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Spiritual Pride + Secret Sin

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Series: Taking Ground
Joshua 7

Good morning, Two Cities Church. Are you guys ready for a building update? I hope so. I'm going to show you pictures in a minute. We're going to celebrate. We're going to be excited. Let me remind you of this: The building is not an end. It's not the end goal. (I need to tell myself this.) The building is a means to a greater end: deeper discipleship and wider mission. We're calling it our *future home and hub* for a reason.

It's a *home* because the church is a family. It's a *hub* because the church is also missionaries. It's going to be a place of worship, and it's going to be a place of witness. Now, if you've not been coming around that long and maybe don't know our story, let me show you the property God gave us. Let me show you a picture of about six months ago. Here's what it looked like...13 acres right outside of downtown. We're very, very excited about it.

For the last six months, we've been doing the groundwork and the foundational work on the property. If you don't know this, the apostle Paul talks about the Christian life and putting down a foundation. Often, it's the groundwork and the foundational work in your life, and also when you're building something, that takes the longest. Sometimes you feel like, "Man, I'm doing the work, and I'm repenting of the sin, and I'm doing everything I can, and I don't even know that anyone sees it."

After you do the groundwork, and after you do the foundational work, you can all of a sudden begin to build. Let me show you what our building looks like right now if you've not seen it. Isn't that incredible? In the back there, that's going to be our worship center and lobby, and in the front there, that's going to be our kids' space and offices underneath. So we're excited.

Let me show you another picture. That's a bigger picture inside of the worship center. Let me show you another picture. That's a bigger picture of the kids' area. Then one

more picture. Look at that. Isn't that incredible? So, guys, the walls have been delivered, and they're being put up. The steel has been delivered. It's being put up.

Here's what I want to tell you. The building of walls... You see that, and why do we get so excited? It's actually a very biblical idea. There's a whole book of the Bible about building a wall. It's called the *book of Nehemiah*. Let me just encourage you. As you drive by the building... I hope you'll drive by the building, and I hope when you drive by the building you'll pray for the building, but if you're the one driving, I hope you'll keep your eyes open. We don't need any accidents near the building. Pray for the building.

When you see the building, here's what I want you to ask: "What do I need to build before we get in the building?" In life, you're always building, you're always defending, or you're always rebuilding. That's it. Those are the three options. When you're young (and many of you are young), you need to build. "I need to build a life. I need to build a marriage. I need to build a family. I need to build a business."

What happens is once you build, then you need to defend. "I need to defend it against decay, against the Enemy, against neglecting it." Then sometimes, if you don't defend what you build, you spend a lot of time and a lot of energy, unfortunately, rebuilding what you already built. We want to help you build, defend, and rebuild here, and we primarily do that through prayer together.

I want to invite you. March 20, we're going to have a night of prayer and worship. We're doing three of those this year. This is our first of it. It's going to be a time where we seek God's face together and ask for God's blessing on our lives, on our families, on our church, and on our city. So, let's pray together, and then we're going to dive into Joshua, chapter 7.

Lord, we just come to you right now in Jesus' name. We are so thankful for so many of your gifts that you've given us. Of course, first and foremost, the gift of salvation, forgiveness of sins, for those of us who are in Christ. Lord, we thank you for other blessings. We thank you for 13 acres right next to downtown in 2023, and we're thankful for the progress of this building and the hope and plan and prayer and goal that we'll still be in this building as a place of worship and witness at the end of this year.

Lord, I pray right now anybody who says, "As I see that building go up, there are some things I need to build in my life over the next eight to ten months... I need to build my marriage. I need to build my family. I need to build spiritual disciplines." Lord, would you help us to defend with the Word of God, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit? Would you help us to defend the things we're building? Lord, if there's anyone in here who feels like, "My life fell apart. The wall broke down," would you

put people to come alongside them and help them rebuild it? We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

This was the sermon in the book of Joshua I didn't want to preach. Why couldn't I be gone *this* week? I was gone last week, and Spencer got the victory at Jericho. I'm back, and I get sin in the camp. This is a sermon today that asks the questions...*What are you hiding, where are you hiding it, how long have you been hiding it, what are the effects of hiding it, and how is your life affecting everybody else around you, either for good or bad?*

This is not a fun sermon to preach. I don't know a lot about a lot of things. I know a little bit about preaching, and what I know about preaching is there are three types of sermons. There are inspiring sermons. I love those. Those are like, "Let's be courageous, and let's take risks. Let's climb that hill. Let's take that mountain. What if we reached these people? What if God did *this*? What if we saw *that*?" Those are fun to preach. Those are inspiring sermons.

Then there are intriguing or interesting sermons. I love preaching those. That's probably mostly what I try to preach. It's like, "Hey, look. Have you ever seen *this* before? This is really cool in the Bible. Here's something familiar, but let me try to make it fresh. Here's an interesting doctrine that maybe you didn't know about. Here's an application for your life from Scripture that maybe you never thought of, and this will help your marriage." Everyone is like, "That's great."

So, there are interesting sermons and inspiring sermons, and then there are just terrifying texts that God gives us...terrifying. Today, Joshua experiences defeat. He experiences failure. He experiences loss. We don't really do well with defeat and failure and loss. As soon as loss happens, we try to figure out why it happened.

