

Embarrassed?

Joshua 7:2-9

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, February 12th 2023

Three years ago, in an online conversation, Andy Ryan told a story on himself. And he posted this himself, so he is OK with sharing it. But he said,

I was in a park and a lady loudly called out “Anyone who wants an ice cream come over here”. I headed over with several others. She handed out ices to them all then asked me “Who are you?”. I realised the rest were all her family. 30 years later I still cringe.

I think we have all done things that are cringe-worthy. Some of the things we cringe over are not sinful - they are just cultural *faux pas* that make us look stupid. And other times we are embarrassed to have to confess a sin to someone, but we get past the embarrassment and we do the right thing. But counselors know that some people find confession of sin to be so humiliating and so shameful that they just can't do it. Their pride gets in the way of doing things God's way, so they either lie their way out of the problem or they cover up the problem, or minimize, or deflect. In any case, I want to highlight nine super embarrassing things that happened to Joshua and the other leaders in verses 2-9.

I. Embarrassment 1 - Archaeologists have ignored God's inspired clues (Josh. 7-8)

But before we get to those nine, I want to highlight an embarrassment that was not experienced by the people in *this* story. It's an embarrassment that has been experienced by *modern* archaeologists who didn't look at all the clues that God gave to them on the identity of Ai in the text. They trusted their own intuitions more than they trusted the Scripture. And now they have egg on their faces big time. So here is the raging question nowadays: “Where is the modern location of Ai?” Verse 2 starts,

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel...

This verse gives two of eleven Biblically inspired clues that should have guided archaeologists - the Bible always has to come first when doing archaeology. And for some it did. Let me list all eleven of the inspired clues that God has given. We might as well do it here so that I don't have to do it in a later sermon. And it needs to be done because even Evangelical commentaries that you might have in your homes mess up on these clues.

1. Verse 2 says that the site has to be adjacent to Beth Aven.

2. Verse 2 and chapter 12 verse 9 both say that the site has to be East of Bethel and near to Bethel.
3. Two verses in chapter 8 say that the perfect ambush site (for the ambush in chapter 8) had to be *between* Bethel and Ai (Josh. 8:9, 12).
4. Fourth, chapter 8, verse 11 says that there was a militarily significant hill *north* of Ai where the Israelite army would be able to camp. That's a huge clue.
5. Fifth, in chapter 8, verses 13-14, the inspired text says that the site had to be close to a shallow valley north of where Joshua and the decoy force would have been able to be seen by the king of Ai.
6. Sixth, according to the first two verses of chapter 8, Ai had to have fortification walls around it because the text calls it a "fortified place." Well, the traditional site is not. In fact, liberal archaeologists have had total fails on most of these clues.
7. Seventh, according to chapter 8, verse 11, the location of the main gate of Ai had to have been facing north.
8. According to chapter 7:3 and chapter 10:2, Ai had to be a relatively small town.
9. According to chapter 8 verse 25, there were women in that fortification - and plenty of evidence of women can be found in the digs at the true site, including the pottery and bones that are in your outlines.
10. Tenth, according to the dating of the whole book, the city could not have been destroyed when liberals say that their supposed site for Ai was destroyed. Instead, it had to be occupied in the 15th century BC and destroyed in the 15th century BC. And a 15th century scarab was unearthed in 2013, as confirming evidence of the true site's date of destruction. In fact, Christianity Today magazine voted that scarab to be the #1 discovery in biblical archaeology in 2013 - not that we needed it, but it was yet another embarrassment to liberals.
11. Eleventh, according to Joshua 8, verses 19 and 28, Ai was burned, and so the site needs to have evidence of destruction by fire in the 15th century B.C.

There is only one location that meets all eleven clues.¹ And I've put a map as well as a picture of that site in your outlines. It is Khirbet el-Maqatir. But the liberal archaeologists have had fail after fail on their preferred site, which is Et-Tell. And in their pride they won't retreat from their opinion. Their theory is that Et-Tell was ancient Ai, and they have held tenaciously to that view ever since W. F. Albright's 1924 article.

