

Achan Steals and Lies to God



Overview

Materials You'll Need

- construction paper
- markers
- glue
- hole punch
- yarn
- cotton balls or pompoms



Scriptures

Josh 7

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God becomes angry when we sin against Him, but He also forgives when we repent

Behavioral Objective(s)

To tell the truth, even when it is hard to

Memory Verse

"You shall not steal ... nor lie to one another." (Lev 19:11)



Bible Knowledge

Obedience Versus Disobedience

Compare what happened when Achan sinned and when the Israelites eliminated the sin in their community. It is evident that God always blessed the Israelites when they got rid of their sin.

A. Achan's Sin

1. Many people died (Josh 7:5)
2. Israel's army was paralyzed with fear (7:5)
3. God said He might withdraw His presence from the people (7:12)
4. Achan and his family had to be destroyed (7:24-26).

B. The People Got Rid of Their Sin

1. Encouragement from God (Josh 8:1)
2. God's presence in battle (8:1)
3. God's guidance and promise of victory (8:2)

Ai

Ai was located two miles from Bethel. It was a small city west of Jericho. Like the previous city,

Joshua sent out spies to look at the land. But instead of waiting for God's instructions or asking for His guidance, Joshua went ahead and sent out a small army of 3000 men to attack Ai. He thought that because "the people of Ai are few," he could use his military prowess to win this battle. To his dismay, the Israelites lost thirty-six lives as they were chased away, likely towards Jericho.

The Bible records that the hearts of the people melted when they learned of the defeat at Ai. As a matter of fact, these were the same words Rahab used when describing how the people of Jericho felt when they realized the Israelites were near (Josh 2:11).

Achan

Achan and his entire family were stoned to death once his sin was found out. Why was the punishment so severe? In Joshua 7:11, God says that "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them ... they have both deceived and stolen." These words highlight the seriousness of Achan's sin. In order to keep Israel a holy nation, God had to get rid of all sin completely.



Understanding Your Students

It is important to explain to your students why it is wrong to steal. If someone took something that belonged to them without asking them first, would they like that? What if someone took their favorite toy and never gave it back? How would they feel? They would probably feel sad, and maybe a little hurt or angry. Also remind the students that the eighth commandment prohibits stealing, and we must always obey the Ten Commandments.

Sometimes people steal because they want something so badly that they will do anything to get it. Things such as toys, laptop computers, and money can be so important to some people that they feel like they absolutely must have them. This is how Achan

probably felt about the things that he took from Jericho. When we want something we don't have, it can turn into greed. When we become greedy, it can lead us to steal. People who steal show that they don't love others very much, and they demonstrate that they don't trust God enough to allow Him the chance to provide for their needs.

This lesson also provides a good opportunity to teach the importance of confessing our mistakes. It is often hard for children to admit their mistakes because their confession is almost always coupled with punishment. While sometimes it hurts to confess our mistakes, it will be worse if we don't. For instance, we often have to tell more lies to cover up previous ones. If we confess at the beginning, we would only make one mistake, but if we lie, then we could make two or more mistakes. Then, the situation is far worse than it was at the beginning.



Vocabulary

Repent

to ask for forgiveness

Wicked

something evil and horrible

Sacrifice

to give up something that is important to you

Canaanites

all the different people who lived in the land of Canaan



Before You Teach

Why did Achan's entire family pay for his sin? The biblical record does not tell us if they were accomplices to his crime, but in the ancient world, the family was treated as a whole. Achan had disobeyed God's command to destroy everything in Jericho; thus everything that belonged to Achan would be destroyed. This example reminds us that sin has drastic consequences, so we should take equally drastic measures to avoid it. How can we keep sin away? Prayer and the fullness of the Holy Spirit can give us the strength we need to overcome sin. But sometimes, it is also necessary to avoid or literally run away from situations that may cause us to be tempted.

We also learn that the faith of a community of believers is the sum of the faith of the individuals. This story reminds us that our own personal spiritu-

al cultivation has an impact on the spiritual well-being of the entire group. Thirty-six Israelites died because of Achan's secret sin. The Israelites lost courage because of Achan's greed. Although it was one bad apple, it ended up corrupting the entire nation of Israelites.

