

God's Providence Will Surprise You
Unsung Heroes
by Chris Famisaran

Hello, friends, Welcome back to week two of our series on the Unsung Heroes. The next couple months going to be talking about some people who don't necessarily get a lot of notoriety. And so we want to make sure that their story is told, because there's a lot of lessons we can take from them. So let's begin with prayer. And then we'll follow up with the story. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather together today. And we just pray that you will be with us lead and guide us in Jesus name, amen.

Back in 2005, there was a film called Sky High. It was directed by Mike Mitchell, and it tells a story of Will Stronghold who's the son of two of the greatest superheroes in the world. And everyone expects him to grow up to save the world, just like his mom and dad. But he's got a bit of an issue. He doesn't have any superpowers. And so when he gets to his first day of school at Sky High, we'll meet Ron Wilson, a school bus driver, who's also ignored by the rest of the school. And just like Will, Ron also his parents are superheroes. But he also doesn't have any superpowers of his own. And so, you know, he's overlooked and teased by others his whole life. And yet Ron faithfully shows up to his job every day with a smile. He takes pride in his role as a bus driver. And even though he never developed any superpowers of his own, Ron ends up being one of the key reasons why Will's band of last-picked, sidekick, outcast friends who are able to stop the villain and save the day. Now the world tells us that in order to succeed in life, we have to do these awesome huge important things and become superstars. But the Bible regularly shows that God loves to choose and pick people that the world overlooks, and helps these individuals do amazing, impossible things.

Now today we're going to go to the book of Joshua, we're going to look at a story of a woman by the name of Rahab. In the book of Joshua follows the Pentateuch or the Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, there's a big shift because Moses is no longer in charge. Joshua takes over. It's the first book after the Torah. And it's here that we find that Joshua, who is a loyal mentee of Moses, is established as the leader of the Hebrew people to lead them through the promised land. And in Joshua 2, he sends two spies to check out an area

known as Jericho, and it's that they're that they enter the land, they meet a woman by the name of Rahab, who shelters the men from the king of Jericho. Joshua, son of Nun, This is verse one, secretly sent to spies from shoot him go look over the land, he said, and especially Jericho. So they went, they entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab. and stayed there.

And somehow, the King finds out that these spies are being placed there and someone had to snitch on the spies. The king of Jericho had heard of these people going across land, doing amazing things with the power of God. And they were scared because they knew that the Hebrew people weren't to be trifled with. Now in verse two, it says, The king of Jericho was told, Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land. And so the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab bring out the men who came to you and entered the house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.

You know, I mean, if he was a us a good king, you know, he's trying to look out for his own people. You know, if I were king of Jericho, I'd probably do the same thing. Technically, he's been a good leader trying to find out who's trying to snoop around the land. But he's also worried about this large group of people and wondering what do they plan to try to do? Are they going to take it over and topple His kingdom? So he ordered Rahab to turn these men in? And it's at this point that Rahab has to make a decision? Does she protect these men that are in her home? Depending on the choice she makes, it could possibly cost her life, much like last week's characters, Shiphrah and Puah. She can comply with the Kings order and wrap these two spies out or protect them.

Now, let's get a little bit more context who was Rahab? What was your chosen profession? While she was the Canaanite a Gentile, according to the Hebrews in their eyes, she was also a prostitute. No self respecting men will go near her, at least not in public. That a night, when it was harder to see, she was probably ignored, despise looked down upon. And it's easy to judge when you see someone doing something that you are morally and ethically opposed to. And to be in her position was difficult. She has family that she has to think about and care for mom, dad, her brothers. You know, I was talking about this story with Bill last night, he mentioned, you know, the one thing that stands out about Rahab was that she was a survivor. And a survivor will do whatever it takes to survive. Think

about that. If she was married, or she had a family to help her, would she be in this position? Probably not. Now, now, we don't really know much more beyond that at this point. But we do know that she does have a family. And as we'll discover later in the story, it sounds like they were not in a position to help her. She was the provider. She was the breadwinner, someone had to make money. So if you're Rahab, what do you do? Do you want to take the easy route and then turn them in or do the right thing and shelter them until the coast was clear. And just like the midwives we've learned last week, Shiphrah and Puah, she makes the big decision, the right decision to protect them.

