

## Taking Responsibility for Your Life Leader Guide Session 3: This Is No Time to Pray

### Video Overview:

In the Old Testament, Joshua followed Moses as Israel's leader, taking the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This fulfilled the promise God made 650 years earlier, that this land would be given to Abraham's descendants. Finally, after centuries of slavery in Egypt, Joshua led people into this land.

By then it was already populated by pagan cultures that were extremely evil—they sacrificed children to pagan gods, and their women were treated with unspeakable horror. God in essence was saying, "I gave them time to right their wrongs, but they did not; it's best now that these cultures be eradicated."

The first pagan city that God's people encountered was Jericho. God made their conquest of Jericho easy, showing their need to trust in him.

They came next to the much smaller city of Ai. The Israelites expected a quick conquest here. However, one Israelite man had violated God's instructions by secretly taking silver and gold from Jericho.

The soldiers of Ai promptly routed Israel's forces. This shocked and frightened Israel. In grief, Joshua and other leaders fell on their faces in prayer. But God commanded Joshua to get up, and asked why he was facedown on the ground. God informed Joshua of the sin that had occurred and gave instructions for discovering who had done it. He emphasized that Israel could not stand before her enemies until the stolen treasures were destroyed. In essence God was saying, "This isn't the time to pray."

The story dramatically shows what happens when one member of a community acts irresponsibly. Everybody connected to the guilty person eventually reaps what he has sown.

# Journey CHURCH

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From our perspective, that doesn't seem fair, but that's the nature of irresponsibility. We're connected, and one person's irresponsibility eventually becomes everyone's responsibility.

That's why we must learn to confront those among us who are acting irresponsibly. The most loving thing we can do for them is to refuse to put up with their irresponsibility.

Arising from this story in Joshua 7 is this question for all religious people: "Are you hiding behind your prayers? Are you praying when you need to stand up and do something?"

If God has already addressed an issue in his Word, then we don't need to pray about it. We've already been told what to do.

Likewise, if we're trying to pray our way out of something we behaved our way into, it's time not to pray but to stand up and do something. Prayer is no substitute for taking responsibility.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Can you think of any instances in your life when you've tried to mask your irresponsibility with prayer and religious talk? If so, what was going on in your mind and heart?
2. Andy speaks of "misguided compassion," when we facilitate the irresponsibility of others instead of holding them accountable. Do you find this to be a tendency in your life? If so, why do you tend to respond this way to the irresponsibility of others?
3. In what ways, if any, have you felt that you're bearing the burden caused by the irresponsibility of others?
4. Do you ever find yourself tempted to blame God in a situation involving human irresponsibility (either your own or that of others)? If so, what causes you to feel this way?

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5. Why do you think it's so difficult for many of us in our culture to confront the irresponsibility of others?
6. Think about the groups of people you're involved with. What do you consider to be your most important responsibilities toward them? How can you strategically set an example for them of acting responsibly?