

## PART 4

Secrets. Everyone has some. Many secrets are harmless—things better overlooked and forgotten. However, there are some secrets that can destroy. These secrets can undermine and create undertow in life. And when they surface, the impact is catastrophic.

Joshua 7, our text for today, is a story of catastrophic loss after unparalleled victory. It is a great reminder for us that we can be defeated by victories in life.

The Bible warns us about this specifically: “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18 ESV).

While courage is admirable, presumption is the indulgence of arrogance. It is the assumption of invincibility, arrogance and entitlement. When this is present in a man, watch out! Danger!

Read the paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 10:11-13 from *The Message*:

<sup>11-12</sup>These are all warning markers—danger!—in our history books, written down so that we don’t repeat their mistakes. Our positions in the story are parallel—they at the beginning, we at the end—and we are just as capable of messing it up as they were. Don’t be so naive and self-confident. You’re not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it’s useless. Cultivate God-confidence. <sup>13</sup>No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he’ll never let you be pushed past your limit; he’ll always be there to help you come through it.

Today, we learn about the fourth dynamic of courage found in the life of Joshua. It is the simplest to see and yet, I believe, the hardest to do.

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***Courage means selflessness, not selfishness.***

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This characteristic of courage is rooted in integrity and evidenced through a commitment to the well being of others. It is the opposite of presumption and indulgence.

After the walls of Jericho came down and the city was captured, there was another battle, a smaller challenge with two letters: Ai.

Read **Joshua 7:1-5**.

How could a people who seemed so strong, even invincible after their victory at Jericho, experience such a shameful and disastrous defeat at Ai?

Presumption.

Presumption is the enemy of courage. When we presume, we assume we have little risk and little loss. However, in Joshua 7, nothing could be further from the truth.

Presumption makes a selfish assumption: “I can achieve, indulge and enjoy with little effort what others have acquired and achieved through risk, sacrifice and loss.”

Men lose courage when they presume their job is secure, their marriage is intact, their kids are in tow, their money is secure, their church commitment is adequate, etc.



**BE** MEN'S FORUM  
**COURAGEOUS**

<sup>1</sup>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.<sup>2</sup>Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” And the men went up and spied out Ai. <sup>3</sup>And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few.” <sup>4</sup>So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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! <sup>8</sup>O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! <sup>9</sup>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?” <sup>10</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? <sup>11</sup>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.”

*Continued on next page.*

Read **Joshua 7:1-9**.

Joshua cries out to God and expresses his frustration about their defeat in Ai.

Read **Joshua 7:10-13**.

There is no courage or confidence where there is a breach in integrity. In Israel, presumption disarmed courage and limited their future.

Men, do you have secrets today? Have you hidden anything from your wife? Is there shame that could injure your children?

The lesson at Ai is discouraging, but essential. You can be defeated by your victories when you displace integrity and courage with indulgence and presumption.

Let's take a closer look. Read **Joshua 6:18-19** and **Joshua 7:18-21**.

What did Achan do? He took a cloak from Shinar plus silver and gold. Achan thought no one would notice... no one would miss them... he could get away with it. The "forbidden fruit" of victory did not make Achan courageous; it made him a coward. Defiance and disobedience toward God does not bring courage; it brings disgrace.

"Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13 ESV).

How did Achan's secret affect him? It affected him in the same way secrets affect us: disrupted life, defeated prayers, impacted friends, destroyed family, limited church. His secret affected all his connections and those whom he touched. His breach of integrity brought shame and injury to him, to his family and to Israel.

How you live impacts and affects others, either good or bad. Do you live with a courageous

commitment or selfish indulgence? You must never underestimate the amount of damage one person can do outside the will of God. You must never underestimate the amount of damage one person can do when the well being of others is never considered.

Courage is selflessness, not selfishness. This means selflessness in marriage, family, career, pursuits, friendships, etc.

<sup>12</sup>"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. <sup>13</sup>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." <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>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.'" <sup>16</sup>So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. <sup>17</sup>And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. <sup>18</sup>And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. <sup>19</sup>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." <sup>20</sup>And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. <sup>23</sup>And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. <sup>24</sup>And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. <sup>25</sup>And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. <sup>26</sup>And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor. —Joshua 7 ESV

Read **Joshua 7:21** and note the words *saw... coveted... hidden*. Achan went from being a courageous man to being a corrupt man. While Achan "hid" his acquisition, Scripture never hides flaws. The Bible affirms and warns: "'Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the LORD. 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:24 ESV).

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13 ESV).

Courage is rooted in selflessness and often appears in the private moments of life. Having this type of courage means doing the right thing day after day and positively impacting the lives of others. It guards against the presumptuous, indulgent thoughts and actions that tend to bring shame and disgrace. It is being the husband, father, worker, friend, Christian, etc., whose selfless and sacrificial efforts are remembered and honored.

Remember, what you cover, God uncovers. What you uncover, God covers. ■