

We are so glad to have all of our students home from youth camp today. Thanks for praying for them this week. The stories I've been hearing have been incredible and our group were Camp Champs. So, congratulations to all our CAGY students on their win!

Happy Father's Day to all of the dads today. I want to take just a minute to tell you something about my dad and our pastor. This week at a banquet hosted by the Oklahoma District of the Assemblies of God they honored ministers who have now held credentials for **50 years**. Pastor preached his first sermon at 10 years old and began his lifelong, fulltime preaching ministry as a teenager. The District recognized that call on his life to preach the word and awarded him his initial "Exhorters License" when he was just 15 years old. Each recipient on Friday received a gold pin during the pinning ceremony for their 50 years of recognized, faithful ministry to the Lord and His church and our pastor was one of those honored. It's a really big deal so we wanted you all to know this took place on Friday. Congratulations for 50 years of service.

This morning I want to tell you a story – because as you know I love stories – and then I want to look at a verse found in 1 Kings that has weighed heavy on my heart for some weeks. The story begins though in the book of Joshua. He had become the leader of the people of Israel when Moses died – having already been chosen and commissioned by Moses and the chief priest to succeed him. It was now time to finally walk into the land God had promised them when they had left Egypt, with Moses, 40 years prior. Joshua's first real act as leader was to send a new set of spies to Jericho so he could formulate a plan to take the city. As soon as they returned Joshua knew God was going to give them the city and so they began to advance. The people consecrated themselves to the Lord – in other words they dedicated or purified themselves. We would sometimes use the phrase "they got right with the Lord." That's a good thing to do when setting out on a difficult task. It was a moment of surrender – to ensure that they were ready to follow God's leading because they were about to be asked to do the craziest, strangest, most insane things. Then they crossed the Jordan river – miraculously, and they camped at Gilgal on the eastern side of the city of Jericho. While camped there they showed their complete obedience to the Lord and all the men were circumcised. I told you – insane things. This is not the sort of thing you do to your entire army enroute to battle. Crazy! Now remember all of these young men had been born while they wandered in the desert after their parents left Egypt. Because of this not all

of the laws God had given Moses had been properly followed. As part of this complete obedience – their consecration – their “get right with the Lord before battle” decision – their complete surrender to the Lord they were circumcised just as their fathers before them had been. With this act they were prepared to finally take the land they’d been promised.

Finally, everyone was ready and the Lord spoke directly to Joshua and gave him the craziest plan – it’s really strange – for how they were going to capture the city. He was instructed to march around the city with all the armed men of Israel one time for 6 days. They were to be led by seven priests playing trumpets followed by the ark of the covenant. They were to march in this formation each day around the full length of the city wall. Then on the seventh day Joshua was to have them repeat this seven times, and on the seventh lap they were to give one long blast on the trumpet and this would be the sign to all the people to shout at the top of their voice. When they did so the wall would collapse and the people would go straight in to Jericho and take the city.

This is exactly what happened. The book of Joshua records what God said to Joshua, then it records Joshua telling the people the same thing God had told him, and then it records them doing exactly what God had told Joshua and Joshua had told them and how it all went down exactly as they’d been told. Basically we read the same thing 3 times. Every piece of what God had said would happen came to pass. That’s how scripture works – every bit of comes to pass because every piece of it is true – so just keep reading it over and over again – here’s what God said, here’s what the people did, here’s what happened – exactly what God had said would happen. The wall collapsed and the people rushed in and they took the city. They devoted it to the Lord and destroyed everything that was there. The entire city was burned and the plunder of silver, gold, bronze and iron were put into the treasury of the Lord’s house. It had all taken place just as God had said it would and the people were now in the land they had been promised – just as God had said for more than 500 years. **“At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: ‘Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.’ Joshua 6:26**

God had been with His people. He had led them step by step. He had given them Godly leaders to guide them and show them the way. He had led them into battle and given them

the victory. Every need they had had God had supplied to His people time and time again. He had been true to His word and His promises – some of those promises were hundreds of years in the making. God had certainly been good to them.