What does this mean for us? The story of Achan serves as a stern warning to us, as members of our local church. We need to watch ourselves with all caution, because our actions, even if they are in private, may very well impact God's treatment of our entire church community. God is omniscient. We cannot hide anything from Him or try to run away from Him. Furthermore, we have a greater responsibility when our actions can affect other believers. What can we do when we have sinned? We should confess our sin or mistake and pray for forgiveness. The Bible records that God is righteous and will judge each person accordingly. He is also slow to anger. God is merciful and will restore those who come before Him with a repentant heart.



Bible Story

People and Things in Jericho Are Destroyed

In the last lesson, we learned that Joshua and the Israelites went to attack Jericho. Because they listened to God, the walls came falling down and the people entered Jericho easily. But before the soldiers went inside the city, Joshua gave them specific orders. He told them, "Destroy everything except the silver and gold, and the brass and iron things. Those things may be kept for the Lord's work. Destroy everything else." So, could the Israelites keep clothes they liked for themselves? (No.) Could they keep pretty jewelry for their friends? (No.) God told them that they had to destroy EVERYTHING. They were only allowed to take silver, gold, brass, and iron things for God's temple. Gold is a yellow colored metal. Silver is a gray and shiny colored metal. Can you think of some things made out of gold or silver? (Jewelry.) Brass is a metal that is very shiny, and used to make horns and instruments. A long time ago, they even used brass to make mirrors because it was so shiny. Iron is a very heavy and hard metal. Think of a hammer; it's very heavy, right? The top, heavy part is made out of iron. Joshua told them things that were made out of gold, silver, brass and iron were supposed to be given to God for His temple. They weren't allowed to keep those things for themselves.

Once the soldiers went into the city, all the people in Jericho were killed, according to God's commandment. Only Rahab and the people at her house were saved. Why did God allow the people in Jericho to die? God doesn't want people to die. He wants them to repent and live righteously. But the people in Jericho didn't want to do that. They didn't want to listen to God. God gave the land to the Israelites. The Israelites were not allowed to act like the people who lived there before. More importantly, they were not to worship idols. Canaanites did horrible things in their worship. They would sometimes kill their own children and offer them as sacrifices to idols. That is why God told the Israelites to destroy almost everything.

The Israelites Are Defeated at Ai

After the Israelites won the battle of Jericho, Joshua turned toward the town of Ai. Just like

Jericho, Joshua sent spies to Ai to see what the town was like. But this time, Joshua did not ask God first. After the spies returned, they said, "You won't need more than two or three thousand men to capture this little town." It seemed like it would be so easy, they didn't need God's help. They didn't pray to God to ask Him for help. They forgot the reason they won at Jericho was because of God's help.

Joshua sent a small army to take the town. They didn't send the big army because the spies said Ai was very small. Who do you think won this battle? The Israelites thought they would win, but do you know what happened? They lost the battle! They lost very badly, and 36 of their soldiers died. The people of Ai even chased the Israelite soldiers back to their camp. How could this be? Ai was supposed to be an easy battle compared to Jericho, but they lost. When they won at Jericho, who helped them? (God) This time, they didn't ask for God's help. Without God, even something easy proved to be hard.

After the battle, many of the Israelites became afraid. If they lost against such a small town, how would they win against other big cities? If their enemies heard about how they lost, then their enemies would gang up on them like bullies! No wonder the Israelites became scared. Joshua was afraid, too. He tore his clothes and threw himself down on the ground to pray before the ark of the covenant. He was sad that God did not help them win the battle.

Joshua Inquires of the Lord

"Lord, why did you let us enter Canaan? We won at Jericho, but now that we lost at Ai, our enemies will surround and kill every one of us. We will surely all die!"

The Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up! You should not be surprised that you lost against the people of Ai. The reason you lost against Ai is because someone has taken some things in Jericho they were not supposed to take. They have stolen and they have lied. Because of this person, Israel will not be able to win against their enemies. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy that person who has stolen things from Jericho." Do you remember what the Israelites weren't supposed to take from Jericho? Could they take clothes? (No.) What were they supposed to do with the gold, sil-

ver, bronze, and brass things? (Give them to God's temple.) God told Joshua that someone had taken something they weren't supposed to take.

