Commandment 7: Achan's Theft

"You shall not steal"

Exodus 20:15; Joshua 7:7-25

Goal: This lesson teaches the seventh commandment through the story of Achan's theft. The Lord gave Israel victory at Jericho and forbad them to take the spoils. But Achan stole some treasures for himself and hid them in his tent. He was found out by lot and punished.

Process: Choose activities for the 4 parts of the lesson from the chart below. For multi-aged groups, teach the lesson to the entire group and select activities that suit your students. Online Extras provide additional activity choices.

Lesson Overview

Lesson Parts	Activities	Materials Given	Supplies Needed
1. Introduction (2-3 minutes)	All Ages *The Seventh Commandment*	introduction p. 2	
2. Readings & Questions (5-7 minutes)	All Ages select readings for your group	readings pp. 2-3 questions p. 4 talk-about picture p. 5	Bible for ages 11-14
3. Activities choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes) *Note*: Activity ages are approximate. Choose activities that will work for your group.	Ages 3-6 ***Achan's Theft*** act-it-out	directions p. 6 *The Lord Puppet* p. 7 ***Achan's Treasure 1-3*** pp. 8-10	scissors; fabric to make tent to cover treasure; markers or crayons; tape or stapler; puppet handles, e.g. popsicle sticks, pencils cardboard strips, plastic spoons, etc.
	Ages 7-10 *Hidden in the Tent* folding paper project	directions p. 11 Tent Directions p. 12 *The Lord* p. 13 ***Achan's Tent Outside*** p. 14 ***Achan's Tent Inside*** p. 15	Scissors *optional:* markers or colored pencils
	Ages 11-14 ***Achan's Decision Flow Chart*** activity & discussion	directions p. 16 ***Achan's Decision Flow Chart*** sample p. 17	colored pencils, pencil or pen, blank paper
	Ages 3-10 picture to color	***Achan's Buried Treasure Is Found*** p. 18	crayons or markers
4. Closing & Recitation (2-3 minutes)	All Ages wrap-up	*Recitation Slips* p. 19	scissors or paper cutter
Online Extras	All Ages additional activities	online links p. 19	various

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Introduction: The Seventh Commandment

The seventh commandment is on the second table of the commandments. It is the third commandment about loving our neighbor. The Lord tells us,

7. You shall not steal. Exodus 20:15

The seventh commandment says we should not steal. We are not to take things that are not ours, whether they are physical things, like clothes, or spiritual things, like presenting someone else's work as our own.

- The Lord tells us that we are not to take things that are not ours.
- We may think of stealing as taking physical things, but there are other ways we can steal as well. What other types of theft can you think of? (e.g. stealing someone's excitement, stealing grades by cheating, claiming someone else's work as your own, not doing chores faithfully, stealing a conversation, opportunities, etc.)
- Some kinds of stealing are not as obvious. For example, we may steal another person's happiness by saying mean things, or their reputation by saying bad things about them. Can you think of other examples that rob people of deeper kinds of happiness?
- On the deepest level, theft means claiming that the Lord's gifts—our life, ideas and loves—are our own.

Our story today is from the book of Joshua. It is about Achan (pronounced A-can). Achan one of the children of Israel who fought to destroy Jericho as they entered the land of Canaan. The Lord had clearly said that all the treasure captured in the battle were to be given to the Lord. He warned that anyone who took something for themselves would be punished. Let's find out what happened when Achan saw some beautiful things he wanted.

Reading Ages 3-**6: Achan's Theft**

This is a short retelling of the story for young children. To tell the story in your own words using a picture, see the talk-about picture on p. 5.

The Lord helped Israel win a big battle—the battle of Jericho. He told Israel that all the treasure from the battle was to be saved for the Lord's house.

But one man, Achan, disobeyed. When Achan saw some beautiful clothes, and some gold and silver, he secretly took them. He buried them in the ground underneath his tent. He did not think anybody knew what he had done.

But then something bad happened. Israel lost a battle and people got hurt. Joshua, their leader, thought it was the Lord's fault. But the Lord told him that someone had taken something that did not belong to them. You see, even though Achan hid what he stole, the Lord knew what had happened.

The Lord told them to draw lots. When they had finished, Achan was chosen. He admitted what he had done and Joshua sent men to his tent. There, they found the treasures where Achan had hidden them. So Achan was punished.

When we do something wrong, the Lord asks us to think about what we have done, be sorry for it, not do it again, and to try to do what is right next time.

