

Friday: Don't forget...

Read: Joshua 7:22-26 ²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath... And they laid them down before the LORD. ²⁴ And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan... ²⁵ And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him... ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day...

<p>Reflect: What a grim ending to a roller coaster of a story. Actually the story isn't over until the end of chapter eight...when the covenant that had been violated was renewed (cf. Josh8:30-35). YHWH demands obedience.</p> <p>Since Achan's sin affected the community of Israel, it was fitting a communal execution took place (cf. Lev20:2,27). With so many people casting stones it would be impossible to tell which stone dealt the death blow. In this way a single individual wouldn't bear the guilt of the death alone. Israel no longer had "devoted items" in their midst, therefore a holy God would continue to commune with them.</p> <p>Notice the pile of stones in v26. They should be seen in conjunction with the memorial in Joshua 4:9 (cf. Deut6:20). YHWH's message is clear, "Don't forget My faithfulness. Learn from your mistakes".</p>	<p>Respond: Verse 23 says they "laid them down" before YHWH. It was an act of offering to God what is His. Have you given your life to Him and accepted Jesus as Lord? What keeps you from doing so?</p> <p>The story sounds harsh, it is. Yet it is also filled with grace. Certainly if God hadn't removed this evil from Israel it would've spread (more quickly). Right?</p> <p>Do you have a "memorial" of God's faithfulness in your life? How might it be helpful?</p>
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Pray: Be in prayer for another teacher training event that is being planned for NLCC in the near future. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) for His workers as they speak boldly for Him. Ask God to help you to remain faithful to Him.

Saturday: Remembering Our Task

Read: Isaiah 40:9-11; 49:6; 52:7; John 3:16-21

<p>Reflect: We've seen this past week that sin doesn't affect just the sinner. The impact of sin reaches far and wide. It is truly like a wild animal crouching to devour everyone (Gen4:7). There certainly is hope in Jesus, but without Him...</p> <p>There isn't a single one of us who would deny that we've all sinned. Yet what we do want to deny (at least at times) is just how damaging sin has been to us. Self-centeredness seems to be one of the biggest sin issues we face. Put bluntly, our sin keeps us from God's mission – and His mission is to save people from damning themselves to hell.</p> <p>The correlations are amazing (and frightening). To name just two, the Hebrews were God's <i>segullah</i> (Exod19:5), now those bearing the name of Christ are (Tit2:14). The Hebrews were called on the carpet for their hypocrisy (e.g., Isa1:10f), so were the religious leaders of Jesus' day (e.g., Mt23:23). What about us?</p>	<p>Respond: Is there a specific sin with which you struggle the most? How can you overcome it? Is what you've been trying working?</p> <p>How long have you been "saved"? Did you know that statistically speaking those who've been Christians over five years have few if any non-Christian friends?</p> <p>What is the most recent example of love and compassion you showed someone outside the body of NLCC?</p>
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Pray: Ask God to continue to prepare your heart and mind to worship Him tomorrow, not just with your NLCC family at the building, but all day. Thank God for His grace. Pray for our services tomorrow – that they are pleasing to God and that we are welcoming to our guests.

Passionately Pursuing _____ ?

July 27 – August 2

All relationships are built on trust. If someone doesn't trust other people, they aren't going to have much in the way of relationships. At least not when it comes to relationships that are meaningful, helpful, challenging – basically the type of relationships that will assist spiritual growth.

Yet when we have been hurt by others (sometimes repeatedly) it becomes harder to trust. Or do we make it harder to trust?

In Joshua 7 we read of a time when the people of Israel "broke faith" with God. This means they betrayed His trust by disobeying Him. The same words are used to describe adultery (e.g., Numb15:12-13), difficulties with a neighbor (e.g., Lev6:2), and why Israel went into exile (e.g., 1Chron9:1).

This violation of trust (in Joshua 7) cost 36 men of Israel their lives, and the effects would've continued to be devastating had the sin not been addressed. Yet (after dealing with the sin) God forgave them and He continued in the covenant relationship with Israel.

To me the parallels are obvious. While I readily admit I'm not above having a hard time trusting others when they've done me wrong...how many times have I broken trust with God? How many times have I confessed a sin and hoped I'd never do it again...only to do it later – that same day even!?! God demands obedience, but He also extends trust (and grace) to us over and over again when we mess things up...

I realize we all think "logically," and that is when "discernment" comes into play when dealing with other people who've hurt us. Therefore we're slower to trust again. Yet, what if God dealt "logically" with us...

What I'm getting at is the need to work on extending trust and grace to those who make up the body of New Life. This is where our "Passionate Spirituality" score on the *Natural Church Development* health assessment comes into play. We scored ourselves relatively high on the subcategory of 'Passion for Devotions' – this indicates the Bible is important for us in guiding how we live. However, another subcategory of 'Experiencing God' was noticeably lower, as was the 'Spiritual Interconnectedness' of those at NLCC. Why the discrepancy? Is it possible that the subcategory of 'Passion for Devotions' was a bit too subjective? In other words, we think we do well there...but when we look at those other (perhaps) more concrete areas it becomes clear that God's Word doesn't guide and direct our lives as much as we think it does...

I don't have the answers; I'm just posing questions... Perhaps my questions are offensive. That's OK – I, like you, am tired of offending God and breaking His trust. I want us to get better at doing that less and less together. I'm certain you do too. It is for His glory.

Monday: Uh-oh...

Read: Joshua 7:1¹ 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.

