

Message Discussion Guide SIN IN THE CAMP (Part 2)

The Church at Brook Hills . Dr. David Platt . February 10, 2008, 2008 . Joshua 7:1-26

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Discuss as a group: **Are you a light or heavy sleeper? Have you ever slept through a significant or scary event? When?** Examples could include an important test, a fire truck's siren at the house next door, or a job interview. Once each person has shared, discuss these questions as a group:

- **Why do you think some people can sleep through anything, while others are awakened at the sound of a pin drop? Do you think it's how they're born, or is it a conditioned choice?**
- **How can sleeping through traumatic times relate to being asleep in the presence of sin?**

Explain that we're about to take a look back at a story in the Old Testament that had serious consequences for the people of Israel—all because one man was numb to the presence of sin in his life.

Option 2

Read the opening example David shared from a book by Cornelius Plantinga called *Not The Way Its Supposed To Be*: "The awareness of sin, a deep awareness of disobedience, and painful confession of sin used to be our shadow. Christians hated sin. They feared it, they fled from it, they grieved over it. Some of our [forefathers] agonized over their sins. A man who lost his temper might wonder if he could still go to holy communion. A woman who for years envied her more attractive and intelligent sister might wonder if this sin threatened her very salvation . . . That shadow has dimmed. Nowadays the accusation, 'You have sinned,' is often said with a grin and with a tone that signals an inside joke. At one time this accusation still had the power to jolt people."

- **Have you experienced the truths in this quote? If so, how?**
- **Why do you think the accusation of sin no longer jolts many people?**
- **What can and should we as Christians do to stay sensitive to God's holiness and sin's presence?**

Explain that we're about to take a look back at a story in the Old Testament that had serious consequences for the people of Israel—all because the presence of sin didn't jolt one man.

Review the Message . . .

Remind the group that last week's message looked at the golden calf—a picture of the entire people of God giving themselves to sin. The focus of that text was not on any one individual's sin, but the corporate sin of the people of God. Point out, however, that Joshua 7 focuses on an individual's sin, and the effect of that one individual's sin on the entire people of God.

Review the context: In the first six chapters of Joshua, everything was going great. God called Joshua and gave him great confidence as Moses' successor. Then the people miraculously crossed the Jordan River, as God delivered them from slavery finally into the Promised Land. The first major city they came to was Jericho with massive walls all around it. God again miraculously delivered the city into their hands as they simply played their trumpets and marched around the walls—and the walls came crashing down in great victory.

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Read Joshua 6:27. Then point out the first word in chapter 7: “But...” Read verse 1. Stress that God told the people not to take the devoted things (See Joshua 6:18-19). Everything in Jericho had been reserved for the judgment of God because of the wickedness of the people and their pagan worship practices. Even the articles of silver, gold, and bronze which had been devoted to pagan gods were now to be devoted only to the One True God, Yahweh.

Read Joshua 7:1-26. Then, discuss these questions:

The Bottom Line...

We need a radically God-centered perspective of sin.

- How does this text illustrate our need to have a God-centered perspective of sin?
- Referring to Joshua 6:18-19, how do you understand the gravity of Achan’s sin?
- How do the “devoted things” Achan took illustrate his selfishness?
- How do we see God’s seriousness about His people displaying His holiness in these verses?
- The sin pattern in Joshua 7:20-21 occurs throughout Scripture, as with Eve and King David: See, Desire, and Take. Achan took a robe, a little bit of silver and gold. How do we experience this same pattern in our own lives? How can we avoid falling into this pattern?

One Sin...

- Harms the entire people of God.

Begin by praying: *God, uncover what’s hidden in our hearts.* Then, discuss these questions:

- How do you see the truth that one sin harms the entire people of God illustrated in this passage? (*Only one person took devoted things. Yet 36 men lost their lives in the battle with Ai.*)
- As you read through the story, what options did Achan have? (*Confess, or hide—and face consequences.*)
- How did Achan’s sin bring into question God’s presence among the entire people of God? (*They wondered if they would even be able to take the Promised Land.*)
- How could his one sin affect all of their blessings in the future?

Application . . .

- How can the entire Body of Christ suffer because of one person’s sin?
- How can we recognize and accept the responsibility that our sin affects the rest of the body of Christ?

1. Sin always affects your faith family.

Discuss these questions:

- Note the plural language in verse 1. How does this show us that point one is true?
- Who from the people of Israel suffered because of one man’s sin?
- If you had been a family member of one of the 36 men killed at Ai, how would you have felt toward Achan and his family?
- How was the entire family of Israel going to be affected by Achan’s one sin?
- If you were an Israelite at the time of this story, how would the consequences that Achan faced instill a deeper sense of God’s holiness in your life?

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Application . . .

- If the presence of God among the people of God had been jeopardized by one sin in the camp, what implications does that have for the church today? (*Though there is not a direct parallel between the church today and Joshua 7, God will not go one step forward with us, God will withhold the fullness of His presence, as long as there is sin in the camp.*)
- How could this be the reason why the church is so powerless in our culture today?
- Do we see the church trying to move forward, grow, and come up with innovative ways to do church . . . while God is saying, “Look in your tents!”? If so, how?
- How does the knowledge that one sin in one of our lives can rob us all of the blessing of God change the way we feel responsible and connected to this church body?
- How can we as a church more deeply realize the gravity of sin, especially in the community of faith?
- What is the proper response to sin in the camp today?

2. Sin always affects your physical family.

Discuss these questions:

- How was Achan’s entire family affected by his sin?
- Note that Deuteronomy 24:16 says that children would not be put to death for their fathers’ sins, and fathers would not be put to death for their children’s sin. How does this show us that Achan’s family was not likely innocent in this whole picture? (*Achan, the husband and father in his home, had dragged his family into his sin. Achan’s sin affected his whole family.*)

Application . . .

- How should the thought that your sin has a direct effect on our family members’ lives make us feel? How should we live differently in light of that truth?
- What kinds of things do we hope to pass down to our children, or do we long to be passed down to us?
- David challenged all people in the church, especially husbands, fathers, with this statement: “I am convinced that the church is in the state it is today because as men, we have discarded the notion that we are responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of the people around us, most notably the families we lead. Your sin does not just affect you. Your sin affects your family.” How have we experienced this as true? How does this truth spur us on toward holiness?
- How do we see the effects in the church today of the sin hidden among families?
- What is the proper response to sin in the camp?
- How does the truth of the gospel change the ending of Achan’s story in our own lives?
- If Jesus is willing to take our sin and cover it with His blood, how should that truth drive us to Him instead of trying to hiding our sin?
- What is the benefit of confession in someone’s physical or faith family? (See James 5:16)
- When should sins be confessed publicly, and when should they be dealt with in private?
- How would you describe the ways God challenged you with this message?