Covenant Keepers.

**Tues.** Hebrews 4:1-11—Entering God's Promised Rest.

**Wed.** Deuteronomy 29:1-6—New Covenant Made with the Israelites.

**Thurs.** 2 Kings 22:1-7—Josiah Prepares to Repair the Temple.

**Fri.** 2 Kings 22:8-13—Josiah Seeks Guidance to Confront Disobedience.

**Sat.** 2 Kings 23:1-3—Josiah Leads in Covenant Renewal.

**Sun.** 2 Kings 22:14-20—Huldah Confirms Coming Judgment; Josiah Spared.

Close the class by allowing the students a few minutes of silent prayer time to talk to God concerning their desire to seek His agenda daily. Then close in a group prayer. Encourage your students to continually seek God's agenda through prayer and studying His Word.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

## Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read 2 Kings 22:14-20. Ask your students to think about something they do each week or even every day to experience peace in their lives.