

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia Children's Ministry

## 2017 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

God cares

about the

little things



Wednesday

1st-5th grade

# God Cares About Our Obedience

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The “Main passage” is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the “reward box” found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God’s Word

**Objective** This lesson will use the story of Achan to show the class that God sees our disobedience even when we think we got away with sin.

## Key Verses

Joshua 7—Main Teaching Passage  
Joshua 6:17-19

**Memory Verse** - Proverbs 15:3

“The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place,  
Keeping watch on the evil and the good.”

## Hook

Ask the class if they have ever tried to do something wrong when their parents or teachers weren’t watching. Did they get away with it? If not, how did their parent/teacher find out? Then ask if God knew about it. Share a story from your own life when you tried to get away with something.

Today, we are going to see that, no matter what we might do, God sees. In our story, one of the characters will do something wrong and think that he got away with it. Let’s see what happens.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

Today's story comes right after the famous story of Joshua and the Israelites defeating Jericho. Before the destruction of the city, Joshua commanded the people not to take any of the treasure from the city (see Joshua 6:17-19). Unfortunately, Joshua 7 opens by telling us that a man named Achan did not obey this command from the Lord. He took some of the treasure after the battle and hid it in his tent. Because of this, God was angry with the children of Israel.

After the victory at Jericho, Joshua sent spies to Israel's next target, Ai. The spies reported that there were not many people in Ai and advised Joshua not to send the whole army. However, the people of Ai defeated the Israelites and drove them away. Joshua and the people were devastated. He and the elders of Israel cried out to the Lord asking Him how He could allow this to happen. The Lord told him that there was sin in the camp and that someone had stolen treasure from Jericho and lied about it. He commanded Joshua to bring the children of Israel before him and said that Israel would not have victory until this sin was dealt with.

The next day, Joshua had all the tribes of Israel come before him. The tribe of Judah was selected. From Judah was selected the clan of the Zerahites and the family of Zabdi. Finally, each member of Zabdi passed by, and Achan was selected. Joshua asked Achan what he had done, and Achan confessed that he took a cloak, 5 pounds of silver, and a pound of gold and hid it in his tent. Joshua sent messengers to search the tent, and they found the treasure just as he said. Then both Achan and the treasure were taken. Achan was stoned and the treasure was burned with fire. When the Lord saw this, He was no longer angry with the Israelites.

# LOOK

All week, we have looked at how God sees and cares about every detail of our lives. Yesterday we learned that He knows our needs and provides for us. Everyone can agree that God seeing and caring for our needs is a good thing. However, today we read that He also sees something we might wish He didn't see: our obedience or disobedience.

Imagine what Achan must have been thinking when He took the treasure from Jericho. Clearly he didn't think that God or Joshua would find out, or if they did, they wouldn't care. Maybe he believed that what he was doing was not a big deal. Perhaps in his mind, God had better things to do than deal with one ordinary guy who had taken some things. Then, when Joshua brought all the Israelites before him to discover who had sinned and caused Israel to lose the battle, Achan still did not come forward and admit his guilt. He might have still thought he could get away with it. Unfortunately for him, he was wrong. God knew what Achan had done from the beginning.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK (Continued)

Often when we sin, we can fool ourselves into believing that no one, not even God, knows what we have done. However, our story today shows us that this is a lie. We may be able to hide our sins from our friends, our teachers, or even our parents, no one can hide their sins from God. This makes it important to be obedient in all things, even if you think you can get away with your sin. Even if no one on earth discovers what you have done, God still sees it. He will not let us get away from our sins. Therefore, we ought to obey the Lord in all situations and be people of integrity. Integrity means doing the right thing whether or not we can get away with doing wrong. God wants us to do the right thing and obey Him in every situation, even if no one ever knows that we did what was good.

Because God saw Achan's sin, Achan had to face consequences. He may have confessed his sin, but only after he was exposed and had to admit what he did. Likewise, we also will face consequences for our own disobedience, whether from man or from God. This is why it is important to be people of integrity. The only way to avoid having the Lord see our disobedience is to have integrity and obey in the first place.

# TOOK

As a class, memorize Proverbs 15:3.

Review the concept of integrity with the class. Talk about what integrity looks like in everyday situations.

**Pray:** Ask the Lord to help the class live lives of integrity before the Lord. Thank Him for forgiving us even though He knows all our sin.

