

STAND UP! WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOWN ON YOUR FACE?

Joshua 7:1-15

We were canoeing a small river in northern Wisconsin, heading for its outlet into Lake Superior. Our friend was alongside in his kayak. We had not been on this stretch of water before, but our friend's map showed that this part of the river had no serious rapids or obstructions. What could go wrong?

Suddenly the water ahead took on the sinister form of a straight line. We all back-paddled and paused to take a closer look. Not far ahead the river cascaded over a concrete barrier. It was a low-head dam designed to keep invasive sea lampreys from coming upstream to spawn. In a profound understatement our friend remarked, "This isn't on the map."

On the rivers of our lives we encounter a lot of obstacles not on the map, if we had a map in the first place. At those stressful times, the Lord may ask us pointed and revealing questions.

Group Discussion. What are some unexpected difficulties that drive people to seek answers from God?

Personal Reflection. When have you seen a sure thing abruptly go wrong?

The Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt, spent a generation in the wilderness, and finally crossed the Jordan River to take possession of Canaan. They attacked and defeated Jericho in obedience to the Lord's careful instructions (Joshua 6). Jericho was to be destroyed, and

nothing was to be looted, except that silver, gold, and articles of bronze and iron were to be set apart for the Lord's treasury (Joshua 6:18-19). *Read Joshua 7:1-10.*

1. The writer of Judges reveals in advance that there is secret sin in the Israelite camp (v. 1), but Joshua and the elders do not yet know about it. How does the attack on Ai go terribly wrong?
2. Before the attack on Jericho, Joshua met the "commander of the army of the LORD" and "fell facedown to the ground in reverence" (Joshua 5:14). Then it was a posture of worship and awe; now he is "facedown to the ground" before the ark of the LORD in desperate prayer and petition. God asks Joshua why he has fallen on his face. Why is Joshua on his face?
3. Paraphrase Joshua's complaints in each part of his desperate plea (vv. 7-9).
4. When have you asked similar questions or made similar statements in the face of an unexpected bad turn of events?
5. The Lord's sharp command "Stand up!" (v. 10) was certainly meant physically: get up off the ground and onto your feet! How might the action of standing up physically lead Joshua to stand up in other ways?

6. Read *Joshua 7:11-15*. Joshua begged for an explanation, and the Lord gave him an immediate and clear answer. Identify the specific sin(s) committed.

7. Achan was singled out and specifically identified in verse 1. Then why do you think the Lord says, "Israel has sinned" (v. 11)?

8. How can the sin of one person affect an entire church, Christian fellowship, or ministry?

9. When have you been facedown before the Lord—literally or figuratively—asking him "Why?" and then you realized that the "Why?" was because of sin, either someone else's or your own, or both? Share with the group if you are comfortable.

What did you do with your realization, and what were the results?

10. Where and how do you need to step-up and take responsibility for things that seem to be going wrong in your church fellowship, your family, or in your own life?

11. What steps will you take this week to help repair those situations?



Consider ways sin may be harming your relationships or the relationships within your fellowship, family, or another group. If the sins are your own, confess them honestly before God and accept his forgiveness. If the sins are those of someone else, pray about how you might humbly and lovingly confront the offender.

NOW OR LATER

After Achan's sin was dealt with (Joshua 7:16-26), Israel was told to attack Ai again and this time not to be afraid or discouraged. Study the resultant successful campaign in Joshua 8:1-29.

Study Hebrews 12:4-17 and Deuteronomy 29:16-28. Both passages caution the people of God to stay faithful to him and to avoid letting any bitter root poison their relationships with the Lord and with each other.