



Rahab

Woman of Faith, Truth, Courage, and Belief

The Story of Rahab

Joshua 2:8-14

About this time Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he visited a man named Then Joshua secretly sent out spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia. He instructed them, "Spy 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. They are spies sent here to discover the best way to attack us." Rahab, who had hidden the two men, replied, "The men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the city at dusk, as the city gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them." But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath piles of flax.

So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossing places of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the city gate was shut. 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 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."

Joshua 2:8-14

"And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River. 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. 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 when the Lord gives us the land."

Joshua 2:15-24

Then since Rahab's house was built into the city wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days until the men who are searching for you have returned; then go on your way."

Before they left, the men told her, "We can guarantee your safety only if you leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window. And all your family members – your father and mother, brothers, and all your relatives – must be inside this house. If they go out into the street, they will be killed, and we cannot be held to our oath. But we swear that no one inside this house will be killed – not a hand will be laid on any of them. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way."

"I accept your terms," she replied. She sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

The spies went up into the hill country and stayed there for three days. The men who were chasing them had searched everywhere along the road, but they finally returned to the city 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 will certainly give us the whole land," they said, "for all the people in the land are terrified of us."

Joshua 6:1-14

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go in or out. But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its mighty warriors. Your entire army is to march around the city once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the horns, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then the walls of the city will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the city."

So Joshua called together the priests and said, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn." Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the city, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the Lord."

After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the ram's horns started marching in the presence of the Lord, blowing the horns as they marched. And the priests carrying the Ark of the Lord's Covenant followed behind them. Armed guards marched both in front of the priests and behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. "Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!"

So the Ark of the Lord was carried around the city once a day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp. Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the Lord. The seven priests with the ram's horns marched in front of the Ark of Lord blowing their horns.

Armed guards marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind the Ark of the Lord. All this time the priests were sounding the horns. On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

Joshua 6:15-25

On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the city as they had done before. But this time they went around the city seven times. The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! The city and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies. Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on all Israel. Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord and must be brought into his treasury."

When the people heard the sound of the horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the city from every side and captured it. They completely destroyed everything in it – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, donkeys – everything.

Then Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family." The young men went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, brothers, and all the other relations who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israelites.

Then the Israelites burned the city and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the Lord's house. So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were in her house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Hebrews 11:1,31

Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon and bore him a son. Rahab is considered a woman of great faith, and she is held in high esteem in the Bible. The following passage about Rahab was written centuries after her death.

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see... It is by faith that Rahab the prostitute did not die in her city with all the others who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

And finally, the outcome of Rahab's story is the honor given to her in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, where she is listed in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Rahab hated her life, and was forced to live in shame. Yet, she had faith in God. She was filled with the terror of death, but filled even more with a desire to be a part of what was to come. She wanted to belong to the God who was coming. Looking out at the soldiers marching around the city, her heart spoke "I want to be one of Your People, for you alone are a true God."

Study Guide

Read the story of Rahab, and discuss the following questions. Keep an open mind for there is more to the story of this woman, who was a known prostitute, than what her occupation would lead you to believe.

Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho. As a prostitute, she lived on the edge of society, one stop short of rejection. Her house was built into the city wall and provided both lodging and favors to travelers.

1. *Rahab was a prostitute in service to the king and held his favor. How might she have come to this position?*

- In keeping with the customs of the times, her father may have sold her into prostitution to the king to secure his own position and favorable marriages for any other daughters he may have had.
- The king may have noticed beautiful Rahab and demanded her from the father who was too afraid of being killed if he refused and knew she would be taken from him regardless.

2. *Was Rahab like the other people of Jericho who had faith that their idol gods would save them?*

- Rahab was forced to live in shame.
- Rahab knew in her heart that the Israelite God was the true God.
- She believed God protected his people. She longed to be one of them.

3. Why would the spies stop at the house of Rahab, a prostitute?

- It was a good place to gather information and an ideal location for a quick escape because it was built into the wall.
- God directed the spies to Rahab's house because he knew her heart was open to him and that she would be instrumental in the Israelite victory over Jericho. God often uses people with simple faith to accomplish his great purposes; no matter their past, or how insignificant they seem to be.

4. Was Rahab justified in lying to save the lives of the spies?

- God forgave Rahab's lie because of her faith; Rahab was simply deceiving the enemy, a normal and acceptable practice in warfare.
- There may have been another way to save the lives of the Israelite spies, but under the pressure of the moment, Rahab had to make a choice. Most of us will face dilemmas at one time or another. Fortunately, God does not demand that our judgment be perfect in all situations. He simply asks us to put our trust in him and to do the best we know how. Rahab did that and was commended for her faith.