Here's what we're going to learn today. I'm not telling you these are the only reasons loss happens. I'm telling you, from the book of Joshua, these are the two main reasons Joshua experienced loss. Here's what they are: *spiritual pride* and *secret sin*. That's what we're going to talk about for the next 40 minutes or so.

Joshua has to learn a principle. There are a few main principles in the book of Joshua, and here's one of the main principles: *Obedience leads to life, to victory, to winning, and to success. Disobedience leads to death, loss, failure, and shame.* Many times, the reason we have a defeat... It did not come from without; it came from within. So, we're going to look at a very hard text, and from that hard text I'm going to try to show you four helpful but surprising truths from a hard text.

01 EVERYTHING YOU DO AFFECTS EVERYONE YOU KNOW

Turn with me to Joshua 7:1. "***But the people of Israel broke faith...***" Did you know you can break faith? Your faith can be broken. You can break your faith. You can't lose your faith, but you can break your faith. Some of you *have* broken your faith. Israel broke their faith. "***...in regard to the devoted things...***"

First of all, do you notice what the first word in this text is? *But*. Here's what you need to know: there are some big *buts* in the Bible. Pun intended. You're like, "Can we laugh about that?" You can. There are positive *buts* and there are negative *buts*. A positive *but* is all of the verses you love. "We were dead in our sins, but God..." We love those. Those are the verses you memorize, you hold on to, you think about, you trust in.

I had a buddy, and he said that Romans 6:23, when he used to share it... He said, "Let me show you the biggest *but* in the Bible." He said, "Here's what it is. It's Romans 6:23: 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.'" We love that. We don't like the negative *buts*. The negative *buts* are, "God was doing *this*, God was blessing *that*, but you..."

Do you see how it started here? The last verse, if you go back to chapter 6, is "The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread everywhere." This chapter starts with a negative *but*. It says the people of Israel broke faith. Do you know how many people there were? Rough estimates tell us three million people. Did three million people have a bad day all at the same time?

It says they broke faith. Do you see how they broke faith? "***...in regard to the devoted things...***" What were the devoted things? This is interesting. In Joshua, chapter 6, God says, "After the battle at Jericho, I want you to bring all the treasure into my storehouse...*all* of it, 100 percent." We'll see in future battles he says, "You can keep some. Bring *this* much, but keep some." In the first one, he says, "Bring me all the gold. Bring me all the silver. Bring me all the iron. Bring me all the bronze."

It says they didn't do something with the devoted things. They didn't bring it to God. Here's what God is trying to communicate. This is such an important principle to understand: *God doesn't do second*. Some of you don't understand that still. God doesn't do second. There are things about God he just doesn't do. You read it and go, "Okay, God doesn't change." You're like, "Oh, thank God. He's the same." Good. God doesn't change.

"God doesn't lie." "Oh, this is great news. God doesn't lie." Here's another one: "God doesn't do second." He doesn't do second in your marriage. He doesn't do second in your finances. He doesn't do second at work. He doesn't do second in parenting. He

doesn't do it, *can't* do it, impossible, won't be done. God says, "Give me the first." The principle of the tithe is not just 10 percent; it's the first 10. It's "Give and trust." They didn't learn this lesson. Some of *you* haven't learned this lesson.

I'll show you what happens next. We're still in the first part of verse 1. "***...for Achan...***" We're going to call him "Mistaken Achan." He'll soon be "Quakin' Achan." By the very end he'll be "Achan Fried Like Bacon." We'll see this. Some of you know this story. "***...for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah...***"

Do you know this is the longest introduction of any person in the entire Pentateuch? Why? Why are you telling me his dad, his granddad, his great-granddad, and his tribe? Usually, if someone is super important, here's what you get told: "Joe, the son of Bob." If they're really, really important, you get told, "Joe, the son of Bob, the son of Tim." Why are we getting three generations?

Let me show you this. "***...took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against [Achan].***" It doesn't say that, does it? "***...against the people of Israel.***" Israel breaks faith because one person hides something in their tent (we'll get there), steals something, decides, "I'm not going to give," and God is angry at everyone.

Here's the first surprising truth from a hard text: *everything you do affects everyone you know*. Why do we get his dad, his granddad, his great-granddad, and his tribe? We're getting his social community and context. We're going to see at the very end his family is going to get in trouble, as well, along with him.

Everything you do affects everyone you know. I know you don't like that. Who likes that? No one likes that, because you'd like to think, "What does it matter what two consenting adults do when they're by themselves? What does it matter if I do something? Doesn't it only hurt and harm me?" You *are* an individual, but you are not an island.

Here's what this means. Let me give you the bad news, and then I'll give you the good news. Here's the bad news: whenever you sin, and whenever you do something wrong, it is way worse than you think and affects way more people than you want to know. The good news is when you do something good, it is way better than you think and affects way more people than you know.

Do you know the average person will have a thousand (this is the average person) significant relationships in their life? I'm not saying a thousand best friends. A significant relationship is a relationship in which you will have influence over the

person. The average American right now (they did a study) has 320 stored contacts in their phone. Think about that.