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Reading Ages 7-10: Achan's Theft

New Church Concept
Teacher Background

In the natural sense, this commandment means not to take away anyone's goods. It also extends to impostures and illegitimate gains, and to frauds in paying taxes and discharging debts. Laborers transgress this commandment when they do their work unfaithfully; merchants, when they practice deceit in weight, in measure, and in their accounts; judges, when they give judgment for friendship, reward, relationship, and so depriving others of the goods which they rightfully possess. See *True Christian Religion* 317

"In the spiritual sense, to steal means to deprive others of the truths of their faith, which is done by means of falsities and heresies. Priests, who minister solely for gain or from a lust for honor, and teach what they see or might see from the Word to be untrue, are spiritual thieves, since they take away from the people the means of salvation, which are the truths of faith." *True Christian Religion* 318

A retelling of the story for children.

When Israel conquered the city of Jericho the Lord told the people to destroy everything they found except the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron. These were to be saved for the treasury of the house of the Lord.

During the battle one man, Achan, disobeyed the Lord. He took some treasures for himself and hid them in the ground under his tent. He thought nobody would know what he had done. But Israel suffered badly because of his disobedience.

After the battle of Jericho, Israel fought against a smaller city nearby called Ai. Joshua, the leader, sent men to spy out the city. The spies said the city was weak and would be easy to conquer. So Joshua sent a small force to take the city. But the attack went wrong, and Israel lost the battle. Joshua was angry with the Lord, and blamed Him for the defeat.

The Lord told Joshua that Israel had lost the battle because someone had committed a sin. "They have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff" (Joshua 7:11). Even though the guilty person hid the plunder, the Lord knew what had happened.

The Lord told Joshua to find the person who sinned by drawing lots. Of course He knew who would be chosen, and He already knew that this person—Achan—was guilty. We do not know exactly how the children of Israel drew lots. If we were to draw lots we might put twelve pieces of paper in a pot. Eleven pieces of paper would be unmarked, and the twelfth would have a dot on it. Twelve people would choose a piece of paper. The person who picked the paper with the dot on it would be "chosen" by lot.

When Israel had finished casting lots, Achan was chosen. Joshua spoke to Achan and asked what he had done, and Achan confessed. So Joshua sent messengers to Achan's tent. The messengers found a beautiful garment, a wedge of gold and some silver hidden in the earth under his tent.

Achan and his whole family were punished for what he did. This may seem cruel, but when we break the Ten Commandments the Lord wants us to search our hearts to find out what caused the trouble. If we ask His help, He will show us what caused the trouble, so we can get rid of it. And we must also get rid of any wrong ideas that came from what we did. Imagine a person secretly taking something that is not theirs and then hiding it and telling lies to cover it up. Hiding it and the lies are like Achan's "family". We must not steal, and we must also weed out the bad thoughts that follow what we have done and get rid of them as well.

Reading Ages 11-14: Achan's Theft

Read Joshua 7:7-25 or use the retelling above.

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Questions Ages 3-6

1. What did Achan do? (He took beautiful clothes, gold, and silver during a battle.)
2. Why was this a bad thing to do? (The Lord said the silver and gold were to be saved for His house.)
3. Where did Achan hide them? (He buried them in the ground under his tent.)
4. What happened because of what Achan did? (Israel lost a battle.)
5. How did Joshua, the leader, discover what Achan had done? (He drew lots.)

Questions Ages 7-10

1. Achan stole something secretly. What happened as a result? (Israel lost the battle of Ai.)
2. How did Joshua find out what had happened? (The Lord told him someone had committed a sin.)
3. How can we know when we have done something wrong? (We hear the voice of conscience, which is the Lord with us.)
4. What did the Lord tell Joshua to do to find out who had stolen something? (draw lots)
5. What did Joshua ask Achan to do when he was found out? (Joshua asked him to tell the truth about what he had done.)
6. What happened next? (Achan told him everything.) Have you experienced being asked about something you did? Do you think Achan felt better, or worse after telling Joshua what he had done?

Questions Ages 11-14

1. This story took place shortly after the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land, which represents heaven. The battle of Jericho was Israel's first fight in a series of battles for them to win the land. What kinds of battles do we fight so the Lord can establish heaven in us? (We need to fight against evil spirits and work hard to keep the commandments.)
2. Who did Achan steal from? The people of Jericho, Israel, or the Lord? (Achan stole from the Lord since the gold and silver were meant for His house.) Stealing from the Lord is the worst form of stealing. We can steal from the Lord by taking credit for the good things we do instead of seeing that everything good is the Lord's.
3. How were Achan and his family punished? (Achan and his family were stoned to death.) It seems hard that Achan's family was punished too. However, we must remember that Achan is like part of us. Achan's "family" are what Achan did to hide the fact that he stole. He hid what he had taken. He may have lied about it. The Lord tells us that we need to get rid of *all* the bad things when we have done something wrong. This includes the bad thoughts and feelings that can "look good" to us, just as stealing the treasures looked good to Achan.
4. In the Word, stones correspond to true ideas. How do true ideas help us get wrong attitudes and ideas out of our lives? (Without true ideas we do not know what is right, and so it is hard for us to make spiritual progress.) We experience true ideas from the Word as the voice of conscience.

