

The Defeat at Ai

Message 05 in the series, "Strong and Courageous"

A. The Israelites sinned and turned victory into defeat at Ai.

1. Sinning, through rebellion and self-reliance, will disrupt God's intention for your life.

"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... 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.' So approximately 3,000 warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated."
Joshua 7:1-4 (NLT)

"For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!" Jeremiah 2:13 (NLT)

2. Sinning always has destructive consequences in your life.

- a. Sin results in loss and even death.

"...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." Joshua 7:4-5 (NLT)

"For the wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23 (NLT)

"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death." Proverbs 14:12 (NLT)

- b. Sin always impacts more people than just you.

"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." Joshua 7:25 (NLT)

"Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough?"
1 Corinthians 5:6 (NLT)

- c. Sin never satisfies.

"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.'" Joshua 7:20-21 (NLT)

"Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death." James 1:14-15 (NLT)

"It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible." Hebrews 11:24-27 (NLT)

B. The Israelites repented, trusted God, and turned defeat into victory.

1. You can turn defeat into victory by returning to God.

"Joshua and the elders of Israel tore their clothing in dismay, threw dust on their heads, and bowed face down to the ground before the Ark of the LORD until evening." Joshua 7:6 (NLT)

"How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?" Galatians 3:3 (NLT)

2. You can turn defeat into victory by listening to God.

“But the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Get up!’... Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take all your fighting men and attack Ai, for I have given you the king of Ai, his people, his town, and his land.’” Joshua 7:10, 8:1 (NLT)

“Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.” Ephesians 5:10 (NLT)

3. You can turn defeat into victory by stepping out in faith.

“So Joshua and all the fighting men set out to attack Ai.” Joshua 8:3 (NLT)

“So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.” Galatians 5:16, 25 (NLT)

C. God can turn your biggest sorrow and defeat into a place of hope and joy.

“They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. That is why the place has been called the Valley of Trouble* ever since. So the LORD was no longer angry.” Joshua 7:26 (NLT)

**Achan is derived from Achor, meaning “trouble.”*

“But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope....” Hosea 2:14-15 (NLT)

Shane Segars • 08-11-19 • shane@centeringlives.com

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS:

Think about the following statement. “The choices you make dictate the life you lead”.

1. Read Joshua 6:17-19 and 7:1. What do you think may have been happening in Achan’s heart that caused him to fall into temptation and defy God? Has there ever been a time in your life when you struggled with the same things Achan did?
2. Temptation is always present in our lives. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. How should a believer handle temptation, and what does God promise us?
3. Read Hebrews 11:24-26. Have you ever heard the phrase, “sacrificing the future on the altar of the immediate?” What does this look like in someone’s life? Name some sins that offer temporary pleasure but cost way more than expected in the long run.
4. Read Proverbs 4:23-25 and Philippians 4:8-9. Whatever we allow to influence us will directly impact how we navigate temptation. How has this played out in your life either positively or negatively?
5. Read James 4:7-10. “Repent” means “to turn away from”. When we confess and repent of sin, what are we actually doing?
6. What we believe about how God views our temptation directly impacts whether we hide from Him or run to Him. What is your natural tendency when you give into temptation? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What does this passage say about how God views us in relation to our temptations and weaknesses?
7. Read Romans 6:11-14. According to this passage, what has God done with the power of sin in our lives? How does knowing this influence your perspective when you face temptation?