Now, in verse four, it says, but the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come in at dusk. When it was time to close the city gates, they left I don't know which way they went, go after them quickly, you may catch up with them. But she taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flash she had laid out on the roof, so she kind of light there. So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that led to the fuel fjords of Jordan. And as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shot. Before the spies lay down for the night, though, she went up to the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given you this land, and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We've heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea. But when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the Kings, the two kings of the Amorites, East of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. And when we heard of it, hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage bill because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven, above and on the earth below. So she acknowledges who God is, who these two spies represent. When you look back through history, can you think of anyone or a group of people who saw evil taking place and decided you know what, that's not something they can stomach and let go by, so they chose to make a difference.

During World War Two, there were many people like Rahab, who chose to disobey their leaders evil rules. One teacher, for instance, Johan van Hulst, helped hide Jewish children in baskets so that they could be secretly moved out of the city to somewhere they'd be safe. And Mr. Van Hulst loved God more than he loved his own life. And he cared more about what happened to these children. And so he didn't care if he was caught. And even if he wasn't some superhero with

superpowers, he and his friend helped save over 600 children who were able to grow up and have families of their own. Can you imagine that? And so God protected Mr. Hulst, and when he died, he was died at the age of 107 years old. Wow, that's amazing. That's a full life.

Mr. Van Hulst, who was he, a school teacher. He wasn't looking for fame or glory. He wanted to ensure that these children would be safe and secure. And it takes moral courage to devise something that is so heinous and so evil against your own human beings. The sad truth is that when we think of genocide, for instance, we immediately refer back to the Holocaust, which was many years ago. But there's been a number of instances actually recently in Cambodia, Rwanda, Myanmar, even today, right now, there's ethnic cleansing within our time or generation away. It's not that far back, that we see these things happening. And going back to Joshua to Rahab, essentially turns her back on her people, and sides with God, she makes a promise with the two spies, now that please swear to me by the Lord, that you will show kindness to my family because I've shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from debt. They respond with our lives for your lives. If you don't tell what we are doing. We will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us this slammed. So she said, let them down by a rope through the window for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. And she said to them, Go to the hills so that the pursuers will not find you hide yourself there three days until they return, and then go on your way. And the men said to her, this oath you made a swear will not be binding on us unless we enter the land. You have tied the scarlet cord in the window through which you have led us down and unless you have brought your father, your mother, your brothers and all your family into your household, if any of them go outside your house, their blood will be on their own heads, not going to be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head of a hand is laid on. But if you tell what we're doing, we will be released from this oath You made us swear.

So she makes a note, she promises essentially with these two spies. I'll help you out if you help me up. Again. She's a survivor. The key part of this text indicating that the scarlet cord that the two spies used to exit had to be displayed when the people of Israel came back and attacked. It had to be displayed, and all of her

family must be inside their her place, or else they could be treated as the enemy combatants. Remember now she lived on the part of the wall in Jericho. If you remember back Sabbath school lessons way back in the day, what happens the Jericho gets taken over, but amazingly Rahab and her family survive. Now this isn't the end of the story for Rahab. Eventually she joins the people of Israel, she's a convert, that she gets married to Salman who also they birth Boaz, who also births Obed. And then also finally Jesse, who is the father of guess who, King David, you know that line, she's a part of that great lineage of Jesus line. So eventually, she joins the people of Israel, she gets married, and she plays a vital role in helping to save the world, not just in Jericho, but the whole world. And if you go back to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, she's listed in the hall of faith in verse 31. That's some pretty heavy company. And everybody has their name listed in there. She's in good company.

