



CHRIST'S COMMISSION FELLOWSHIP

Los Angeles

Dgroup Discussion Guide
June 29, 2014

Word:

Scripture: Joshua 6 and 7

Today God is First (T.G.I.F)

God's vision for the Israelites was to free them from bondage at the hands of the Egyptians. And so He called Moses. He told Moses that He has seen the affliction of His people at the hands of the Egyptians and I am going to bring them to a good a spacious land flowing with milk and honey. Any other person would have been passed on this and come up with all sorts of excuses just to escape doing God's will. But this is God's vision. . . God's plan and not ours, so He will make sure that it will come to pass.

In our Scripture today, we are at the point that after 40 years in the desert, the Israelites are now ready to enter the Promised Land. This land has already been given to them, He had said that the land was theirs all they had to do was possess it. They were told to take possession of the land. they come first to the city of Jericho. Jericho fell and they took possession of the land. They were supposed to wage war against the second city, Ai and so they sent 3,000 men went to take possession of Ai. But this time they failed. 36 men of their number died and the rest were discouraged — let us look at Joshua 6.

Most military commanders would plan out his attack. He would strategize his armies strength and weaknesses. But God plans were different. They were not based on human understanding of warfare — God's instructions were ² ***The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. ³ You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. ⁴ Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."***

Although God's plan did not make sense, Joshua still obeyed — and because of their obedience they were able to take possession of Jericho.

The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. ¹⁸ But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." ²⁰ So the people shouted, and the priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. ²¹ They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

When the walls of Jericho fell, it tumbled inside and not outside. if it had fell outside it would have hurt the Israelites, but it tumbled inside to destroy the city. The instructions were that the first fruit, the treasures of the first city — the gold, silver and other valuables were to be sacred to the Lord. Everything else has to be destroyed except for Rahab and her family.

But the Israelites were unfaithful, in particular Achan. The reason why the Israelites were not able to defeat the second city Ai was because there was sin in the camp. Achan was tempted by the plunder and chose to keep some for himself. When Joshua confronted Achan, he confessed his sin. Joshua then ordered that the plunder be taken, Achan's sons and daughters and all his belonging to be taken to the valley of Achor and they were stoned to death. (Joshua 7: 16-26) Because of the sin of one man, his entire family died with him. All sin has collateral damage. One sin affects a lot of people. One sin is enough to contaminate a whole batch. Paul writes a little yeast puffs up the whole dough.

It was unthinkable that they could not conquer Ai. . . it was a much smaller city than Jericho. Jericho was situated up on a hill, protected by a wall and yet they were able to take possession of it. But God showed them if you follow Me and obey Me nothing is impossible.

So what was different with the battle for Ai? There was sin in the camp and they did not pray. They did not consult God. In Joshua 7:2, we can clearly see that they did not consult God. They did not know at that time that there was sin in the camp, and often when there is sin we choose not to pray. This can be either because of pride or maybe embarrassment that we have sinned. . . or maybe fear that God might not listen to you. These thoughts and beliefs are lies from the devil . . . and will just draw us further away from God. But God says to just call upon Him and He will answer. (Psalm 91:15)

Believing that God will not answer our prayers because we have sinned against Him is a lie from the devil. Instead keep your eyes on God's vision for you. In the case of the Israelites, God had given them the whole Promised Land, they were just supposed to take possession of it. But after their victory at Jericho, they no longer consulted God.

There are three reasons why the Israelites lost at Ai:

1. There was sin in the camp.
2. They did not pray.
3. They had become proud.

How can we say that they were proud? In Joshua 7 verse 3- 5, Joshua listened to the spies without consulting God. And he sent just 3,000 men. We see from the verse that when the men of Ai killed 36, the rest of the Israelites got discouraged and ran. They became proud thinking that it was easy for them to capture Jericho, it would be the same with Ai – they had forgotten that in Jericho God was with them whereas here at Ai they were planning things on their own without praying or presenting their plans to God.

Often times we too become guilty of this – becoming presumptuous when it comes to God. Believing that since God had done it before in Jericho, He will automatically do the same for Ai. We tend to forget that in everything, we have to continue to obey and pray. We tend to forget that in all our planning, the most important factor is that we have God in our midst. But as long as there is sin, and as long as we don't pray, and as long as we succumb to the sin of pride. . . we cannot please God. And if God is not pleased, then His presence will not go with us.

The root of the problem is this - - - They did not put God first.

Think of it – if Achan had not put God first, then he would have stolen the devoted things. If Joshua had put God first, he would have prayed first before sending out spies to Ai. If the Israelite spies had put God first, then they would have not become overconfident in themselves and instead depended on God's power and presence in order to take possession of the land.

So why then did they not put God first? It is simply because they did not love God enough to put Him first.

We are all guilty of this. We have not put God first in our lives. We have not loved God above and before all things. We have not made Him the center of our lives. Often we are the center of our lives and our faith is just one aspect and not the other way around. It should be that Christ and our Christianity should be the center and everything else is an outflow of our love for Christ. It is so easy to lose sight of who should be first – but as disciples of Christ, we should be constantly aware and continuously re-direct our paths so that God is always first in our lives.

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In fact, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 said “ **for Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**” The life of a disciple should be driven by his love for God. In everything we do, our driving force and thought is because we love God. Paul says that the love of God compels him. . . this means that it is his love for God that motivates him, that drives him, that pushes him to continue with his ministry despite and in spite of all the things he had to endure. It is like you are a prisoner to that love that you have no other choice but to move in the direction that it directs you to do what you do. He explains that when you receive the love of God, when you understand the love of God and have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior that there is a need for a change accompanying that profession of faith. He says that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the One who died for them.

Similarly when we profess our faith in Jesus Christ, we need to desire the change in our lives because of our love for Him. The same love should motivate us to share that love to others. This our response to God's love for me – we worship, we read His word, we evangelize, we go into a discipleship relationship, we disciple others, we give, we serve. . . . all because we have felt God's love and presence in our lives.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:10-12

God sacrificed the life of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ to appease His own anger towards our sin. When you say you love somebody, there is a required accompanying action. It is impossible to declare your love for someone and be passive about it. It is when we embrace the truth of God's love and allow this love to change us that we are able to love one another. If people around us see that we love God and everyone around us, even if they have not seen God they have a glimpse of what and who God is through our love for God.

The only reason why we know of God's love is because He started it all 1 John 4:19 tells us “ ***We love because He first loved us***”. We had no idea what love is if God did not demonstrate His love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8). And the beautiful thing is that we do not have to do anything or be anyone for Him to love us. He says in Jeremiah 31:3 “***I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness***” Since eternity past until eternity future, He has loved us. The concept of love exclusively comes from God.

In order to live a life of love – it is quite easy. Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:35-40 ***One of them, ³⁵a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And He said to him, ““YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ ³⁸This is the great and ³⁹foremost commandment. ³⁹The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*** To consider others better than us, to put the needs of others before yourself, to want to do good for our fellowmen, to pray for our enemies, to share the good news of Jesus Christ to others . . . to love God to put others before ourselves.

Know the love of God, experience the love of God, share the love of God – that is the gospel made complete in us.

So starting today make God first.

Works: Journaling task

Today God is first. How can we apply this in every aspect of our life? Please be specific.

1. In our relationship with our spouse and children. In our relationship with our parents.
2. In the workplace.
3. In ministry.
4. In the streets.
5. In our freetime. In our pasttimes.
6. In how we speak, dress, or act.