

SESSION 2

Amazing Grace

JOSHUA 2:4-21

GOD USED RAHAB, AN IMPERFECT PERSON, TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLANS.



The Bible demonstrates how God often uses flawed, unlikely people to do His will. For example, Abraham and Sarah both laughed in unbelief when God told them they would have a son in their old age. God made David the greatest king of Israel and established an eternal covenant with him even though David came from humble beginnings. Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute, is another unlikely person God used to accomplish His plans.

*WHY DOES GOD SO OFTEN USE UNLIKELY, IMPERFECT PEOPLE
TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Deuteronomy 9:1, Moses told the nation, “Listen, Israel: Today you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and drive out nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities fortified to the heavens.” Jericho was the first of these large, fortified cities the Israelites faced as they entered the promised land. Joshua sent two spies to scout the area so they could bring him a report on what his troops should expect when they went up against it.

Archaeologists believe Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is located in the well-watered lower Jordan Valley. Its location was important because several routes that led west into the central hill country of Canaan emanated from the city. Therefore, it was a key junction for those traveling east across the Jordan into Moab and beyond.

Ancient Jericho must have been an incredible and alarming site to the spies when they saw it for the first time. It was built to defend the people who took refuge within it. Located on high ground, the city was surrounded by an immense stone wall

at its base. Higher up at the crest stood another wall that towered about forty-six feet high. There was no way the Israelites had the means to conquer this massive, fortified city on their own. Archaeologists estimate there were thousands of people within the city when the Israelites approached it.

Rahab and her family were citizens of Jericho. Joshua 2:15 indicates her house was part of the outer fortifications located on the city wall. Archaeologists have discovered that at the north end of ancient Jericho’s ruins there is a small portion of the wall that was left standing and there were houses built against it. This area is only a short distance from the Judean wilderness where the two spies Rahab saved hid for three days before returning to Joshua. Some suggest this is possibly the area where Rahab lived.



Joshua 2:4-21

4 But **the woman A** had taken **the two men B** and hidden them. So she said, “Yes, the men did come to me, but I didn’t know where they were from. **5** At nightfall, when the city gate was about to close, the men went out, and I don’t know where they were going. **Chase after them quickly, C** and you can catch up with them!” **6** But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them among the **stalks of flax D** that she had arranged on the roof. **7** The men pursued them along the road to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as they left to pursue them, the city gate was shut. **8** Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, “I know that **the LORD E** has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is **panicking F** because of you. **10** For **we have heard G** 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.” **15** Then she let them down by a rope through the window, since she lived in a house that was built into the wall of the city. **16** “Go to the **hill country H** so that the men pursuing you won’t find you,” she said to them. “Hide there for three days until they return; afterward, go on your way.” **17** The men said to her, “We will be free from this oath you made us swear, **18** unless, when we enter the land, you tie this scarlet cord to the window through which you let us down. Bring your father, mother, brothers, and all your father’s family into your house. **19** If anyone goes out the doors of your house, his death will be his own fault, and we will be innocent. But if anyone with you in the house should be harmed, his death will be our fault. **20** And if you report our mission, we are free from the oath you made us swear.” **21** “Let it be as you say,” she replied, and she sent them away. After they had gone, she tied the **scarlet cord I** to the window.

Key Words

A. Rahab (Josh. 2:1). She refused to surrender Israel’s spies to the leaders of Jericho (6:25).

B. Joshua had sent two spies into Canaan to investigate Jericho and the surrounding area.

C. Rahab deceived the king and sent his soldiers on a wild goose chase to protect the Israelites.

D. A plant used to make clothing. Flax was harvested and set out on a flat roof to dry.

E. Despite being a Gentile, Rahab affirmed God’s work. She was confident that He would lead Israel to possess the land.

F. The Hebrew conveys the image of melting. Jericho’s residents were melting in fear of the Israelites and their God. See verse 11.

G. Israel’s enemies knew about the miracles in Egypt and the Red Sea decades earlier, as well as the recent victories over the Amorite kings.

H. The opposite direction of the king’s soldiers. Jordan’s fords were east of Jericho (v. 7), while the hills around the city were to the west.

I. Some scholars see a connection between this red cord and the blood on the Israelites’ doors at Passover.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A Bold Act

(Josh. 2:4-7)

Following God often requires leaving one's comfort zone and stepping out in faith.

- **What is the relationship between boldness and faith?**

2. A Kind Action

(Josh. 2:8-13)

We can be encouraged that God's acts will always demonstrate His character.

- **How should our beliefs about God impact the way we treat others?**

3. A Daring Escape

(Josh. 2:14-16)

Relying on God's grace leads to security, even in difficult situations.

- **How does faith in God require obedient action?**

4. A Firm Assurance

(Josh. 2:17-21)

We can be assured of God's work in our lives by regularly reflecting on what He has done in the past.