**Parent Question:** What is integrity and why is it important?

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Joshua 7 by David Guzik

### ***Defeat at Ai and Achan's Sin***

#### A. Defeat at Ai.

1. ([Jos 7:1](#)) Not all of Israel obeyed the law of the devoted things.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

a. **The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things:** Joshua commanded the nation in [Joshua 6:18](#) that they should not take of any of the accursed things, those things that were associated with the demonic and debasing worship and practices of the Canaanites.

b. **The accursed things:** The wars fought by Israel in Canaan were not to be plundering wars of personal gain; they were an unusual, sacred instrument in God's hand, used for judgment against a society ripe for judgment.

c. **So the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel:** Israel could not be defeated by the Canaanites, but they could defeat themselves by alienating themselves from God's plan and power.

2. ([Jos 7:2-3](#)) Spies report from the city of Ai.

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*"

a. The recommendation to send only **two or three thousand men** was either a response of faith or self confidence. In the end it did not matter; in their disobedience, they could have sent 100,000 troops and it would have made no difference.

b. Israel's success depended on their own state of being conquered by God; Achan's rebellion showed that in that respect, they were not conquered by Him - and therefore open to defeat.

3. ([Jos 7:4-5](#)) Israel is defeated at Ai.

So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

a. **So about three thousand men went up there from the people:** Joshua, a wise military leader, commands the larger number recommended by his military intelligence to be sent - but it makes no difference. **They fled before the men of Ai.**

b. **And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men:** The thirty-six men killed were thirty-six more than were killed at Jericho, which was thought to be a much more difficult city to conquer. Though this number was small from a military standpoint, what it meant was staggering to Israel. It meant that Israel *could* be defeated in the Promised Land.

i. The defeat at Ai showed that what mattered was not the strength of the opponent, but the help of God. Without God's help, all would be lost.

c. **Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water:** The people of Israel had good reason to be afraid. Their panic was completely logical, because if God did not fight for them, they had nothing to expect but defeat.

B. Joshua goes before the *LORD* in time of crisis.

1. ([Jos 7:6-9](#)) Joshua fears that it was unfaithfulness on God's part that had caused the defeat.

Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all; to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

a. **Then Joshua tore his clothes:** To tear your clothes and to put dust on your head both displayed *mourning*. Joshua is not only mourning the death of thirty-six men, but more so, **he and the elders of Israel** mourn the loss of the blessing and guidance of God.

b. **Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all:** For Joshua and the elders of Israel, this defeat was a national calamity. They do not take this defeat in stride; there is no "win a few, lose a few" mentality at work. They know that every battle matters, and there is always a *reason* for defeat, it doesn't "just happen."

c. **Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!** Joshua well knows that if God's hand of blessing and guidance is not there, it would be better that they had come to the Promised Land. If God will not deliver them, all will be lost.

i. How different from so much of Christianity today! We are often so filled with *man's* programs and power, that if God withdrew His blessing and guidance, it wouldn't be missed for a long time.

d. **Then what will You do for Your great name?** This shows that Joshua's over-riding concern was for the glory of God. Our greatest disappointment when we stumble should be that we have possibly caused reproach on the **great name** of God.

2. ([Jos 7:10-11](#)) The real reason for defeat: Israel has sinned.

So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff."

a. **Israel has sinned:** The good news was that God had not failed the nation. The bad news was that this defeat was due to the sin of Israel. Joshua doesn't need to fear that the problem is with God - it is almost comforting to find that the problem is with us!

i. This is why God tells Joshua to **get up**. He doesn't need to beg God to change *His* heart towards Israel. Joshua must change Israel's heart before God.

ii. God's provision is for us to live a life of unbroken victory. But He will not make defeat *impossible*, taking away our ability to choose good or evil. He always makes it possible for us *not* to sin; here, Israel sinned, but they didn't have to.

b. **Israel has sinned ... they ... they ... they also:** God says that **Israel** had sinned, not only one man. It is staggering to think that the whole nation was found guilty, and thirty-six men were dead, all for the sin of one man and his family.

i. Paul speaks in similar terms concerning sin in the church; regarding sin among the Corinthian church, he says *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* ([1 Corinthians 5:6](#)) A small amount of sin accepted and tolerated among believers can infect the whole group.

ii. In this sense, the acceptance and toleration of the sin is worse than the sin itself, so it must be dealt with strictly.

c. **For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived:** We should understand exactly what the sin was. Someone in Israel took things that were devoted to God, devoted either by their giving to His tabernacle, or by their complete destruction. One man stole from God, in the same way we steal from Him when we do not give Him what he directs us to give.

i. [Leviticus 22:14](#), [27:15](#), [27:19](#), and [27:31](#) each demonstrate that in Israel, if you wanted to keep something that belonged to God, you had to pay a 20% (one-fifth) penalty. This was the same amount required for restitution in theft ([Leviticus 6:4-5](#)).

ii. The New Testament teaches us that giving should be regular and proportional ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)), that it should be generous, purposeful, and cheerful ([2 Corinthians 9:6-8](#)). When we don't give as God directs us, we must regard it as sin and repent of it.