5. Once Rahab made the choice to protect the spies, she put everything she had at risk for a God she barely knew. If she had been caught harboring the Israelites, she could have been killed. Why do you believe she chose to protect them?

- She took the risk because she sensed that the Israelites relied on a God worth trusting.

6. Would you assume that Rahab – a pagan, a Canaanite, and a prostitute – would ever be interested in God?

- God works through people, like Rahab, who we are inclined to reject. God remembered her faith, not her profession.

7. Do you judge others' interest in, or value to, God based on background, lifestyle, or appearance?

- Consider Mother Teresa, who picked up lepers and dying people from the gutters of the street and loved them and nursed them until they died. Would you see these homeless people as worthy of saving?

8. When Rahab asked the two spies to save herself and her family, they gave her their promise and gave her specific instructions to follow, what were they?

- To gather her family into her home, and to leave the red cord hanging from the window.

9. What was Joshua's reaction when the spies returned and told him that they had spent the night in a prostitute's house and that they had promised to save her and her family?

- He told them to fulfill their promise to Rahab and sent them to rescue her and her family as they had promised.

10. When the city of Jericho fell and Rahab and her family were saved and taken out of the city to a camp close to the Israelite camp, did Rahab leave with her family and go back to their old way of life?

- No, she was allowed to stay and became the wife of Salmon, one of the spies that she had hidden in her home.
- She got her wish that she became one of God's people, and a new life as a wife who was loved.

11. How was Rahab's life blessed for her faith in God?

- She was saved from certain death and became one of God's people.
- She no longer was forced to live in shame.
- She became a wife who was loved and had a son who was known as a great man.

12. Do you have times that you feel like a failure or have shame in how your life has progressed? How can the story of Rahab help you see the possibility of change for your life?

- If God can change the life of a prostitute in a condemned city, he can change your life if your heart, like Rahab's, is open to him.

13. How is Rahab remembered in the Bible?

- She is one of only two women listed in the Hall of Faith in Hebrew 11:31.

What If...

Rahab is included as one of the four most beautiful women in the Bible. In her time beauty was not always a guarantee of happiness and a family. In a patriarchal society where men were accustomed to taking what they wanted including a beautiful woman, life could be very hard. This is how it was for Rahab, who was placed into prostitution when she would have been no more than a girl. Although she found favor with the king, was given many gifts and luxuries, she still was not accepted as part of society and had to live her life in shame. Yet she did not let the circumstances of her life keep her from dreaming of a different life of respect, love, and family.

When God presented Rahab with a way out of her life of shame and degradation and a chance to be part of his people, she took it. When she saved the two spies Joshua sent to check out the city, she proclaimed, "The Lord your God is God in heaven above, and here on Earth. I know that the Lord has given you this land." She then proposed a deal that she would help them to escape the city and would keep their secret if they would agree to spare her and her family when they took the city, for Rahab truly believed they would be victorious. The spies agreed and promised to save her and her family if they were all inside her house when the city was taken over; and if she left the scarlet rope hanging from her window on the wall so they could identify her house. Divine intervention was surely at work in Rahab's life. It was not chance that she was living in the city that God was giving back to his people.

When the king found out that the spies were at Rahab's house and she was sheltering them, he sent men to arrest them. When the men came, Rahab lied and told them two men she didn't know had come, but left the city as it was getting dark; and if they hurried they might catch up with them. This lie was a courageous act by Rahab. If it hadn't worked and they had found the spies hidden on her roof, she surely would have been killed.

As Joshua's soldiers began to march around the city, the noise and vibration of thousands of people marching must have been completely terrifying to everyone inside the city, yet Rahab kept her faith in the Hebrew God. The anticipation of the coming destruction surely increased the fear of the people in the city with each passing day. By the time of the actual fall of the city, the people, for the most part, were already defeated.

One of the spies, Salmon, was taken by Rahab's beauty, courage, and faith in God. After the battle was over and Rahab was safely camped outside of the city, he took her for his wife. She had a son, Boaz, who became a great and honorable man. Because of her faith in the face of almost certain death, and her courage to act on that faith, we see her honored in Matthew, Hebrews, and James. And yet she is still referred to as Rahab, the prostitute.