Here's one practical application that we can make: you can judge how Biblical a commentary on Joshua is by whether they still hold to Albright's discredited views or whether it is a commentary that is driven by the Scripture alone. You see, even evangelical

¹ Bible Archaeology Report summarizes the archaeological evidence beautifully:
<https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/04/12/biblical-sites-ai/>

archaeologists are often afraid to disagree with the status quo liberal archaeology because they want to be judged as academic dunderheads. But despite excavations at et-Tell for seven years, no one has been able to come up with any evidence that could reconcile that site with the Bible. One of the excavators, Joseph Callaway, finally said in disgust,

Ai is simply an embarrassment to every view of the conquest that takes the biblical and archaeological evidence seriously.²

So how did people handle this massive embarrassment? Liberals (and sadly, some Evangelicals) won't admit that they were wrong. Their pride gets in the way. Instead, they respond in one of two ways: they ignore the problem or (in the case of liberals) they say that the Bible must be wrong and that the locals must also be wrong when they have consistently pointed to a different location for the real site of Ai. Instead of admitting error, the liberal commentaries say that the story in chapters 7-8 is a myth. For example, one scholar said "that archaeology has wiped out the historical credibility of the conquest of Ai as reported in Joshua 7-8."³ No - I say the opposite: that the Bible has wiped out the credibility of that archaeology team. Bible and Spade archaeology magazine said, "The scholarly consensus about the biblical account of Ai is that those events never happened."⁴ Hey, if being in line with scholarly consensus is important to you, keep in mind that the scholarly consensus is that this part of the Bible is wrong. I could care less about scholarly consensus. In contrast, Jesus said to the Father, "Your Word is truth." It is the truth standard by which all other claims to truth must be judged. So these commentaries are actually lying to cover over their embarrassment. In their certainty that they could never be wrong, they are quite willing to say that the Bible is wrong. And lying to cover over our embarrassment is not the Christian thing to do. Joshua models a better way.

Unlike the liberals and liberal leaning evangelicals, true conservative archaeologists have (at least for the most part) admitted (if they ever did buy into that theory of El-Tel) that they were duped and have acknowledged that only Khirbet el-Maqatir fits 100% of the Biblical evidence, and as a result they have produced a massive amount of archaeological evidence that fits. Repentance, public retraction, and affirming that they should have paid closer attention to the eleven biblical clues is a very encouraging sign that these people are handling embarrassment in a Biblical way - the Joshua way.

I bring this archaeological point up for two reasons. It's an easy way for me to introduce where Ai is during the weeks that we look at chapters 7 and 8. And we do need to know

² Bryant G. Wood, "The Search for Joshua's Ai." In *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, edited by Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray Jr, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2008), p. 205.

³ As quoted in Michael A. Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries That Lend Credence To The Historicity Of The Scriptures," *Bible and Spade* Volume 27 27, no. 1 (2014): 8.

⁴ Michael A. Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries That Lend Credence To The Historicity Of The Scriptures," *Bible and Spade* Volume 27 27, no. 1 (2014): 8.

that for some later lessons. But I think it is a perfect illustration of how we should handle our own embarrassments. The conservative archaeologists handled it the way Joshua handled his own embarrassment in these two chapters. He admitted his wrong and corrected the things that he was embarrassed over, and (with the exception of the Gibeonites) he didn't repeat any of those bad decisions again. And we will look at the Gibeonite exception later. We are not going to look at his *corrections* today. Instead, we are going to try to learn from each of the nine embarrassments he faced in this chapter.

II. Embarrassment 2 - Joshua failed to seek God's guidance and he overestimated the wisdom of man (vv. 2-3)

First, Joshua failed to seek God's guidance and he overestimated the wisdom of man. There is no evidence that Joshua sought guidance from the Lord or went to Him in prayer, and plenty of evidence to show that he did not. Flush with the excitement of a supernatural victory at Jericho, he just dove into the conquest of the next city up the road. Let's read verses 2-3.

Josh. 7:2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."

There was nothing wrong with sending spies. They did that at Jericho with God's approval. These spies were no doubt experts in their field. But he should have done so prayerfully, and he should have evaluated their advice prayerfully - especially since the kind of conquest they were involved in required that they receive divine revelation for how to engage in each facet of their warfare. They didn't deal with each city in exactly the same way. Remember that we said last week that this was *herem* warfare, not ordinary defensive warfare, and it always required divine revelation.