3. ([Jos 7:12-13](#)) The effect of the sin: they now have no power before their enemies.

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: *"There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."*

a. **Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies:** Israel could not fight in God's power and presence unless they walked in obedience to God. Israel was under a covenant with God that promised blessing on their obedience, and also promised curses upon their disobedience.

i. We are not under that kind of covenant. Our position with God is made by the work of Jesus on our behalf, not our own works. Yet if we want God's power and presence in our own battles, we must walk in fellowship with Him, and this fellowship is hindered by our own sin and rebellion.

ii. Our position before God is secure in Jesus; but our fellowship with Him is hindered by our own sin ([1 John 1:6](#)). This fellowship with God is our wellspring of power to live in the Spirit.

b. **They have become doomed to destruction:** It is sobering to realize that a body in sin has no power before their enemies. It is wonderful to realize that once the sin has been dealt with, God's power can again flow in

our Christian life.

c. **You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you:** When God deals with a particular area of sin, and when resist His work, His *mercy* makes us to fail in battle. We are most dangerous when we think we are "winning" battles with our own self-reliance.

4. ([Jos 7:14-15](#)) Instructions for judgment of the sin.

"In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel."

a. **The tribe which the LORD takes:** Though the identity of the sinning family was unknown to Joshua, it was known to God. Secret sin on earth is an open scandal before God. Therefore, we should therefore live our lives with "one set of books," with one kind of life that can be seen by anybody, anywhere.

b. **Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire:** Once God dealt with the one sinning individual, blessing could come again on the whole nation.

C. Achan's sin publicly judged.

1. ([Jos 7:16-18](#)) God exposes the identity of the head of the family that had sinned.

So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

a. **Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken:** This must have been an excruciating experience for Achan. How much better to simply walk in obedience to God!

b. All this time, Achan certainly remembered exactly what he had taken, and how he wished he had not taken it. But he - and we - should remember the regret of sin *before* we sin, not after.

i. Sin does have its pleasures. Taking those things gave Achan a good feeling. But the penalty of sin, both within us and upon us, outweighs any of the fleeting pleasures of sin.

2. ([Jos 7:19-21](#)) Joshua confronts Achan, and he confesses.

Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me." And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

a. **My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him:** Even when we sin and try to cover our sin, we can still **give glory to the LORD** by openly and honestly confessing our sin. Hidden sin always has a special power over us.

b. **A beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels:** Measured against the lives of thirty-six men and the welfare of the entire nation, what Achan gained was pretty insignificant. Truly, *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* ([1 Timothy 6:10](#)).

c. Think of how Achan could have rationalized his sin: "No one will know." "These things won't be missed." "Think of how I'll be admired in this beautiful Babylonian garment." "I'm not hurting anyone." "I deserve this." The excuses can go on and on, but they all fall short.

d. When we are at the terrible place Achan is, we all feel terrible about our sin, wishing we had never done it - may God help us to feel terrible about our sin *before* we do it!

2. ([Jos 7:22-26](#)) The confession confirmed and judgment executed.

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

a. **His sons, his daughters:** Achan's sons and daughters had specific knowledge of the sin, because it is unlikely that he could bury so much under their tent without their knowledge. At the same time, they were not necessarily stoned with Achan. Instead of being killed with their father, Achan's children were probably called forth to witness the judgment against their father.

i. We notice the use of the singular in [Joshua 7:25](#) and [7:26](#) (**you ... you ... him ... him**), in reference to a person being stoned. The use of the plural in [Joshua 7:24](#) and [7:25](#) (**them ... them ... them**) probably has reference to Achan's possessions, not his children.

b. The Israelites aptly named this place **Valley of Trouble** (or, *disaster*, as it is in the NIV).

c. **So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger:** Even this kind of sin, when it is dealt with, can be a spring board to victory again. Now Israel was again in position to walk in the power and guidance of God, after they had been conquered by God again.

i. This kind of victory only comes after a *death*. We need to die to such besetting sins, know that *those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* ([Galatians 5:24](#)) - the power and victory of Jesus' resurrection are ours as we crucify our flesh with Him every day.