After Joshua heard this, he told the Israelites, "God told me that we lost against Ai because someone disobeyed the command and stole things when we defeated Jericho. Until we destroy the things that have been stolen, we cannot win against our enemies. Prepare yourselves tonight, because tomorrow we will find out who took things that belong to God." Most of the Israelites did not steal anything from Jericho. They probably wondered who stole something and why they broke God's command.

Achan Confesses

Early the next morning, Joshua had all the people come forward in family groups, starting with the biggest family groups. After a long time, they found a man named Achan. Joshua said to him, "Tell me what you have done."

Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against God. This is what I have done: when I saw a beautiful coat, five pounds of silver and one pound of gold, I stole them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent." Ah! So Achan was the one who took things that he wasn't supposed to. The night before, when Joshua told the Israelites that someone stole things from Jericho, did Achan tell the truth? (No.) When Achan realized that God

did not help the Israelites win at Ai, did he say that he did something wrong? (No.) Achan even hid the things he stole, and waited until the last moment before he said that he did something wrong. Because Achan did something wrong and lied, 36 Israelites died in battle, and they lost against the people of Ai.

So Joshua sent messengers and they took the things from the tent and showed them to him. The people stoned Achan and his family and burned up all his things, even the things that Achan stole.

Then God stopped being angry at the Israelites and wanted to help them. Later, the Israelites went back and attacked Ai, and this time, God helped them win the battle. God helped them because no one disobeyed God's commands.

God Helps Us When We Listen and Trust Him

In today's lesson, we learned that we have to always listen to and depend on God. When Joshua got ready to fight Ai, he didn't ask for God's help. Then he found out that someone had stolen and lied about taking things at Jericho. So they lost the battle. But when the Israelites listened to God and followed His words, He helped them again.



Check For Understanding

1. **What was the name of the city the Israelites attacked after Jericho? (Ai.)**
2. **Did Joshua ask God what he should do before attacking Ai? (No, he decided that 3000 men would be enough.)**
3. **Did the Israelites win at Ai? (No.)**
4. **Why didn't the Israelites win? (Someone had disobeyed God and stolen things from Jericho.)**
5. **What was the name of the person who stole and kept the gold, silver and beautiful coat? (Achan.)**

6. **What happened to Achan after his sin was discovered? (He and his whole family were stoned to death. All his belongings, including the things he took, were burned.)**
7. **Why did God give such a hard punishment? (God wanted His people to stay holy and pure. He didn't want them to act like the Canaanites.)**
8. **What happened when the Israelites went to attack Ai the second time? (God helped them win.)**
9. **What does God teach us about stealing and lying? (Allow students to answer.)**



Life Application Story

God Knows Everything

One Saturday, Mrs. Laurie taught a lesson about stealing and lying to God and to man.

"Class, remember that God had given the Israelites the Ten Commandments to obey?" Mrs. Laurie asked the class.

"Yes, we remember, Mrs. Laurie!" the class said.

"Which commandment tells us that we should not steal?" Mrs. Laurie asked the class.

Many boys and girls raised their hands wanting to answer her question.

"Okay, Jean, please tell us," Mrs. Laurie said.

"The eighth commandment tells us not to steal," Jean said.

"Good, Jean," Mrs. Laurie said. "Now who can tell the class what commandment tells us not to lie?"

Again, many boys and girls raised their hands.

"Tommy, please tell the class," Mrs. Laurie said.

"The ninth commandment tells us not to lie," Tommy said.

"That's right, Tommy," Mrs. Laurie agreed. "I want to share a true story with you about a boy who stole and lied to his mother. There was once a little boy who stole one dollar from his mother's purse when she wasn't looking. He wanted to buy some candy and he knew his mother wouldn't buy him any because she said that candy was bad for his teeth. At first, it was not a big deal, but ever day after school, his friends would stop at the grocery store and buy junk food to eat. He wished he could do the same thing, so he decided to take the money one day when his mother wasn't in the room. He opened her purse and grabbed a dollar. His heart was pounding the entire time but he was relieved he wasn't caught. The next day, after stealing the money, he went with his friends to the store and bought some candy. He ate some of it on the way home. Then he saved the rest of it in a secret place in his room.

