

The Campgrounds of Unanswered Prayers

Joshua 7

- **Year of biblical narratives**
- So far we have made it through the first 5 books of the bible, known as the Torah or Pentateuch
 - In **Genesis**, we saw Jesus as the word in the beginning becoming flesh. Whom created heaven and earth.
 - In **Exodus**, we saw Jesus as the Passover lamb, whose blood was on the door post of our heart so that we could escape slavery
 - In **Leviticus**, we witness Jesus as our Holy Temple, where we meet with God.
 - In **Numbers**, we have seen Jesus as our Provider, our cloud by day and fire by night
 - In **Deuteronomy**, we believe Jesus was our coming prophet, greater than Moses. Wherever the law of Moses condemned, Jesus came to fulfill.

This of course leads us to the book of **Joshua**, where we will discover Jesus is our victory, our fearless leader, leading us into the promise land.

Today we will be in the book of Joshua, chapter 7. In our story so far, Joshua have led Israel across the Jordan river, and took down the wall of Jericho. You can imagine how **excited** these people are!

Joshua 1:9 ***“Be strong and courage, do not be afraid; do not be discourage, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”***

while Israel was camping in the wilderness waiting on God to tell them what to do next. Joshua sent spies to check out Ai, the men brought back a good report.

[Joshua 2:2-6]

- How did these people who started with so much hope, and fire, ended up melting in fear?
- Where was God? Why did he let them fall? 36 of them was killed (that’s like my whole youth group right there...)

For today’s message we will be dealing with a very hard question. Why does God sometimes not give us the victory, why do we pray and pray for rescue, for healing, and for him to come through, but we receive no answer.

I have titled my message **the campgrounds of unanswered prayers.**

Nothing is more discouraging than unanswered prayer from a God that says, ***“do not be discourage, for I am with you wherever you go.”***

- Where was he when Israel face Ai.
- Where is he, when his church cries out for help?

In times of fear and discouragement we often sound like Joshua in **[verse 7]**
Unanswered prayer in the church has caused so many to turn away from the faith.

Ex: Jason A few weeks ago, I met with a student that goes to our youth group.

- [take a break from God]
- If I believe in the same God that you do, I would give up on him as well.
- We have this image of what we think God is and a lot of time that’s **false idols** that we have built up in our hearts. Then we get discourage when God doesn’t come through for us.
- [praying for a girlfriend] pray for evil
- God is not going to honor your request.
- James 4:3 ***“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”***

- Is your prayer to bring glory to you or God? prayer should be, “God what do you want”, but instead its for our selfish reasons.

Have you ever asked yourself, is God not answering my prayers because of an unrepented sin?

- [Another student came to me and ask for prayer. Healing]!!
- James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”
- So do you have anything you want to confess, “no” [sleeping with GF]
- Ex: If her dad knows about this, would you have the courage to ask her dad for a favor? She is the daughter of God; how do you think he feels when you come to him for a request? And you want me to go with you. NO WAY!
- God is not going to listen to that kind of prayer when you are living in sin.
- Psalm 66:17-18, “For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke. If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”
- If you are not willing to follow the council of God, why do you think you deserve the blessings of God.

One of the most rewarding feelings in the world, is when God answers a prayer, and you know it was not by your strength or by change, it was God that came through.

- Ruth the musical; One time I prayed for just 3 people to ask to help me.
- The officer group praying for Destiny. And I prayed for Britney.
- **Ex: [Student text me]**
 - Nhat guest what!? God answered my prayers, I prayed for this and it actually happened!

Summary: But in our story today we meet a man name Achan, who took some of the devoted things, things from Jericho that God told them to not take for themselves and he hid them under his tent. And because of his hidden sin, God turned his face away from the whole congregation.

I wonder, when someone prays up here, pray for good things, praying for CKN, praying for our church, praying for healing, praying for youth group. I wonder if God will really listen and respond to our church.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not questioning our prayers because I doubt God, I’m questioning our hearts because I fear God!

What if he is withholding our victory, blessings and healing, because we are withholding our devotion. We are turning to other gods and living in sin, so he will not answer our prayers.

What if God response to us as he responds to Joshua in **verse 10-12.**

These things that you are hiding, will kill you. Don’t you understand that these devoted things are not just objects that you hide **under your tent.** These are idols that you hide deep in your hearts.

Idols are not just bad things either, they are good things that you have made into god things. Things that you worship and devote your time, energy, and money towards. And because of these hidden sin God says, “I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.”

Then this is how God told Joshua to handle this situation, in **[verse 13-15]**

It’s clear, that God calls us, to call out individual sin. Because, **God takes sin seriously.** More serious than I care about my own sin, let alone people in this church.

- Can you imagine Joshua. calling the people, dividing them. /Until he got to Achan. God has his ways of **singling out sin** in our lives. For us to confess and repent before him and the congregation.

Joshua said to Achan **in Verse 19**

- If you want to discern if someone is living in hidden sin, watch how they worship. **Hidden sin will prevent you from true worship**, you can't give God **glory** in your sins, you can't **honor** God.
- That's why Achan responded in **[verse 20-23]**

See, what's funny about hidden sin, is that they don't stay hidden for long. God will **single out** your sin and he will **spread it out** before the people.

I don't know if you ever experience this before, (I have) but when God just exposes all your sins and laid them out on the table, you are able to see how wicked and sinful you are. You would also agree that you deserve punishment. You deserve what is coming to Achan.

It says in **[verse 24-25]**

Did you catch that his sons and daughters were also stoned to death? Why?

- Because your hidden sins affect your children.
- Achan was not the only one that knew about the hidden things, everyone in his tent must knew about it also.
- And in this Vietnamese culture I fear that we have this mindset that we must hold onto these **family secret** that are destroying us on the inside.

That's why God said, **"I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction."**

- but **if we are not willing to confess these secret sins, then in the end, it will publicly destroy us.**

[Verse 26]

- Don't you see your sins affect all of us. It affects weather or not God will answer our prayers.
- You have to realized, that God didn't just save you so that you can have a **relationship with him**. He saves you to a **body so that you are one with us**.
- What you do, matters to me, and what I do, should matter to you. We are one body.
 - So if you are a member of this church and you are living in sin, all of us will suffer.
 - If you are a member of my youth group, and you are living in sin, our ministry will suffer.
- It's clear in **[verse 1]**

Gospel: We have all hid sinful devoted things in our hearts, and all of us deserve the fate of Achan. In Ephesians 2 it says, **"Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."**

Jesus had already died for your hidden sin on the cross and he was buried in your place. While Achan's body was buried in a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. **Jesus' body came back to life in three days and he rolled the stone away!** So if you put your faith in his resurrection today, **God will raise us up with Christ** as he promised.

- **Also, God is not going to answer our prayers unless each one of us repent of our sins.**
- Prayer is meant to be lifted up as a corporate cry, a pounding on heaven's gate, a group effort to petition before the throne of God.
- I know a lot of us memories and pray the Lord's prayer in private, but have you realized, that it starts by saying, **"Our father"**
- **I think we have forgotten how powerful and effective our prayers are together.**
- **James 5:14-20**
- **"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."**