



## Week Seven: Joshua 7-8

### “Breaking Faith”

Study Guide for the week of  
October 30, 2022

### Achan's Sin - [Joshua 7:1-26](#)

#### Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. How would you describe our culture's attitude toward money?
2. What most concerned Joshua about the ramifications of Israel's loss? ([7:9](#))
3. Why had the Lord allowed Israel to lose the battle with Ai? ([7:10-12](#))
4. How did the Israelites repent of their sin before the Lord? ([7:22-26](#))
5. How would you describe a good attitude toward wealth?
6. How can you guard yourself against the sin of greed?
7. How can you protect yourself from being greedy?

#### Life Application Bible Notes

[7:1](#) The things to be "set apart" refers to all the clothing, cattle, and other plunder that God said Israel should destroy when they conquered Jericho (see [6:17-19](#)). It was not that they found a good use for something that was going to be thrown out anyway.

This was a serious offense because it was in direct defiance of an explicit command of God (see [Deuteronomy 20:16-18](#)).

[7:1ff](#) Notice the results of Achan's sin:

- (1) Many men died ([7:5](#))
- (2) Israel's army melted in fear ([7:5](#))
- (3) Joshua questioned God ([7:7-9](#))
- (4) God threatened to withdraw his presence from the people ([7:12](#))
- (5) Achan and his family had to be destroyed ([7:24-26](#))

When Israel eliminated the sin from their community, these were the results:

- (1) God's encouragement ([8:1](#))
- (2) God's presence in battle ([8:1](#))
- (3) God's guidance and promise of victory ([8:2](#))
- (4) God's permission to keep the plunder and livestock from the battle for themselves ([8:2](#))

Throughout Israel's history, blessings came when the people got rid of their sin. You will also experience blessings when you turn from your sin and follow God's plan wholeheartedly.

[7:6](#) Joshua and the leaders tore their clothing and threw dust on their heads as signs of deep mourning before God. They were confused by their defeat at the small city of Ai after the spectacular Jericho victory, so they went before God in deep humility and sorrow to receive his instructions. When our lives fall apart, we also should turn to God for direction and help. Like Joshua and the leaders, we should humble ourselves so that we will be able to hear God's words.

[7:7](#) When Joshua first went against Ai ([7:3](#)), he did not consult God but relied on the strength of his army to defeat the small city. Only after Israel was defeated did they turn to God and ask what happened.

Too often we rely on our own skills and strength, especially when the task before us seems easy. We go to God only when the obstacles seem too great. However, only God knows what lies ahead. Consulting him, even when we are on a winning streak, may save us from grave mistakes or misjudgments. God may want us to learn lessons, remove pride, or consult others before he will work through us.

[7:7-9](#) Imagine praying this way to God. This is not a formal church prayer; it is the prayer of a man who is afraid and confused by what is happening around him. Joshua poured out his real thoughts to God. Hiding your needs from God is ignoring the only one who can really help. God welcomes your honest prayers and wants you to express your true feelings to him. Any believer can become more honest in prayer by remembering that God is all-knowing and all-powerful and that his love is everlasting.

[7:10-12](#) Why did Achan's sin bring judgment on the entire nation? Although it was one man's failure, God saw it as national disobedience to a national law. God needed the entire nation to be committed to the job they had agreed to do—conquer the land. Thus, when one person failed, everyone failed. If Achan's sin went unpunished, unlimited looting could break out. The nation as a whole had to take responsibility for preventing this undisciplined disobedience. Achan's sin was not merely his keeping some of the captured goods (God allowed it in some cases), but his disobeying God's explicit command to destroy everything connected with Jericho. Achan's sin was indifference to the evil and idolatry of the city, not just a desire for money and clothes. God would not protect Israel's army again until the sin was removed and the army returned to obeying him without reservation. God is not content with our doing what is right some of the time. He wants us to do what is right all the time. We are under his orders to eliminate any thoughts, practices, or possessions that hinder our devotion to him.

[7:13](#) The Israelites had to undergo purification rites like those mentioned in [3:5](#) when they were preparing to cross the Jordan River. Such rites prepared the people to approach God and constantly reminded them of their sinfulness and his holiness.

[7:24, 25](#) Achan underestimated God and didn't take his commands seriously ([6:18](#)). Taking a robe, along with some silver and gold, may have seemed a small thing to Achan, but the effects of his sin were felt by the entire nation, especially his family. Like Achan, our actions affect more people than just ourselves. Beware of the temptation to rationalize your sins by saying they are too small or too personal to hurt anyone but you.