So what's the takeaway here? How does this apply to our lives here in 2023, number one, God can provide for you in unexpected places, for the two spies, they had no idea that help and protection would come from Rayhab a Canaanite Gentile, a prostitute. But the second thing too is God can use anyone to accomplish God's work. God in a way redeems Rahab as well. And the final lesson here is one that I mentioned before, the past does not define who you are, for the rest of your life. Imagine what rehabs life would look like if she would wallowed in self pity, she wouldn't have gotten very far. And because of her faithfulness, she is saved, and now has an opportunity to positively change the direction of her life. She joins the people of Israel, gets married to salmon plays a key role in Jesus earthly lineage in the past does not define who you are for the rest of your life.

Now, one of the things that I do is I'm a facilitator for preparing to enrich it's, it's one of the things I love to do leading couples through premarital counseling. And it's also a tool for couples who are maybe having a relationship that is struggling or even, you know, doing well, but you know, sometimes you have to get a railer tune up, you know, gotta get the oil, check, make sure everything's good to go. And one of the things that I have every couple of do is take an assessment, and they usually last about 30 minutes and, and ask questions about who you are some of your beliefs and also your relationship with your current or future spouse. And then calculates areas where you have strength and growing areas communication, conflict resolution, things you love to do spiritual beliefs. Various

things there's, there's there's eight categories. And what I tell people is that this is a snapshot of your relationship right now. It could look differently in a week or a month or a year. But if you do it right, it's an honest assessment where you are at in your relationship, you can continue to do the right things and have a healthy relationship. If you're already blessed to have one. Or you can put the work in the hard work, build up your communication, have those tough, honest, hard questions, and learn to be able to communicate and grow in relationship with your future or current spouse. Now that again, this assessment doesn't define who you are for the rest of your life. If there are growing areas you need to change, but it takes work and it takes intentionality growth will have to occur and that requires change.

And if we're being honest with ourselves, we don't like the idea of change because it requires being Being uncomfortable from trying something new to having those difficult, honest questions with yourself and your spouse, being honest with yourself is one of the hardest things to face. But when you're honest, I found that it's one of the most freeing things that you can do. Growth cannot take place unless we are honest with ourselves. And it takes faith to grow and make those tough decisions. But just like Shiphrah and Puah in Exodus one and Rahab here in chapter two of Joshua, they chose to be faithful in spite of the consequences that potentially ended their life. Rahab chose to live faithfully and become an unlikely unsung hero for the Lord. And the two spies probably did not expect to be helped out and saved by Rahab. Nor did anyone probably ever imagine the impact that she would have on the world. There's a there's a saying that I once heard, and I've shared it here I'm going to share it again. Small actions, equals or leads to big reactions, small actions, lead to big reactions. God's providence can come from the unlikeliest of places, don't judge a book by its cover. That person can potentially help save the world. And I think the biggest lesson from Rahab is don't write people off because of our own prejudices, people will surprise you. We expect God's people to look and act a certain way, or God's grace and Providence to come from certain places. The Bible regularly shows that God uses all people in from the unlikeliest of places to accomplish God's plan. So keep an open mind on God's way of leading.

So as we wind down in our reflection, where has God shown you grace and goodness, from the least expected places, and people in your life?

And as you go forth, as your challenge, this is a challenge for the week. Get to know someone who would be considered an outcast or different and build a relationship with them. You'll be surprised what you learn.

May God bless you, be with you.

And let's close with prayer. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for another Sabbath day that you blessed. Blessed us with another day of life, leading guidance and all that we do. Forgive us of our sins, Lord, help us to move forward with courage. Thank you for all that you're doing and all the things that are on our hearts and our minds that perhaps keep us up at night. Bless those things, leading guidance. Help us to know that we do and to be the ambassadors you've called us to be in Jesus name. Amen.

Grace and peace, everyone. God bless you all. Take care.