

The Cover Up at Ai

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 7–8

MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 7:12; Matthew 10:26

Hidden sin doesn't just affect a person, or a household, it can cripple a community, but honest repentance restores God's presence and power. However, when God's people return to obedience, He leads them to renewed victory and a fresh start.

Welcome & Introduction

SAY

“Have you ever wondered why your phone battery is dying even though you’re not using it?” Sometimes a hidden app is running in the background—something small, unnoticed, but draining power from everything else. It can cause all other functions to perform poorly and impacts everything else. Until you identify it and delete this app your phone will not work properly.”

TRANSITION

That’s what Achan’s hidden sin was for Israel. One person’s secret choice drained the whole community’s strength.

Israel didn’t lose at Ai because they were weak—they lost because something hidden was stealing their power.

Joshua 7–8 shows that hidden sin doesn’t stay private; it drains spiritual strength until it’s brought into the light and dealt with.

Unexpected Defeat

Joshua 7:1–5

Teaching Points

- Overconfidence without God’s presence leads to unexpected defeat. The spies assumed Ai would be simple, but they didn’t seek God’s guidance or recognize that something was wrong spiritually.
- Thirty-six Israelites lost their lives in this defeat. This only represents about 1.2% of the total fighting force, but the effect was demoralizing to the troops and the nation.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think God sometimes allows us to face setbacks or losses? How can those moments help us grow spiritually?
2. Fear and doubt are contagious. How do you think unexpected losses damage the confidence of a family, team, or a nation?

KEY TRUTH

God uses painful moments to get our attention and call us back to Him. Israel’s loss wasn’t random—it was a wake-up call that something deeper needed to be dealt with.

Giving Our Defeats to God

Joshua 7:6–10

Teaching Points

- Joshua responds to defeat with honest emotion, not fake strength. He tears his clothes and falls before God—showing that real leaders bring their confusion and pain to God instead of pretending everything is fine.
- Joshua knows immediately that something is amiss. God had promised to give the land to the Israelites and to make them victorious.
- Even strong believers can misunderstand what God is doing. Joshua assumes the worst (“Why did You bring us here to be destroyed?”), reminding us that fear can distort our view of God when things go wrong.

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever jumped to the wrong conclusion about God because something went wrong in your life? What helped you see the situation more clearly?
2. Read Leviticus 26:3–8 — In light of this passage, what does this defeat indicate?
3. What does God’s command to “stand up” teach us about how He responds when we’re discouraged or confused? How might God be calling you to “stand up” in your own life?

KEY TRUTH

God doesn’t let His people stay stuck in despair. God tells Joshua, “Stand up”—a powerful reminder that God meets us in our lowest moments but doesn’t leave us there.

Uprooting Hidden Sin

Joshua 7:13–26

Teaching Points

- A key to understanding this section requires a review of Joshua 6:17–19. No Israelite was to take spoils of war from Jericho, and all of the silver and gold was to be given over to the Lord’s treasury.
- Achan’s sin wasn’t just a private mistake; it was a breach of trust. He took what belonged to God, hid it, and hoped no one would notice. This shows that sin often grows in secrecy and deception.
- Hidden sin affects more than just the person who commits it. Achan’s private choice created family and public consequences, reminding us that our actions—good or bad—impact the people around us.
- Confession is unavoidable — what we hide eventually comes to the surface. Achan only admitted the truth when confronted, but the process shows that God lovingly exposes what we try to bury so healing can begin.

DISCUSSION

1. Review Joshua 6:17–19 — Were any spoils from the victory at Jericho to be taken as private possessions?
2. Why do you think Achan’s hidden sin affected the whole nation instead of just himself? What does this teach us about community and responsibility?
3. What does this lesson teach us about believing we might be able to maintain hidden sins in our hearts?
4. The punishment for this sin strongly implies that Achan’s wife and children were complicit in continuing to cover up his sin by burying these forbidden items in their home and remaining silent. Remember, 36 households lost a loved one because of this selfish sin. How can one family

DISCUSSION

member's unlawfulness bring consequences on the entire household today?

KEY TRUTH

God takes sin seriously because it destroys people and communities. Israel couldn't move forward until the hidden sin was brought into the light. God's holiness isn't about harshness — it's about protecting His people from what harms them.

Battle Plans

Joshua 8:1–9

Teaching Points

- God restores courage after failure. The first words God speaks are “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” God doesn't shame Joshua—He rebuilds him. Failure wasn't the end of the story.
- Victory requires preparation and teamwork. Joshua organizes ambush teams, scouts, and leaders. God provides the plan, but His people still have to prepare, work together, and trust His timing.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think God starts by telling Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged? What does this show about how God treats us after we fail?
2. Why is it important that Israel followed God's plan exactly instead of copying what worked before?

KEY TRUTH

God turns past defeat into future victory. The same city that humiliated Israel becomes the place where God shows His power again. God can redeem the very places where we've stumbled.

When God Gives Second Chances

Joshua 8:10–21

Teaching Points

- The same city that once chased Israel now falls into their ambush. When God is with His people, He can flip any situation.
- God often works through both faith and strategy. Joshua doesn't just pray—he plans. Israel follows God's instructions with precision, showing that trusting God includes using wisdom, preparation, and teamwork.

DISCUSSION

1. How did God use Israel's previous failure and retreat to lure their enemies into a fatal trap? How is this similar, or different from Pharaoh's army pursuing the Israelites into the sea?
2. What does this story teach about waiting for God's timing instead of rushing ahead? Where in your life do you struggle with patience or wanting things to happen fast?

KEY TRUTH

God's timing matters as much as God's plan. Israel waits for Joshua's signal before springing the ambush. Victory comes when they move in sync with God's timing, not their own impulses.

Renewed Commitment

Joshua 8:30–35

Teaching Points

- After victory, Joshua leads the people back to worship, not self-celebration. Israel pauses to honor God, showing that success is safest when it drives us toward humility and gratitude.
- God's Word is central to the life of God's people. Joshua reads the entire law—blessings and curses—to everyone. This shows that God's people thrive when Scripture shapes their identity and choices.

DISCUSSION

1. Often after military victories, leaders erect monuments to commemorate their greatness. Why do you think Joshua felt it important to erect an altar to the Lord and engrave the law and read it publicly?
2. How can we build "altars" in our own lives—practices that help us remember God's faithfulness?

KEY TRUTH

Obedience includes building spiritual habits, not just winning battles. Joshua builds an altar exactly as God commanded, reminding us that spiritual foundations matter as much as outward achievements.

Memory Verses & Closing

Memory Verses

- Joshua 7:12
- Matthew 10:26

Challenge for the Week: For the next seven days, choose one area of your life where you've been hiding, avoiding, or pretending — and bring it into the light.

This could be:

- a habit you've been hiding
- an attitude you've been ignoring
- a relationship you've been avoiding
- a responsibility you've been putting off

- a sin you've been excusing

What to Do Each Day:

1. Name it honestly before God. Spend 2–3 minutes telling God the truth about it — no filters, no excuses.
2. Ask God for courage and a fresh start. Just like He told Joshua, hear God saying to you: *“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*
3. Take one small step of obedience.
 - Apologize
 - Delete something
 - Set a boundary
 - Tell a trusted adult or friend
 - Replace a habit with a healthier one
 - Make a plan and follow through
4. End the day with gratitude. Thank God for giving you a clean slate and walking with you.

Close in prayer.