

Rahab: An Unlikely Hero

Lesson 02 of 06 in the series, "Strong and Courageous"

1. Joshua sent two spies into Jericho to scout it out before the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

"Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, 'Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.' So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night. But someone told the king of Jericho, 'Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.' So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: 'Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land.' Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, 'Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.' (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut."

Joshua 2:1-7 (NLT)

Note: Rahab had probably hidden men in her house before and had probably lied before.

Note: God providentially guided the spies to Rahab's house because He knew what was going on in her heart.

"Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. 'I know the LORD has given you this land,' she told them. 'We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.'"

Joshua 2:8-11 (NLT)

Life Application: There are sinful, hurting people all around us who are ready to turn to God for help.

"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him." Matthew 21:31-32 (NIV)

2. Rahab's faith in God led her to help the two spies escape and make them swear to protect her family.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

"Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.' 'We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,' the men agreed. 'If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the LORD gives us the land.' Then, since Rahab's house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. 'Escape to the hill country,' she told them. 'Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way.' Before they left, the men told her, 'We will be bound by the oath we have taken only if you follow these instructions. When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window through which you let us down. And all your family members—your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house. If they go out into the street and are killed, it will not be our fault. But if anyone lays a hand on people inside this house, we will accept the responsibility for their death. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way.' 'I accept your terms,' she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window."

Joshua 2:12-21 (NLT)

Life Application: Genuine faith always leads to action.

"What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road." James 2:14, 17, 25 (NLT)

a. Rahab's faith saved her and her family from the destruction that was certain to come.

"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies." Hebrews 11:31 (NLT)

Life Application: Faith in Jesus saves us from God's wrath that is certain to come.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

- b. Rahab’s faith strengthened the faith of the two spies.

“The spies went up into the hill country and stayed there three days. The men who were chasing them searched everywhere along the road, but they finally returned without success. Then the two spies came down from the hill country, crossed the Jordan River, and reported to Joshua all that had happened to them. ‘The LORD has given us the whole land,’ they said, ‘for all the people in the land are terrified of us.’”
Joshua 2:22-24 (NLT)

Note: Rahab simply believed the promises of God that the previous generation of Israelites DID NOT.

“I will send my terror ahead of you and create panic among all the people whose lands you invade. I will make all your enemies turn and run.” Exodus 23:27 (NLT)

Life Application: “And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)

3. God rewarded Rahab’s faith by bringing her into His own family and taking away her shame.

“Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon... Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.”
Matthew 1:5, 6, 16 (NLT)

Life Application: God rewards our faith in Christ Jesus by adopting us into His own family and taking away our shame.

“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father.’ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.” Romans 8:15-17 (NLT)

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“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.”
The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:1-5 (NIV)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Connect Group questions:

1. Describe a time in your life when somebody helped you out of a really tough situation. Why did they do it?
2. Read Joshua 2:1-11. Why do you think Rahab helped the two spies?
3. Read Matthew 21:31-32. Why do you think “sinners” like tax collectors and prostitutes came to hear John the Baptist preach? Why do you think many of them believed him?
4. Describe a situation in which you were afraid that something bad was about to happen (i.e. tornado warning, getting laid off, being dumped from a relationship). Where did you turn for help? Why?
5. Read Joshua 2:12-21. What did Rahab ask of the spies she had helped? Why did she make them swear they would help her? What were the terms of their agreement?
6. Read James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31. Why is a pagan prostitute held up as a hero of the faith? How does this make you feel?
7. Why do you think Matthew, a former tax collector, made sure to include Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus? (See Matthew 1:5.)
8. Spend some time as a group thanking God that He saves us and gives us brand-new lives.