

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)

PAGE 58



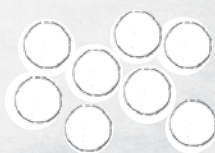
LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 60



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 66



4

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
ADVENTURE!**

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, ask them to think about a time they wanted something but couldn't have it. Invite them to share with the group what it was.

SAY • Sometimes God doesn't want us to have something because it isn't good for us or because He has a better plan for us. Our Bible story today is about a man who wanted something he couldn't have.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Commandments Review" on the activity page.

SAY • God gave us His rules, which are summarized in the Ten Commandments. These rules help us know how to love God and others. God is holy and good, so we can trust that His rules are holy and good. Today we will learn that disobeying God is sin, and sin has consequences.

- "Commandments Review" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Steal it

Form two teams of kids. Divide the room evenly with a masking tape line, and instruct teams to stand against a wall on opposite sides of the line. Place a ball for each team on the line. Call out the names of one kid from each team to run and “steal” her team’s ball before the other person grabs hers. Lead kids to replace the balls, line up again, and play again. Play as time allows, choosing new kids each round.

SAY • You had to be fast and tricky to steal the ball. In real life, we know that stealing is wrong. No matter how fast or tricky you are, God always knows what you’ve done. Stealing is a sin and sin separates people from God. Listen to today’s story to find out how one man’s sin caused a big problem for God’s people.

OPTION 2: Is it a sin?

Before class, write various scenarios on strips of paper, fold them, and place them in a bowl or bag. Invite kids to pass around the bowl, each kid drawing out a strip. One at a time, kids will read the scenario on the paper strips. Kids will discuss if the scenario is a sin or not.

Suggested scenarios: *borrowing your brother’s gaming device without asking, finding money on the ground and keeping it, looking at a classmate’s paper during a test, and hiding candy in your room so you don’t have to share.*

SAY • Sin is a big deal to God because it separates us from Him. When we sin, it’s like we’re saying to God that we know better than God what we need. In today’s story, one man’s sin affected many people.



- balls, 2
- masking tape

- strips of paper
- marker
- bowl or gift bag

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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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
• vest
• stuffed squirrel

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a vest or jacket with a stuffed squirrel tucked inside. Act like it wants to escape and you're holding it back.]

LEADER • Welcome back, everyone! I have a wiggly little friend here that wants to see you. Are you ready to meet him and see what he is? *[Take the squirrel out of your vest and gently pet it.]*

Today we are learning about squirrels. How many of you have seen squirrels near where you live? Squirrels are found all over North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Did you know that squirrels' front teeth never stop growing? Their teeth get worn down when they chomp on nuts and tree bark. If their teeth didn't keep growing, they'd have no teeth left!

Another fun fact about squirrels is they are hard workers. They gather food all year long, especially during the fall. They often bury their food to hide it.

When they wake up out of hibernation, they go look for the food they buried.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Speaking of burying food, our Bible story today is about a man who buried something. [*Point to the previous week's Bible story.*] Last week, we learned that **God fought for His people and led them into the promised land.** At the battle of Jericho, Joshua told the people to destroy everything except Rahab and her family, since Rahab had hidden the spies. They weren't supposed to take anything from Jericho.

Well, a man named Achan did not obey God. He stole some items and then hid them under his tent. Today's Bible story is called "Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai."

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • God had promised that He would be with Joshua and the Israelites as they entered the promised land. When the Israelites kept God's commands, God would go with them and would fight their battles for them. Joshua trusted God. That reminds me of our big picture question, ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***

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 • The people were so excited after the battle at Jericho. The next city, the city of Ai, was much

- Bibles
- "Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Main Point Poster

smaller than Jericho. Joshua sent out a small group of soldiers to battle Ai. But this time, God did not go with them. The men of Ai chased the Israelites, and several of them died.

Joshua tore his clothes, which was a sign in Bible times that he was extremely sad. What did God tell Joshua? That's right! God had not gone with the Israelites because the Israelites had sinned.

God showed Joshua who had sinned by narrowing down the the tribes, clans, and families until Achan was singled out. Achan confessed that he had taken some things from Jericho.

Taking some clothing and a little bit of silver and gold that was going to be destroyed anyway may not seem like a big deal, but sin is always a big deal to God. God must deal with sin, and He would not fight for His people until Achan was punished. **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.**

The punishment for Achan's sin was death. It seems harsh, but the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. 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.

Ask the following review questions:

1. What did God tell the Israelites to do with the things of Jericho? (*destroy everything, Josh. 7:1*)
2. Who sinned against God? (*Achan, Josh. 7:1*)
3. What did Achan do? (*took things from Jericho and buried them under his tent, Josh. 7:21*)
4. Because Achan sinned, what happened at Ai? (*The*

Israelites were defeated, Josh. 7:5)

5. What had to happen before God would fight for His people again? (**God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.**)
6. After Achan was punished for his sin, what happened at Ai? (*The Israelites defeated Ai, Josh. 7:19*)

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

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.

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

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joshua 1:9. Invite kids who can say the key passage from memory to say it now. Praise each kid's attempt.