If someone asks, "Are you friends with so-and-so?" my answer is "No" unless I have their cell phone number, because if you have a cell phone number, you have access...immediate, instant, constant access. So, we know the average American right now has 320 people in their life they know well enough to have in their phone. Everything you do affects everyone you know.

We know this. Right? This can happen about people you don't even know. Have you ever been driving...? You're on I-95 or you're on I-40, and somebody makes a foolish mistake. They're not paying attention, or maybe they were drinking and driving, and they get in an accident. You don't even know this person, and you're stuck in traffic for four hours. And not just you...thousands of people.

How can someone I not even know do something and affect me? I don't know what happened with the Southwest flights when they were grounded. I haven't followed it. But I wouldn't be surprised if we found out it was three people's fault and something with technology. It's like, "Wow! Can three people mess something up for tens of thousands of travelers?"

I mean, think about how many dinners got rescheduled and business meetings got reordered and plans got rearranged. You are an individual, but you're not an island. You're a citizen of America. You're an employee of a company that also might be connected to the stock market. You're a player on a team. You're a student in a college. You're a member of a church. You're a part of a family.

You may wish you were some island and you could do whatever you wanted and it affected no one else, but that's not the truth. See, here's the hard truth we get in this text. You're not going to like this. Sin is social. What happens is when I sin, it shapes me, not for good. When you sin, it shapes you, and then you go out and interact with the rest of the world, and we have to deal with the sin-shaped you.

I'll give you some examples. Here's a classic example. People think, "Man, pornography... What does it matter? I delete my browser history right afterward. I only look at 'free porn.'" There's no such thing as free porn. What you're doing when you look at pornography, among many other things, is you're propelling an entire demonic industry that is violent toward women and dehumanizes them, along with men.

When you look at pornography, you're not just looking at pornography; you're propelling an entire industry. Then your mind gets shaped. We know the actual science on this, that porn changes your mind. I've met men who can't be intimate

with their wives because of the amount of pornography they've watched. I've met single men who are afraid to talk to a real woman. They know how to interact with pixels, not a person. A real woman can say, "No." They don't know what to do with that. They've never seen that their whole life.

Alcohol abuse, and many other addictions... What happens with an alcoholic is, almost always, an alcoholic becomes a liar. The part of the brain that is inflamed on lying is inflamed in every alcoholic's brain, because what you have to do to become an alcoholic is lie to yourself and lie to every person around you, eventually.

What you do as an addict is you begin to isolate yourself more and more. You'll look at your schedule, and your addictions will dictate your schedule, which will pull you away from your family and will pull you away from other relationships. And what does sin do, among many other things? It separates things. So, you will lose your relationships with your addition. It affects everything.

Here's a really serious example, as if those weren't serious: suicide. I don't know what to do with suicide. We're having more and more a generation of people who are suicidal. If that's you, we want to walk with you and be pastorally sensitive to this. Suicide (I don't know how else to say this) is unbelievably selfish. People are in pain. People feel weakness. It's not the unforgivable sin.

What you'll see (and I've met many families like this over the years) is somebody in their family will have committed suicide all by themselves in a moment of weakness, and the family has to live with it for decades. It's not something you get over; it's something that, by the grace of God, you get through. It is unbelievably hard on people, and they get angry, and they grieve. It can affect families... There's the grace of God, but it can affect families for generations.

If you call Two Cities home, everything you do affects us. When you write your goofy, long Facebook posts (I'm not thinking about any one person), it affects us, guys. We are doing great financially, *really* great. We're ahead of budget. We've been ahead of budget every year. We're strong. New people are joining. Many people in our church are generous. But I want you to understand this: your lack of generosity (there is a group of you) is deeply affecting our church.

We can't do everything we would like to do and God would have us do because you're not generous. Guys, we have a \$5 million budget. At the size of our church, if everyone here was tithing, our budget should be \$10 million. There is \$5 million of gospel ministry and mission we can't do because of some of you. Everything you do affects everyone you know. Okay, guys. We're going to have to move fast. We're only through verse 1. Let's continue on.

02 EVERY BATTLE YOU FIGHT NEEDS EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT

Verse 2: ***"Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai..."*** That does not stand for artificial intelligence. Some of you go, "This is a prophecy. The church is going to fight artificial..." No. We'll see. Maybe. ***"...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."***

Now, Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho. Here's the second surprising truth from a hard text: *the greatest hindrance to future success is past success*. Here's the principle: we don't do very well with blessing. Do *you* do well with blessing? You get blessed, and you just keep giving. In fact, you give more because you've been more blessed. You're blessed, and you feel just as dependent on the Lord today, with all of your blessings, as you did when you didn't have them.

The human condition, because of sin, is we don't do well with victory. We don't do well with winning. We don't do well with blessing. See, Joshua... It says he sent out the spies. Now, you have to understand the text carefully and look at how he did things in the past. He does the same things... This is how spiritual pride works. Joshua has spiritual pride, which comes from being successful.

