



Courageous #4: Courage of Integrity

Text: Joshua 6:18-19, 7:1-26

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At this point in our story, the Israelites have not only made it *to* the Promised Land, they have begun to make their way *into* the Promised Land. And it began with the thrilling victory over Jericho. But now one man's sin threatens to ruin it.

1. **Read Joshua 6:18-19 & 7:1-26.** The foundation of Achan's sin was a *lack of integrity*. Integrity is how you behave when no one is looking. What does this passage teach us about the effects of sin, even if we are not "caught"? (Take note how one man's sin affected an entire nation.)

2. Some of the most important words from Achan's confession are "when I saw" (Joshua 7:21). The forbidden spoils of war had captured his vision. Likewise, the first step to a lack of integrity in our own lives is to focus on the wrong things. Because whatever has your affections has *you*.
 - a. What are signs to be aware of that might tell us when the wrong thing has our attention?

 - b. What are things that have a tendency to pull *your* attention away from God?

3. **Read Romans 5:6-11 & 8:32.** Achan had to die so the rest of Israel would not. Likewise, Jesus died so we don't have to. But he did it for *our* sin! How should the person and work of Jesus lead us to live lives of integrity?

4. **Read Colossians 3:1-3.** The way to deal with temptation is *not* to *resist* but to *replace*. We need to replace the love for the forbidden thing with a stronger love for Jesus! Think back to your answer to 2b.
 - a. What is it you are wanting those things to provide you in that moment that you are not believing God will provide?

 - b. But in truth, how does God provide something even better? What are the "things above" that you need to set your mind on? (*If you are having trouble, ask your group for help here.*)

Challenge: To his credit, Achan did confess. *But* he did it when it was too late! Don't let that be you! Get it all out. Find someone, perhaps from your Grow Group, with whom you can be fully known and yet fully loved. Set a time to get together with that person this week to process through the temptations, the secrets, and the lack of integrity you are struggling with.

Prayer: Partner with someone of the same gender in your group. Confess where you are struggling to live a life of integrity. Then spend time praying for one another. Praise God as the one and only who lives in perfect integrity. Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sin. Thank God that because of the cross, we do not have to wallow in sin and shame. Ask God for the grace to live in freedom! And finally, ask God for the grace to live with integrity by the power of the Holy Spirit.

STUDY DEEPER

Wake Up to the Corrupting Effects of Compromise

When I was 22 years old, I worked at a small company where an older salesman bragged to me about how he defrauded customers. I raised serious concerns with him, and it got back to the company owner, who one day decided to give me some fatherly, sage advice. He said, "You know, when I was your age, I also saw things in black and white. But as I've gotten older, I've learned that things are mainly shades of grey."

It was true that I was young, inexperienced, and naive in many things. I'm now close to the age that company owner was back then. I better understand the layered complexities, ambiguities, and difficulties of life. I can think of a number of things that I'm not nearly as dogmatic about as I was back then.

But fraud isn't one of them.

The Danger of Dimmed Vision

At age fifty, it's as clear to me as it was at 22 that the owner's "shades of grey" spiel wasn't sagacity; it was self-justifying, compromise-covering baloney. The fraud wasn't grey; it was straight-up stealing and lying. If the defrauded customer had been in on our chat, the "grey" would have looked quite black to him, as it would have to a judge had legal action been pursued.

So what had happened to this man over time that greyed-out his moral vision? It is no mystery; we all know. It was one compromise, and then another, and then another until the incremental, cumulative effects of selfishness and greed had corrupted his integrity. A self-induced osteoporosis of compromise had weakened his moral backbone. His was not wisdom gained by age; his was moral conviction lost by atrophy.

To my knowledge, this owner was not a Christian, so the blinding of 2 Corinthians 4:4 was likely in play. But Christians are not immune from this sort of atrophy. Jesus rebuked the church in Laodicea for it (Revelation 3:14–22). Something like it must have happened to Demas (2 Timothy 4:10). We all know people we love whose once-clear vision has faded to grey. We have seen the effects in ourselves. It is an ever-present danger.

Jesus's Prescription for Spiritual Cataracts

What do we do if we see the corrupting effect of compromise at work in ourselves or those we know? Jesus's prescription is painfully, mercifully brief: "be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19). At a moment like this, we cannot trust how we feel. The Laodicean Christians, to whom Jesus addressed this exhortation, didn't feel zealous. They were "lukewarm" (Revelation 3:15–16). They were worldly and self-satisfied and didn't feel the urgency of their condition. Solution? Get urgent and repent.

The severe simplicity of this prescription is hopeful. Spiritual osteoporosis can be reversed, greyed vision can be healed, and much more quickly than we might think. The anesthetizing effects of compromise can dissipate quickly, like a man waking from a nap with the smelling salt of repentance.

As we mature and become more aware of the complexities of life, the effect this exhortation should have on us is a diminishing of immature self-righteousness and misplaced self-confidence, not the diminishing of our conviction about fundamental truths. The slow fires of aging should produce the tempering effect of a patient, gentle relentlessness, not the melting away of our moral muscle. We must lose our pride, not our nerve or our will.

Truth doesn't grow grey with time. But our moral eyes can be dimmed by the cataracts of compromise. If we find that this darkening has happened, Jesus has good news for us: He has salve for our eyes that will help us see again (Revelation 3:18). And he will give it to the one who is zealous and repents.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/wake-up-to-the-corrupting-effects-of-compromise>