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Ages 3-**6: Achan's Theft Act**-it-out

Materials Needed

copy of *The Lord Puppet* (2 per page) for each child; *Achan's Treasure 1-3*; paper or fabric to cover treasure; markers or crayons; scissors; tape or stapler; puppet handles, e.g. popsicle sticks, pencils cardboard strips, plastic spoons, etc.

Prepare in Advance

Print *Achan's Treasure* and *Lord Puppets.* Cut apart the *Lord Puppets.* Gather other supplies. Set up a tent by draping a sheet over several chairs. Choose a location for "Jericho" and place *Achan's Treasure* there.



Children will take the story of Achan's theft to heart by acting it out with a puppet of the Lord and simple props the teacher sets up in advance.

1. Who saw what Achan did as he was doing it? (The Lord.) Yes, the Lord is always with us, protecting us and reminding us about what we should do.
2. We will start by making a puppet to remind us that the Lord is always with us. Give each child a *Lord Puppet* and markers of crayons. Have children draw a picture of the Lord. Use tape or a stapler to fasten the Lord to a "handle". Children will hold their puppets throughout the activity.
3. Where was Achan when he saw the beautiful garment, the gold and the silver? (Achan was fighting in Jericho.) Let's go to Jericho and see if we can see what Achan saw. Walk to "Jericho" and look for *Achan's Treasure.* Was the Lord watching Achan? (Yes.) What did Achan do? (He took the treasure.) Did Achan know it was wrong to take the treasure? (Yes.)
4. What did Achan do next? (He took the treasure to his tent and buried it.) Let's take the treasure and hide it in the tent. Go to the tent and put the treasure in it.
5. What happened next? (Israel lost a battle.) How did Joshua find out what had happened? (The people drew lots, and Achan was chosen.) Send someone to "find" the treasure in Achan's tent.
6. Who already knew that the treasure was in the tent? (The Lord.) The Lord sees everything. He is always with us, looking after us.

New Church Concept
Teacher Background

If evils are not put away in one's external self, lusts with their delights grow and proliferate. The more thieves steal, the greater their lust to steal, until at last they cannot desist. See *Divine Providence* 112

Insofar as a person refrains from stealing as being a sin, so far they love honesty, because stealing is also fraud, and fraud and honesty are two opposites. Consequently, insofar as a person does not engage in fraud, so far they deal honestly. See *Doctrine of Life* 82