But, then, this generation that had marched around Jericho in accordance to God's clear words and instructions died and their children did horrible things and sinned against God. Time went on and things got worse and then they'd get better and the history of the people of Israel has had so many ups and downs and moments of repentance and even more moments of evil and sins committed against the Lord. They begged to be like everyone else and have a king to rule over them and so they had a line of kings and the kingdom is split, and Israel sees hostile take overs and violent ousters. And, one such evil king is named Ahab. His wife, Jezebel, is even worse and she has them worshipping false gods and building temples to Baal and thinking that God's word really has no bearing on their own day and God's promises are not really going to be fulfilled. She puts to death God's prophets and has other God-fearing men killed. It was a dark time in Israel's history. But even if people were living contrary to God's words and instructions it did not mean that God's word was no longer true or that God's words would no longer come to pass. When reading the history of God's people in the Old Testament we should always remember that God's perceived slowness in exacting judgment is really His extreme mercy in action. Nothing was being forgotten or excused and no one was getting away with their sin.

It is in this evil day, when Ahab and Jezebel ruled, and sin and evil was rampant that we read this heavy and painful verse, **"In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun." 1 Kings 16:34**

We know very little about this man, Hiel. In fact, all we know comes from this one sentence. He had at least 2 sons, Abiram and Segub, and that he rebuilt Jericho. The foundation being poured is the first thing done in building a city and the gates are the last and final touch, so we also know he fully rebuilt the city of Jericho. Hiel's birthplace, Bethel, tells us a bit more about him. The first king of a divided Israel, Jeroboam, was incredibly evil. He was concerned that if people in his kingdom continued to go to Jerusalem to worship that they might be swayed to pledge their allegiance to the king of Judah and revolt against him. So,

he put up 2 golden calves the people could worship a bit closer to home. A worship of convenience never leads to true commitment. One altar and idol he set up in Dan and one in Bethel. Jeroboam basically set up a false religion with idols and priests and high places and festivals that closely resembled what God had commanded. So closely, in fact, that no one even questioned if this was right. All that glitters is not gold; and just because what you see or hear sounds like it's from God does not mean it is from God or that it is in accordance to His word.

The people of Bethel worshipped a false god with no regard for the true God's word or His prophets. We would assume based on what Hiel did in rebuilding the city of Jericho that he too had no regard for the word of God. So, we know Hiel comes from a city that has ceased to worship the true God of Israel. We know he is a skilled builder and a successful one. We know he is a father. And, we know he has something to teach us from those three facts.

**Fact: Hiel came from a city that had disregarded the one true God.**

**Fact: Your personal disregard for God's Word does not change or negate its truth or power.**

Hiel lived in a place and time where God's word was not being followed, listened to, or lived by. But it did not change the fact that what happened as a result of his own choices and sinful behavior against God took place "in accordance with the word of the Lord." We may also be living in a time when God's word has been disregarded as an old book written by flawed men in another language for another time. You can order any number of books that will try to discount, disprove, and offer you multiple views on how to read any and every passage of scripture to fit your own personal beliefs and values and make you feel good about your personal sins of choice. So, yes, you can stop reading the actual Bible, stop believing in its validity, and stop living by its commands. All that is your choice, but it won't stop every promise from coming true in accordance with the word of the Lord. Because your personal disregard will not, cannot and does not change or negate its truth or power. The scripture will teach us how to live, how to parent, how to be faithful in our marriage, and how to live holy lives. It will also rebuke us, convict us, and punch us in the gut sometimes when we're not. It will help us correct course and get back in line when we've strayed. But, most of all it will remain true and all that was said from the beginning to the end will come to pass.

