

Digging Deeper Joshua Week 5

My prayer for this study is that it will be one that you all walk out in your life. I want you to share the things you learn, the insights, the questions that challenge you with others. I pray it helps create conversations. We have all done Bible studies where we took notes, highlighted certain portions and even felt like we really learned something from the study. BUT, what did we do with it? I don't believe we are simply to study God's Word for intellectual ascent. I don't even think we read His Word only for ourselves, but to share it with others. If you have learned something new from this study, please share it with someone else. If you have been challenged, please challenge someone else. If you have been encouraged, please encourage someone else. Let's not let this be another study that we say we learned something from and keep it to ourselves.

Last week we ended with this verse:

Joshua 6:27 So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

I asked you who you might know that needs to be encouraged to know that the Lord is with them. If you shared that with someone, please record how that went. If you didn't have a chance to do it, it's not too late, ask the Lord to reveal to you who He wants you to encourage today, record their name and then come back and record after you have been obedient.

We start this week in Joshua 7 and we are dealing with a problem right out of the gate.

Joshua 7:1 But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel.

Notice that this verse starts with but – which means we are switching gears – we ended chapter 6 with the Lord being with Joshua and his fame was in all the land. BUT now the people of Israel have broken faith and the anger of the Lord was burning against them.

Doesn't that sound like our walk with the Lord at times – we have times where we are walking in obedience and being blessed and reaping the rewards of being in close communion to the Lord and then we find ourselves in a spiritual valley where we are not walking as closely with Him, we are not doing the things He asks us to do and we feel disconnected? Where do you find yourself today – are you on the mountain or in the valley?

Joshua sent spies and the spies returned with a plan on how they were to attack Ai. Unfortunately, it was their plan and not the Lord's plan. Neither the spies nor Joshua sought the Lord before going

through with their plan. It's easy for us to be judgmental of Joshua and the spies and for us to not be surprised that they were not successful in the battle. However, I think if we are honest, we do the same thing. How often do you seek the Lord BEFORE making decisions or putting plans into action? Or do you make decisions and then ask the Lord to bless what you are doing? Or perhaps you sought the Lord and began doing what He led you to do and when difficulties came you decided to take matters into your own hands. Can you share examples of where you may have done this in the past and how it worked out?

How well do you do waiting on the Lord when you have sought Him? Are you waiting on the Lord right now? Pray that the Lord will give you the strength and the restraint to wait for Him.

Psalm 27:14 *Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!*

Psalm 28:15 *But for you, O LORD, do I wait;
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.*

How do these verses apply to you and encourage you? Are you willing to commit to waiting on the Lord?

Not seeking the Lord did not go well for the Israelites.

Joshua 7:4-5 So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

Not only did the fighting men flee, but the hearts of the people melted. This description was used of the people of Jericho and now it was being used to describe the Israelites. How quickly the condition of their hearts changed. They had just had the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, set up stones of remembrance so they would never forget what the Lord had done for them and had the Lord gave them victory over Jericho in a way that could only be of the Lord.

Their hearts changed so quickly because we are fickle. It is easy for us to be discouraged and to forget what the Lord has done for us. It is easy for us to 'listen to our hearts' rather than listening to what we KNOW about God.

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?*

Our feelings can easily be swayed by our circumstances and more importantly by our perception of our circumstances. Our perceptions are so limited where the Lord sees the big picture. Have you ever learned that your perception of a situation or a person was wrong? Did you allow your feelings to dictate how you responded or reacted? Can you share an example of when this has happened to you?

Joshua responds to the defeat of his men.

Joshua 7:6 *Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads.*

Joshua was devastated at their defeat and the loss of his men. He knew that they had done something wrong and he took on a posture of deep emotional pain to cry out to the Lord. Think about how different this is from how we handle our failures and our sins. Do you fall on your face and tear your clothes in distress? What kind of a difference do you think it would make for us if we responded more like Joshua?

I think most of us are comfortable confessing our sins and asking the Lord for forgiveness but are we willing to repent? Are we willing to turn from our ways towards the Lord and follow His ways? Do you ask for forgiveness without ever turning away from your sinfulness? Are you confessing the same sin over and over again? Is there something you have confessed but have not repented of – turn to the Lord and express your desire to repent.

What does Joshua have to say as he cries out to the Lord?

Joshua 7:7-9 *And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies!⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and*

will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"

I love the honesty with which Joshua approached the Lord. You can hear his frustration and exasperation in this. This is the kind of raw honesty the Lord wants from us. He already knows what we are going through and how we feel. When we approach the Lord with a starched version of how we feel, we are not being authentic. The Psalms are full of people crying out to the Lord in anger, frustration, sadness and grief. The Lord wants us to bring all of ourselves to Him just the way we are – He can handle it. Do you approach the Lord with your unvarnished feelings? What do you need to share with the Lord today?

The Lord responds to Joshua.

Joshua 7:10-12 The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.

The responds that Israel has sinned. The Lord holds the entire Israelite community responsible for what one man did. How can He do this? The Lord is a covenant God – He didn't make a covenant with an individual – He made a covenant with the whole of Israel. It was not just individuals who committed to follow the ways of the Lord but the whole community.