"That same night after he bought the candy, the little boy's mother noticed that the only dollar bill she had in her purse was missing. She thought maybe she had put it somewhere in the house so she asked the little boy if he had seen the one dollar bill. The little boy lied and said, 'No, Mom. I haven't seen your money.' Then he went to sleep. Afterwards, the boy's

mother went to clean up the playroom and found some candy wrappers in the trash. She wondered where they came from.

"The little boy's mother went up to his room right away and asked, 'Honey, did you eat candy today? I found wrappers in the playroom.' The boy became afraid and said, 'No, Mom, I didn't. Maybe those wrappers are from long ago.' The mother didn't know what to think, but since it was late, she said good night and left the room. She would talk about it more the next day. Later on that night, the little boy couldn't go to sleep because he felt bad about lying to his mother. Finally, after tossing and turning for a long time, the boy decided to tell his mother that he had taken her money and that he bought candy and ate it.

"At first, the mother was angry at him for lying and stealing but she was relieved that her little boy had later told her the truth. The little boy promised his mother that he would not steal and lie again because it made him feel bad. The mother also told him that stealing and lying are things God does not like. She hugged him and said that she was glad he felt sorry and told her the truth in the end," Mrs. Laurie finished.

Tommy raised his hand and Mrs. Laurie called on him.

"God's not happy when we steal and lie because it breaks His commandments," said Tommy.

"That's right, Tommy," Mrs. Laurie replied. "God likes it when we tell the truth. Even if we did something wrong, we should be honest about it, because if we lie about it, like the little boy, he had to tell more than one lie to cover it up. We should always be honest about what we do. God is happy when we tell the truth."

Questions to Think About

1. **Why did the boy steal the money?** (He wanted to buy some candy to eat, like his friends.)
2. **How many times did the boy lie?** (Twice, once about the money, and once about the candy.)
3. **When we do something wrong, should we lie so we don't get into trouble or should we tell the truth?** (We should tell the truth, even if we are punished. God is pleased when we are honest and He will forgive us.)



Activity 1

Achan Sins Against God

What kinds of things did Achan take? Circle the right words below. (gold, silver, clothing)

God does not want us to _____ (steal) or _____ (lie).



Activity 2

Should We Lie?

Look at each set of pictures. Which people obeyed God by telling the truth? Which ones did not? Put an "X" over the people who did not.