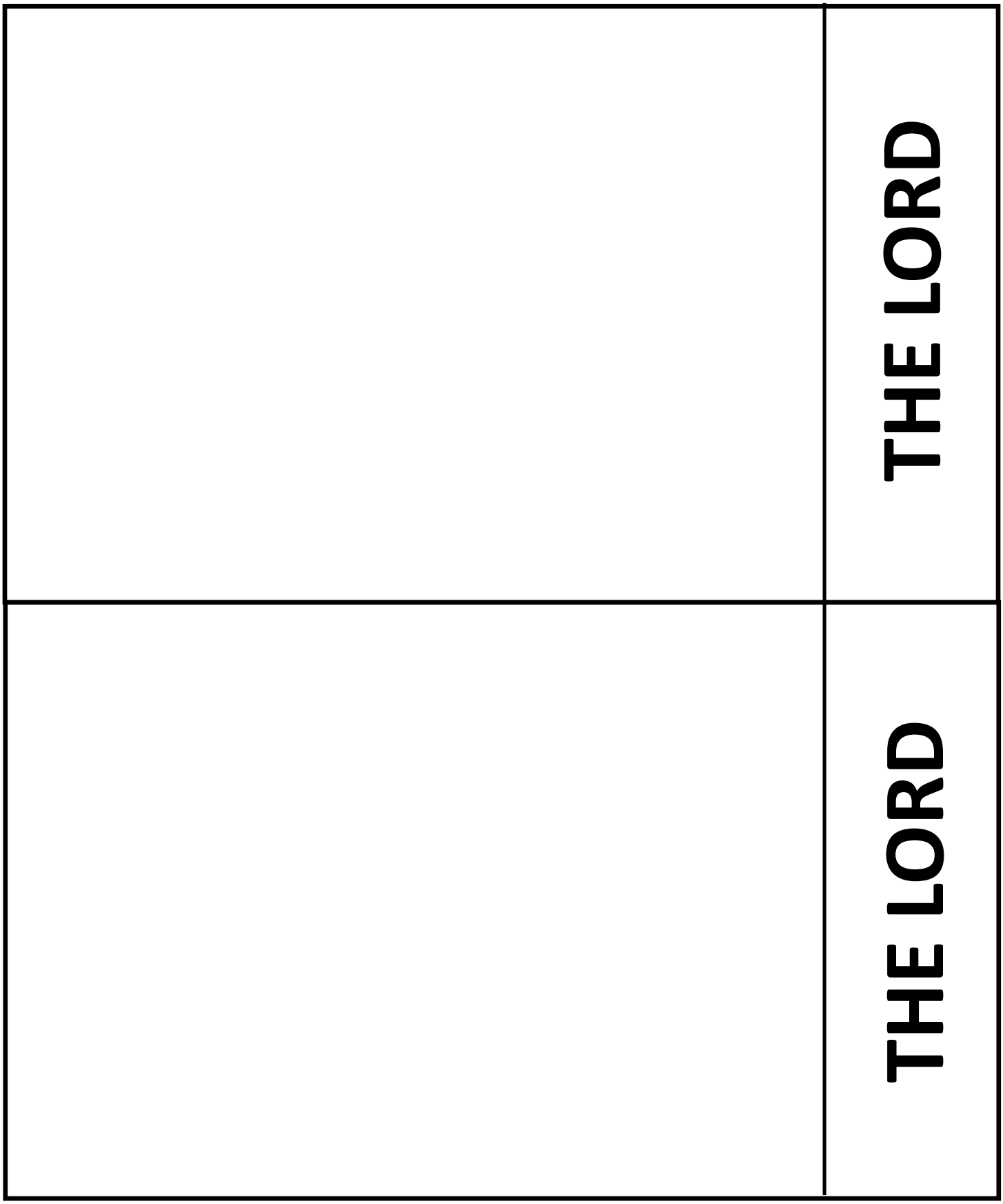
New Church Concept
Teacher Background

"In the celestial sense, thieves mean those who take away from the Lord His Divine power; also those who claim for themselves His merit and righteousness. These, even if they adore God, still do not trust in Him but only in themselves, and also do not believe in God, but only in themselves." *True Christian Religion* 319

The literal meaning of the commandments is that one should honor one's parents, not kill, commit adultery, or steal, and so on. But the internal sense is that one should worship the Lord, not harbor hatred, falsify what is true, or claim for oneself what is the Lord's. These are the ways in which those four commandments are understood in heaven. See *Arcana Coelestia* 7089

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The Lord Puppet



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Achan's Treasure 1



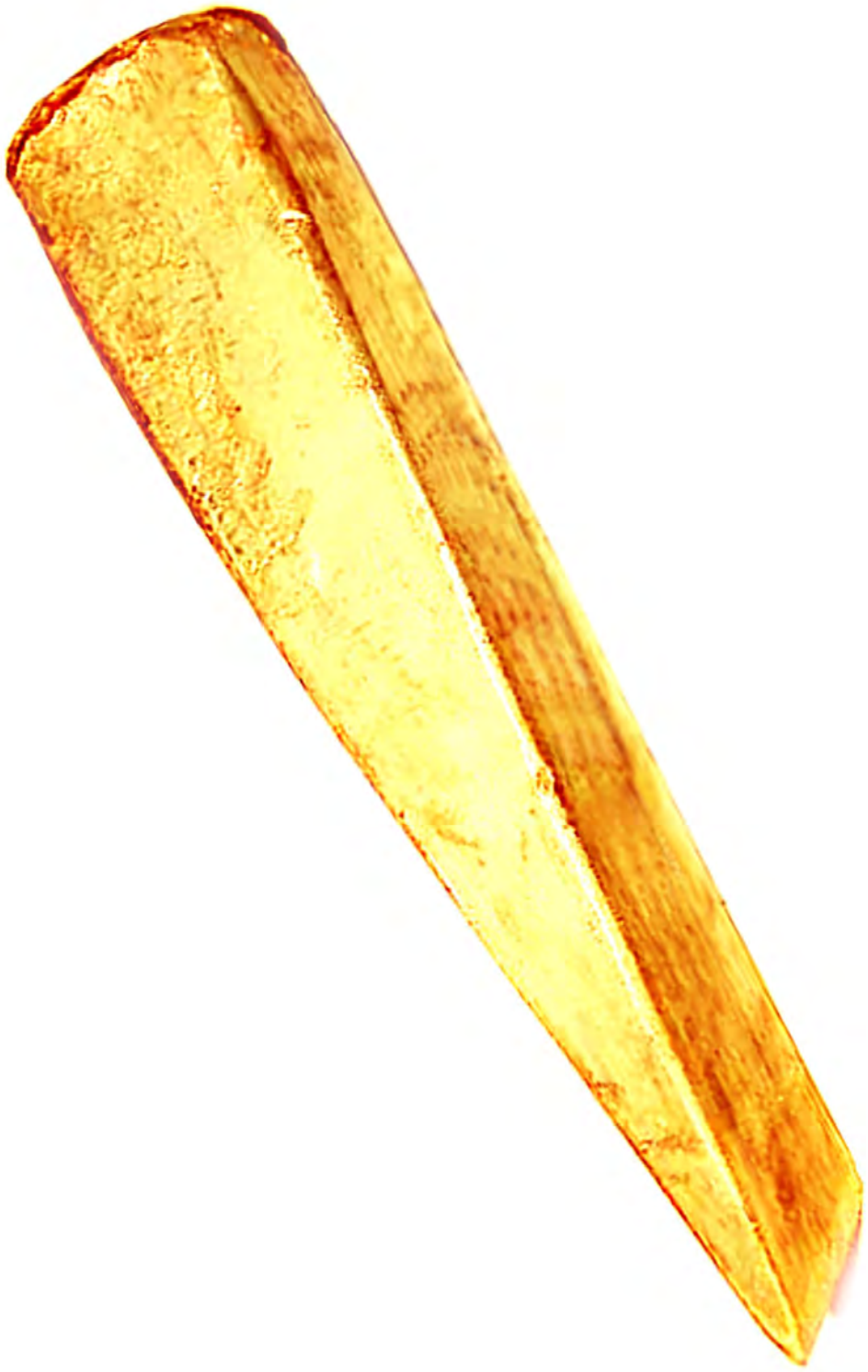
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Achan's Treasure 2