LEADER • God had promised that He would be with Joshua wherever he went. When God did not go with His people to fight Ai, Joshua knew something was wrong. When we trust in Jesus as our Savior, God gives us the Holy Spirit to live within us and be with us forever. God will never leave us!

Invite kids to sing the key passage song together.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Wherever You Go" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • How do we determine if a punishment fits a wrongdoing? Check this out.

Show the "Unit 7, Session 4" discussion starter video.

LEADER • Do you think that Jacob's prank on the principal

- "Unit 7, Session 4" discussion starter video

was more serious than pranking his friends? Why?

[Invite responses.]

Point out that the importance of the person being pranked affected the prank's seriousness. Relate this to sin; sin against God is a big deal because of who God is. That is why there is no such thing as a "little" sin. All sin against a glorious God is a big deal.

LEADER • Remember that the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. Achan sinned, so he deserved to die. Each of us sin and deserves to die too. God is holy. God is also full of love, mercy, and grace. We know this because He sent Jesus to die in our place. We can be forgiven of our sin when we trust in Jesus.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)" song

LEADER • When I think about the fact that God loves me even when I mess up, I can't help but praise Him. He is so good to us. Let's sing together.

Sing together "Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • We don't always do everything right, do we? It's good to know that when we trust in Jesus, God forgives us for our sin.

Dear God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. Thank You for your grace to us! Amen.

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

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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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- dry erase board or chalkboard
- markers or chalk
- sticky notes

Write the key passage, Joshua 1:9, on a dry erase board or chalk board. Invite kids to read the key passage together from the board once, and then cover two or three words of the key passage with sticky notes. Invite the kids to say the key passage again, supplying the missing words. Cover more words of the key passage in each round until kids can say the entire key passage from memory.

SAY • God promised Joshua that He would always be with him. That wasn't because Joshua was perfect and never sinned. The Bible says that all of us have sinned except for Jesus, the Son of God. When we turn away from sin and trust in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to live inside us. God will always be with us!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- dry erase board, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper
- markers or chalk

Open your Bibles to Joshua 7–8. Provide a dry erase board, chalk board, or large sheet of chart paper. Form two teams and assign one team to be *Xs* and the other to be *Os*.

Draw a tic-tac-toe board. Explain that you are going to review the Bible story by playing tic-tac-toe. Kids must

answer a review question correctly before they can make a move. The first team to get three squares in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally wins. Play as time allows.

Ask the following review questions:

1. What was the name of the first city the Israelites conquered after crossing the Jordan River? (*Jericho, Josh. 7:2*)
2. What was the name of the second city the Israelites attacked? (*Ai, Josh. 7:2*)
3. What items did Achan steal from Jericho? Name two of the three. (*cloak, silver coins, gold bar; Josh. 7:21*)
4. Where did Achan hide the items he had stolen? (*under his tent, Josh. 7:21*)
5. After Achan was punished for his sin, what did God tell the Israelites to do? (*Go and attack the city of Ai again, Josh. 8:1*)
6. How did Joshua trick the army of Ai? (*Joshua sent one group of soldiers on the other side of the city. The Israelites pretended they were running away and burned the city when the men of Ai chased the Israelites, Josh. 8:14-21*)
7. What did Joshua do to celebrate the victory at Ai? (*built an altar for the Lord and sacrificed offerings, Josh. 8:30-31*)

SAY • God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai. The punishment for Achan's sin was death. 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.

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



LOW PREP

Tip: Consider bringing in a rotten apple for the kids to view and smell. Do not allow them to handle the apple.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Bad apple

Invite the kids to sit down and close their eyes. Explain that when an apple is bad, it emits a gas that can spoil other apples around it. Announce that you will tap one kid gently on the shoulder. She is the “bad apple” in the game. When kids open their eyes, they will walk around and shake hands with each other.

When the “bad apple” shake hands, she should gently squeeze a kid’s hand twice without anyone else noticing. Then she will move on to the next child. If a kid’s hand was squeezed twice, he will silently count to five and then sit down because he has spoiled. Play until all the kids but one are spoiled or until the kids discover the “bad apple.” Play again with a new “bad apple.”

SAY • Bad apples teach us about sin. A bad apple can spoil others, and one person’s sin can affect others—just like Achan’s family and the Israelites who died trying to attack Ai. But as bad as sin is, there is hope! Because Jesus died on the cross to pay the punishment for our sin, we can be forgiven when we trust in Him. *Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.*

OPTION 2: Make a Bible story scroll

Help kids divide a long piece of paper into five sections. In each section, kids will draw one part of the Bible story:

1. Victory at Jericho
2. Achan stole from Jericho.
3. Ai defeated the Israelites.
4. Achan confessed his sin.
5. God helped the people fight Ai.

- 5½-by-17-inch sheets of paper, 1 per kid
- craft sticks, 2 per kid
- art supplies
- string

Show the kids how to tape their craft sticks to the ends of their papers and roll them up like a scroll. Distribute string for kids to tie their scrolls closed.

SAY • God is serious about sin, and nothing is hidden from him. **God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.** When we sin, we don't have to hide from God. God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and rise again so that we can be forgiven of our sin when we trust in Him.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write or draw a picture about a time when they were tempted to hide something from God. As kids work, invite them to pray and ask God to forgive them for their sin and for trying to hide it from Him.