Activity 3

Memory Verse Hanging

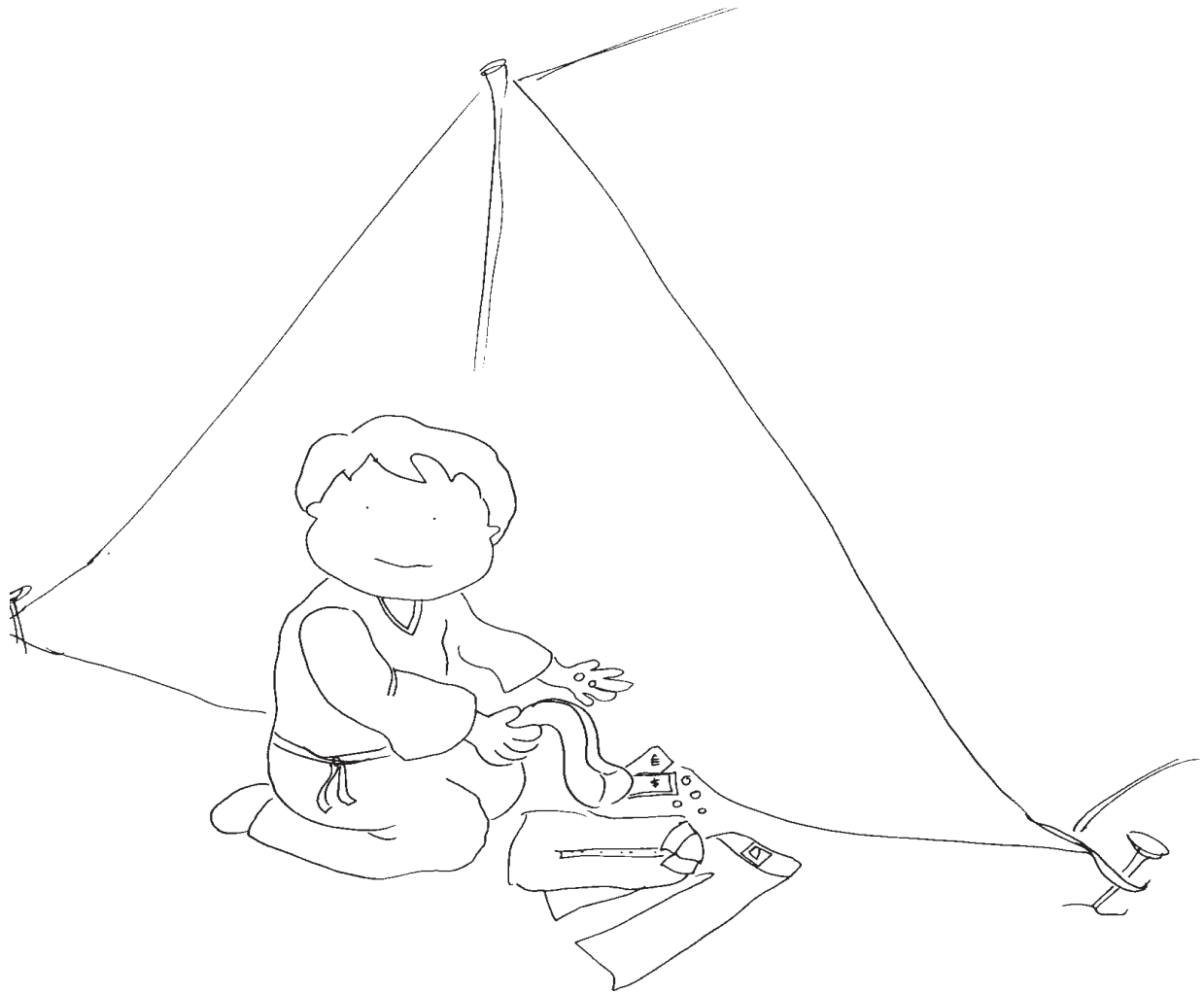
Materials:

1. construction paper
2. markers
3. cotton balls or pompoms
4. glue
5. hole punch
6. yarn

Directions:

1. Provide each student with a piece of construction paper.
2. Help them write today's memory verse on the paper.
3. Have each student glue the cotton balls or pompoms to create a border around the memory verse.
4. The students can decorate their paper.
5. Punch holes on the top corners of the paper and string a piece of yarn through the holes to create a wall hanging.
6. Encourage the students to hang their memory verse in their room to remind them that God doesn't like people who steal or lie. We should be honest and obey God's commandments.

Achan Sins Against God



What kinds of things did Achan take? Circle the right words below.

GOLD

FOOD

SILVER

CLOTHING

God does not want us to

_____ or _____.

Activity 6:2

Should We Lie?

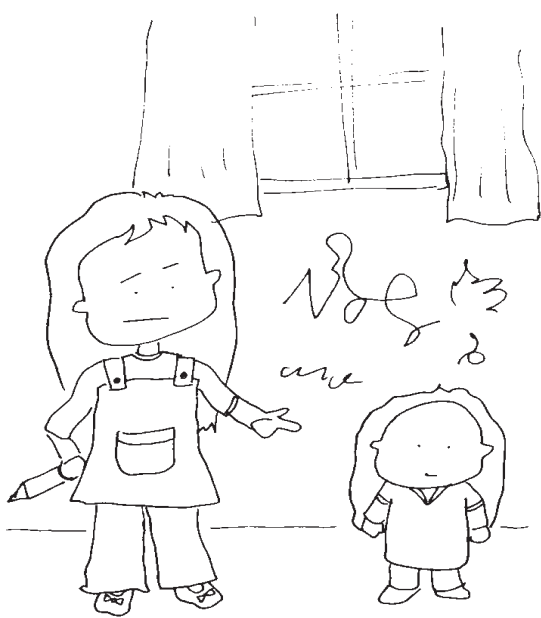
Look at each set of pictures. Which people obeyed God by telling the truth? Which ones did not? Put an "X" over the people who did not.



"It was the dog who did it."



"I broke it. I am sorry."



"My sister drew all over the wall, not me!"



"I drew on the wall. I am sorry!"