The promises of God are yes and amen – to the ones we cling to and the ones we hope will pass us by. Joshua recorded the curse God had given him about Jericho, but He also wrote, **“You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened...if you violate the covenant of the Lord your God.” Joshua 23:14-16** Hiel of Bethel learned this the hard way.

**Fact: Hiel was a skilled and successful builder.**

**Fact: We are all building a legacy we will someday leave behind.**

Hiel built a city, but his legacy is one of pain, heartbreak and loss because what he built was never supposed to have been there. God had clearly said Jericho was never to be rebuilt. Hiel took this upon himself to forge his own type of success and fame and security. This wasn't what God was asking of him – this was all Hiel's idea. And, while he is remembered by name it's not for something good. He's remembered for being cursed. The contrast here is that Joshua is remembered for leading the people of Israel to consecrate themselves before the Lord and conquering Jericho and Hiel is remembered for letting the sins of Jericho conquer him and devoting himself to his own plans and purposes instead of Gods. Dads, since it's your day, let me direct this towards you. You're building a legacy too. Sometimes what you begin to do feels right, and important, perhaps you feel it will make your family proud, and maybe it even seems Godly or in the best interest of your family – but the question is: is it what God has asked you to do?

What are you building? You see, what you're paying attention to and giving your time to is being noted in the eyes of your kids. You can say church is important, but your actions, your involvement, and your attendance will communicate what is actually important to you. You might have wanted your kids to know God, but did you introduce them? You might want your kids to know God's Word, but did you ever read it with them? Did you intentionally build a legacy of faith that you could pass on to your children? Or did you leave them a legacy with no eternal value?

Now, it's admittedly easy for me to stand here and talk about legacies that parents leave their kids because I don't have any kids of my own! I could use examples of things parents teach their kids that don't affect me either. But, the truth is whether we're parents or not

we're still building a legacy that we will leave behind to those who come after us. People will remember what we dedicated our lives to build.

What are we building with our lives that will be remembered after we're gone? Dad's what are you communicating by your actions to your kids? What are you teaching them about kindness and generosity? The importance of work and ethics and relationships? Are you teaching your kids that prioritizing your marriage and loving and honoring your wife is part of being a good father – because that one is just a fact. What do your kids see you building?

But, again, this message isn't just to dads. What legacy am I building and leaving behind? What are any of us building with our lives – our words, our actions, our treatment of others? What is the digital legacy we're building? Imagine that – what if when you died a package arrived at your home to be given to the benefactors in your will. Inside the package was all the memes you shared, the comments you made on other's social media pages, the words you posted on your pages or blogs, the emails you sent, the text messages, the snapchat pictures – and it came with a note – this is part of your inheritance. You inherit my digital legacy. I hope it serves you well as you learn what was in my heart for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. What would your digital legacy be?

We're building a legacy with our words and actions. Someone will inherit it. Hiel built a city but there was no child to inherit his legacy. His legacy was a curse and not a blessing to his family, it was sinful behavior that led to death. And, the hard question for us is what will the legacy we're each building be?

**Fact: Hiel was a father who made a name for himself but at what cost?**

**Fact: There is always a cost.**

Hiel rebuilt the city of Jericho at the cost of his firstborn son and his youngest son. Many scholars believe it isn't just these 2, but that the first to the least or last is an expression letting us know that his whole family – the children in between Abiram and Segub were all killed because of what he did. Now, let's just say for argument's sake that since the days were evil he didn't know what Joshua had said generations before. So let's just say that he was ignorant that he would lose his firstborn when he laid the foundation for the city. But even that argument fails when you realize that he went forward with the project and finished building a city knowing full well that when he put the gates on at the very end he

would have lost his whole family. This is what has bothered me for weeks. Hiel knew the cost of success and fame and wealth. He knew the cost of doing what he wanted to do regardless of what God and His word made clear. The cost was his sons – and he decided it was worth it. He counted the cost and knowing full well it would cost him his children he laid a foundation and put up a gate.

