

SESSION 3

RAHAB: A FAITH NOT HELD BACK BY FEAR

Leader pages on pp. 110-113

THE POINT:
FAITH ACTS WHEN OTHERS
ARE PARALYZED BY FEAR.

JOSHUA 2:1-4A, 8-14; 6:22-25

¹ Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two men as spies from the Acacia Grove, saying, "Go and scout the land, especially Jericho." So they left, and they came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab, and stayed there.

² The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelite men have come here tonight to investigate the land."

³ Then the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab and said, "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, for they came to investigate the entire land." ^{4a} But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. . . .

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⁸ Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof ⁹ and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you.

¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan.

¹¹ When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.

¹² **Now please swear to me by the LORD that you will also show kindness to my father's family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign**

¹³ that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death."

¹⁴ The men answered her, "We will give our lives for yours. If you don't report our mission, we will show kindness and faithfulness to you when the LORD gives us the land."

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²² Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her." ²³ So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

²⁴ They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house.

²⁵ However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

The Lord your God, he is God (v. 11)—Rahab declared and expressed her faith in the God of Israel (Yahweh), not the Canaanite deities.

Showed kindness to you (v. 12)—Rahab took a huge risk to allow the spies to stay in her

house and defying her king's order and misleading his men.

All who are with her (v. 22)—Joshua was faithful to keep the promises to Rahab and her family and they were spared from destruction.

HOW DOES OUR FAITH HELP US HANDLE FEAR?

JOSHUA 2:1-4A, 8-14; 6:22-25

Harriet Tubman was nicknamed "Moses." Just as Moses helped to deliver the people of Israel from Egyptian captivity, she led many expeditions where she freed slaves. Her first courageous act was escaping herself to freedom. There were many obstacles against her during that time. There was always the chance of her being captured and possibly killed. Although faced with those dire consequences, she returned several times and helped others escape. She is quoted as saying, "I said to the Lord, I'm going to hold steady on to you, and I know you will see me through."² We must do the same just as Harriet used her faith to help her through scary and uncertain situations.

Let the story of Rahab teach us that fear is not necessary when talking about the one true God. She could have easily turned in the spies, but she had already heard the story of God's chosen people. Her story teaches us the powerful outcome of trusting in a mighty God!

Take a Stand // Joshua 2:1-4a

Joshua knew what it was like to be a spy. Moses picked him as one of twelve spies who had secretly entered the land of promise forty years earlier. His fellow spies and the nation had rejected his faith

in God. Now, as commander, he ordered two men to spy on the city of Jericho and the surrounding area. The men ended their journey in Jericho at the house of Rahab, a prostitute.

Many male travelers to Jericho no doubt knew about Rahab's house. Although these two Israelites ended up at Rahab's house, they had little in common with her other visitors. Though few Bible readers can relate to Rahab's profession, countless people can identify with her story of faith and survival.

Joshua's attempt at secrecy was short-lived. The intelligence officers of Jericho's king informed him that Israel had sent men to spy on his land. They had pinpointed their exact location. The king sent word to Rahab that he wanted the spies. Rahab's response to her king would expose her faith. Was her loyalty to her king or the God of the Israelites?

At this point in the story, if she gave aid and comfort to the enemy, she didn't know if Israel and their God would help her.

It doesn't appear that Rahab hesitated for one second; she hid the spies. Why did Rahab hide the spies? It would have been easier to turn them in. She crossed a line, and she could never go back.



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Her rebellion revealed her faith in the God she had only heard about in stories. Some considered her actions heroic; others might consider them traitorous. But her faith in God would make her actions legendary.

Readers of the book of Joshua know Rahab's story and how it ends. But let's back up a minute. Did she do the right thing? As we will see, her desire to protect her family and her newfound faith in God demanded that she hide the spies.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT HELP YOU STAND UP TO CULTURAL PRESSURE?

Choose the Lord's Side //

Joshua 2:8-14

We're all guilty of it: After your cellphone's operating system is updated, you've checked the "I agree" box without reading the terms and conditions. Would you purchase a new car or house and sign the loan documents without reading the terms and conditions? Let's take that a step further: Would you sign a blank Last Will and Testament? Regardless of your lawyer and the amount of faith you have in this person, that's a terrible idea! Rahab had signed the contract before reading the fine print. Would she live long enough to regret her decision?

It appears that as Rahab made her way to the roof to talk with the spies, her faith grew. Not only did she have faith in the God of Israel, but it was also in His people, her new allies. Rahab believed the spies would allow her to discuss their potential partnership before reporting to Joshua. Rahab was the first to speak, and this is the summary of her intelligence report:

- Their Lord had already given Jericho to Israel.
- Terror and panic had filled the hearts of the people of Jericho.
- God divided the Red Sea and destroyed two Amorite kings.
- Everyone in Jericho had lost heart, and their courage failed.