<p>Reflect: Things had been going so good for the people of Israel. They had witnessed God’s miraculous power as they crossed the Jordan River (Josh3). In fact, they’d even set up a memorial so they wouldn’t forget what had happened (Josh4:1-9). They had also conquered Jericho (Josh6).</p> <p>Unfortunately, Israel “broke faith” with YHWH. It’s a word that indicates a betrayal of trust. Most often it speaks of trust between God and humans. When the trust is broken, guess who the guilty party is...</p> <p>Joshua was very clear about what was to happen when Jericho was conquered (cf. Josh6:17-19). Notice that while only one man is singled out (Achan), the text says “the people of Israel broke faith” – and later YHWH’s anger burned against “the people of Israel”. That’s how it was in the Ancient Near East; people found identity in a group. The actions of one person could have a drastic impact on a large number of people.</p>	<p>Respond: How have things been going between you and God lately? In other words, how trustworthy have you been?</p> <p>When was the last time you betrayed someone’s trust? What about when your trust was betrayed by someone else? Has either scenario been resolved?</p> <p>Do you have a sense of identity at NLCC? Is your affiliation with this body important to you? How do people know?</p>
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Pray: Thank God for His grace. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38). Thank God for the time of worship with your church family yesterday at the NLCC building; pray what was sung, prayed, and heard will impact you this week.

Tuesday: “Uh-oh” is right

Read: Joshua 7:2-5² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel... they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not have all the people go up...⁴ So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai...And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

<p>Reflect: The way the text reads Ai was an insignificant city; at least Beth-aven was more prominent. Yet the men from Ai gave the men of Israel a defeat they would not soon forget. In fact, the results were devastating...</p> <p>That the “hearts of the people melted and became as water” is not an insignificant statement. Similar statements (cf. Josh2:9,24) and practically identical statements (cf. Josh2:11; 5:1) were used of Israel’s enemies. The once proud and confident Israelites now had the same demeanor of those they were to conquer...</p> <p>This raises an interesting question. Was Israel now God’s enemy too? It sounds almost ridiculous, but they had broken His trust and He was angry with them (cf. Josh7:1). God doesn’t have double standards.</p>	<p>Respond: Joshua 4:13 states 40,000 fighting men came from two and a half tribes alone. How confident do you think Israel was to send only 3,000 to Ai?</p> <p>When something goes wrong is your trust in God easily shaken like Israel’s in verse five?</p> <p>When was the most recent time you “broke faith” with God? What were the results?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for the purity of NLCC. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29). Thank God for the ways in which He was faithful to you yesterday as you served Him.

Wednesday: What have You done!?!?

Read: Joshua 7:6-15⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening...⁷ 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!⁸ O Lord, what can I say...¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?¹¹ Israel has sinned...I will be with you no more, unless...¹³ Get up!

<p>Reflect: Joshua had been “face down” before YHWH before (Josh5:14), only that time it was because of humility and worship; this time it is because of shame and defeat.</p> <p>Doesn’t Joshua sound a lot like us? “Waaaa...it’s not fair!” That may be overstating it a bit (not much), but isn’t it ironic – or better yet sad – to notice what Joshua doesn’t do? He doesn’t ask if they’ve done anything wrong...He simply does what is ‘logical’ and blames God.</p> <p>Perhaps I’ve been a bit too hard on Joshua, but YHWH wasn’t too easy on him (cf. 7:10,13). YHWH spells out what Israel has done. They’ve 1) sinned, 2) violated (transgressed) the covenant, 3) taken what was YHWH’s, 4) stolen what was YHWH’s, 5) lied about it, 6) and hid it (v11). That is why things have gone so bad for Israel...it is their own fault.</p>	<p>Respond: “Alas” (Josh7:7) is a cry of shock and hopelessness. When was the last time you felt that way? Have you had a change of perspective yet?</p> <p>When things go wrong for you do you check yourself first, or do you look for an external source for your problems?</p> <p>The statement of YHWH leaving the people of Israel (v12) wasn’t just a threat – He would do it (cf. Josh1:5-9, especially vs7-8). How devastating would that have been?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for the elders and preaching minister; pray also for their meeting at 4pm this Sunday. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1) as His workers speak boldly. Confess to God your desire to make sure you don’t blame Him, or others, for hardships in your life.

Thursday: Just like (‘snap’) that...

Read: Joshua 7:20-21²⁰ 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.”

<p>Reflect: Achan finally confessed...although it took a long and undoubtedly suspense-filled process until he realized there was no way out for him (cf. Josh7:16-19). Did he think somehow he’d get away with it?</p> <p>Notice the speed with which Achan’s downfall came about, “saw...coveted...took”. It’s not unique to this passage, the same words occur in Genesis 3:6 (see also 1Jn2:16).</p> <p>The plunder of Jericho had been assigned to the treasury of YHWH (Josh6:19). Achan had stolen directly from YHWH and violated the 1st, 8th, and 9th Commandments. Ironically, if he’d been obedient at Jericho, he could’ve had all the plunder he could carry at Ai (cf. Josh8:2).</p>	<p>Respond: Are you quick to confess your sins, or do confessions need to be drug out of you?</p> <p>While Achan’s actual actions were swift, he likely had a “heart problem” before spotting those items he took. How can you guard your heart for God’s glory?</p> <p>Is there an area of your life that is “unseen” by others, but sinful nonetheless? What should you do about it?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the worship team; pray their practice goes well tonight and pray for their continued preparation as they serve God in this important manner. Keep this Sunday’s board meeting in your prayers. Ask God to show you areas of your life that need to change; pray also for the proper obedience when He does.