At what cost, dads, are you willing to serve your own interests or make a name for yourself? At what cost, moms? At what cost, follower of Jesus? At what cost, students? At what cost will you pursue what you want or what brings you pleasure or what feels right in your heart or what will keep you out of church or away from fellowship with other believers? At what cost are you willing to live contrary to the word of God? At what cost are you willing to throw away your marriage? At what cost will you go against everything you've learned at this place in youth service or Sunday School? Because there's always a cost – don't pay it. Don't pay it at the price of your relationship with Jesus. Don't pay it if it costs you your children. Don't pay the price of your relationship with your kids. Don't do it if it will cost your kids their relationship with the Lord. It will cost you something. What are you willing to pay?

**Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" Mark 8:36** Hiel knew the cost and decided it was still worth it. What will you decide?

Don't build a legacy that will cost you or your kids a relationship with Jesus. Nothing is more important than that – nothing is more important than living for Jesus. No job, no promotion, no scholarship opportunity, no affair. It's not worth it if it's going to cost you your kids. It's not worth it if it will cost you your reputation. It's not worth it if it will cost you your soul.

Hiel built a city and in some ways was considered a success for having done it and he found a level of fame for his name has been remembered for thousands of years. But, it cost him his entire family. The curse that came with rebuilding Jericho meant there would be no one to inherit his legacy. He lost them all to build something of stone with no eternal value. The scripture had been clear this would happen – it was in accordance to the word that God had spoken to Joshua. Joshua obeyed the words of God, Hiel did not. I wonder if we could speak to Hiel today and ask him if it was worth it what he would say.

You're here though. Your legacy is still being built and I hope it's being built on the word of God. I hope it's being shaped and cultivated by what the scripture says. Students and those in your 20's your story the foundation is still being laid and the structure is just starting on the legacy you'll build – build it well. Build it so that 30 years from now when you hear a sermon like this you say – but for the grace of God I could have been Hiel, but I'm not. But, I also know there are some who are hearing me today and are realizing the legacy their building is not being built on God's word, but the word of God that convicts you can also help you correct course for there is still time to build a legacy of eternal value. While you still have breath there is still time to change the legacy you'll leave.

Let me finish with a word of hope. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Sin will always cost us. The price is death. Sin is a curse – just as there was a curse on the one who would rebuild Jericho. God knew the price of sin, because He set the price. He knew the cost. Yet, He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. His Son, Jesus, became the curse and in that way – by dying in our place – He redeemed us. **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23** And, now, while the Bible clearly states the wages of sin is death it also says the gift of God to us through Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection is life both here and now. The curse of sin has been broken and we can be forgiven to live free from sin and instead live for Jesus. Living for Jesus is the best legacy we can build – for ourselves, for our future, for our kids, those around us. Here's how we build that legacy: **“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” Mark 8:34-36**

We decide to no longer live for ourselves – our own interests, our own goals, our own ideas of success – and we take up our cross – we consecrate ourselves, dedicate ourselves, we “get right with the Lord” – and we obediently follow Jesus – His lead, His direction – every day. When it's hard, when it seems it will cost us the promotion or the bigger house or the opportunity that looked so good – we take up our cross. And, when it's all good and life is raining down blessings and the job that allows us to be home with our kids and attend the



ball games is handed to us – we take up our cross that day too and we keep following and we keep serving and we keep saying yes to Jesus. In this way we both lose and save our lives and build a legacy worth leaving behind.

Dads, I hope you get a gift today, but the best gift you could give your kids in return – regardless of their age, is a life lived for Jesus. You can start today. The scripture tells us how – Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved – and when you place your trust in the Lord you will never be put to shame – you'll be blessed.

The Lord is merciful and desires for you to know Him and to teach your kids about Him too. If that's not what has top priority in your life today – correct your course. Build a legacy of faith you can leave behind in accordance to the word of the Lord.

Let's pray.