When you have spiritual pride, you don't often notice it. Joshua is not going to notice it for a few verses until he's flat on his face before God. Here's what happens. You start doing the same external things, but you forget the internal, spiritual things. Joshua still sends out the spies. This is the only time he doesn't seek the Lord before he goes out, but he always sought the Lord privately, so no one knew.

You can learn to do the external things and get pretty good at them, and the internal things go away. I'll show you this here. It says, ***"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.'"*** In other words, "Joshua, I looked at it. It's a few people. Let's send the JV team."

Here's a principle: fear makes your enemies look bigger. We know that. I've preached that sermon. That's the beginning of the book. That's the end of Deuteronomy. That's the book of Numbers. When we have fear, the enemies in our lives look bigger than they really are. Here's the second part of that: when you're prideful, your enemies begin to look smaller than they really are.

Guys, lust is a big enemy. It's no joke. Anxiety is a big enemy. Satan is an intelligent, evil being. The value system of the world is nothing to play around with. We need our enemies to be right sized. Joshua, in pride, along with his men (because of their past

success, which is the greatest hindrance to their future success), decided, "This is not a big battle that we need to send a lot of people in." Look at what happens. Verse 4:

"So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, 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."

So, here we go. They fail, and they fear again. See, here's what happens. Here's another way to say it: we become vulnerable after the victories in our lives. Here's what basically happens. It doesn't usually happen if you're just successful one time. By the way, Joshua has been successful multiple times now. Moses liked him. They cross over the river. People listen to him. He wins a battle. He's becoming famous.

What happens is when you're successful across time, you begin to think you're maybe special. It's one option among many options. It might be also God is blessing you, but you begin to think you're special. You begin to think you're unique. You begin to think... We don't articulate these things. It's my job to help us articulate these things. We begin to think, "Maybe I'm the exception to the rule in this area of our life."

Here's really what happens: you trust more in your competency than in your character or your communion with Christ. Let me give you an example from my life from preaching. I've been preaching now for 17 years, so, getting close to half my life. The first time I ever preached, I was 21 years old.

I was in college, and my college pastor came up to me and said, "You're preaching in a couple of weeks." I said, "Okay." He said, "Yeah, I want you to preach at our weekly event." I thought, "Oh, I'm not ready for *this*." There were only, like, 40 people at the event. He said, "I want you to preach at this event."

Man, I went home, and I think I confessed every sin I ever did. I think I called every person I ever sinned against and said, "Would you forgive me?" I was so prayed up. I was so dependent on the Lord. "Man, I've got to be godly. I'd better not be sinning this week." I preached it, and I don't even remember quite how it went, but here's what I've learned over the years: I know how to put a sermon together.

I know it needs an introduction. I know it needs clear language. I know you need illustrations. I know you need to talk about people's marriages. I know I need to talk about your finances. I know there needs to be an emotional flow. I know I need to talk about what the culture says. I know we need a moment at the end to respond. The longer I do this, the more I know how to do this.

Sometimes I'm standing back there in that corner, and I'm thinking to myself, "How much have I prayed today? I'm about to pray to start the message. Is this the first time I'm praying today?" It's easy to trust in your competence or your capacity instead of your character and your communion with Christ. The second surprising truth: past success is often the greatest hindrance to future success. We become vulnerable after the victory.

03 EVERY DEFEAT WE EXPERIENCE NEEDS TO BE PROCESSED WITH PRAYER & PEOPLE

Let me show you the third truth. This one is going to surprise some of you. *Sometimes you need to stop praying.* You're not even going to believe this text if you've never seen it before. ***"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."***

We're going to look at Joshua and his prayer life, and like all of us, it's a mixed bag. There are some good things he does. There are some bad things he does. Let's talk about the good things he does. First of all, he processes defeat, processes failure, processes loss, with people and by prayer. *Prayer* is he's going to go to God in prayer, and *people* is he brings the elders together. I think this is a really good principle.

When something is not going well in your life, you need to pray about it...with other people. I just think there's something powerful when a husband and wife say, "You know what? I know you've been praying for our daughter who's having a hard time in high school, and I've been praying for our daughter who's having a hard time in high school. I think we need to pray for her together. Something might happen. We might get some insight."

"Our marriage is a mess. I know you've been praying to God and telling God how I need to change, and I want to tell you I've been committed to praying to God and telling God how *you* need to change, but I thought maybe we could pray about our marriage together." Most Christians, when they pray, only pray by themselves.

Joshua gathers them. He also has the right posture. Sometimes your soul, like Joshua's, is overwhelmed, and it affects your body. He just fell. Sometimes you need to do something with your body so your soul will feel it.

I wouldn't do this, but if I said right now, "Everyone, please get on your knees; we're going to pray," you would be able to feel the temperature change in the room. Sometimes you do something with your body for your soul. I've read the whole Bible.

There's no verse in the Bible that says, "During worship, please stand there with your arms crossed and look bored," but that's what many of you do. Posture is important.

Let's go on. Here's the prayer. **"And Joshua said, 'Alas...'"** Do you know what *alas* means? We don't use that word anymore. Modern translation: "Bummer." That's what it means. It's like, "This stinks!" It's a Hebrew term of disgust. He says, **"Alas, O Lord GOD..."** What Joshua does well is he complains *to* God. We are to complain *to* God, but not complain *about* God.