Here's the point: there is a lot in these verses about what the *spies* said, and no reference whatsoever to what *God* said. Indeed, in chapter 8 God will tell Joshua to do the *exact* opposite of what these spies said. God will tell him to take the whole army. So this was a cringe-worthy decision on his part.

And this is a warning to us. We live in a day and age when there are experts for everything. But just because a person has a doctorate degree in some area of expertise does not mean that he or she is wise in the application of *Scripture* to all of life - the only infallible revelation we have now. But whether we look to the Bible or we seek guidance through prayer, God wants us to involve Him in our decision making, and we still are responsible to evaluate what the experts say. We need to be Bereans who make sure that the advice we receive is consistent with what God has said.

In fact, I would say that the more educated a person is in our modern secular educational system, the *less* likely that he or she will be Biblically discerning on that subject. I'm serious.

They are more likely to be corrupted in their thinking because they have spent years immersed in the sewer of pagan thinking. Now, I'm not saying that this was the case with these spies. But it *is* clear that they trusted their own observations, expertise, and intuitions so much that they felt no need to pray for guidance. It just seemed too easy of a decision to worry God about it. They probably thought that if they could take on the large city of Jericho, surely Ai would be no problem for them. Later Joshua will no doubt cringe over how obvious this first failure was. Philippians 4:6 commands us to be prayerful "in everything." Commit your driving, reading, marital intimacy, eating, and relaxation to the Lord. Prayer should be the atmosphere in which we live. And Joshua certainly learned this lesson, as we will see later in the book.

III. Embarrassment 3 - the leaders underestimated the power of the enemy (vv. 4-5)

The second embarrassment was that the leaders underestimated the power of the enemy. Verses 4-5:

4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Even though Ai was much smaller than Jericho, chapter 8, verse 25 shows that there were 12,000 people holed up in that fort - probably many of them being from farms in the surrounding region. And Ai was well fortified and entrenched, and its defenders were very motivated to fight with everything they had. In any case, Israel had underestimated the strength of the enemy and had overestimated its own strength - only sending 3000 against a much larger force.

Now, as a sidenote, Why does God hold Israel accountable for these first two embarrassing points of the leaders? Last week we saw it was for two reasons: 1) They were covenantally connected to the leaders. That's the main reason. 2) Second, they didn't resist by suggesting that the leaders seek God in prayer. The Regulative Principle of Government means that Israel as a state could only do what God had explicitly authorized them to do. And especially with herem warfare, a general command for conquest was not enough - *every facet* of the warfare had to be authorized by God. Some cities would be burned, others would not. Some you could take the loot, others you could not. Each city required God's direct revelation. Therefore this failure to seek divine guidance should have been resisted. The generals could have spoken against Joshua's plan. Individual militia leaders could have bowed out. And individual families could have bowed out of the battle. And this means that corporate guilt was in part also individual guilt.

Now, you might not think that going into battle against Ai without prayer was a big deal. After all, if God is for us, none can be against us. That's true. But the reverse is also true. If God is *not* for us, anything can be against us - even a tiny fortification like Ai. And you can

see by the picture in your outlines of the reconstructed model of Ai, that it was pretty small. 12,000 people were crammed into that small fort.

So how do we apply this? I think it is critical that we not pridefully underestimate the strength of our enemy today. When we have had a success like Jericho, it is easy to begin to take credit for it in subtle ways rather than deflecting praise to God. That is a danger signal. Some of you may have had your parents tell you the parable of the proud woodpecker. The parable goes that the woodpecker was pounding on a tree with his beak when a sudden bolt of lightning split the tree from top to bottom. A few minutes later the woodpecker brought all of his friends to see the tree and said, "There it is gentlemen, right over there. Just look at what I did to that tree!" In this parable, the woodpecker was taking credit for something God had done.

