

Speaker 1:

Hey welcome today to all of our LifeChurches, and our Network Churches, and those of you all over the world at Church Online. I've got an amazing treat for you today, but before I introduce our guest speaker I want to tell you two weeks from now it is Easter weekend.

I'm going to be launching a brand new four part message series I'm very excited about. It's called, "I Deserve It." We live in a very entitled world where people think they deserve so much, but the reality is if we're all honest, so many of us we've done things that are wrong. We feel like we really deserve bad things in our lives. We're going to look at four different Gospel stories, where people actually deserve something that was bad, but because of the grace of Jesus he did not give them what they deserved. It starts in two weekends, I deserve it.

Today I want to introduce to you one of my best friends in the whole world, Pastor Steven Furtick is one of the greatest leaders in the American church. He leads one of the fastest growing churches in the world. He, beyond a shadow of a doubt, is one of the greatest communicators alive. Most importantly to me, he is one of my best friends. Would you show LifeChurch love and honor to our speaker today, and my good friend, Pastor Steven Furtick.

Pastor Steven:

LifeChurch, it's good to be back, great to be back. I'm excited to be back. Fantastic, two weeks I get to be with you. We're starting a series today called, "Don't Stop." Touch somebody next to you, say you can't stop now, can't stop now, we're just getting started. Turn to the person on the other side of you that was your second choice, say, you can't stop either. Don't stop.

I want to take a moment like all speakers do and tell you how privileged I am to be standing here. When you get the mic at Live Church you address the equivalent of a Billy Graham Crusade, honestly, you do. Numerically, week in and week out your reach is that powerful. I don't know if you know that. I've been so many times, you know. I'm probably like your favorite guest, or soon to be. You run out of ways to say, hey, I love you guys, you're special.

I did something, I don't think I've ever done this for another man before, I wrote a poem. I wrote a poem. Before I preach today, I'm going to preach in a moment, we're going to have a great time, you're going to be shouting and saying amen, it's going to be interactive. First we're going to go deep together, let's go deep together. I want to share this poem with you. It's five stanzas, and it's in honor of my good friend Pastor Craig Groeschel and all that God is doing here at LifeChurch. It begins like this:

Many preach the word of God, and do it pretty well, but none can touch the leadership of Pastor Craig Groeschel. This is getting started, hang on, I need some room.

His team is stacked with geniuses, with skills unparalleled. There's Bobby, Jerry, Kevin, Sam, and Pastor Craig Groeschel.

The titans of technology, their Bible's not for sale. Get it, new version, free Bible. They'll do anything short of of sin to save a soul from hell.

Sale and hell, hell, sale, sale, hell. Near rhyme.

Katy, Mandy, Anna, Joy, Bookey, and Sam agree their dad is swell, but Amy G is definitely the godliest Groeschel. Come on somebody.

Pay attention, pay attention. I don't think he's one steroids, it's kind of hard to tell. His arms are bigger than my waist, that's Pastor Craig Groeschel. Last verse.

In reaching people with the Gospel, LifeChurch, you do excel. In Christ you are unstoppable, now everybody yell.

Yes. You're not going to get that kind of quality from any other guest preacher, I promise. That's copyright, by the way, don't post it as your own. Don't stop.

I feel that the lord sent me on an assignment over these two weeks to help somebody who is about to stop short of something that God intends for you to pursue. Although I don't know the specifics of your situation, I feel like he's giving me something from the scripture that is going to push you to keep up the pursuit. I want to shoot you full of hope. This week I'm going to talk about those that are stopping short of a promise that God wants you to receive. Then next week, I'm going to talk about those who are stopping short of a purpose that God has called you to fulfill. I thought we'd simply call it "Don't Stop."

I'm going to use a New Testament verse from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10:36 where the writer says, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

You need to persevere. What you need to do, tell your neighbor, what you need to do, come on some of you campuses aren't interacting on the right level. I can feel your passivity. Tell your neighbor, what you need to

do, is persevere. I think that is such a powerful verse. God can make you a promise that you never possess if you never learn how to persevere. That's true in relationships, and that's true in churches, and that's certainly true in our spiritual growth, that's true in business.

