

Joshua Daily Devotionals



Week Four: We Are Mere Creatures before Our Creator

Monday, 5/11

“And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel.” (Joshua 7:15 ESV)

Joshua 7 and 8 are some of the most intense chapters in the book. In chapter 7, Israel is defeated by the city of Ai because Achan stole some of the “devoted things” from the battle of Jericho. When he is found out, he and his whole family are put to death. When Israel *does* defeat Ai (chapter 8), *everyone* in the city is put to death—men, women, and children. These stories are some of the hardest to read in the whole Bible.

A key Hebrew word appears several times in Joshua 6–8: *herem*, “devoted things.” Things declared *herem* are completely removed from their normal use and devoted to something else. Sometimes, this means destroying the *herem*; sometimes it just means removing it from normal use.

In the case of the conquest of Canaan, God declared the people and plunder of certain cities to be *herem* dedicated to complete destruction (Deuteronomy 7:1–2). God established the land as His dwelling place, and His holiness demanded all idolatrous behavior be expunged (Genesis 15:13–16; Deuteronomy 7:1–4; 9:5). Further, since *God* was the one winning the battles to sanctify His land, the spoil belonged to Him.

By keeping some of the spoil, Achan was taking what was rightfully God’s.

This passage is sobering. What does it teach us about the holiness of God and the gravity of sin?

Joshua 7:10–15

Tuesday, 5/12

Since Francis Schaeffer considered thanklessness to be the opposite of love for God, he considered humility key to spiritual formation. We must recognize ourselves as creatures before our Creator. He writes in *True Spirituality*:

“The beginning of man’s rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart. They did not have proper, thankful hearts—seeing themselves as creatures before the Creator and being bowed not only in their knees, but in their stubborn hearts. The rebellion is a deliberate refusal to be the creature before the Creator, to the extent of being thankful. Love must carry with it ‘Thank-you,’ not in a superficial or ‘official’ way, but in being thankful and saying in the mind or with the voice ‘Thank you’ to God.” (*True Spirituality*, 10)

Think about this: If someone *created* you, they can just as easily *un-create* you. That is a sobering thought when it comes to our relationship with God. We often (rightly!) think of God in terms of his love and faithfulness, but God is also the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The things that exist do so because He declared them to exist and He holds them together. The more we recognize this, the scarier it is to consider rebelling against Him.

How does it make you feel to be a creature before the Creator?

Exodus 20:2–3

Wednesday, 5/13

Francis Schaeffer argues that Eve's original sin was to want to be like God. We repeat the same tendency today. He writes in *True Spirituality*:

“[S]ince the fall of man, we do not want to deny ourselves. Actually, we do everything we can, whether it is in a philosophic sense or a practical sense, to put ourselves at the center of the universe. This is where we naturally want to live. And this natural disposition fits in exactly with the environment that surrounds us in the twentieth century.

This was the very crux of the Fall. When Satan said to Eve, ‘You shall not surely die . . . but you shall be like God,’ she wanted to be like God (Genesis 3:4–5). She did not want to say no to the fruit that was good to the eyes, even though God had told her to say no and had warned her of the consequences—and all the rest flowed from this. She put herself at the center of the universe; she wanted to be like God.” (*True Spirituality*, 18)

I love Schaeffer's description of Eve's desires—she wanted to be the center of the universe...and so do we. It is hard to recognize that the universe does not revolve around us, that we are characters in a story ultimately about God.

But we can't do God's job. Only God can do God's job. The more we recognize that, the more we can take up the role we were meant to play—creatures.

What is the hardest part of recognizing that we are not God?

Isaiah 42:8

Thursday, 5/14

Francis Schaeffer thought that being a creature meant telling ourselves “no” on occasion. He writes:

“[T]he Word of God is definite that in all things, including hard things, we are to be contented, to say ‘Thank you’ to God. Here is a negative, and it really is a negative; it is a negative of saying no toward the dominance of things and of self.

We also see that the Bible tells us that we are to love men, not only in a romantic or idealized sense, but enough not to envy. Here again it would be false not to point out that this is a meaningless word, a pure romantic word; it is a pure utopian word in the bad sense, unless we see that this also involves a very strong negative aspect. If we have this right attitude, it means that we are saying no in certain very definite areas to certain things, and saying no to ourselves.” (*True Spirituality*, 16–17)

Because we are creatures, we are subject to the laws of the Creator. This means that we are to be at all times grateful to the Creator—even in *hard* times. Further, there are times in which we are to say “no” to ourselves, when we find ourselves envying our neighbor.

When we adopt the posture of a creature, we lose our sense of entitlement. We learn to accept the good from God along with the hard. We learn to rejoice in blessings, but also to rejoice with others who rejoice (and mourn when they mourn). On the other hand, if we *refuse* to view ourselves as a creature, if we continue to insist that *we* are the center of the universe, then we will resent God in hard times and envy our neighbors when they get things we don’t.

What are some areas in which you feel God is telling you to say “no” to yourself?

Proverbs 14:12

Friday, 5/15

“Our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29 ESV)

The New Testament reiterates the teaching of the Old on the holiness and majesty of God. The God we worship is the same God who commanded the execution of Achan’s family and the city of Ai.

Hebrews 12 warns us about refusing the voice of God—we know so much more about God than the ancients did; the expectations are higher not lower! God has been gracious to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but we need to be careful that we don’t respond by drifting back to the old ways. We died to those ways!

Christ’s death and resurrection always remain our hope. We are saved through His work from the power and penalty of sin. Because of this, we can draw near to God with confidence without fear of judgment. But, it is still appropriate to “fear” God in the sense that He remains the Creator and sustainer of the universe, and He is still holy.

How do you balance assurance of your salvation through the finished work of Jesus with a healthy “fear” of a holy God?

Hebrews 12:25–29

Saturday, 5/16

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” (James 4:10 ESV)

This week we have looked at Francis Schaeffer’s emphasis on recognizing that we are creatures before our Creator. James encourages us to humble ourselves before God. God will, in turn, exalt us.

We have also looked at some tough passages in Joshua this week as we have discussed the wrath of God. It is important for us to remember that God is the same today as He was in Joshua 7–8. When we reflect on the story of Joshua and Achan, we need to consider the character of God.

First, God is righteous. When we think of God’s judgment on sin, it is helpful to remember God’s righteousness. His wrath is reserved for executing justice. In the case of Achan, his actions led to Israel’s defeat at Ai.

Second, God is consistent in His actions and character. While the scriptures use emotional language to describe God (“anger,” “joy,” “grief,” etc.), these metaphors are anthropomorphisms. God is emotional, but He is not unpredictable in His emotions the way humans can be.

The stories of Achan and Ai remind us that our God is a consuming fire. He is the Creator and we are but creatures. If we learn to humble ourselves before a mighty God, He has promised to exalt us.

What difference does it make to you to remember that God is righteous and consistent?

James 4:7–10