I know what you're thinking. You're like, "Kyle, that's not true because there's a verse in the Bible that says, 'Do everything without complaining.'" Yes, that's talking about not complaining horizontally. It's not saying we can't complain vertically. How do I know that? Almost every single psalm is a complaint to God. This is very important to understand.

Some of you complain. You don't even know. You are just so negative. You complain about *this*, and you complain about *that*, and you're very hard to be around. It's very hard to be around somebody who complains. Also, the other thing about complaining is when you complain... If I'm your friend and you're complaining, I'm like, "You're right. Your boss is terrible." My tendency is just to want to come alongside you. Or "You're right. Your husband is a goofball."

When you complain to God, he sees the whole situation. "Just get it out. Come on." In marriage, they say there are three sides to the story: what she said, what he said, and what really happened. God always sees what really happened. He's like, "Give it to me. Cry about it again. Have the heart funeral. Yell for a second. Got it. Good. Okay, you don't have to do that horizontally now. You can do that vertically. I can handle it."

We can complain *to* God. We *should*...get it off our chest, help us process it. Now here's the danger, and Joshua steps into this. He moves from complaining *to* God (two-millimeter shift) to complaining *about* God. This is what he shouldn't do. Here's what he says: **"...why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us?"**

He's doing the oldest trick in the book. This is "When trouble comes, I blame God instead of taking responsibility." Literally, technically, this is as old as Adam. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned and God confronted them? Adam says, "The woman..." If you read it very carefully, he doesn't blame Eve. "The woman *you* gave me..." It's really blaming God.

Well, he blames God, and then look at what happens. Verse 7 continued: **"Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!"** This is why I believe the Bible: it's so honest even about its heroes. Here is great Joshua; "Be strong and courageous"

Joshua; warrior, soldier, man of God, victorious Joshua, and he is saying... There's nothing new under the sun. He's saying the exact same thing Israel said. "I want to go back."

Israel said, "I want to go back to Egypt." Joshua... I can't believe it. It's right there. He says, "I want to go back to the other side of the Jordan. I want to go back into the wilderness." It's like, "Man, you just won a battle before this, and you saw the miracles. God is faithful. You heard the word of God."

What does it take for you to want to give up and go back? Sometimes you're like, "I'm going to step out. I'm going to be a public Christian," and someone says something about it. One comment, and you're like, "Okay. I'm done being a public Christian. I'm giving up and going back." Right?

Some of you get married, and a couple of hard conversations, a couple of fights with your spouse, and you're already thinking the *D*-word, or you're having that fantasy life about how much better life was when you were single. Parents can do this with their kids.

We live in the generation where everybody wants to give up and go back as soon as they can. "I don't like my job; I'll transfer." "I don't like my school; I'll transfer." "Things are hard in my city; I'll move." The test in quality and character in a man or woman is what they can put up with, by the grace of God, without giving up and going back.

He *does* do one good thing. I'll show you this in verse 8. He does one good thing in his prayer. He says, ***"O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! 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?"***

What he does well is he appeals to God's glory and God's great name. I told you a couple of weeks ago God loves God. Here's what he's saying to God: "I need you to act not for me, ultimately. I want you to act because, if you don't act, you're going to look small." Charles Spurgeon used to say, "When you talk to God, you talk to him like a lawyer." You make your case before him.

You walk and you say, "God, how much longer are you going to look small on the college campus? How much longer are you going to seem irrelevant in our culture? How much longer are you going to let your people be treated like this? God, for your great name, do something."

Or as one of my friends likes to say, "God, we have a problem." He said, because we're in Christ, if you're a Christian, because we're connected to Christ and we're in covenant (I've taught on that before; it's a deep, connected relationship), if I have a problem, God has a problem. Every family knows this. If Mom has a problem, Dad has a problem.

My buddy will spread out prayer cards. He's much more spiritual than I am. He will spread out prayer cards all over his desk, and he'll walk in a circle around his desk over those prayer cards, and he'll just say for each one of them, "God, we have a problem." "God, we have a problem. We can't get pregnant." *We have a problem.*

"God, we have a problem. We have a prodigal. *We have a problem.* I need you to come through and work in this." What's amazing is it's when he says, basically, "God, we have a problem" and appeals to God's great name that God responds, but maybe not the response we were thinking. Look at what he says. You wouldn't believe this if it wasn't in the Bible.

"The LORD said to Joshua..." Remember, Joshua is on his knees, and Joshua is face down before God. God says to Joshua, ***"Get up!"*** I can't believe it's in the Bible. Look at what he says next. ***"Why have you fallen on your face?"*** In other words, "Why are you praying about this? There are certain things, Joshua, you don't need to pray about." Some of you go, "That doesn't sound biblical."

Yes, we're always to pray. We're to pray without ceasing, but there are certain things you don't need to pray about. Do you need to pray about breaking up with your non-Christian boyfriend or girlfriend? No, you don't need to pray about that. Do you need to pray about repenting of sin? No, you don't need to pray about that. You might need to pray, "Lord, how would I do it? Who would I tell?"

