

5-Day Devotional: The Cost of Hidden Sin

Day 1: The Progression of Temptation

Read: Joshua 7:20-21

"When I saw... then I coveted... and took them... and hid them."

Achan's confession reveals a pattern we all know too well. It starts with a look, moves to desire, then to action, and finally to concealment. Eve followed the same progression in the garden. So do we.

The battle isn't won when we resist taking the forbidden thing—it's won when we refuse to let our eyes linger in the first place. What we gaze upon, we begin to desire. What we desire, we eventually pursue.

Today, Jesus invites you to win the battle earlier in the progression. Before the "taking" comes the "seeing." Before the compromise comes the choice of where you fix your eyes.

Reflect: What are you allowing your eyes to linger on that God has forbidden? What would change if you fought the battle at the "seeing" stage rather than waiting until temptation has grown stronger?

Prayer: "Lord, give me the wisdom to recognize temptation early. Help me turn my eyes away before desire takes root. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Day 2: The Ripple Effect

Read: Joshua 7:4-5, 11-12

Thirty-six men died. An entire nation lost confidence. God withdrew His favor. All because one man took what wasn't his.

Achan's sin didn't stay private. It never does. When we choose disobedience, we don't sin in isolation—our families, our churches, our communities all feel the impact. The electric wire of fellowship with God gets cut, and the current of His power ceases to flow.

The lie whispers: "It's just me. Nobody else will be affected." But Scripture tells a different story. No believer ever sins alone.

Reflect: If your hidden life became public today, who would be affected? Your spouse? Your children? Your small group? Your coworkers who know you're a Christian? Let that sobering reality motivate holiness, not through shame, but through love for those around you.

Prayer: "Father, forgive me for believing the lie that my sin only affects me. Help me see the ripple effects of my choices. Give me love for others that motivates obedience to You."

Day 3: What You Entertain Today

Read: Proverbs 4:23; Romans 12:9

"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

Vigilance isn't a word we use much anymore. It means constant, careful attention. It's the opposite of coasting. It's refusing to let your guard down.

What you entertain today may enslave you tomorrow. That "harmless" compromise, that "just once" decision, that thing you're tolerating "just a little bit"—it's setting patterns that can bind you.

God calls us to be vigilant because He knows how quickly we can drift. The thing that seems small today can become the stronghold that devastates tomorrow.

Reflect: What are you entertaining that you need to eliminate? What "small" compromise needs to be addressed today before it grows? What does vigilance look like practically in your daily life?

Prayer: "Holy Spirit, make me vigilant. Show me the areas where I'm coasting. Give me the courage to set up guardrails and the humility to invite accountability. Help me abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good."

Day 4: The Path of Restoration

Read: Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9

"He who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

Achan confessed—but only after he was caught. His confession came too late to avoid devastating consequences. How different might the story have been if he had come forward immediately?

God's path to restoration always runs through repentance. Not the kind that waits until we're

caught, but the proactive kind that brings sin into the light because we trust God's mercy more than we fear exposure.

Here's the beautiful promise: God is faithful and just to forgive AND to cleanse. He doesn't just pardon—He purifies. He doesn't leave you in your mess—He makes you clean.

Reflect: Is there something you need to confess today? Not because you've been caught, but because you want to walk in freedom? Who is a trusted person you can confess to for prayer and accountability?

Prayer: "Gracious Father, I don't want to wait until I'm caught. I confess [name it specifically]. Thank you that You are faithful to forgive and cleanse me. Lead me on the path of restoration."

Day 5: The PVC Pipe Principle

Read: Psalm 101:2-3; Matthew 5:29-30

"I will set before my eyes no vile thing."

Sometimes holiness requires creativity. It requires setting up systems that let sin out but don't let it back in. Jesus spoke radically about this: if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. He wasn't being literal—He was emphasizing how seriously we should take the battle.

What's your PVC pipe? What boundary do you need to establish? What app needs to be deleted? What relationship needs new parameters? What environment needs to change?

The safest place to be is in obedience to God's revealed Word and will for your life. That safety is worth whatever radical step it takes.

Reflect: What specific "exit strategy" do you need to create for the sin you struggle with most? What one boundary could you implement this week that would help you walk in greater holiness?

Prayer: "Lord, give me both the wisdom to know what boundaries I need and the courage to implement them. I want to be a person who abhors evil and pursues holiness with all my heart. Lead me in Your way."

Blog Post: What a Snake Problem Taught Me About Hidden Sin

Reflections on Joshua 7 and the Danger of What We Hide

I have a snake problem.

Well, I *had* a snake problem. At least, I'm pretty sure it's past tense now. Let me explain.

Back in May, I was sitting on my front porch celebrating one of my boys' birthdays when a six-foot black rat snake emerged from the bushes. Full panic mode ensued. After chasing it back to the woods (while my wife filmed the chaos), I thought we were done.

We weren't.

A few days later, another one appeared. Then, while pulling weeds near my bedroom window, I discovered a half-dollar-sized hole in the brick with an electrical cable running through it. Trail camera deployed. Evidence confirmed: snakes were using this hole as their personal entrance to my walls.

Then came the sound I'll never forget—something that sounded like a dragon chasing a mouse above the drywall in my bathroom. A six-foot snake had made it into my walls, likely hunting mice in my attic.