Do we do that when we have had a promotion at work? It's not to downplay the hard work that you have done yourselves. Downplaying your own efforts would be false humility. But do we grow proud over our intellectual accomplishments, or our success at business, or our gifts, or our people skills, or something else that God has enabled us to achieve? Then when we fail on those things that we are proud of, the embarrassment will kick in big time. Pride is at the root of all embarrassment. Even if it is an accidental failure like falling, spilling drinks, ripping pants, flatulence, or something else, studies on embarrassment seem to show that it results from a sense that your self-worth has been lowered in the eyes of others. Sadly, Psychology Today says that this pride is a good thing. It says,

A child's need to feel proud, and to avoid feelings of shame, is a fundamental motivation, and remains fundamental, throughout her life. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these emotions in the psychological development - and emotional health - of our children.

Shame is our instinctive response to personal failure or inadequacy, especially the public exposure of inadequacy. Embarrassment is a temporary and mild form of shame; humiliation, aloneness, and self-hatred are severe forms of shame.⁵

So that is a secular perspective, right? But the need to feel proud of oneself is not a Biblical concept. Biblically we need to desire God's esteem far more than we do man's esteem. God sometimes deliberately crucifies our pride by having us do things that others will not esteem. For example, God commanded Peter to have fellowship with Gentile believers and to eat with them. In Galatians 2, Paul blamed Peter for allowing peer pressure to make him embarrassed of eating with Gentiles. He wasn't embarrassed to eat with the Gentiles when the Judaisers *weren't* around, but as soon as they showed up, his desire to avoid embarrassment made him separate from Gentile brothers. Peter was also ashamed of letting Christ wash his feet in John chapter 13. But Jesus insisted. It was good for Peter's pride to *be* served. In Mark 2 the Pharisees thought they could embarrass Jesus by pointing out that he ate with sinners and tax collectors. What's with that?! *They* would have been

⁵ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pride-and-joy/201205/understanding-children-s-emotions-pride-and-shame>

embarrassed to do that, and so they thought they could humiliate Him by pointing that out publically. They knew that public embarrassment can be a powerful motivator or demotivator. But far from being embarrassed, Jesus focused on what God the Father had called Him to do. He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17). He gloried in God's call, and didn't care what the Pharisees thought.

But back to the embarrassment in Joshua 7:4-5, we must not underestimate or overestimate the power that we have in Christ Jesus. We love to quote 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says,

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

OK, that's God's grace for our Jerichos. But we should never forget the verse right before it, which says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." As one person worded it, "Yesterday's victory does not make a believer immune from defeat today." The person who knows that without Christ I can do nothing will daily look to the Lord for strength for everything he does. He knows that without God's grace He will either fail to do the task, or if he *is* able to do it, he will mess up in some other way - perhaps he not do it to God's glory, with the right motives, with God's anointing so as to make that task transformative in the lives of others. Jericho reminds us of Paul's admonition in Ephesians 6:10 - to be strong *in the Lord* and in *His* mighty power. Ai reminds us of the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:12 - "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." It would be very easy for Joshua to cringe over this devastating defeat from a tiny foe, but not only does he not cringe over it later in his life, he *highlights* his mistake by putting it into Scripture so that others can learn. He handled his embarrassment correctly.

IV. Embarrassment 4 - all self-confidence evaporated (v. 5b)

The fourth embarrassment is the opposite of the one we just looked at. It would be very easy for the Israelites to later cringe over the fact that the last clause of verse 5 was true of them. The last clause says, "therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water." Ouch! Rather than regrouping and saying, "You know, we should have trusted in the Lord; let's make another attack *after* seeking God's strength and counsel" - instead of that, they retreated from battle and thought, there is no way we can fight. The wind was taken out of their sails and they were demoralized. They were ready to quit. But that too is a wrong approach. It is a false humility.

I was plagued with this kind of false humility for a long time. It is inverse pride (or an upside down kind of pride). It is an unwillingness to do what God calls us to do because we fear that we might fail and be embarrassed. But fear is not compatible with faith, and we must resist it stoutly. It is so easy to give in to depression, discouragement, and a temptation to bail. You can tell that Joshua has gotten past this when he wrote his book because he records this embarrassment for all men of all ages to see that we are not alone

in having this problem. But we also know that he got past these embarrassments because he didn't repeat those mistakes (except for one of these mistakes with Gibeonites). He learned and grew through the embarrassments. It's OK to laugh at yourself - that is, after you have repented to God. But it's not a good sign when we try to hide our pride behind a false humility that refuses to take on risks.