So I want to speak to somebody today who knows in your heart that you have stopped short, or you're on the verge of stopping short of something that God put inside of you, something that he spoke to you. Something that may have faded, but is still echoing in your heart.

I want to use an Old Testament passage of scripture to illustrate the verse we just read. I want to speak to you from the sixth book of the Bible, the book of Joshua. So it's like Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua is the sixth book of the Bible. I want to speak to you from the sixth chapter of the sixth book of the Bible. I've entitled this message ... you won't know what the title means, but I promise you it's going to stick in your head after you hear the message, I want to entitle this message, "Don't stop on six." Just see what it means in a minute, but for now, just touch somebody next to you and say don't stop on six. Don't stop on six, don't stop on six.

Pastor Craig and Amy, that does not apply to you concerning childbearing, by the way. You can totally hang it up, but for the rest of you, I want to preach on the subject, don't stop on six. Don't stop on six. Joshua chapter six is an interesting chapter of scripture because it describes how God's people had to conquer a land that had been granted to them, that had been given to them, that was theirs, but yet they weren't yet living there. I think a lot of Christian life is like that, because the scripture says that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. So whatever is in Christ is supposed to be working in my life. The peace of Christ, the joy of the Lord, the strength of God, is all supposed to be working in my life.

But just because God promised it, doesn't mean I possess it yet. Now in Joshua six we get to see God's people as they're about to take possession. I'm going to read you a few verses. Joshua six, verse one. It says, "Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out, and no one came in. Then the Lord said to Joshua, See? I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of ram's horns in front of the Ark, on the seventh day," on the seventh day, that's going to come back in a moment, just hold it. "On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets, and when

you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout." Let's try that right now. But not yet, don't shout yet. Before you shout, you've got to go around six days, six times, the same city, then the wall of the city will collapse, and the army will go up, everyone straight in.

You're finally going to get what God started promising to Abraham, and then to Isaac, and then to Jacob. You're finally going to get what Moses never got to enter because he didn't get to go into the promised land, he only led the people out of Egypt. Joshua, you're finally going in, but first you've got to march for six days. I think in this passage, there are three reasons, I'd like you to write them down please, and maybe even if I get to saying something good while you're writing, you might write and shout amen at the same time. Multitask.

If there are three reasons in this text, there are at least three reasons in this text, but if there are three I want to highlight today that people stop short, I believe it starts with this. I've noticed that so many people never receive what God has promised because they don't persevere. The first reason is because our perspective gets blocked. Isn't that true? Our perspective gets blocked. I was studying a bit about Jericho ... how many of you, show of hands, have ever heard of Joshua and the battle of Jericho, maybe Bible school, Sunday school. There was even a little song, right? Did anybody ever learn the song Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down. I don't know what version that was, I don't know what voice that was. But that's what he did. He fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down.

I was just thinking if Joshua heard that song if you were singing that song, he wouldn't like it because it's so simplified to say Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumbling down. Now, Jericho was the first city in the promised land that God's people had to take before they could have everything that God wanted to give them as an inheritance. It was the first. Everybody say first. Often the first battle is the hardest. How many of you know getting started is the hardest part sometimes.

Just like getting to the gym. If you can lace up your shoes, you can make it through the workout. Sometimes getting started is the hardest part and yet, I was studying about Jericho, and you sing the song, and it's like, he fought the battle and the walls came tumbling down, but what it doesn't tell you is that he spent 45 years in the wilderness, wandering because the generation before didn't have enough faith to go in. He had waited

45 years to even get the opportunity to go into Jericho. So Joshua's watching us with our hand motions ... Joshua fought the battle of Jericho ... he's like, wait a minute, no hand motions. This is not as simple as you make it sound.

