

Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joshua 7–8

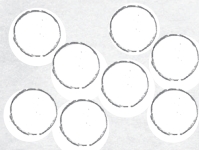
MAIN POINT: God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

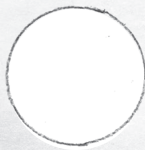
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)

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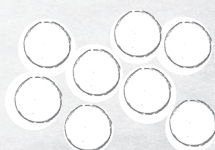
LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

When the Israelites conquered Jericho, God told them not to take anything. Everything in the city was to be destroyed and set apart for God. Achan must have assumed no one would notice if he kept a few things for himself. The cloak was beautiful, and he sure could use some pieces of silver and a bar of gold. No harm, no foul. Right? Wrong. God had commanded complete obedience from the Israelites.

Imagine Joshua's surprise when a few men in Ai defeated his army of a few thousand men. Had God failed to keep His promise to protect them from their enemies?

The next morning, God revealed that it was Achan who had sinned. Achan and his family were stoned to death. The Israelites covered their bodies with a large pile of stones as a reminder of the consequences of sin.

The Israelites faced the people of Ai again. This time, God was with them. He had helped them destroy Jericho; now He would help them destroy Ai—except this time God allowed them to plunder the city, keeping goods and livestock for themselves.

The story of Achan demonstrates that God hates sin. (See Prov. 6:16-19.) God is just to punish sin. Here's the bad news: We are all sinners, and "the wages of sin is death," but here is the good news: "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

God's presence with Israel was tied directly to their obedience to Him. As you present the gospel to kids, help them understand that it is our faith—not our obedience—that gives us right standing with God. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God is always with us and we are victorious over our enemies of sin and death.

4



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Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

Joshua 7–8

Joshua had led the Israelites into the promised land. Now the Israelites had to defeat the people living there. God was with Israel, and He promised to fight for them.

The Lord had helped the Israelites take over the city of Jericho. He had given them specific instructions about what to do with everything in the city. He told them what to destroy and what to set apart for the Lord. **But the Israelites did not obey God completely. They kept some things for themselves, and God knew. So when the Israelites attacked the city of Ai (AY igh), God did not fight for them.** The men of Ai chased away the Israelites, and some of the Israelites were killed.

Now all the Israelites were afraid. Joshua was sad. He did not understand why Israel had lost the battle. But God said to Joshua, “Israel has sinned. They took some of the things I told them not to. This is why they cannot defeat their enemies.”

God told Joshua how to deal with the people's sin. So **the next day, the Israelites came together and God showed Joshua which man had sinned. The man's name was Achan (AY kuhn).** Achan confessed that he had taken from Jericho a beautiful cloak, some pieces of silver, and a bar of gold. Achan had buried the things in his tent. So the people of Israel killed Achan and his family.

After Achan was punished for his sin, God told Joshua to attack Ai again. This time, God promised to give them victory over the city.

Joshua gathered an army. He sent some of the army out at night to lie in wait behind the city. Then early the next

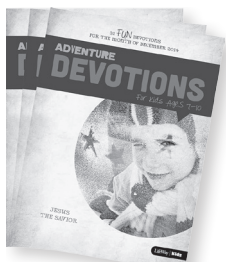
morning, the rest of the army went toward the city.

The king of Ai saw them and **sent out his men to fight** them. **When the enemy army got near, Joshua and the Israelites** ran away, just as they had before. They **pretended to be afraid, so the army of Ai chased them away from the city.** The people of Ai had no idea that Joshua had men hiding on the other side of the city. The army of Ai left the city completely unprotected.

Joshua held out his sword, and the men who were hiding took over the city and set it on fire. **This time, the Israelites did just what God said.** The army of Ai realized that they were trapped, and the Israelites defeated them.

Joshua built an altar to the Lord. The Israelites sacrificed offerings to God, and Joshua read aloud the words of the law. All of the people heard the laws that Moses had commanded.

Christ Connection: The punishment for Achan's sin was death. It seems harsh, but the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) Because we sin, we deserve to die too. Jesus came to die in our place. When we confess our sins and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and saved from spiritual death.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that after Achan's death, the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged" (Josh. 8:1), a reminder of His promise to be with him. (Josh. 1:9) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joshua 7–8

MAIN POINT: God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

As kids arrive, invite them to think about a time they did something wrong when they thought no one else was watching. You may allow a couple of volunteers to share their experiences.

