

# Visible Effects

By Tony Guerrero

**We** often recall the story of Joshua's great victory at Jericho. It was a sound victory that was won not by brute force or military strategy, but primarily through Joshua's obedience to God. Many a pastor has used this story to encourage this kind of obedience to the Lord. Even my first article for *Worship Leader*® magazine used this story to illustrate the role of the musician in spiritual warfare (comparing modern day musicians in the Church to the priests who marched around Jericho blowing trumpets).

Often, though, we tend to ignore the next story in the Bible—Joshua's dismal loss at the battle at Ai, a battle his army should have easily won based upon manpower alone.

## BIG QUESTION

So, if God caused the victory, did He also cause the defeat? The truth is, really, that man once again failed. These two stories show the contrast of man's obedience and man's disobedience, and how God blesses one and may choose to keep His blessing from the other. Just as God rewarded Joshua's obedience at Jericho, so too did He allow defeat at Ai because of the sin of one of Joshua's soldiers, Achan.

One of the rules set at the battle of Jericho was that no one was to take any of the riches of the city—everything was to be destroyed (Joshua 6:17-18). Achan, unbeknownst to Joshua, ignored this rule and secretly kept some of the plunder for himself—gold, money and fine clothing—and buried it under his tent.

Because of this one man's sin, God withheld His blessing of victory from Joshua at Ai. Joshua, still unaware of Achan's sin, questioned God (Joshua 7:7), asking why He would allow them to be so defeated (especially, he must have thought, after such a victory as Jericho). God silenced Joshua and told him that there was sin in his army that must be weeded out.

## RECEIVING GOD'S BLESSINGS

Now, this may seem unfair to Joshua and the rest of his army. After all, they remained obedient, didn't they? And God had rewarded Joshua's obedience the first time; why not reward his obedience this time?

I think the point God was making was that there are no sins hidden from Him. More than being a story on how to start witch-hunts, God is reminding us that there is no fooling Him. And to drive that point home, God even allowed Israel's defeat at Ai. The next level of this story reminds us that one person's behavior can affect even an entire nation.



## SPREADING DISEASE

Achan's brokenness was likely deeper than his act of hoarding treasure displays. There is no way to know exactly what his inner life was like, but I believe it is safe to assume that his clear disobedience was rooted in deep turmoil. And we all know how broken people who have no desire to find healing and grace have the distinct ability to spread the disease to those around them. It's a cautionary tale for us as leaders of teams. Because one person (the leader most of all) has the ability to influence a whole team and how they are able to effectively minister. Of course, we are not God. We cannot see the hidden sins of those on our teams, but we can continually call them (and ourselves) to

strive to be blameless in the sight of God.

Jerry Bridges' new book, *Respectable Sins* helps shed light on just how easy it is to let sin invade our lives and ministries, especially those sins that seem somewhat tame to us. Bridges lists some of the common "acceptable" sins, such as anxiety, frustration, unthankfulness, lack of self-control, anger, judgmentalism, sins of the tongue, gossip, envy, jealousy, worldliness and of course, pride, just to name a few.

But the list goes deeper, even on ministry teams. And while it can be easy to share some of our "respectable" sins publicly: "I got so angry yesterday." "My family isn't always my first priority." "Sure, I make illegal copies of MP3s." Our private sins do not see light very often: "I watch pornography." "I steal from work." "I'm having an affair." We should be ever mindful that our private, hidden sins are not only poisonous to our lives, but to our ministries and to the ministry of others. And, most importantly, they aren't hidden from God.

Thankfully, God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23), because we need God's mercy every day. We need God's help in keeping us from our sins—our willful, defiant sins, our hidden sins and our private sins.

This prayer in Psalm 19 should be our daily mantra:

Who can discern his errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.  
Keep Your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.  
Then will I be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

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*Tony Guerrero is the Director of Creative Arts at Saddleback Church. He is also a recognized jazz trumpeter and is finishing up his latest CD featuring several jazz notables. Visit [tonyguerrero.com](http://tonyguerrero.com) for more information.*

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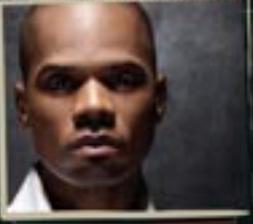
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