Sometime when we see somebody else's victory we oversimplify their process. And we assume it was just easy for them. He just fought the battle and the walls came down. Actually it went the other way around, because Jericho was not a very big city. I'm going to teach you a little geography of the Bible here. It was actually such a small city, you could march around it in about an hour, about an hour. And it wasn't that Jericho was so big that made it a challenging city for them to conquer, it was that Jericho's walls were so high. Now I'm going to preach on that for a minute. Because some of the stuff that's not happening in your life, some of the stuff that God has promised you that you haven't received yet, some of the stuff that you're intimidated of. It's not that it's really bigger than you, because God is in you, he's bigger than anything you face, it's just that your perspective gets blocked by how high the walls are.

That's why you're so wise to come to church. Good job getting here this week, because one of the great things about church attendance is that it lifts your perspective to see beyond the walls of your problems. It lifts your perspective to see beyond the obstacles and the opposition. So as long as all you're looking at in your life is walls, as long as that's what most of us spend six days a week doing; looking at walls, looking at setbacks, looking at deficits, looking at teenagers, hello, looking at our spouse, looking at our past, looking at walls, looking at problems.

But when you come to church, here's something I love about the worship teams at LifeChurch dot TV, because I always watch online and I always check out the worship team, and they're always so excited, and when they come up and start leading you in worship, it's not like Church Online exists so you can stay home if you kind of don't feel like coming out. If you can come out, you can get around other people and start praising God with other people. When you praise God with other people, it reminds you I'm not alone in this. I'm not on my own in this. I've got other people that are pursuing God with me. And there's something about praising about God, there's something about making an effort to get in God's presence that will elevate your perspective so you can see past your problems. When you see past your problems, you can see that the enemy you were intimidated of was actually intimidated of you all along.

Come on somebody, are you going to help me preach today? You just got to look over the wall sometimes. That's what I'm saying, because it says in verse one, it says, "The gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out, no one came in." Then in verse two the Lord says to Joshua, "See? I have delivered Jericho into your hands." Now those verses don't go together, I'm going to show you why. My problem with verse two, is verse one. Because God tells Joshua, "See? I've given you Jericho."

First of all, only God can speak in past tense about a battle you haven't even fought yet. That's how strong God is. That's how big God is. That's how confident God is in his own ability. He said we haven't even started the first round, but I've given it to you, because I live outside of time and I'm not stressed about what you're stressed about, and I'm not popping Prozac about the economy, and I've got this thing worked out and if you get on with the plan, you can have the victory because my purpose will prevail. Anytime you want to see over the walls.

But watch, watch, watch, I got off track. I'm telling you verse one looks nothing like verse two. See in verse two he says, "See? I've given Jericho into your hands." Verse one, it says, "The gates of Jericho were securely barred." So God says "See? You've got this," and Joshua says, "No actually all I see is walls. All I see is locked up walls."

Have you ever felt like what you see in what your life doesn't match up with what God has said in your heart? Have you? Is it just me? Have you ever felt like God is speaking to you about victory, but you feel defeated? Have you ever felt like God was speaking to you about healing, but inside you felt broken? Have you ever felt like God was speaking to you to tell somebody about Christ, but inside you have your own doubts about the existence of God? I'm just wondering, have you ever felt like what God said doesn't match up with what you see? Have you ever had God instructing you in your heart to give something away, meanwhile you have needs yourself? Have you ever heard God telling you that you need to start tithing, and putting me first while meanwhile you're struggling to make ends meet? I'm just asking, have you ever had a season in your life where your revelation didn't match your reality? That's the situation for Joshua and his perspective is blocked.

That's why God sends you preachers. That's why God gave you a pastor, and campus pastors, and people in your life groups, and people you can serve with, so you can see past the walls and keep a perspective of God's promise. Come on, somebody clap your hands for that. Our perspective isn't going to be blocked anymore after today.

