

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 How do you think our choices and behaviors impact our relationship with God?
- 2 Reflect on a time when you experienced the consequences of your actions. How did it affect you and those around you?
- 3 Reflect on your spiritual journey: How might understanding the painful reality of sin shape our approach to living a more intentional and godly life?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!



SCAN QR

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.

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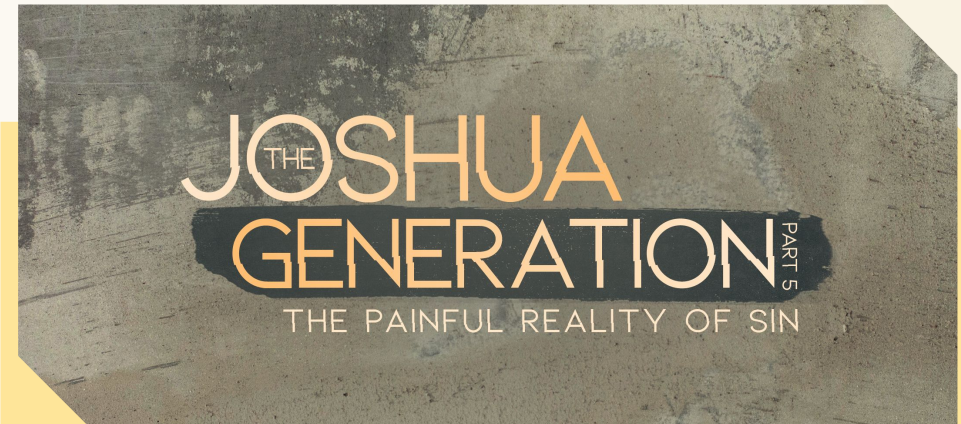
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The last verse in the story of victory at Jericho states: Joshua 6:27 - "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land. (NIV)." After hearing such a powerful statement, you might expect Chapter 7 to start by saying, "So Joshua and his people kept winning battles one after another." Why not? Jericho was the most difficult city to conquer. If Joshua could conquer Jericho, it seemed like no other city could defeat him. After their victory at Jericho, the Israelites were feeling overly confident. From a human point of view, victory has a way of making us feel too comfortable and less careful. No doubt that's part of the explanation for what happens next:

Joshua 7:2-3 - "2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and spy out the region." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 When they returned to Joshua, they said, "Not all the army will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary the whole army, for only a few people live there." (NIV)

As we reflect on the story of Joshua and the Israelites, it's important to consider their decision to send only a few men to take on the smaller city of Ai. While this may have made sense from a military standpoint, it was a mistake that ultimately led to their defeat. The spies who reported back to Joshua had forgotten the role that God played in their previous victory at Jericho. By assuming that they could handle Ai without God's help, they were setting themselves up for failure. This is a powerful reminder that we should never let our pride and confidence blind us to the truth. It's important to acknowledge God's power and involvement in our lives and to always seek His guidance and wisdom in our decision-making.



Joshua 7:4-5 - "4 So about three thousand went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, 5 who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted in fear and became like water." (NIV)

This isn't just a loss; it's a shameful defeat. What should have been an easy win turned into a complete disaster. Now there are 36 graves to dig, and the people are scared. It's amazing how much things can change in just one day. How could this have happened? After crossing the impossible river and conquering the impossible city, how could they've been so easily beaten at Ai?

When word of this shocking defeat reached Joshua, this is how he responded in Joshua 7:6 - "Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads (NIV)." Something had gone really wrong. God promised to be with them wherever they went, but somehow the people of God have lost their way. At this part of the story, only God knows what really happened. No one suspects Achan yet. Joshua doesn't know that Achan took the plunder for himself. And God will reveal that later on.

Let's look at the instruction of Joshua to better understand the story: Joshua 6:17-18 - "17 The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. 18 But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it." (NIV)

Even before they conquered Jericho, God instructed them to burn down the city and defeat everyone living there except Rahab and her family. But, they weren't allowed to take any of the belongings for themselves. They were supposed to give any valuable items to God's treasury and destroy everything else. Out of all the soldiers who were part of the attack, only one person broke that rule.

