

Achan's Sin

(Joshua 6:18-19; 7)

Introduction

Have you ever done anything wrong secretly, hoping no one would find out? [Teacher, give several scenarios – gluing together a vase you've broken, borrowing your brother's toy without permission and putting it back in the closet so no one will know, and so on.]

Listen to our story today to discover a secret that someone buried, thinking no one would ever find out.

Opening Prayer

Father, there are no secrets before You. You see everything we do and You know the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. I pray this morning You will help us to listen to this important lesson You have for us today because we want to learn the importance of living a life that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NLT)

Lesson

The children of Israel were now in the Promised Land, but the land had not been sitting empty all the years they were down in Egypt. They were going to have to take the land back from the Canaanites before they could safely settle there. They would have to face many battles and take the land city by city.

Last week we learned that the Israelites were able to conquer Jericho because God miraculously made the walls fall down. The defeat of Jericho was a great victory for Israel. They set fire to the city and destroyed everybody and everything in it except those things that God had told the people to set aside for Him.

In those days, when soldiers defeated a city, they usually got to take the valuable things from the city for their very own as a reward for winning the battle. But God was the one who had defeated Jericho, so everything in Jericho belonged to God.

Joshua 6:18-19

"Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."

Joshua ordered that nothing was to be taken from the city except silver, gold, bronze or iron. These were to be used for the house of God. The soldiers were not to take anything for themselves.

After they entered the city of Jericho, the soldiers went through the rubble, collecting the gold, silver, bronze and other riches. And every soldier brought everything he found to the treasury of the Lord. But, Joshua did not know that one man, Achan (AY-kuhn), disobeyed.

When Achan saw a beautiful robe, some silver and gold among Jericho's treasures, he desired them for himself and decided to steal them. When no one was looking, Achan took the robe, silver and gold and buried them underneath his tent!

Have you ever seen something that wasn't yours that you wanted so much? What was Achan thinking about when he buried his stolen treasures under his tent? [Teacher, draw ideas from children. To get them thinking, relate an example of someone wanting something he can't or shouldn't have.] He may have thought, "Who's going to know if I keep just a couple of things for myself?" But, did God see Achan bury the treasure? How do you think God felt about Achan's actions?

Joshua 7:1 [Teacher read...]

But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites...

Even if no one else sees your sin, God does. He knows all things!

Meanwhile, Joshua didn't know about Achan's sin. And he was getting ready to take the next city which was called Ai. So, Joshua sent some men to spy on the city just like he did with Jericho. And when they returned they told Joshua that this city would be easy to take.

Joshua 7:2-3

Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the town of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven. When they returned, they told Joshua, "There's no need for all of us to go up there; it won't take more than two or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since there are so few of them, don't make all our people struggle to go up there."

Ai was a small fortified city near Jericho. And the Israelites thought that since the taking of Jericho was so easy for them, that Ai would be a chinch. But they didn't ask God about this; they didn't get the Lord's battle plans, like they did for Jericho. They relied on their own skills and strength. [Teacher, refer to last week's memory verse and point out that they leaned on their own understanding and didn't acknowledge God.]

So, Joshua only sent a small army into battle at the city of Ai. He was expecting God to give them another victory like the one at Jericho.

Joshua 7:4-5

So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai chased the Israelites from the town gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

The men of Ai came after the Israelites and killed some of them and chased them away. Israel lost the battle! This stunned the Israelites and they became afraid! The text says their hearts melted. How could Joshua hope to conquer the other large cities of the Promised Land if he and his army could be clobbered by a little city like Ai?

Joshua was horrified! He called his leaders to an emergency prayer meeting. He fell to the earth on his face before the Lord and cried out.

Joshua 7:8-9

Lord, what can I say now that Israel has fled from its enemies? For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe our name off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?

Joshua told God that when news got out about their defeat at Ai that the rest of the people in the land would think they were weaklings! He asked God how they would ever conquer the rest of the Promised Land. The Lord told Joshua that they were defeated because there was sin among the people.

Joshua 7:11

Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings.

Joshua was shocked; this was a very serious crime! Who would steal from God?

Then God gave Joshua specific instructions about what to do. Early the next morning, Joshua called the leader of each tribe of Israel to come before him one by one. God showed Joshua that the thief came from the tribe of Judah. That was Achan's tribe.

Now Achan, having heard what the problem was, could have admitted to Joshua right then and there what he had done. But he didn't. Why do you think Achan didn't admit his wrong? Maybe he was afraid, or maybe he thought he could fool Joshua. Whatever the reason, He just kept silent.

Next Joshua called the head of each family of the tribe of Judah to come before him. Achan knew he was the guilty one, yet he continued to keep quiet. He obviously didn't know that God was all-knowing. Finally, God showed Joshua that Achan was the guilty one.

Joshua 7:19

Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me."

Finally, Achan confessed...

Joshua 7:20-21

Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. Among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest."

At last Achan had no choice but to admit what he'd done. Joshua sent some men to search his tent and they found the stolen goods hidden just where Achan said they were. This, I am sure, made Joshua very sad.

Joshua 7:25

Then Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you." And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.

What a shame that Israel had suffered defeat in the battle at Ai because of Achan's greed. Achan had to be punished; he had disobeyed God's command. Joshua put Achan and his whole family to death then burned all of his possessions. God showed the Israelites that disobeying Him has serious results.

Do we make God angry when we do wrong? Yes! Our sin has serious results, too. You may think that God's rules in the Bible are not important or that if others don't know what you've done no one will be hurt. But sooner or later, your sin will find you out.