Do you need to pray about taking care of widows and orphans? Nope, we have a verse. I don't need to pray about that. Do we need to pray about giving to the kingdom of God? No. I might want to pray about how much, but I don't need to pray about that. So, then why would people pray?

You have to understand. You have to have a sophisticated understanding of humanity and a sophisticated understanding of sin and spiritual pride. Sometimes we pray to watch ourselves pray. You get in your room and close your door, and no one is home. Or you go in your prayer closet or in your study, or wherever you are, and you pray about your marriage.

You pray for maybe 10 or 15 minutes, and that's a lot for you, so you feel really good, and then you walk out. You prayed to watch yourself pray. Then you walk out and go,

"Man, that was amazing. I bet my husband doesn't pray for our marriage." "I bet my wife doesn't pray for our marriage."

Yeah, here's the problem, guy or gal: you haven't done anything in Ephesians 5 about your marriage at all. You've been praying to delay and distract yourself. You've been praying as an escape and an excuse. You already know what you need to do in this area of your life, and you've not done it. So, here's what God says to him.

"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. 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."

I want us to understand this. God says, "I'm going to tell you the reason things aren't going well in your life, Joshua." Because Joshua is going, "Why did I lose the battle, and why did 36 people die?" God is going to say, "It's not what you think. It's not strategy."

Sometimes we have a problem, and the answer is simple and straightforward. You need some more education. You need to meet with somebody. You need to go to counseling. You need to buy something. You need new technology...whatever. But I don't know how many of us don't have the category in our minds as "Maybe things aren't going well for me, and there's a spiritual, moral reason."

We live in a society today where everybody thinks the solution is a pill. We're not against pills. Pray and take a pill. There you go. We're not against pills. Hear me say that. What we *are* against is the idea... For example, at the Super Bowl, 75 percent of the ads were for pills. I want us to think about that for a second. "There's a pill for that." Well, maybe not.

We tend to think, "If something is wrong, here's what I need to do. Oh, I have to get my kid into a different school." Maybe not. Maybe you need, when they're in school, to go up into their room and pray over their whole room. Pray over their clothes. Kneel next to their bed and say, "God, would you haunt them in their dreams and bring them to Christ?"

Maybe sometimes it's not "We need to take a pill." Maybe it's "You know what? We need to fast about this for a month. We need to go into a serious time of prayer and fasting for our marriage, because we've worn out a couple of counselors and the books don't work. I think maybe there's something deeply spiritual going on here."

I have a friend, and he has a guy he knows, a dad, and his daughter is in her 20s and completely ideological and agenda driven and atheistic and hates her dad and hates the church, even though she grew up in a great church. The dad is trying to figure this out, and my friend, who's a pastor, is trying to help him. The dad goes, "Do you know what I think it is? I think it was in sixth grade she didn't have any friends."

He said, "No, maybe that wasn't it. She had a teacher in eleventh grade. Maybe it was the teacher in eleventh grade." My friend who's a pastor said to the guy, "Man, why do you have no category for the spiritual? Why are you trying to explain this simply psychologically and developmentally, and you don't even have a category for 'This might be a demonic oppression and a spiritual warfare on your daughter'?" Jesus said there are some things that only come out by prayer.

So, he gives him the reason. I just want to encourage you. Sometimes the reason isn't what you think. You may have to pray and get into the unseen realm and get some time with God, get some time together, and say, "God, what is going on in our kid's life? What is going on in our marriage?"

Here's what God says to him. Verse 13: **"Get up!"** I'm thinking to myself, "Is Joshua still on his face?" If God told me to get up, I'm getting up immediately. He needed to hear it twice. ***"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.'"***

Here's what he's saying. Here's what God does. When there's a problem, God chooses the person who is the spiritual leader in that environment to handle the problem. In the home, this is Dad. In other words, as I've heard it said before, if Jesus Christ comes knocking at anyone's house and a kid answers, he's asking for Dad, not Mom. There is a unique responsibility fathers bear, and though everything in the house may not be your fault, it becomes your responsibility to deal with.

There's a very simple reason for this: groups can't lead. I don't know if you know that. Groups don't lead. Groups govern. Groups vote. Individuals lead. Even if you see a group leading, there's an individual in that group who's leading. An individual must be called out, given responsibility, and held accountable. This is what happens with Joshua.

I told my kids... We were talking about something else one time. I said, "Guys, I feel so responsible. If anything would happen at Two Cites, I would feel ultimately responsible." I said, "If anything happened to any of our staff or our elders, I would feel ultimately responsible." Then my daughter, who's thoughtful, said, "Except if it's

the building. Then it's Pastor Dave's fault. Right?" I said, "Yeah, yeah." But there's a responsibility.

So, Joshua says, "I have to take responsibility for this. Though I'm not from that tribe or that family or know Achan personally, I'm going to have to take responsibility." Here's what he does. Verse 14:

"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. 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."

Here's the principle we learn here: a church that does not confront sin condones it. This is teaching us that sin must be dealt with. This is an early teaching on what we now call *church discipline*. Church discipline is just we deal with sin for the good of that individual sinner, who's living in rebellion, and as a warning to everybody else watching that this is where sin leads.