SAY • Is it OK to do something wrong if you don't get caught? Why or why not? Today's Bible story is about someone who sinned when he thought no one was watching.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Hidden Treasures" on the activity page. Challenge kids to search the scene for a bar of gold, silver coins, and a robe.

SAY • A man in today's Bible story hid gold, silver, and a robe in his tent. He thought no one would know that he took the items, but God knew. Let's find out what happened.

- "Hidden Treasures" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What's this?

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. Give one player a random classroom object such as an eraser to pass around the circle. Explain that each time a player passes an object, she must explain to the next player what the object is.

The first player should say, "This is a heavy bar of gold!" The receiving player says, "A what?" The passer responds, "a heavy bar of gold!" Kids will continue to pass the "bar" as you add a second object and say: "This is a shiny silver coin." Then add a third: "This is a beautiful, warm robe."

Players may pass all three objects in either direction (to the right or left). If kids succeed in passing three objects around the circle without making a mistake, try adding a fourth: "a very special treasure."

SAY • Did you have trouble keeping track of the objects? In today's Bible story, we will hear about someone who hid gold, silver, and a robe under his tent. He tried to hide them from God. Do you think God knew?

OPTION 2: Ball and cup search

Guide kids to form pairs. Give each pair three plastic cups and a paper ball. Demonstrate how to hide the ball under a cup and rearrange the upside-down cups quickly. Invite the partner to guess where the ball is. Kids may take turns guessing and maneuvering the cups.

SAY • You might have been able to hide the ball from your partner. Today's Bible story is about someone who tried to hide some things from God.



• random classroom objects

• plastic cups
• paper balls

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

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KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• name tag
• Bible
• labeled box

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a name tag and carrying a Bible. Leader is dressed in a solid-colored polo shirt, khaki pants, and a sun or safari hat. A box is labeled CAUTION: LIVE ANIMALS is positioned at the front of the room. Approach the box. Carefully lift a corner of the lid and then gently close the box.]

LEADER • Oh, wow. OK! *[Address kids.]* Hi, everyone! I am so glad you are here today to see these amazing creatures in the box. That's right, there is more than one animal in there today, and I'm not sure you will believe the facts about these animals. Let me give you some hints, and let's see if you can guess the animals.

The first animal is the fastest flier of all the animals. It can fly at speeds up to 200 miles per hour to attack its prey with sharp talons. No way! Any guesses? *[Allow kids to guess.]* Yes! A peregrine falcon. What? You don't think I have a peregrine

falcon in this box? OK, you are right. There is no peregrine falcon in here. I really wanted to have an peregrine falcon, but I couldn't catch one.

Now, the second animal often hunts in groups, and it can swim up to 68 miles per hour. Unbelievable! Any guesses? [*Allow kids to guess.*] It's the fastest fish in the world—the sailfish! Wait, what? You don't think that's actually in the box either? [*Sigh.*] OK, you got me. I don't have a sailfish either. I just couldn't find saltwater this morning.

But this third animal has long, muscular legs that help it run more than 60 miles per hour. It can reach top speed in just three seconds. Incredible! Who thinks they know what the last animal is? [*Allow kids to guess.*] Yep! Now, do you think I have a cheetah in this box? Well, you will just have to wait and see.

Now, before I tell you more, let's take a step back to look at the big picture.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Raise your hand if you remember what city the Israelites conquered when they first entered the promised land. (*Jericho*) Now Jericho was just the first city the Israelites needed to conquer. God had given them the victory at Jericho, and the Israelites needed to keep trusting Him for victory.

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • *Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.* Now, when you trust someone, you should obey him. Like if you trust your mom and she tells you to finish eating your carrots, you should

obey her. Your mom wants what is best for you. One way to show your trust is to obey.

Well, when the Israelites took over Jericho, they did not completely obey God's instructions. Not everyone trusted that God knew what was best. Let's find out what happened.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Joshua 7–8. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “Achan’s Sin and the Defeat of Ai.”

LEADER • Let's see if you can answer these questions about the Bible story.