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Achan's Treasure 3



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Ages 7-10: Hidden in the Tent

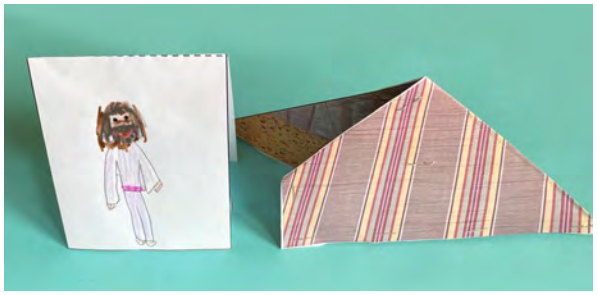
Materials Needed

copies of *Tent Directions*, *The Lord*, *Achan's Tent Outside*, and *Achan's Tent Inside* for each child; stapler; scissors; tape
optional: colored pencils, markers or crayons

Prepare in Advance

Print pages and gather supplies. Make a sample of the tent to be sure you know how the project works. Cut apart the *Lord Figure Template* page. Depending on your class time, you may wish to cut off the edges of the two tent pages before class using a paper cutter or scissors.

Children will create a folding tent to show how Achan hid the treasure he had stollen. They will draw a picture of the Lord to place near the tent to show that He sees everything—including what we do in secret!



1. Achan broke the Lord's commandment and stole some treasures from the battle of Jericho for himself. He hid them away secretly in his tent, but, of course, the Lord knew what he had done. We're going to make a folding tent that shows where Achan hid the treasures and how they were discovered.
2. Give each student a copy both Achan's tent pages—inside and outside. Hand out scissors and tape and copies of the *Tent Directions*. Help students to follow the directions and put together their tents.
3. Once the tents are made, give each student a copy of the Lord Figure Template to cut out and fold on the dotted line.
4. *Optional:* Students can draw their own picture of the Lord on the blank side of the folded paper.
5. Set up the tent as shown in the picture above with the Lord standing near by. You are now ready to act out the story using your tent.
6. After Achan confessed to Joshua about what he had done, Joshua sent men to his tent to find the stolen treasures. We can imagine that first they went into the tent. Open the first outer tent flap—are the treasures found? No—why? (Because Achan had buried the treasure in the earth under his tent.)
7. Open the second flap to "unbury" the treasure!
8. Just like with Achan, the Lord knows when we do something wrong, even if no one else ever finds out. But He will always forgive us if we are sorry for what we have done and turn back to following His commandments.

New Church Concept
Teacher Background

"People interpret stealing to mean thieving, defrauding, and under some pretext robbing the neighbor.... Spiritual angels interpret stealing to mean using falsities and evils to deprive others of the truths of their faith and goods of charity. And celestial angels interpret stealing to mean the attributing to themselves what is the Lord's and claiming for themselves His righteousness and merit." *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 67.2

New Church Concept
Teacher Background

"Angels do indeed possess supreme wisdom and intelligence, yet all their wisdom and intelligence comes to them from the Lord's Divine.... The fact that angels have no wisdom or intelligence at all originating in themselves they themselves openly confess. Indeed they are also quite angry if anyone attributes to them any wisdom or intelligence at all, for they know and perceive that it would be taking away from the Divine that which is His and it would be claiming for themselves that which is not theirs, and so would be engaging in the crime of spiritual theft." *Arcana Coelestia* 4295.2

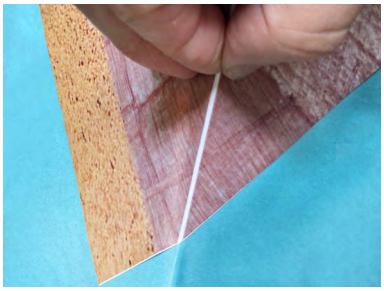
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Tent Directions

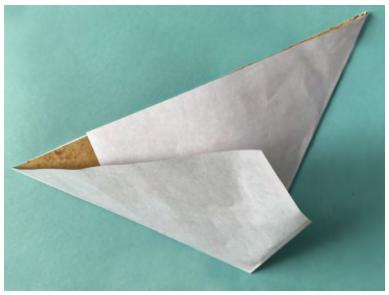
1. Cut the white edges off both tent pages.