Every once in a while, someone... It actually just happened after service. Someone is asking, "Hey, what church...? I'm moving" or "I'm going to college" or "I got a new job, and I'm looking for a church." I only look for two things in a church. I don't care how the pastor dresses. I don't care what type of music they have. I don't care what building they meet in. I don't care how large or small they are.

I care about two things: Do they preach the Bible, and do they practice church discipline? It's the only way to say, "We are dead serious." I would not send somebody... I would not want my daughter growing up in a church that did not preach the Word and did not practice church discipline.

Now don't get afraid. Church discipline is not we call you out and yell at you in front of everyone. Most church discipline is we take sin seriously, and 99 percent of church discipline happens in our church weekly, and it's just one individual talking to another individual about a sin in their life with grace and truth with a desire for that person's best in mind. Every once in a while, it gets to a place where it needs to grow beyond that, but most church discipline takes place at that level.

04 EVERY SECRET SIN WILL BE FOUND OUT

That leads to the final surprising truth, which is this: *there is no such thing as secret sin*. I mean, you may have secret sin that your wife doesn't know about, your husband

doesn't know about, your kids don't know about, your friends don't know about, your brother doesn't know about, your mom doesn't know about, but in regard to the mind and heart of God, there's no such thing as secret sin. I'll show you this. Here's what it says.

"So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken." So, he calls everyone and goes, "Guys, guys, we have to deal with some secret sin." Imagine if I did this this morning. "Hey, guys, we have to deal with some secret sin. There's one person in here who has been sinning. I mean, really grievously. It's secret sin. It's going to be exposed today." And I went, "It's from *this* side of the room." Everyone over *there* is like, "Oh, thank God."

This is what they basically did. The high priest had two stones, a black stone and a white stone. They would use these, tradition tells us, and they would throw them down, and the white stone meant "Yes," and the black stone meant "No." It's like, "Okay, the tribe of Judah."

What I'm wondering is if, at this point, Achan has any thought of "Oh my goodness. I'm about to be found out." I don't think so. I think he thinks, "There's a one in 12 chance. There are still a lot of clans, and there are a lot of families, and I'm not going to get found out." Look at what happens here.

"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. 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. 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.'"

Interesting. He says, "I want you to glorify God by confessing your sins." A lot of people have a very romanticized, very warm and fuzzy view of what it looks like to glorify God. Sometimes glorifying God is confessing your sins. Confessing sin is the same thing as agreeing with God. When you confess your sin, you just say two things: "I was wrong, and you were right."

That's good for you to know, and that glorifies God, and it warns other people if you do it publicly. "God, I was wrong about sexuality stuff. I thought I could be a part of the hookup, shack-up, breakup culture. I was wrong, and you were right." Now here's what else we need to learn about confession that no one wants to admit: your confession needs to be as large and loud as your transgression.

So, if you go on Facebook and write some terrible things about some person, and then you go to them personally and apologize, that is not enough. You go back on

Facebook, and you say, "I was wrong. I'm so sorry. Please share this post. I regret what I have said. I was wrong."

This means that when some husband disrespects his wife or some wife disrespects the husband in front of the kids and does something, you call the kids back into the room. When you call them down, you say, "I'm so sorry the way I talked to your mom." You don't just apologize in the bedroom to her. You apologize in front of the kids and say you're sorry to everybody for the way you treated him or her.

This is what's called *communal discipline*, and every family that's biblical practices it. This is what happens. It means that... I don't know. Say you find out that Junior has been sinning. He has been lying to you. If the kids are age appropriate, you pull everyone around the dinner table and say, "Hey, guys, your mom and I found out that Junior has been lying to us for three months, and here's what's going to happen.

Here's what's going to happen to Junior, and this is what happens to people who lie to their parents. This is what will happen to you if you do the same thing." Have you ever wondered why younger siblings are always better behaved than the older ones? It's because they saw Mom and Dad deal with the foolish and sinful decisions of the older child, and they said, "I do not want to go that same way."

We'll see what happens here as it closes. ***"And Achan answered Joshua, 'Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did...'"*** This is going to be the same language Eve used. ***"...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."*** Do you see that? "I saw, I coveted, and I took."

The problem with Achan is he looked at the spoils a second time. I was taught as a young man, when it comes to lust, when it comes to being attracted to beautiful women, or something like that... I was told (and this has been told to a large group of young men), "You'll never be able to avoid the glance, but you don't have to do the gaze."

The problem with Achan was not the glance. The problem with Achan was the gaze. He saw, he coveted, and he took. Then look at what he says. ***"And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."*** "I'm hiding something, and I'm hiding something under the things I'm hiding." That's a whole other sermon.

Do you ever wonder...? What was he even going to do with that cloak? As soon as he wore it, someone would be like, "Where did you get *that*?" He's going to be in trouble. Here's what we're learning: we all have secrets. Now, the purpose of this message

(please hear me) is not for everyone to go home and try to figure out the deep, dark secrets of their spouse.

No one can live under "Tell me your darkest secret, please, now." No one can live under "We're going to dinner and talking about all of the things you've never told me." No one can live under that. What we *are* saying is that people do have secrets, and people particularly have secret sin.