1. When the Israelites attacked Jericho, God told them not to take anything for themselves. He told them to destroy everything! Is that what happened? (*No, Achan kept some things for himself.*)
2. Achan disobeyed God. He did not trust that God's plan was best. ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***
3. How did God show the Israelites that He was unhappy with their sin? (*He was not with them in the battle against Ai, and they were defeated.*)

Joshua was confused. He knew God had promised to give them victory. Something was wrong.

God showed Joshua that Achan had sinned. Achan tried to hide his sin from everyone, and he might have gotten away with it but God knew. God sees everything. **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.**

- Bibles
- “Achan’s Sin and the Defeat of Ai” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me (optional)

Point out that Achan disobeyed God, and the punishment for Achan’s sin was death. Explain that God was just to punish Achan in that way. The Bible says that the punishment for sin is death. Everyone who sins deserves to die. That’s the bad news.

LEADER • The good news is that God’s Son, Jesus, came to earth to die for our sins. He took the punishment we deserve when He died on the cross. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. Our faith in Him—not our obedience—gives us right standing with God. Because of our faith in Jesus, God is always with us and we are victorious over our enemies of sin and death.

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Did the punishment for Achan’s sin seem fair? Have you ever received a punishment that did not seem to fit the wrong thing you did? Check this out. Show the “Unit 7, Session 4” discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss the pranks in the video. What made one prank more serious than the other?

Point out that the importance of the person being pranked affected the prank’s seriousness. Relate this to sin; sin against God—even sin that seems small—is a big deal because of who God is.

Tip: Provide *I’m a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

• “Unit 7, Session 4” discussion starter video

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- “Wherever You Go” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joshua 1:9. Then cover the poster.

LEADER • Has anyone memorized our key passage? Raise your hand if you’d like to recite it from memory.

Call on volunteers to say the key passage. They may also lead the class in reviewing any motions you created to help boys and girls memorize the verse. Kids may use their own actions, or use these suggested actions:

- *commanded*—Point forward.
- *strong*—Flex arms.
- *courageous*—Put hands on hips and hold up head.
- *do not be afraid or discouraged*—Shake head.
- *Lord your God*—Point upward.
- *wherever you go*—Spread arms wide.

Guide kids to perform the motions as they sing together “Wherever You Go.”

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)” song

LEADER • Let’s keep singing.

Sing together “Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. You may choose to allow kids to share prayer requests. Ask God to help kids understand the seriousness of sin. Thank Him for sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joshua 7–8

MAIN POINT: God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- markers
- paper

Assign each kid a word or phrase of the key passage. If your group is large, form two or more smaller groups. Instruct kids to write their assigned words on a piece of paper. Then lead kids to wad up their papers.

Guide each group to form a circle. Explain that when you say “go,” the group should toss its papers around the circle like popcorn. When a paper ball hits the floor, a kid should pick it up and toss it in the air. Give groups several seconds to “pop” around the words.

When you say “ding!” kids should let the papers fall to the ground. Prompt groups to collect the paper wads, open them up, and arrange the words in the correct order. Then lead everyone to say the key passage together.

SAY • Great job, everyone! These are the words God said to Joshua when He called Joshua to be the Israelites' leader. We heard in today's Bible story how God fought for His people at Ai. The Israelites could be courageous because they could trust God to give them victory. ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Give each kid a pencil, a Bible, and an index card. Guide kids to turn to Joshua 7–8. Explain that each kid should write a sentence about the Bible story. Kids may choose to write a true statement or a false statement. Encourage them to note the Scripture reference revealing the truth.

When kids finish, allow them to take turns reading their sentences aloud. The rest of the kids should guess whether the statement is true or false. If the statement is false, the reader should announce the Scripture reference for the kids to look up the truth. Choose a volunteer to read the verse or passage aloud. Then invite another kid to share a statement.

If time allows, kids may share more than one statement, or you may consider sharing statements such as these:

1. The Israelites obeyed God completely. (*false, they did not obey God completely; Josh. 7:1, 11*)
2. Achan confessed to taking a beautiful cloak, pieces of silver, and a bar of gold. (*true, Josh. 7:20-21*)
3. Achan was put in jail for his sin. (*false, he was killed; Josh. 7:25*)
4. God fought for His people at Ai. (*true, Josh. 8:18-19*)

SAY • God had promised to be with His people in the promised land and to fight for them. But God allowed Israel to be defeated at Ai. He was not with them. Why? (*They had not obeyed Him completely. Achan had sinned.*) Achan's sin was a big deal. God hates sin, and the Israelites' sin separated them from God. **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.**

We know that we sin. Everyone sins. Like Achan, we deserve to die for our sin. That's very bad news. Can anyone tell me the good news? [*Allow kids*

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- index cards
- pencils

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

to respond.] Yes. Jesus came to die in our place. When we confess our sins and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and saved from spiritual death.