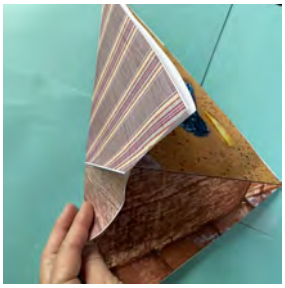
2. Fold both pages along the diagonal lines, using the edge of a table to help make the fold straight.



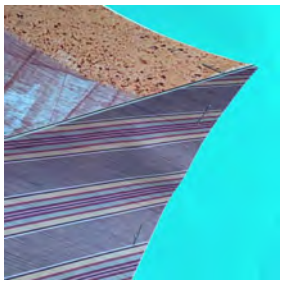
3. Fold the page showing the inside of the tent (with stolen treasures) on the same lines back the other way.



4. Place the white sides of the pages together so both pictures show. Match the large, central triangles so they are back-to-back. All the fold lines should match up.



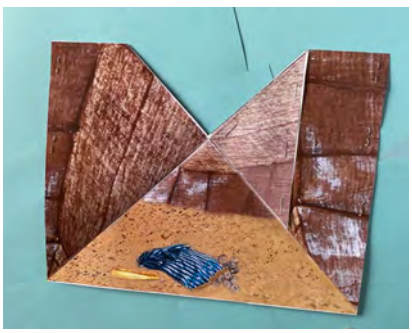
5. With both pages laid out flat (unfolded), staple the two pages together along the edges. Don't staple across any of the fold lines!



6. Cutting through both pages, cut along the bold white line only, stopping at the middle of the tent.



7. Fold the small cut flap down and tape it to the inside of the tent.



8. Fold the left flap in, and then the right flap so that the striped tent is on top. You are now ready to use your tent to show how Achan hid the stolen treasures.



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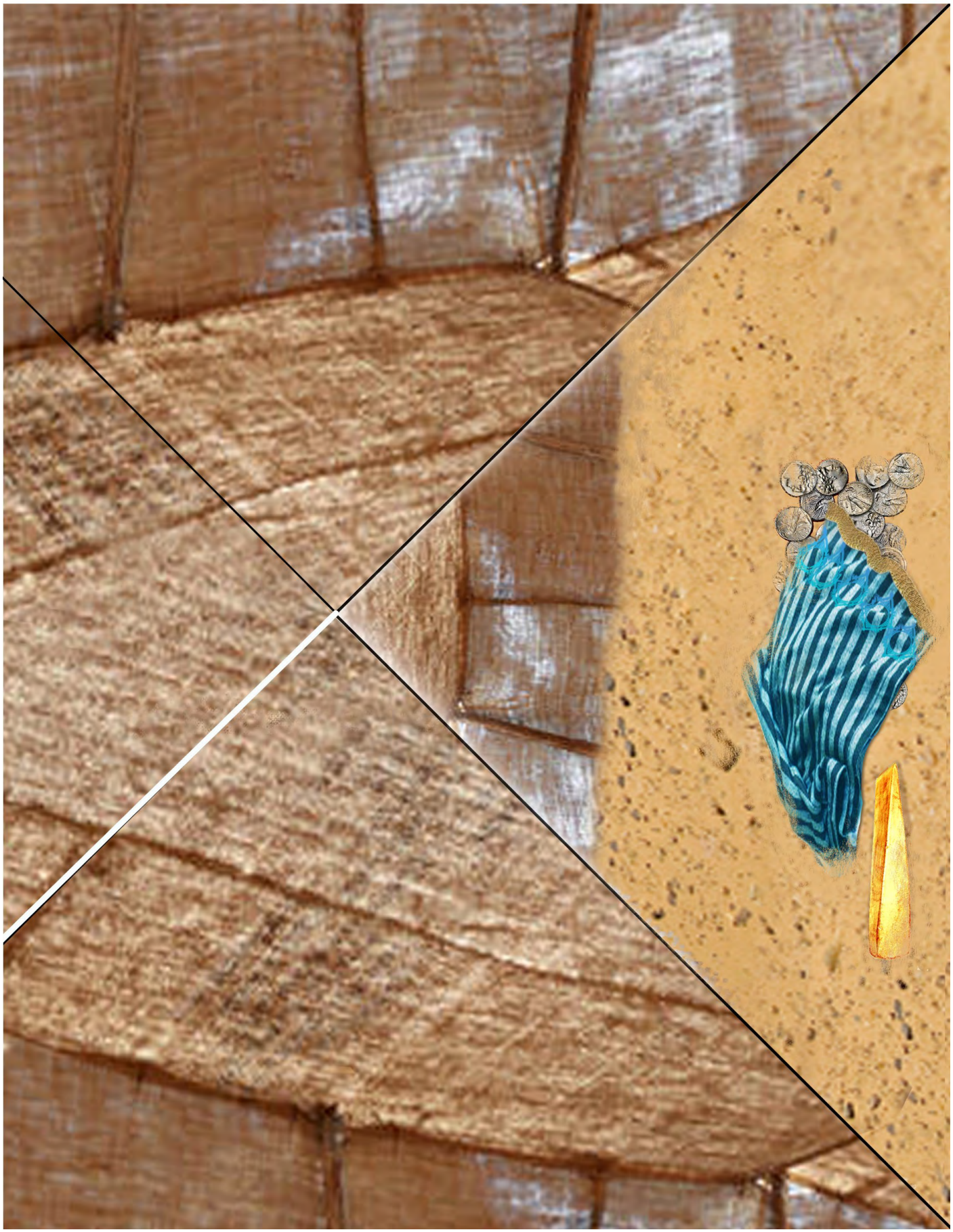
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Achan's Tent Outside