There's a website called *PostSecret*. It's definitely PG-13 or above, so you can decide if you want to check it out. On that website, people post their secrets. Most of them are silly and you laugh, but there's a secret on there... This is a real one that I read: "When I get mad at my husband, I wear the jewelry I cheated on him with." People have dark secrets.

Here's what secrets do. Secrets exhaust you, and secrets make you prideful. You go, "How is that possible?" Secrets exhaust you because you have to spend a lot of time covering up your secrets. You usually have to spend money, eventually. Maybe not at the beginning, but you start spending money. Then, if you're in relationship with anyone, you have to make sure they don't know you're spending *that* money.

Your secrets will ask more time from you, so you'll have to find more ways to have time to do them, but then also act like you weren't doing them. Then, of course, if your conscience isn't completely seared, you'll have to live with your secrets. Isn't the language we use we *keep* secrets? It's like something I hold on to. It takes a lot of energy to keep something. That's why when you come to Christ and come out of your secret sin, even though you're like, "I'm all in," you're more free. You're less exhausted.

How does it make you prideful? All secret sin makes you prideful. Here's why: you think you're getting away with it. You're like, "I'm smarter than my spouse. He doesn't know. I am smart enough. I've been doing this for years and no one knows." It's impossible to partake consistently in secret sin and not become prideful. So, here's what happens.

"So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. 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.

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. 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."

This is hard for us because the family dies with him. Now, Deuteronomy 24:16 says every person will die for their own sins and no one will be put to death for someone else's sin, so here's what we know: the family was complicit. You're not going to like this last part of the sermon either.

We don't know what the family did. Did they steal it with him? Maybe. Did they help him bury it? Maybe. Or did they just know about it and look the other way? What are you tolerating in your home? Culture is what you teach and what you tolerate. Many parents are amazing at teaching the right things, and then they tolerate all of the wrong things.

What happens here is the whole family is put to death. Then it says in verse 26, ***"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."***

Notice this is the second pile of stones in the book of Joshua. The first pile of stones was when something good happened. The second pile of stones was when something bad happened. God gives us both piles of stones. You need to decide if you want your life to be the pile of stones in Joshua 4 or the pile of stones in Joshua 7. Your life will either serve to be an example of *what* to do or your life will serve to be an example of what *not* to do.

Now, what's interesting about all this is, if we go back to the very beginning... Because we see the family is connected to him, so they all die. A lot of us don't like this idea that we're all connected, but if I can just bring us back to Genesis, chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 3, as we close, let me remind you: at the very heart of the entire teaching of the Bible and the entire gospel is that we're all connected.

Somehow, what Adam did in a garden thousands of years ago affects us today. Adam is like, "Dude, all I want to do is... It's just me and my wife here, and let me just do something God said I shouldn't do." It's like, "Thanks for the sinful nature, Adam. Because of this, Adam, you brought sin into the world." One guy making a decision thousands of years ago has affected billions of people, because God says, somehow, you were in Adam and are connected with Adam.

That's the bad news. The good news is the Bible also says that all of us, if we trust in Christ, can be in him. In Romans 5, it says Jesus is a second Adam. Here's a big doctrine for you. It's called the *doctrine of federal headship*. It's that somehow we're all connected to two people, Adam and Christ...Adam by birth, Christ by new birth.

Somehow, when we trust in Christ, everything Jesus did... Somehow, we were in him, and we did it with him. It's like I get to heaven and God says, "That was so awesome when you fought Satan in the desert." I'm like, "I don't remember... Yes. Okay, yeah. I was in Christ."

"That was so unbelievable how you lived a sinless and perfect life and never did anything wrong." I'm like, "I... I was in Christ. That's right." Somehow, when Christ died on the cross, we were in Christ, and he suffered the penalty and the punishment for us. When we realize that, how could we have spiritual pride? How can anyone honestly stand at the foot of the cross and be spiritually prideful about anything?

What I want to do, if you'll just close your eyes, is I want to give us an opportunity to respond. There were a lot of different things. This text was pregnant with so many things. Different things will hit people. I just want to close together, and wherever you need to confess something...

The first thing is some of you may need to confess spiritual pride, that you have been successful, and it has made you prideful, and you need to remind yourself that you need Christ and you need community. For others of you, it might be a secret sin in your life. You knew it. You knew it when I said "secret sin" at the beginning. You don't like that phrase.

You knew what it was immediately. You just need to say, "Lord, I'm going to confess, and I'm going to forsake." For some of you, it's going to be, "There is somebody..." It might be your daughter. It might be your husband or wife. It might be a friend. "There is somebody, and they are heading in the wrong direction. I need to do what Joshua did. I need to go and confront them, and I need to have a hard conversation."

Would you give us grace, Lord? Lord, we are so grateful for the gospel. We are so grateful that in John 8, when a woman was going to be stoned, you said, "He who has no sin cast the first stone," and you forgave her, Lord. We know that because of the cross, Lord, our sins can be forgiven and our pasts can be cleansed. We thank you for all this. In Christ's name, amen.