Even though Joshua doesn't know yet, Achan's greed caused Israel's loss at Ai. Because of one person's disobedience, there are now 36 funerals. Because of one person's disobedience, the army was defeated. Because of one person's disobedience, the nation was embarrassed. This is a serious warning not to underestimate God or take God less seriously. There are several important things we can learn from this story.

1. Your sin always affects other people

The Lord says it this way: Joshua 7:11 - "Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions." (NIV)

It was not the whole nation that sinned, but just one person. However, God held them all responsible for the sin of that one person. This is what it means to be part of God's family. When one person sins, we all face the consequences. It's important to understand that there is no such thing as sinning in private. Every hurtful word, action, or thought affects those around us. This is what Paul was explaining in 1 Corinthians 5 when he spoke about the man who was sleeping with his father's wife. He urged the Corinthians to remove the man from the church not only to help him change his ways but also to keep the church pure. Sometimes we have to make tough decisions for the sake of the church community. If there is cancer growing in your body, you cannot ignore it, or it will spread. Similarly, sin spreads like yeast in dough. If left unchecked, it will affect every part of the church.

2. God will bring your sins to light

Here's part of the twist in the story. Achan was wealthy. He had children, oxen, donkeys, sheep, and a tent. He was from the prominent tribe of Judah. He took the loot because he was greedy, not because he lacked anything.

The Lord said in Joshua 7:14-15 - "14 "In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan the Lord chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family the Lord chooses shall come forward man by man. 15 Whoever is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all

that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done an outrageous thing in Israel!" (NIV)

As the investigation progressed, Achan knew they were getting closer to the truth. Every step near his tent made him shake. Nervous and guilty, he felt the anguish of a guilty man waiting to be caught. There's no such thing as a secret sin because your sins will catch up with you. One verse sums up this story: Numbers 32:23 - "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the Lord; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (NIV)

3. Admitting your mistakes brings glory to God

When Achan faced Joshua, Joshua advised him: Joshua 7:19 - "My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and honor him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." Confessing is good for your soul because it frees you from the weight of your wrongdoing. Let's give Achan some credit here. He told the truth and owned up to his actions. You might argue he had no other option given the situation, but we always have a choice. Some people lie even if it's too obvious because they can't face telling the truth.

Achan admitted his wrongdoing without making excuses: Joshua 7:20-21 - "20 Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I SAW in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I COVETED them and TOOK them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

Look at the actions he described: I saw. I coveted. I took. There's a natural flow here: What the eyes see, the heart wants, and the hands take. Honest confession honors God because He is holy. He can't be near where there's sin. When we admit, "I have sinned," we open the door to blessings and remove the barrier between God and us.

4. Sin always leads to consequences that we must face.

Keep this in mind: Even if you repent, the consequences still come. It's like shooting an arrow and then saying sorry as it flies through the air. When it lands, it might hurt someone or even kill them. Asking for forgiveness takes away the guilt of sin, but it doesn't erase every outcome. For instance, someone who committed murder might confess and seek forgiveness, but they could still face punishment later.

Now, let's look at what happens at the end of the story in Joshua 7:24-26, "24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. 26 Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since." (NIV)

This might seem so harsh. How could God be so hard on Achan? Maybe, we've forgotten how holy God is. God's justice exacts precision. Remember what happened in the New Testament when someone lied to an apostle during a church service? They dropped dead, and then his spouse died three hours later. Check that out in Acts 5:1-11. What happened to Achan in the Old Testament is like what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament.

Keep this in mind: Sin has consequences. Maybe we've grown used to making excuses, so this seems extreme to us. But Joshua knew what he was doing. That pile of stones would serve as a permanent reminder to everyone in Israel that they shouldn't take God lightly. Either take God seriously or walk away. Don't try to change the rules to fit your desires.

In chapter 8, the Israelites return to Ai, conquer it, and then burn it down. This time, God says, "You can keep the plunder," which means if Achan hadn't been so greedy, he could have kept his Babylonian garment, silver, and gold. He just had to wait a few more days. But, he didn't wait on God. Instead, he did things on his own.