V. Embarrassment 5 - False humility

And *initially* Joshua did *not* respond correctly. And we know that because in verse 10 God rebukes him for praying the way he is praying. Next week we will see that there was something wrong about his prayer. God says to him in verse 10, "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?" God is not taken in by the prayer of Joshua. He sees through it right to the heart issues that drove the prayer. Joshua was not praying for God's glory. He thought he was; he thought he was being humble; but he wasn't. Verses 6-8 say,

Josh. 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?"

Verse 6 is an expression of Joshua's false humility. Now, true humility can express itself that way as well, but so can false humility. Just because you are on your knees throwing dust on your head does not mean that you are truly humble. The Pharisees knew how to do that too. Now it is true, unlike the Pharisees, Joshua was mortified, but God later tells him that he was not mortified for the right reasons. Indeed, the reason we know it is a false humility is that he immediately goes into the blame-game with God. It's your fault, Lord. Why did you let us cross the Jordan? Did you do it to destroy us? I wish we had been content and had stayed on the other side of the Jordan. Really? That's a rather bold statement for a humble person to make (if you want to argue that Joshua was being humble here). But it is quite consistent with false humility. Even *narcisists* (who are the worst cases on this) will sometimes act humble while they are hurling attacks at another person - sometimes in very subtle ways.

VI. Embarrassment 6 - Questioning God's goodness (v. 7a)

Embarrassment 6: Verse 7 shows Joshua questioning God's goodness and accusing God of planning their destruction. *I cringe* when I see these words.

And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?"

This is a rather bold accusation. Don't you care? Are you out to annihilate us? I'm sure when Joshua looked back on this, he was embarrassed. And we too can cringe when we think of how we prayed when we were immature and brash.

VII. Embarrassment 7 - Wanting to retreat to the good ol' days (v. 7b)

Next, he implies that the good ol' days were preferable to God's plans for their future. He says, "Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!" It's humble to be content, isn't it? No, not when God calls you to aspire to something else. When our eyes are on our failures and our circumstances it is very easy for our vision to grow narrow and to become negative *and to justify not doing what God has called us to do*. When we do that, we begin to go into reverse and look back and mistakenly think that the past was better. Ecclesiastes 7:10 says, "'Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.'" This is similar to Israel in the wilderness who remembered the garlic, leeks, and cucumbers, and forgot how wretched their lives had been with the taskmasters and the mud pits. Someone once said, "In order to be comfortable we are willing to settle for a life of mediocrity... [rather than to] move ahead in the pursuit of excellence."

VIII. Embarrassment 8 - What will say to the people (v. 8)

And then in verse 8 we get to the real issue - he is mortified of what other people will think about him and he wonders, how in the world will I be able to respond? He says, "what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?" What shall I say? He was embarrassed by the defeat and embarrassed by what other people would think of him. He didn't know what he himself would be able to respond to them.

You may question whether this truly was prideful embarrassment, so let me quote from some excellent commentaries who have really wrestled through the details of the text just as I have taken the time to do - really puzzling through each and every word. Gordon Matties suggests that Joshua felt like he had lost honor before his people.⁶ He was embarrassed. Another commentator speaks of Joshua's "own shame and embarrassment."⁷ Boling and Wright speak of this as being a "thoroughly embarrassing setback."⁸ Gangel and Wilhoit say, "He fell on the ground—a shaken, embarrassed, and frightened general."⁹

⁶ Gordon H. Matties, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Joshua*, ed. Douglas B. Miller and Loren L. Johns (Harrisonburg, VA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2012), 176.

⁷ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya; Grand Rapids, MI: WordAlive Publishers; Zondervan, 2006), 275.

⁸ Robert G. Boling and G. Ernest Wright, *Joshua: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, vol. 6, *Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 229.

⁹ Kenneth O. Gangel and Jim Wilhoit, *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 180.