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Achan's Tent Inside



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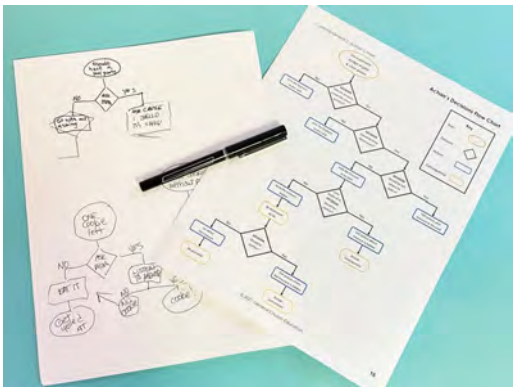
Ages 11-14: Achan's Decision Flow Chart

Materials Needed

copies of *Achan's Decision Flow Chart*, blank paper, pencils or pens

Prepare in Advance

Print copies of *Achan's Decision Flow Chart*.



A flow chart provides a way of visualizing a sequence of decisions made and actions taken. It helps students identify links between their thoughts and actions and the consequences they bring. Achan's choice to hide the items he stole shows that he knew he was making a choice to do something wrong. Using Achan's choice as an example, this activity helps students identify points at which they make critical decisions, and highlights the fact that the Lord repeatedly provides opportunities to turn back to Him.

1. What choices did Achan have when he saw the treasure in Jericho?
2. At what point did Achan know he was doing something against the Lord's Commandments? (When he took the treasure for himself.)
3. When Achan saw the treasure, he experienced a temptation—a choice of whether to take something he was attracted to when he knew it was wrong. From time to time everyone experiences temptations like Achan's. What kinds of temptation have you experienced? How easy or hard was it to choose what you should do?
4. Hand out copies of *Achan's Decision Flow Chart*. After making a wrong choice, how many opportunities did Achan have to make better choices?
5. This flow chart helps us see the many opportunities the Lord gave Achan to think about his actions. Choose a decision you have faced or imagine one that might happen. Design your own flow chart using the different kinds of boxes to show choices you made or could have made. Discuss your chart with the class.

New Church Concept

Teacher Background

Some have reasoned about the influx of all thoughts and affections [as coming from either heaven or hell], and said, if this idea were true, then no one could be found guilty or pay the price for any offence. But they were told in reply that if people were to believe as things really are, which is that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false from hell, they could not be found guilty of any offence or had evil ascribed to themselves. But because they believe that it begins in themselves, they take evil as their own; for their belief causes this to happen. Thus evil clings and cannot be separated from them. See *Arcana Coelestia* 6324