It may seem harsh for the Lord to hold the entire group responsible for the sin of one but the sine of one rarely only impacts the one. When have you strayed from the ways of the Lord and what impact did it have on others? When have you been negatively impacted by something someone else did?

Pray and ask the Lord to reveal to you how your sin has impacted others. Ask Him if you need to reach out and ask for forgiveness and be willing to walk it out in obedience.

After enlightening Joshua as to why they were unsuccessful, the Lord gives marching orders for Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua 7:13-15 Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the Lord takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the Lord takes shall come near

by households. And the household that the Lord takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things 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 an outrageous thing in Israel.”

Look at how orderly the Lord was going about the process to find the one who had transgressed against him. Tribes gathered, then the tribes divided out by clans and then the clans divided out by families. We serve a God of order not a God of chaos. Look at these verses that describe this characteristic of our God.

1 Corinthians 14:33a *For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.*

1 Corinthians 14:40 *But all things should be done decently and in order.*

Colossians 1:16-17 *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Our God is a God of order. If we find ourselves in relationships or circumstances that seem to be in total chaos – it should be an immediate call to prayer – something is going on that is not in line with the Lord. We or someone else is doing something or not doing something according to the will of God or we are allowing the enemy to get in and cause confusion. We need to recognize chaos in our lives and know that it is NOT what God wants for us – He wants us to have order because He is a God of order.

Is there an area of your life that seems to be in chaos – that seems to be out of order? Seek the Lord in prayer and ask Him to reveal to you what is going on and if the enemy is involved in the chaos you are experiencing.

Achan’s confesses his sin.

Joshua 7:19-21 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

Achan saw, he coveted and he took. As I discussed in the teaching we saw a similar situation with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:6).

Henry Blackaby in his book *Fresh Encounter* says, “North America is obsessed with materialism. We know an American church leader who met with a Christian pastor in China several years ago who

suffered greatly for his faith. The pastor told the American that the Chinese Christians were fervently praying for American Christians. The American, somewhat startled that someone who had suffered imprisonment for his faith was praying for those who enjoyed religious liberty, asked why they were praying for America. “Because it seems we are handling our adversity far better than you are handling your prosperity” was the reply. Seeing, desiring and taking is something that is hard for all of us to avoid. We want what we want, when we want it and how we want it.

What do you think of that last statement about us in North America not handling our prosperity well?

We may not take something we are told we can't have, but we are a society with want problems. We see what others have and we want it. We want the house, the car, the purse, etc. that someone else has. We work longer hours to make more money to have more stuff. We have more personal debt than ever before, there are storage units built in every community to store all of our stuff – stuff that we have to have and have to hold onto but don't actually use or need. Do you have too much stuff? Have you seen, desired and taken possession of stuff that you shouldn't have because it has put you in debt or created excessive clutter in your life?

The fact that we desire what others have is not a surprise to the Lord. He knew we would struggle with this. It is why he included it in the ten commandments.

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”

Jesus knew we would struggle with wanting too much stuff and that we would be inclined to make our possessions define our lives.

Luke 12:15 And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

Do you have a want problem? Do you have too much stuff? Do you desire what others have? Confess it to the Lord and ask Him what He wants you to do about it. Record what He reveals to you and your commitment to do something about it.

After dealing with Achan's sin the Lord reengaged with Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua 8:1-2 *And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it."*

Isn't it comforting to know that the Lord didn't walk away from Joshua and the Israelites after Achan's sin? He doesn't leave us either. He gave very different directions on how they were to attack Ai compared to the first attack. Remember how different the Lord's strategy was with Jericho? One lesson for us to take away from this is that our plans are often not the same as the Lord's plan. If we seek Him He will lead and guide us and when He reveals His plan or the next steps we are to take He wants us to walk it out in obedience. We are to walk it out even if His plan is different from our plans. Why do you think His plans are often different from ours?

The Lord had specific instructions for Joshua in what He was to do in the battle – do you remember what it was?

Does this remind you of something from the first battle Joshua fought with the Amorites?

Joshua 8:18 *Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city.*

Joshua 8:26 *But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction.*

This is similar to what Moses did with his staff in the first scene in Scripture where while Moses' staff was raised the Israelites were winning the battle against the Amorites. We will see that Joshua followed in Moses' footsteps in setting up an altar. Why do you think the Lord may have had Joshua do something similar to Moses in this battle?

After their victory what did Joshua do and what did he have the people do?

Joshua 8:30-32 At that time Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, ³¹ just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.

Why do you think it was important for Joshua to set up an altar and to write the law of Moses on stones?

The reading of the blessings and the curses was done with Moses and he told Joshua to do it when they got into the Promised Land. Why do you think Moses wanted this to be done?

What were your take-aways from this lesson? What did the Lord reveal to you? What do you need to share with someone else?

Heavenly Father, help us to not be merely consumers of Bible studies. Help us to be willing to share what we learn with others. Give us the courage to share what you are doing in our life, what you are teaching us with others. If it is important for you to teach us, there is someone else who could benefit from what we have learned. Thank you for the gift of Your Word and how You always have something in it for us – something for us to learn and to apply to our lives. We love you, Lord and want to be help others come to know and love you.