Now, you are free to disagree with me on this point, but I am convinced that he was embarrassed. And because humans have a tendency to cover over their embarrassment rather than to learn from it, we see something similar happening with Joshua. He covers his embarrassment by accusing God of failure in verse 7 and wishing that they had never crossed the Jordan in the first place. It helps to explain God's rather severe rebuke in verses 10 and following (a harsh rebuke that makes no sense otherwise).

But you know what? It's easy for any one of us to do exactly the same thing. Rather than admitting failure and owning our failures and investigating why we made the failure, it is easy to make a pretense of humility, all the while going on the attack and blaming others. Who stops to question, "*Why* am I embarrassed? I shouldn't be embarrassed. Why am I embarrassed? What's going on in my heart? How would God want me to respond?"

IX. Embarrassment 9 - Completely robbed of faith (v. 9a)

But because of his negativity, he next loses all faith to conquer in verse 9, and he says, "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth." What a negative affirmation. It *completely* contradicted what God had infallibly promised - that he *would* successfully conquer the land. But that's the nature of negative affirmations - they kill our faith. Obviously he had faith in his salvation, but he lost faith in conquest. So we can have faith in certain areas and lose faith in other areas.

And how easily and quickly we can go from the certainty of faith to the certainty of failure. I have been so prone to making negative affirmations that kill my faith that several years ago I conscripted my son and my wife to hold me accountable, and I wrote up some homework for myself to put off that negative thinking. It has helped me hugely, and I am willing to share that homework with anyone who has the same struggles.

X. Embarrassment 10 - Mistakenly thinking that God will be embarrassed (v. 9b)

The last embarrassment in these verses was mistakenly thinking that *God* would be embarrassed by this defeat. God will soon tell Joshua that He had *planned* the defeat and had *guaranteed* the defeat. He was *not* taken by surprise, and He certainly had *nothing* to be embarrassed about. But Joshua says,

For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. *Then what will You do for Your great name?"*

It sort of *sounds* like he is consumed with a passion for God's glory. So why does God rebuke him so sharply in verse 10? I believe it was because Joshua was being somewhat manipulative in his prayer. If Joshua had reworded this to say, "Lord, if you don't do things my way, how will you be glorified?," he would have immediately seen that it really was a prideful statement. But that *is* in effect what he *was* saying.

And I think it is so cool that God displays Joshua's sinful failings for all to see so that we can relate to him and learn from his failures. And yet hopefully we can also relate to Joshua getting *past* these embarrassments too. We have the same grace to grow that he did.

In any case, God is not too concerned about what the pagans believe about Him. He could change their hearts any time He chose to do so. Nor does the church's lack of success bother Him nearly as much as the church's rebellion. God is more interested in our holiness than He is in our comfort. And Joshua's focus is more on his *own* embarrassment and how the pagan's lowered view of God would negatively impact *him and Israel*.

XI. Conclusion - learning from our embarrassing moments

So I want to conclude with a few thoughts about how we can learn from *our* embarrassing moments.

First, recognize embarrassment for what it is - it is a prideful reaction to your sins or foibles being exposed to others. In other words, it is a form of pride.

Second, seeing it for what it is, can lead you to thank God for yet another opportunity to *crucify* your pride. Whenever I have an embarrassing situation (and I still have plenty), I immediately tell the Lord, "Thank you Lord, for yet another opportunity to crucify my pride. I hate my pride and I am glad it is getting crucified. Help me to grow through this." I use the embarrassment to point me to God rather than to cause me stew in regret and embarrassment. And it works. It removes the embarrassment by giving me a positive God-focus.

Third, immediately commit yourself to taking the actions needed to correct what you were embarrassed over. Don't hide them or rationalize them; correct them. In other words, learn from your failures so as not to repeat them. As one of John Maxwell's handouts is titled, "Fail Forwards." We are all going to fail, but make sure you grow from it - that you move forwards as a result of it. Figure out what led to the failure and correct those deficiencies and figure out what can strengthen your character for the future.

