

JOURNEY THRU JOSHUA: UNDERCONFIDENCE

TOUCH BASE:

We've asked in the past what is one thing that you think you are better at than others. Now let's explore: is there anything that you think you might be at least competent at doing, but you are not confident about your skills?

How would you describe 'confidence in God'? What does it look like to have an appropriate confidence in God? What might be overconfidence? Under-confidence?

PRAYER

BIBLE STUDY:

From the crossing over the Jordan, to the Battle of Jericho, to the unfaithfulness of Israel, we should expect the people to be a little weary about the next steps. Yahweh has promised the land, and Israel is to be His instrument in implementing the "ban", and yet in the midst of it all ... the setbacks of chapter 7 and the deaths of the soldiers at the hands of Ai, as well as the destruction of Achan and his family would have left the Israelites reeling in anguish. (If this type of thing were a part of today's culture and God had us root out the unfaithful among us, we would be sad to lose an entire family due to sin.) This would have shaken Israel's confidence and may have had an impact on Israel's certainty and excitement about entering the land.

But chapter 8 begins with the Lord again giving the commands to move forward. Ai is next for destruction and Joshua is given his orders. He carries them out according to God's instruction and soon the king of Ai is dead and all of his people with him. The city is burned, but Israel is allowed to take the plunder and enjoy it. This calls for a worship celebration, and Israel participates in a covenant renewal. Things seem to be back on track and looking great for the future.

As we begin our time thinking about the sermon, is there anything that really stood out to you that you would like to share? Is there anything that you've been challenged to consider (or reconsider) as a result of what you heard?

One important aspect of this passage is that it begins with the encouragement of the Lord for Joshua. Pastor Clint noted the "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" of v. 1 and compared it to chapter 1 and "Be strong and courageous" (1:6 and 1:9). That earlier passage really was a call to faith. **Why do you think that God begins His instruction to Joshua this way? What might have been going on in Joshua's mind, and what might Yahweh be trying to overcome or accomplish?**

Do you remember a time in your life where the Lord moved you out of discouragement? How about a time when He spoke to you (directly or thought someone else) to accomplish something in your life? What was your response to this movement in your life?

Is there something for us to learn from this as we look to support one another in faith? How should we respond to unfaithfulness in the lives of those around us?

Pastor Clint discussed the differences between the two battles at Ai. One resulted in defeat and the other in success. One was the result of over-confidence and the other likely had some under-confidence. One had failed to rely on God, and the other relied on Him completely. One ended in a “ritual” of death, the other in worship. **What are some of the contrasts between the people-groups that you see in the passage? The contrasts between Ai and Israel? Between the battle plans? What differences do you see between them?**

Thinking of your own life ... are there contrasts where you can see that the results are not expected and perhaps because God is not part of your plan?

The final aspect of the chapter described the worship that Israel engaged after the success at Ai. There are two key aspects of this story: first, that the instructions given in Deuteronomy 27 are being carried out by Israel – this is a matter of obedience *and* faith; secondly, that Joshua is a leader in the same vein as Moses. **How do we show our obedience and faith after God delivers us a victory? This could be any victory – from the smallest “God-moment” to the biggest miracle of our lives.**

One aspect of this worship is that it is about community, not individualistic worship. What differences do you see between individual worship and community worship? Are there ‘holes’ in our current methodologies of worship because it often leans toward the individual? What could be changed to embrace the community-aspect of worship?

During the worship at the mountain, offerings are given – yet the key seems to be Joshua writing on the stones, and the reading of the law. **Why is this so important to Israel? What role does the law play for Christ-followers? How do we define the standard by which we live?**

Pastor Clint offered three suggestions to answer the key question of *“How can we increase our confidence in God learning from the Battle of Ai and covenant renewal?”* He suggested that we increase our confidence as we learn from the confidence in God as we learn from the contrast of His presence and His absence; from the contrast of Godly leadership and worldly leadership; and from the contrast of public commitment and a lack of ritual.

How is confidence learned from the contrast of God’s presence and absence?

How did you feel about Pastor Clint’s statement that too often we pay attention to worldly leadership without even knowing it? Do you agree or disagree? What can someone do to avoid this?

What rituals take priority in your life? Would you describe worship as one of the key issues?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

What other thoughts come to mind as we close our time out together? What haven’t we discussed that you would like to bring up? What do you still have questions about?