• Key Passage Poster

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Key passage battles

Direct kids to sit in a circle. Choose a volunteer to play first. He will stand behind another player in the circle and say the first word of the key passage, Joshua 1:9. The seated player may choose to say the next word or the next two words. The standing player must then respond with the next word.

If he knows the words, he continues around the circle, challenging the next player. If he responds incorrectly, the seated player stands and the standing player sits in her place. Play resumes with the new challenger. Continue around the circle as time allows.

SAY • The Israelites had to trust that God was with them when they battled Ai. **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.**

OPTION 2: Crime and punishment

Write the following crimes on separate index cards: *jaywalking* (crossing the street where not allowed), *littering*, *identity theft*, *murder*, *bank robbery*, *treason* (attempting to overthrow the government of one's country), *kidnapping*.

Challenge kids to arrange the crimes based on the punishment each crime deserves—from the least punishment to the greatest punishment. When kids finish, prompt them to discuss how they decided the order. Then reveal the answers:

1. jaywalking—\$5 fine
2. littering—\$50 to \$500 fine

• index cards
• markers

Note: Penalties are federal mandatory minimum sentences and are subject to change.

3. identity theft—2-year prison sentence
4. treason—5-year prison sentence with \$10,000 fine
5. bank robbery—10-year prison sentence
6. kidnapping—20-year prison sentence
7. murder—life in prison

SAY • Were you surprised by any of these punishments?

Did they seem to fit the crime? The punishment for Achan's sin was death. It seems harsh, but the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

Because we sin, we deserve to die too. Jesus came to die in our place. When we confess our sins and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and saved from spiritual death. That's such good news!

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Remind kids that Achan tried to hide his sin. Other people may not have seen what Achan did, but God saw. Prompt boys and girls to journal about a time they wanted to or tried to hide from God. What happened? How did they feel?

SAY • We cannot hide our sin from God but we can repent, or turn away from our sin, and ask God for forgiveness. Jesus took the punishment we deserve. When we trust in Jesus and confess our sin, God forgives us! [*See 1 John 1:9.*]

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Something Is Missing" on the activity page. Kids should fill in the missing consonants to complete today's main point. (*Answer: **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.***)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Something Is Missing" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Journal Page

God the Savior

Key Passage: Joshua 1:9

Big Picture Questions: Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

Session 1: Joshua and Caleb

Numbers 13:1–14:38

The Israelites did not trust God to give them the promised land.

Session 2: The Bronze Snake

Numbers 20:1–20; 21:4–9

God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.

Session 3: The Promised Land and Jericho

Joshua 2–4; 6

God fought for His people and led them into the promised land.

Session 4: Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

Joshua 7–8

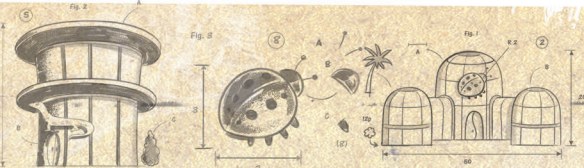
God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

Session 5: Joshua's Final Encouragement

Joshua 23:1–24:28

Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone.






“Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

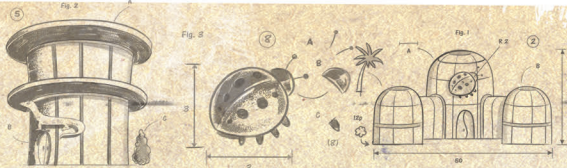




“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Joshua 1:9





“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9



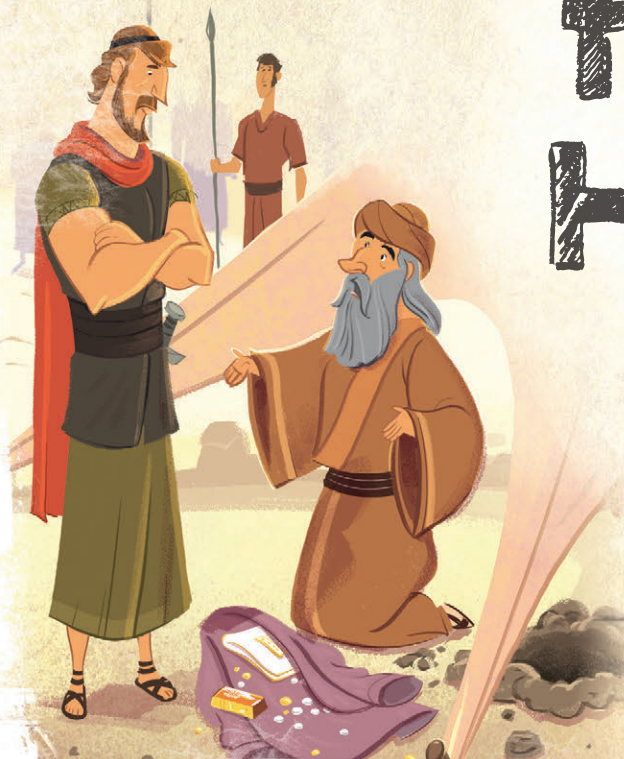


**“Have I not
commanded you? Be
strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid; do
not be discouraged, for
the LORD your God will
be with you wherever
you go.”**

Joshua 1:9



God punished
Achan for his
sin. Then God
fought for
His people
at Ai.





Journal Page

Write about a time you wanted to or tried to hide from God. How did you feel? Why do you think people might want to hide from God? Is this a good idea? What can we do when we sin?



FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What did Achan do wrong?
- What is the penalty for sin? (See Romans 6:23.)
- What should you do when you sin?



Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

Joshua 7-8

**MAIN POINT: GOD PUNISHED ACHAN FOR HIS SIN.
THEN GOD FOUGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE AT AI.**

The Lord had helped the Israelites take over the city of Jericho. He had given them specific instructions about what to do with everything in the city. But the Israelites did not obey God completely. They kept some things for themselves, and God knew. So when the Israelites attacked the city of Ai, God did not fight for them and Israel lost the battle.

God said to Joshua, "Israel has sinned. They took some of the things I told them not to. This is why they cannot defeat their enemies."

The next day, the Israelites came together and God showed Joshua which man had sinned. The man's name was Achan. Achan confessed that he had taken from Jericho a beautiful cloak, some pieces of silver, and a bar of gold.

After Achan was punished for his sin, God told Joshua to attack Ai again. This time, God promised to give them victory over the city.

The king of Ai sent out his men to fight. When the enemy army got near, Joshua and the Israelites pretended to be afraid, so the army of Ai chased them away from the city.

Joshua held out his sword, and the Israelite men who were hiding behind the city took over the city. This time, the Israelites did just what God said.

Christ Connection: The punishment for Achan's sin was death. It seems harsh, but the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) Because we sin, we deserve to die too. Jesus came to die in our place. When we confess our sins and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and saved from spiritual death.

FOLD

Something Is Missing

Fill in the missing consonants to complete today's main point.

___ O ___

___ E ___ OD

___ U ___ IS ___ E ___

___ OU ___

A ___ A ___ FO ___

___ O ___ I ___

___ I ___ I ___

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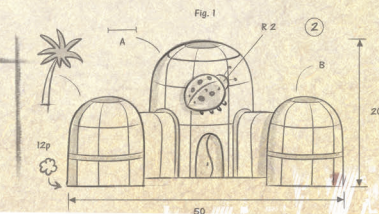
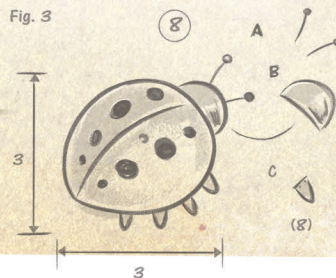
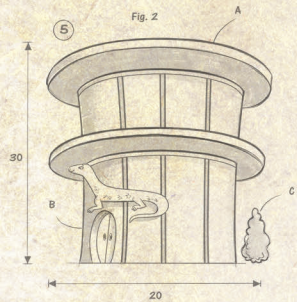
A ___ AI

Hidden Treasures

Look at all the treasures hidden in the tent!
Can you find the silver coins, the bar of gold, and the robe?



Whom can we trust?



Whom can we trust?

We can trust God to take care of us.