Secondly I think a lot of us stop short because our progress isn't always obvious. Okay, so God speaks to Joshua, he says march around the walls for six days, on the seventh day, march seven times, it's going to be awesome. The walls are coming down. So Joshua, calls the people together for six. Follow me here, I'm going to show you something super cool. The Bible is amazing by the way. Do you read the Bible? You've got to read the Bible, no the Bible's boring, no you're boring, you've got to read the Bible, the Bible is amazing, now read it.

Joshua summoned the priests and said to them take up the Ark of the covenant of the Lord and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it. And he ordered the army advance, march around the city with an armed guard going ahead of the Ark of the Lord. They get this instruction to start marching, and Joshua after he told the people, verse eight, it says, "The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord went forward blowing their trumpets and the Ark of the Lord's covenant followed them." So they're making progress, right? Making progress. Everybody say, "making progress."

Doesn't it feel good to make progress, don't you love progress? Just to see things going in the right direction in your life. Don't you like making up your bed in the morning? It just feels like you're ahead of where you were the night before, the bed's made up. This is something about me, I always need things to be progressed, and I get very frustrated if I can't see progress, progress. So they're making progress.

"The armed guard," verse nine, "marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the Ark." All this time the trumpets were sounding, but Joshua had commanded the army to not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout, then shout. So he had the Ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once, and then the army returned to camp and spent the night there. Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests took up the Ark of the Lord, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward marching before the Ark of the Lord and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them, and the rear guard followed the Ark of the Lord while the trumpets kept sounding. So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

I want to get all up in this story right now. I want to feel what these men must have felt while they thought they were about to charge into a city and wage war, but all they ended up doing for six days straight is taking a walk. Let me tell you, if I were God, the most terrifying prospect in the

history of humanity, by the way, but if I were God, and I were orchestrating this miracle, if I were writing Joshua chapter six. And I had this group of fighting men, and I wanted them to march around the wall six times, and then on the seventh time I'm going to let the walls collapse, and I want to keep them motivated, let me tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to ... let me move this out a little bit. I'm going to give them a little sign every time they around for one lap. I'm going to give them a little sign that they're doing a good job. Just a little something, just a little sign that you're doing good. You walk a day, and one seventh of the wall crumbles after that day, incremental progress, incremental wall demolition, whatever you would call that.

But incrementally I would show you ... it would be like Tetris, anybody remember Tetris? I know I'm old school, but in Tetris when you would complete the line, the line would disappear. That's how I would want the walls to disappear. Because I need to see something happened to motivate me to stay in motion. Are any of you like me? I don't mind working hard, I don't mind sacrificing, I don't mind putting up with stuff, but I need to know that my pain has a purpose, that it's serving a purpose. That there's a point to this. But the Bible doesn't say they walked around the first day and a little bit of the wall fell down, and then they walked the second day. That would have been so intrinsically motivated, yeah? Look, we got something done today.

Instead, if you were one of these fighting men, you'd come home to your wife after the first night, I know they probably had a camp set up and they didn't get to come home, but go with me. You come home ... it would ruin my illustration if that was the case, but you come home and your wife goes, "How'd it go? Are we going in? What's it like in there? Is it amazing? Who'd you kill today, my little warrior, my big strong warrior, who'd you kill today?" Its like, "Well, actually baby, we didn't fight today. Its kind of more like a spring training. Like a preseason. We just went for a walk, but tomorrow I'll bet you tomorrow is a warm up lap. I think Joshua just wants us to get acclimated to the conditions. Muscles stretched out, just get a vision for what's going to happen."

So you come home day two, because it said they did it six days, and you're like, that's not that long. It's long when you've been waiting in the wilderness for 45 years, and now you're looking at it, but you can't go in. So you go out the second day, and you come home and your wife's like, "How was your day today?" Which by the way is code from a woman for ask me how my day was and sit down because this will not be a short answer, this is not multiple choice or fill in the blank, this is an essay. Amen, marriage seminar. But look, you come home the second day,



"How was it today? How was your day today?" "You know babe, Joshua, somebody needs to talk to him, but he won't let us talk. He told us we all had to keep our mouths shut, he told us we couldn't say anything. We marched in silence."