Fourth, don't respond with false humility. It's so easy to respond to embarrassments with false humility rather than with true humility. Of course, that takes recognizing the difference between true humility and false humility. Let me quickly outline ten of many differences that you can find in good counseling books. And I've included a totally different chart on the back of your outlines that gives some additional ideas. But don't look at that right now or you won't be able to process the ten distinguishing characteristics that I will cover right now. The stuff on the back is additional material for later.

1. First, true humility acknowledges one's shortcomings and sins and is more grieved over the *sins* than over the *consequences* of the sin. False humility only acknowledges the *obvious* shortcomings and sins that are socially acceptable. But false humility will still try to avoid the consequences of others looking down on you. So this first contrast should motivate us to want to be more grieved over our *sins*

than we are over the *consequences* of our sin.

2. Second, true humility works towards genuine change, whereas false humility is more concerned about appearances, and often puts the responsibility for change on others. And there can even be a little bit of blameshifting that can happen with false humility. But true humility takes ownership and works towards genuine change. Don't be taken in by the false humility of others that is not willing to change.
3. Third, true humility cares about God's opinion and thinks about self the way God does - including recognizing the *good* that God has done in you. True humility does not downplay the good that God has done in you. False humility cares more about the opinions of others than the opinion of God, even if that means putting yourself down falsely or making self-deprecating statements about about the good things that God really has done in you. Self-deprecation can be a falsehood that is done to make people think we are humble when we really aren't. And false humility is OK with making self-deprecating statements so long as others really don't believe those statements. I think of the professor who acted embarrassed by the praise he received in one class (because he wanted to appear humble), but acted offended in another class when he was criticized in exactly the same area. Because the contradiction in his reactions on the same issue was so stark, he finally came to realize that he had false humility. He only acted humble when people were proud of him.
4. Fourth, true humility is preoccupied with God, whereas false humility is preoccupied with self and what others think. Any expressions of false humility tend to be somewhat self-serving even if there is some language about caring for the other person.
5. Fifth, true humility admits to *all* sins, while false humility admits to the small sins, or self-selected sins, or socially acceptable sins, or sins that are already obvious to others because we've been caught in the sins. When Joshua will later give Achan the opportunity to confess, Achan still minimizes his sin even though he is caught red-handed. He only confesses to what is obvious to all - that he coveted and stole, but he didn't describe it as being a breaking of covenant worthy of death and an abomination as God saw it. We need to describe our sins the way God describes our sins and we need to confess all of them.
6. Sixth, true humility is able to laugh with others at our own foibles because we know that our own worth is not based on impressing others. In contrast, false humility may laugh because it is socially expected to laugh, but feels inwardly slighted and keeps stewing over that incident.
7. Seventh, true humility is without pretense, whereas false humility often pretends a humble tone of voice while saying proud things. You can spot the fake humble tone of voice that sounds condescending, but is *trying* to sound humble.

8. Eighth, true humility is quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry, whereas false humility wants to speak, not listen, and is easily offended when you disagree. Joshua gets quite a tongue lashing in verses 10-15. If someone gave that kind of tongue lashing to you, you might be tempted to think it was unfair. But what does Joshua do? He immediately repents and resumes a true humility before the Lord. He wants to grow. He is eager to be corrected. But it is easy to go from true humility to false humility without realizing it.
9. Ninth, the apostle Paul says that one manifestation of false humility is an asceticism and self-denial that denies itself good things so as to *appear* humble and holy to others. But true humility recognizes that sin comes from the heart, not from pleasure.
10. Tenth, true humility does not need to prove itself to others, whereas false humility is very preoccupied with proving our humility to others. It can even sometimes pridefully lists all the humble things we do. But true humility does not need to prove itself to others. It operates before the Lord.

Obviously there are many other things that could be said about this subject, but I think just *beginning* to think about these things before the Lord is a good exercise. Will you be taken advantage of by others if you are humble? Probably. But you will have God's favor. So don't be humiliated and embarrassed if this sermon has exposed your heart this morning. Instead, thank the Lord that you can be restored to the path of true humility. We will all experience embarrassing moments because we all have at least some residue of pride. Make sure you learn from your embarrassing moments and grow through them. And make sure that those embarrassing moments don't paralyze you or continually make you cringe. OK? Let's pray.