SAY • *Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.* When we remember that we can trust God, we are no longer afraid of Him and do not need to hide things from Him. God loves us and wants the best for us. When we mess up and sin, we can go to God and thank Him for forgiving us through Jesus.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, acknowledging that God is holy. Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, to die for us and rise again. Pray that the kids will understand their sin and their need for Jesus.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers

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

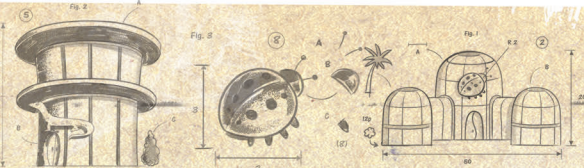
God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

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

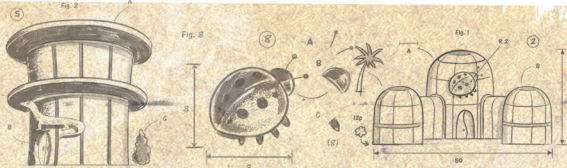




“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

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



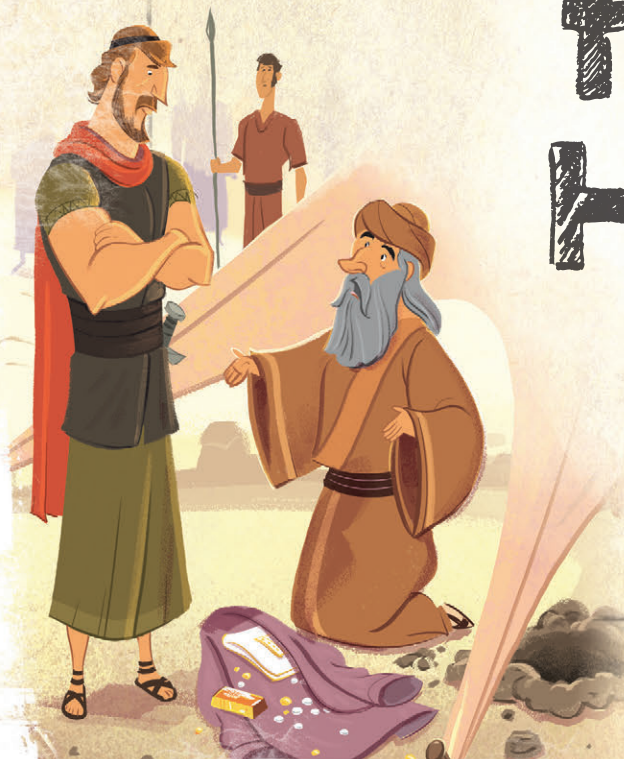


**“Have I not
commanded you? Be
strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid; do
not be discouraged, for
the LORD your God will
be with you wherever
you go.”**

Joshua 1:9



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





Commandments Review

DOWNLOAD THE
TGP FAMILY APP

INSTRUCTIONS: Write the letter of each picture with the commandment it represents.



- _____ 1. Do not have other gods besides Me.
- _____ 2. Do not make an idol for yourself.
- _____ 3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
- _____ 4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
- _____ 5. Honor your father and your mother.
- _____ 6. Do not murder.
- _____ 7. Keep your marriage promises.
- _____ 8. Do not steal.
- _____ 9. Do not lie.
- _____ 10. Do not want what belongs to someone else.

KEY PASSAGE: Joshua 1:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

BIBLE STORY: ACHAN'S SIN AND THE DEFEAT OF AI

- God had told the Israelites to take nothing from Jericho.
- Achan disobeyed God and was punished for his sin.
- When Israel attacked Ai, God did not fight for them.
- After Achan was punished for his sin, God fought for His people and they defeated Ai.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

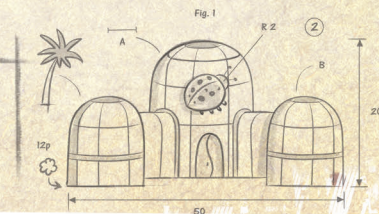
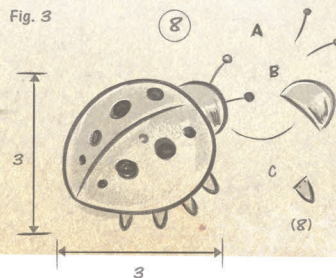
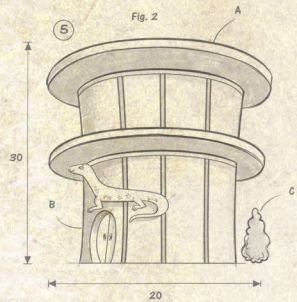
- How can our sin affect others? Share specific examples.
- Read Proverbs 3:12. Why is discipline loving?

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Invite each person to write down ways he/she has sinned on paper. Destroy the papers, and thank God for His complete forgiveness through Jesus.
- Go further: Drive through your community, praying that people who live and work there turn from sin and trust in Jesus.



Whom can we trust?



Whom can we trust?

We can trust God to take care of us.