God is a perfect, holy God who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. But the good news is that because God loves you, He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to earth to take your punishment.

If you have never received the Lord Jesus as your Savior from sin, you need God living in you to give you power to do what's right here on earth and to give you life forever in heaven (John 20:31).

This week when you are tempted to do wrong, stop! Think of the consequences of your choice; then thank God for His power as you do what's right. Remember you can't keep any secrets from God; He is all-knowing and all-seeing. But, never forget that God is also all-loving and merciful!

Do you know what to do when you sin? All you need to do is talk to God about it. Confess your sin to Him and He will forgive you. And, when He forgives you of your sin, He throws that sin into the sea of forgetfulness and He will never bring it up again! Isn't He wonderful? Aren't you glad that Jesus came and took the punishment that you and I deserve?!

Closing Prayer

Father, please help us to remember it is not worth it to try to keep our sins a secret. You see everything and You will find us out. Our sin always causes trouble. But, thank You, Lord, for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to come to earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Thank You, also, for sending the Holy Spirit Who gives us the power to do what's right. Please help us to say "No" to sinful desires so that we might live holy and righteous lives that are pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Game Center

No Secret Sins

PREPARATION: You will need a colorful throw rug or blanket, paper, pencils, and a large trash can with a lid. You'll also need a Bible.

PLAY: Place the throw rug on the floor in the center of the room. Distribute the pencils and sheets of paper. Ask kids to write down something they've done wrong, such as lying, stealing, disobeying, or being unkind. Nonreaders may draw pictures. Reassure children that no one will see what they've drawn or written.

Then have kids wad up their papers and put them under the throw rug. Invite kids to sit in a circle around the rug.

Say: We all have secret sins that we haven't told anyone about. Achan took something he wasn't supposed to and then tried to keep it a secret. But it showed up just like all these bumps under the rug.

Ask:

- Who was hurt by Achan's secret sins? (Achan and his whole family, plus the whole nation of Israel.)
- What does God want us to do when we do something wrong? (Confess it).

Scoop up the paper wads, and wrap them in the rug. Open the large trash can, shake the paper wads into it, and put the lid back on.

Say: Hiding our sins doesn't make them go away. Only God can remove our sins and get rid of them. When God forgives our sins, he puts a lid on them, and we don't have to keep feeling bad about them. We're completely forgiven. Let's ask God to forgive us for the sins we wrote down.

Or, Use the following review questions in a discussion or game of your choice.

1. What did Achan do after the battle at Jericho? What attitude do you think Achan had toward God when he did these things?
2. What are some reasons people choose to sin, or do things that are wrong? (They are selfish and greedy. They don't know about Jesus' gift of salvation and how He helps us to do right.)

3. Why do you think God's forgiveness is important? (Everyone does things that are wrong. We all need to be forgiven so that we can be part of God's family.)
4. What do children your age need to do to receive God's gift of salvation? (Ask God to forgive our sins, believe in Jesus and trust Him to save us.)
5. What does it mean to be saved from our sins? (We don't have to pay the penalty for our sins.)
6. What is a way to show thankfulness to God for His gift of salvation?

Sword Drill

1. Read **Romans 5:8**. According to this verse, how does God show His love to us? What happened when we were still sinners?
2. Read **Romans 6:23**. According to this verse, what is the result, or wages, of sin? What is God's gift to us? What did Jesus do so that we could be given this gift? (God's Son, Jesus, loved us so much that He came to earth to die on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Because Jesus died for us and came back to life again, we can be forgiven and live forever with Him.)
3. Read **1 Corinthians 15:3-5**. What does Paul say is the most important thing he wants to tell others? How can you show that you believe in Christ's death and resurrection for our sins?
4. Read **1 John 1:9**. What happens when we ask God to forgive the wrong things we have done?

Other Game Questions

1. Why didn't Joshua send his whole army to conquer Ai? (Instead of consulting God, he followed the advice of his spies who told him that it was going to be easy to take Ai.)
2. Do you think it is wrong or sinful to want things? (Only if the desire for the thing is greater than the desire to please God. If wanting a thing leads you to steal, lie, or covet; you are breaking God's commands.)
3. If you see something that doesn't look like it belongs to anyone is it all right to take it? (No, you need to find its rightful owner.)
4. Why did Achan take the things that God told him not to take? (He wanted them more than he wanted to please God.)
5. Which of the Ten Commandments did Achan break? (#8. Do not steal, #9 Do not lie, and #10. Do not covet.)
6. What should Achan have done when he saw the robe, the gold, and the silver coins? (Take them to Joshua to put in the Lord's treasury.)
7. Where did Achan hide his stolen treasure? (Under his tent.)
8. How did Joshua find out that it was Achan who had sinned against the Lord? (God told him.)
9. What was the Lord's command about the plunder in Jericho? (Silver, gold, and precious metals were to go into the Lord's treasury, everything else was to be destroyed.)
10. What did Achan take for himself? (Silver, gold, and a robe.)
11. Who saw Achan hide the treasures? (God.)
12. If God must punish all sin, how can anyone escape from His punishment? (Only those who trust that Jesus Christ took the punishment for sin are saved from God's wrath.)
13. What happened to the Israelites because of Achan's sin? (They were defeated at Ai.)
14. What did Joshua do when he heard of Israel's defeat? (He was horrified and called his leaders to an emergency prayer meeting.)
15. What happened to Achan? (He and all his family were stoned to death and his possessions were burned with fire.)

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