Which, by the way, why did Joshua tell them not to talk while they were marching? I think because he knew that 40 years earlier it was what the spies said about their situation that kept them from receiving God's promise, and he knew that when it comes to receiving God's promise, your mouth is often your own worst enemy. Your thoughts are often your own worst enemy. Sometimes you've got to talk to people, you've got to get advice, you've got to express how you feel, but sometimes the best strategy is shut up and march. Touch three people around you and tell them shut up and march. You know you've always wanted to tell somebody shut up at church.

Three days, four days, five days, six days, six days and still no action. Oh, by the way, I've been holding this. I haven't even dropped the bomb on you yet because this is the part that blew my mind. You know how God told Joshua after six days, on the seventh day then the walls are going to fall? Remember that? Remember that? Just remember. Remember? Well, guess what Joshua did not tell the people? He didn't say a single word about how long they were going to be doing this. Read it again. Joshua gets the people, he says advance, march, and keep your mouths shut and I'll tell you when we get there. He doesn't tell them how long, he doesn't tell them how many laps, so it's not like they can say, "Only five more days of this, only four more days of this." For all I know, we're going to take a walk every morning. For all I know, Joshua has lost his natural, ever loving mind. For all I know, this man thinks we're in a marching band. I didn't sign up for the marching band. What's up with the trumpets? I want to use my sword, dog.

And this is the third reason we stop short, because the process is open ended. The process is open ended. One rule that I have in working out, is I always, always, because I have a guy that works out with me, he's actually here with me, and he makes the exercises up, but he used to not tell me what the workout was. And I didn't like that because I need to have some control over my willpower and motivation. I'm not one of these people that like working out, I'm not one of those people that posts their workout. I'm one of these people that hates people that post a picture of their workout. I'm so sorry if that offends you, but I'm not one of these people that lives to workout. I workout to live. I want to be healthy. I want to be strong. I want my wife to like what she sees. It's a gift to the body of Christ. But I want to say, I can do 30 seconds, if I know

it's 30 seconds, but can you imagine when somebody else is holding the clock and I don't know how long I have to march, how long I have to sprint?

I workout in my house now, but there's a clock on the wall, because I need to know how much more of this foolishness, ignorance, craziness, torture. Wouldn't it be nice if God put a clock on your dreams or your prayers to let you know I know you're tired, I know everybody else your age that you're friends with is getting married and you're not yet, but if you can stay pure for two more years. Be like, all right God, two years? I can do two years. I did two and a half, I'll raise you three years. That's the number of the trinity. That's so church-y. I can do it if I know what I've got to do.

I've got two things working against me, I've got three things. I've got walls, I can't even see what I'm pursuing, what I'm fighting for, and what it's going to be like. I've got walls, I've got problems. I've got no progress, I'm marching and nothing's happening. Which, by the way, I have a theory that the reason the walls didn't fall down a little bit a time is because God didn't want Joshua and the men to trust in their effort or their progress, but he wanted them to have faith in his promise. Sometimes God lets you walk around in a situation where what you're doing doesn't seem to be working because he wants to know that you trust that I'm working, even when what you're doing doesn't seem to be working.

Will you still pray when they answer hasn't come for six days? Will you still serve me when nobody appreciates you? Will you still show up when you don't even feel like it's making a difference? Will you still give even when you're not seeing the provision flow back to you? Will you still? Will you still? That's the question he wanted to know. Will you still? Will you march just because I told you to? Not because you saw the benefit of it, not because you saw the progress. I have a philosophy that we would all work out and we would all eat well if we could see the results of eating well and working out as we were working out and eating well. Wouldn't it be amazing? Eat a broccoli, get an ab, I'd be popping broccoli. Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. Snorting cauliflower, but I'm saying God wants you to know, I'm working when what you're doing doesn't seem to be. Can you trust me?