The PVC Pipe Solution

After consulting with professionals and getting advice from church members, I engineered what I now call my "snake exit strategy." Using PVC pipe, an L-bracket, hardware cloth, and a one-way door mechanism, I created a system that would let snakes exit but never return.

The trail camera has now confirmed four exits. Four snakes that had found their way into the walls of my home.

For weeks, I've been vigilantly checking hundreds—sometimes thousands—of trail camera images. Every shadow, every movement, every alert. I'm watching because I know the stakes: if even two snakes got in and laid eggs, I could be dealing with 5-30 baby snakes.

That's not a problem I can ignore.

The Spiritual Parallel

As I've obsessively monitored these images, a Scripture keeps echoing in my mind: "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good" (Romans 12:9).

God has been using my quirky snake situation to teach me something profound about hidden sin.

Just like I can't afford to be casual about what's getting into the walls of my house, I can't afford to be casual about what's getting into my heart. What starts small and hidden can multiply and devastate.

Achan's Fatal Mistake

This week, I preached from Joshua 7—the account of a man named Achan whose hidden sin cost 36 men their lives and caused an entire nation to lose God's favor.

The progression was predictable: "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak... and silver... and gold, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent" (Joshua 7:21).

Saw. Coveted. Took. Hid.

It's the same pattern as Eve in Genesis 3. It's the same pattern you and I follow when we compromise. And here's what Achan didn't count on: his private sin would have public consequences.

Israel lost their next battle. Thirty-six families buried loved ones. God said, "I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you" (Joshua 7:12).

One man's hidden choice. Devastating ripple effects.

The Lie We Believe

In that moment when Achan saw the cloak and the gold, do you think he paused to consider who else would be affected? Did he think about his sons and daughters? His fellow soldiers? The families who would grieve?

I doubt it. Because that's how temptation works.

The enemy whispers: "It's just a little thing. You deserve this. Nobody will know. It won't hurt anyone else."

But here's what I've learned, both from Scripture and from snake-hunting: **what we secretly tolerate can publicly devastate.**

Every single time I look at a trail camera image now, I'm reminded of this principle. I cannot be casual about what I allow into my space. I have to be vigilant—constantly watchful, always on guard.

The Power of Vigilance

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

Vigilance. It's not a word we use much anymore. But it's exactly what's required.

When I was in college, I moved into an apartment where my roommates had cable TV and were lax about what they watched. The neighbors next door threw parties with paper-thin walls. I felt spiritually suffocated.

That's when I discovered Psalm 101:2-3: "I will walk in my house with a blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing."

I printed that verse, laminated it, and put it on every wall of my room. It was the Word of God that cleaned my thought life. It was vigilance that protected my heart.

Your PVC Pipe

So here's my question for you: **What's your PVC pipe?**

What system do you need to create that lets sin exit but doesn't let it back in?

- What app needs to be deleted from your phone?
- What boundary needs to be set in a relationship?
- What environment needs to change?
- What Scripture needs to go on your wall?
- What conversation needs to happen with an accountability partner?

Maybe it's as simple as this: you need to invite the Holy Spirit to do a full inspection of your life and give you a one-way exit strategy for whatever He reveals.

Three Questions That Won't Let Me Go

Since preaching this message, I can't stop thinking about three questions:

1. What are you allowing your eyes to linger on that God has forbidden?

The battle isn't won when you resist taking the forbidden thing. It's won when you refuse to let your eyes linger in the first place. Achan saw, then he coveted, then he took. Win the battle earlier in the progression.

2. If your hidden life became public today, who would be affected?

Your spouse? Your kids? Your small group? Your coworkers who know you're a Christian? That sobering reality should motivate holiness—not through shame, but through love for those around you.

3. What step of obedience is God calling you to take today?

Just one step. Not a complete life overhaul. Just the next right step. What is it? The Holy Spirit knows. He's been pressing on your heart even as you read this.

The Path Back

Here's the good news: if you've been hiding sin like Achan, there's a path back to God's favor.

It runs through three non-negotiables:

- Sin must be **identified**
- Sin must be **confessed**
- Sin must be **removed**

Proverbs 28:13 promises: "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

1 John 1:9 assures us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God doesn't just pardon—He purifies. He doesn't just forgive—He cleanses. That's the promise.

The Cost and the Gift

The cost of hidden sin is devastation—to you, to those you love, to your witness for Christ.

But the gift of confession and holiness? It's the favor of God. It's walking in freedom. It's being able to say with the psalmist, "At your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

My snake saga isn't over—I'll keep that PVC pipe and trail camera up until the first frost, just to be sure. But every alert, every image, every check has become a spiritual discipline.

It reminds me: **what you entertain today may enslave you tomorrow.**

Don't wait until you're caught. Don't wait until the consequences are irreversible. Don't wait until 36 people pay the price for your private compromise.

Run to Jesus today. Confess. Repent. Create your exit strategy. And walk in the freedom and favor that come from obedience.

The safest place to be is in obedience to God's revealed Word and will for your life.

Trust me—and trust the lesson of a man named Achan—it's not worth holding onto what God has said to release.

What's your next step? I'd love to hear how God is speaking to you. Leave a comment below or reach out—because we all need people who will walk with us toward holiness.