[7:24-26](#) Why did Achan's entire family pay for his sin? The biblical record does not tell us if they were accomplices to his crime, but in the ancient world, the family was treated as a whole. Achan, as the head of his family, was like a tribal chief. If he prospered, the family prospered with him. If he suffered, so did they. Many Israelites had already died in battle because of Achan's sin. Now he was to be completely cut off from Israel.

Achan's entire family was to be stoned along with him so that no trace of the sin would remain in Israel. In our permissive and individualistic culture we have a hard time understanding such a decree, but in ancient cultures this punishment was common. The punishment fit the crime: Achan had disobeyed God's command to destroy everything in Jericho; thus, everything that belonged to Achan had to be destroyed. Sin has drastic consequences, so we should take drastic measures to avoid it.

### **Victory at Ai - Joshua 8:1-35**

#### **Some questions to answer and discuss:**

1. To what extent do you consider yourself more of a leader or a follower? Why?
2. What role did Joshua play before and during the war with Ai? ([8:9](#), [13](#), [18](#), [26](#))
3. What was the outcome of Israel's war with Ai? ([8:20-23](#))
4. What did Joshua do following Israel's victory over the city of Ai? ([8:30-35](#))
5. Following the Israelites' example, how should we respond when the Lord gives us victory over a sin or weakness?
6. In what area of your life do you need a second chance?
7. How can you remind yourself this week of God's promise of victory over the struggles in your own life?

#### **Life Application Bible Notes**

**8:1** After Israel had been cleansed from Achan's sin, Joshua prepared to attack Ai again—this time to win. Joshua had learned some lessons that we can follow: (1) Confess your sins when God reveals them to you ([7:19-21](#)); (2) when you fail, refocus on God, deal with the problem, and move on ([7:22-25](#); [8:1](#)). God wants the cycle of sin, repentance, and forgiveness to strengthen us, not weaken us. The lessons we learn from our failures should make us better able to handle the same situation the second time around. Because God is eager to give us cleansing, forgiveness, and strength, the only way to lose is to give up. We can tell what kind of people we are by what we do on the second and third attempts.

**8:2** Why did God allow the Israelites to keep the plunder and cattle (livestock) this time? Israel's laws for handling the spoils of war covered two situations: (1) Cities like Jericho which were under God's *ban* (judgment for idolatry) could not be looted (see [Deuteronomy 20:16-18](#)). God's people were to be kept holy and separate from every influence of idolatry. (2) The distribution of captured goods from cities not under the ban was a normal part of warfare. It provided the army and the nation with the necessary food, flocks, and weapons needed to sustain itself in wartime. Ai was not under the ban. The conquering army needed the food and equipment. Because soldiers were not paid, the plunder was part of their incentive and reward for going to war.

**8:3** The conquest of Ai was very important to the Israelites. Only 11 miles away from Jericho, Ai was a key stronghold for the Canaanites and a buffer fortress for Bethel ([8:12](#)). If the Canaanite kings got wind of an Israelite defeat at Ai, they could unite in a coordinated attack. They did not know that God had restored his power and protection to Joshua's troops. We must depend on God with absolute obedience to be sure of the victory he has promised.

### ***The Battle for Ai***

*During the night, Joshua sent one detachment of soldiers to the west of Ai to lie in wait. The next morning he led a second group north of Ai. When the army of Ai attacked, the Israelites to the north pretended to scatter, only to turn on the enemy as the men lying in ambush moved in and burned the city.*

**8:18** The Lord gave Joshua the city. Yesterday's defeat became today's victory. Once sin is dealt with, forgiveness and victory lie ahead. With God's direction we need not stay discouraged or burdened with guilt. No matter how difficult a setback sin may bring, we must renew our efforts to carry out God's will.

**8:30, 31** The altar was to be built out of uncut stones so it would be holy (see [Exodus 20:25](#)). This would prevent the people from worshiping altars like idols, or worshiping the craftsmanship of the workers rather than the great works of God.

**8:32** It was most likely the Ten Commandments (recorded in [Exodus 20](#)) that Joshua copied on stones. These were the heart of all God's laws, and are still to be followed today.

**Acts Study Guide questions and notes are from**