Her words were a confession of faith in the God of Israel. She believed in the God that had given His people victory before their battle began. Next came the information the spies had been sent to gather. She divulged the mental and physical state of the people of Jericho: In their minds and hearts, they had already lost. The king of Jericho would never want his people's fragile condition shared with his enemy. Rahab's information was priceless for any general doing battle planning.



DIGGING DEEPER RAHAB

Rahab lived in Jericho, a city located in Canaan. The Canaanites had a polytheistic religion, meaning they worshiped many gods. The most popular god was Baal. The name "Baal" means master or lord. He was worshiped as the storm god who brought rain and made the grounds fertile. Once the Israelites settled in Canaan, one of the jobs they did was farming. Some Israelites eventually started worshiping and praising the idol god Baal, hoping to have an abundant crop and productive flocks. The statues of Baal show him with bull horns to indicate his fertility. The club he holds indicates his strength, while the lightning bolt in his hand represents his job as a storm god. Although Baal was a prominent god in Jericho, Rahab heard about the one true God, Yahweh, and she began to believe in the One True God.

What lessons can we learn from Rahab about doing what's right despite cultural pressure?

Normally, intelligence is shared after a partial payment is received, and the promise of more money when the information is deemed worthy. Rahab's faith led her to give the information to the spies before securing any payment or any promise of payment. She put herself and her cause in a vulnerable state. Why would she do this? By all indications, Rahab was a strong, street-smart survivor. But there can only be one explanation. Giving away her city's secrets is tangible evidence of her faith in the spies and, more importantly, in their God.

Historically, Rahab's faith is the main storyline in this tale. But we can't go any further without discussing the faith of the two spies. These men demonstrated many acts of bravery and faith in Rahab, Joshua, and the Lord. It was extremely dangerous for them to travel behind enemy lines and gather intelligence. The king knew their location and would surely send his soldiers to capture them. They were now trapped on Rahab's roof and didn't know if she would turn them over to her king for interrogation and execution. Their survival depended upon a woman of questionable ethics, but one who had voiced confidence in their God.

The spies could have seen Rahab as a threat and eliminated her as such. These faithful men, however, listened to Rahab's request for them to take an oath to protect her and her family from certain death. The men agreed to her demands only because she had shown kindness to them by not reporting their mission to her king. The spies offered their own lives as a promissory note for the safety of Rahab and her family.

WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE ACT IN FAITH EVEN IN THE FACE OF FEAR?

Depend on the Promise //

Joshua 6:22-25

It's always easier to make promises than to keep them, but Joshua was no ordinary man. It was time for Joshua to keep the promise made to Rahab by his two spies. He and his men had faith in the only true and living God who Himself kept His promises. Joshua and his people would honor God and keep

their word to this woman who had shown them kindness and gave them protection.

Rahab confessed to the spies that God had given Israel the land of Jericho and the surrounding territory. Rahab and her household were now witnesses to the destruction involved in God keeping His promises. Rahab's family witnessed the walls of their great city falling.



They heard the horrible sounds of battle and the eerie silence of defeat.

Every second Rahab and her household remained alive during the siege must have seemed like an eternity. Were they going to die like everyone else, or would they be spared as promised? Rahab must have assured her family countless times that the two men would keep their promise of rescue. Is it possible their faith increased as they remained alive? Was each moment a promise kept?

They heard men approaching. Were the men their executioners or an escort out of town? Rahab's faith in the two spies and their God was a powerful testimony to her family. Every assurance Rahab made to them, no matter how far-fetched it seemed, would now be put to the ultimate test.

Jericho lay in ruins. The joy of their escape was muted by what they witnessed during their journey through the front lines of battle into the safety of Israel's camp. Joshua and his armies had not yet completed their objectives. The smell of smoke attacked the senses of the conquering army and

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the small band of refugees from Jericho. The destruction of Jericho was absolute.

Rahab came to faith in God based on the stories she had heard about God's actions on behalf of His people. How many people would follow Rahab's example of coming to faith in God because of a demonstration of His great power? Stories about God's faithfulness would continue to be shared about His people entering the land of promise. Consider the impact of Rahab's faith in God:

Rahab's life before faith in the Lord. A prostitute and doomed with all the citizens of Jericho.

Rahab's life after faith in the Lord. She had faith in the Lord God of Israel, the spies, and Joshua. Her family witnessed God's faithfulness to Rahab. Rahab's faith delivered her and her family from certain death.

Rahab's faith in the Lord impacts people beyond her lifetime. Rahab is in the ancestry of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5); she is an example within the Hall of Faith for welcoming the spies in peace (Heb. 11:31); and she is recognized for her works of receiving the spies (Jas. 2:25).

WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE ABOUT GOD'S WORK IN RAHAB'S LIFE?

DID YOU KNOW?

Louise "Lulu" Fleming is known as one of the first black women to become a foreign missionary to the Congo. She received her education as part of the "Talented Tenth" program, which trained African Americans to return to their communities and teach. In her final months in the program, she became interested in the foreign mission society work at the American Baptist Convention. She eventually became the first African American woman to serve as a missionary in the Congo. She eventually became sick and returned to the United States. During this time, she realized that the Congo people also needed access to quality medical care. She began to pursue her studies in medicine and completed them in 1895. On October 2, 1895, she returned to the Congo as a medical missionary. She provided care for the next three years but eventually got sick. Ms. Fleming died at the age of 37.

Biblical Truth: God has commissioned all of us to go and make disciples in His name (Matt. 28:18-20).

Where is God calling you to move in faith on behalf of others?

LIVE IT

What steps can you take this week to move in faith instead of being stopped by fear?

When we are obediently standing on God's Word and trusting Him, we have no need to fear. We may encounter situations that are fearful in life—whether this is on our job, in our health or family. On our own, we may become overwhelmed and want to give up. But faith acts when others are paralyzed by fear. Choose one of the following applications this week to increase faith:

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- **Imagine.** Your faith may be new, but imagine having a strong faith like Rahab. Think of one thing in your life that would be different if you had stronger faith. What could you accomplish?
- **Plan.** Faith demands action. What can you do today that will make progress toward the one thing you considered above? Make a plan.
- **Share.** What will their reaction be regarding your growing faith? It will impact your family, friends, and even the world. Choose someone with whom you can share your faith journey. Pray for this person before sharing your faith.

DAILY READINGS

1. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? // JOSHUA 2:1-4A

With spies in the land, Rahab knew what was coming just as well as the king. But instead of responding in fear, she moved with God. When the king commanded her to turn the spies over, she made a life decision. Could we say the same if some government official came to our doorstep with a similar decree? It's easy to fold for much less. No matter the consequences, God must still be our only option. When we know who He is, we can trust in the safety of His protection. With this in mind, we can confidently move in faith. As believers, we know "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2. Tim. 1:7). Fear doesn't determine the outcome.

We can safely rely on God, He alone is in control.

2. YOU MUST CHOOSE // JOSHUA 24:15

Before playing a game, kids often take the opportunity to pick teams. Typically, they look around for the strongest players and choose a team with the hopes of securing victory. If we look at life as one big high-stakes game, we, too, are given the opportunity to choose a side. No matter how things are looking, the long-term math always points to us as victors when God leads the way. Yet, we must choose. As Joshua 24:15 says, "Choose for yourselves today . . ." Our choice is one of faith and trust, not based on situation, but on God who rules over all. It is a choice of faith and trust. We are not automatons. God won't make the choice for us.

Will you choose to be on the winning side?

3. A MINORITY MAJORITY // MATTHEW 7:13-14

From music to film, it's not hard to see how far society has departed from God. Artists, actors, and actresses alike promoting sin and perversion are growing increasingly popular and adding fans by the day. As a result, harmful, secular views are widely promoted. As believers, anything that doesn't align with God should not align with us. Though it's not the popular way to go, we must take

the stance in our own lives and in our own spaces to honor God as Supreme Authority. If that places us in the minority, so be it. We are encouraged in Matthew 7 to "Enter through the narrow gate" (v. 13). Following the crowd was never the path of the believer. But we can also stand firm in the whole truth of God's Word. No matter what situation "... If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Take heart. God is always the majority!

4. BANK ON IT! // PROVERBS 30:5; HEBREWS 10:23

Rahab had seen enough to know that God was real—so real, in fact, that she banked her life and the life of her family on it. Like Rahab, we've seen the hand of God move. We've witnessed His mighty works both near and far. We know that He's never been defeated, and we know that He never will. Each time we share our testimony and pass along our faith to the next generation, we're banking both our lives and theirs on that without so much as a second thought. Why? Because we know who God is, and whatever He says, He will surely bring it to pass. Our testimony declares His greatness far and near.

God is still in the mighty works business—bank on it!

5. ALL TALK, NO GAME // 2 CORINTHIANS 10:5

Satan will use our past and, at times, present to keep us from receiving God's promises. He's proficient in the art of the lie. As children of God, he doesn't dwell in us, but he can speak to us, and that's what he does. He stands on the outside of our fleshly "house" and talks, spouting convincing lies, waiting to see what takes hold. But that's just it. That's all he can do—talk. Through Christ, we have the ability to cast down these imaginations and confidently walk out the plan of God for our lives. God saw Rahab for the priceless gem that she was, even sending Jesus through her lineage. No worries! He sees you the same as well!

You are much more valuable than you know!