This is the essence of faith. Because it was walking around the walls of Jericho that would prepare them to fight the giants once they got in the promised land. It was in what God had to do on the inside. We're so convinced that what God wants to do for us is the most important thing.

I'm wondering if sometimes God doesn't send us walking around walls because what he wants to do in us must come before what he wants to do for us. My message today is, some of you are on lap number six, and you don't even know it yet. See in Nascar they have ... you guys watch Nascar? I don't but I've studied about it. And on Nascar they have a counter on the screen and it says laps left. Laps left. It lets the drivers know how they need to pace themselves, but life doesn't tell you how many laps you have left.

And I wonder how many people gave up on their marriage, gave up on their ministry, gave up on their kids, gave up on God and you were on lap six and you didn't even know it. Don't stop on six. Don't stop on six, that's the message. God sent me here to preach this to you. Don't stop on six. You're closer than you think you are. Don't stop on six. You might be tired, it might not make sense, you might look ridiculous, you might be tired of blowing a trumpet, but don't stop on six.

If you walk every lap like it's your last, believing that what God has promised he will perform. If you walk every lap like it's your last, one day you will be right. One day you'll be right. You need to persevere so that after you have received the promise, the process will prepare you so that you can live in the land.

And at all of our locations today, I wonder could I pray for you with heads bowed and eyes closed. There is somebody here today, you didn't come to church by accident, you are on the verge of quitting something that God has promised to you. You lost your grip, you're letting go, you gave up mentally, you checked out emotionally. You're still there, you're still present, but you're not really in it. God brought you here today so you could hear this might be your last lap. And with every lap that you walk, every time the walls don't fall, there's something I'm building in you. Joshua, I want to teach you to trust me.

So I want to pray for you today who are on the verge of giving up, a dream, an aspiration, a calling that God put on your life. Right now I want to pray for you in Jesus name. If that's you say I'm here, I need to persevere. I don't know what to do next, but I want the fate to take the next step. If that's you, at all locations, would you just raise your hand right now, raise it right now. I'm praying for you.

Father, in Jesus name, I thank you that your strength has come today. The strength of the spirit of God to encourage the weary, to sustain the one who wanted to quit. I thank you Lord that six is our number, but seven is yours. I thank you that the six laps that show us that we don't

have the strength prepare us for the seventh lap so that we will give you all the glory when it comes to pass. And I pray that what you're doing in us would become more important to our hearts will become more important than what you're doing for us. Give us the strength persevere. In Jesus' name, heads still bowed, eyes still closed, there's another group of people that God sent me to speak to today.

And in your life right now, you're still living in the sixth day, that is you're doing everything in your own effort, in your own ability, in your own power to make your life right. You're marching, you're trying to achieve, you're trying to be popular, I don't know what your effort is, but I know it always falls short. For all have sinned and fallen short in the glory of God and the promise of God is this. That whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. And that's not a promise that you earn, my friend, that's a promise that you simply must believe. Believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord. Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Confess it with your mouth and you shall be saved. If there's someone here today, and I know there are many, and life has worn you out walking around the same mountains, walking around the same addictions, walking around the same efforts, and today you want to surrender your life to the grace of God and say I can't knock the walls down, God, only you can. Only you can change my heart. If that's you I want you to lead you in a simple prayer right now. Would you repeat after me.

Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus Christ is your son, and the savior of the world. I believe he died to forgive my sin, and rose again to give me life. I turn from my sin, I receive you, Jesus as my Lord and savior, I want to follow you all the days of my life. Heads still bowed, eyes still closed, if you just prayed that prayer, shoot your hand up at the count of three. We want to celebrate. One, two, three, shoot them up. Hands going up everywhere. Hands going up everywhere. Let's celebrate right now LifeChurch and thank God for the victory. Come on, we can do better than that at every location. Let's thank God for every soul that just made a commitment to Jesus Christ.