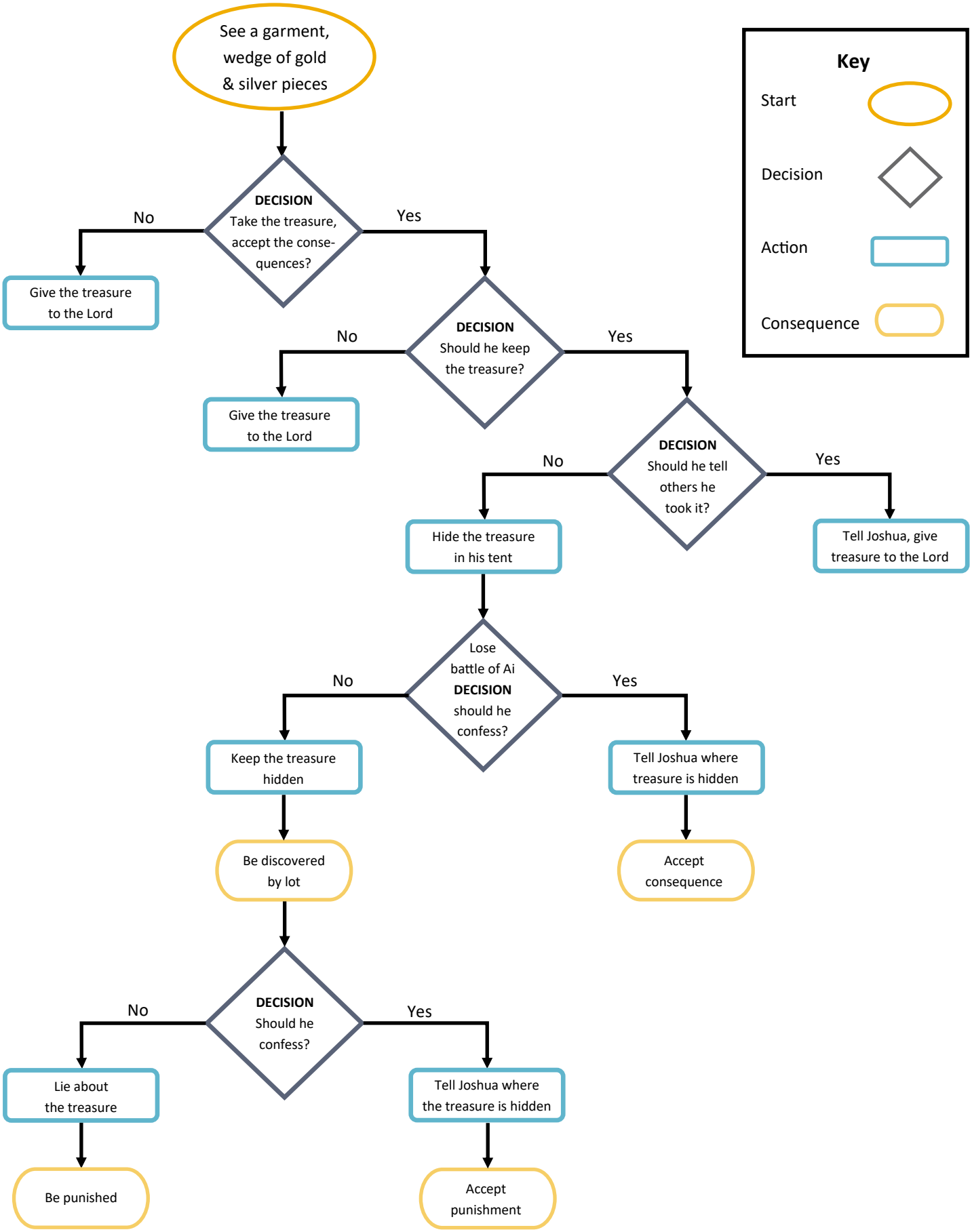
New Church Concept

Teacher Background

The laws of spiritual life, civil life, and moral life are set forth in the ten commandments. In the first three commandments are the laws of spiritual life, in the four that follow the laws of civil life, and in the last three the laws of moral life. In external form, the merely natural person lives in accordance with the same commandments in the same way as the spiritual person does. But all these they do merely for the sake of themselves and the world, for the sake of appearances; while in internal form such a person is the direct opposite of what they appear in external form, since in heart they deny the Divine. Consequently, they are wholly disjoined from heaven, and not being a spiritual person they are neither a moral person nor a civil person. Although they do not steal, yet they covet the goods of others. In intent they are continually acting the thief. See *Heaven and Hell* 531

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Achan's Decisions Flow Chart



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Achan's Buried Treasure Is Found



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Closing & Recitation

The seventh commandment, "You shall not steal" means we are not to take anything that is not ours, whether it is a physical thing, an idea, or even someone's spirit.

Today we add the seventh commandment to the commandments which we have already learned. You shall not steal. Let's say it together now. Take home a recitation slip and practice the first seven commandments each day.

The Ten Commandments	The Ten Commandments
1. You shall have no other gods before My face.	1. You shall have no other gods before My face.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.	3. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother.	4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not murder.	5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.	6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.	7. You shall not steal.
Exodus 20:3-15	Exodus 20:3-15

Online Extras

Looking for something "extra" ? Try these online ideas!

Ages 3-6 *Achan's Sin and Its Penalty* http://childrensbiblelessons.blogspot.com/2014/06/lesson-achans-sin-and-ienalty.html (Project idea)

Ages 7-10 *Pair Angelic Qualities with their Opposites* https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-pairing-angelic-qualities-with-their-opposites.pdf

Ages 11-14 *Attributing all good in life to the Lord rather than stealing the credit from Him* https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-attributing-life-to-the-lord.pdf

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