- **If you were Rahab, how would you feel about the spies' conditions? Why?**
- **What are some signs that remind us of God's grace in our lives?**

Apply the Text

- **In your group, what are ways you can encourage one another to rely on God's grace even in difficult times?**
- **How does relying on God's grace lead to security during difficult times?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Titus 2:11-14.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Focus on a key word to gain a better understanding of a biblical text.

Look up the word "kindness" (Hebrew *hesed*) in a Bible dictionary (Josh. 2:12). What special significance does this term have in the Old Testament? Read Exodus 15:13 and 2 Samuel 16:17 where the term is used. How did Rahab show loyalty to the spies? How did the spies demonstrate loyalty to her?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 2:4-5

Consider why Rahab was willing to take a risk.

Verses 1-3 indicate Joshua sent two spies to go and scout out the land before them, “especially Jericho.” The spies ended up at the house of a prostitute named Rahab. Her house was likely an inn, tavern, or combination of the two. There is no indication the spies had immoral intentions in choosing to stay there. With people coming and going at night, such a venue in Jericho—which was a hub for travelers from various regions—should have allowed the spies to blend in without being noticed. It is for the same reasons that the king of Jericho had his own spies there as well. Someone spotted and identified the Israelite spies and immediately reported their presence and location to Jericho’s king. The king sent men to Rahab demanding she turn in the men who “came to investigate the entire land” (v. 3). Rahab apparently expected the king’s men to come, understood the spies’ mission, and was sympathetic to their cause. Although she confirmed to the king’s men that the spies had been there, she communicated that she knew nothing about them. In fact, she said the men exited the city, she didn’t know where they were going, and the king’s men had better give chase quickly if they were to have any chance of catching up with them. In anticipation of the arrival of the king’s men, Rahab had hidden the spies from the king’s men.

When have you taken a risk for what you believe is right? What holds you back from acting courageously in your faith?



Day 2: Joshua 2:6-7

Read what the New Testament says about Rahab in Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; and James 2:25.

The flat roofs on houses in ancient Canaan enabled people to expose things to the sun—like fruit that needed to ripen and wet grain and laundry that needed drying. The making of linen from flax was a common activity in households. Part of this process required soaking the three to four feet stalks to loosen the fibers. After soaking them, people spread the stalks out on their roofs to dry. These drying stalks of flax provided a perfect place under which Rahab could hide the spies because of the size of the stalks and because the king’s agents would have been accustomed to seeing them on rooftops. Scripture does not justify Rahab’s lying any more than it does her life as a prostitute. Furthermore, the Lord in His omnipotence could have saved the spies any way He chose. What is commended in Scripture is Rahab’s faith in God; she put her life in danger to help the spies (Heb. 11:31). Rahab is also part of the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

The king’s men believed Rahab and quickly left in pursuit. Once they exited the city, its gate was shut. These agents went as far as “the fords of the Jordan” River to find and capture the spies while Rahab still hid them in her home.

What does Rahab’s decision to hide the spies reveal about her faith in God?



Day 3: Joshua 2:8-13

Underline the words “has given” in verse 9.

Rahab explained to the spies why she covered for them. She began by sharing her knowledge of Israel’s God, declaring, “I know that the LORD has given you this land.” She used the past tense, given, not “is giving” or “will give.” Before the Israelites took a step to cross the Jordan, God had instilled a fear within Israel’s enemies because of the many victories He already had given them. After revealing her knowledge of what the Lord had done for Israel at the Red Sea and against their formidable enemies, Rahab described the impact those events had on her and her people. They “lost heart” and “everyone’s courage failed.” We can learn three important truths here: (1) God uses what He does for and through His people to reveal who He is to unbelievers, (2) He keeps His promises, and (3) unbelievers have reason to fear the Lord’s judgment.

Rahab declared her faith in God, asserting that “the LORD your God is God.” Her proclamation, He is God “in heaven above and on earth below,” indicates that she believed the Lord is the only God and there is no other. When people place their faith in the Lord, they commit themselves to His people. Rahab demonstrated this when she showed kindness to the spies.

How do your beliefs about God impact the way you treat others?



Day 4: Joshua 2:14-16

Take note of the promise the spies made to Rahab.

The spies promised Rahab they would give their lives for her life as long as she did not betray them to her people. Additionally, they promised to show Rahab “kindness and faithfulness” when it was time for the Lord to give Israel Jericho and the surrounding area. These spies saw the formidable fortifications of Jericho yet were confident the Lord would give them the victory.

The wall of the city was also a wall of Rahab’s house. It was not unusual for large, populated, walled cities to utilize every inch of space within them in this way. Acting in good faith, Rahab lowered a rope out her window, allowing the two spies to escape. As she did, she gave them instructions to keep themselves safely hidden from the king’s agents who were searching for them. She directed them to go to the Judean hill country. This was the opposite direction of the Jordan River where the king’s men expected them to flee since Israel was camped on the other side of it. She instructed them to stay hidden in those hills for three days until the king’s men gave up their search.

The spies made a promise to Rahab. How do you honor commitments you make to others?



Day 5: Joshua 2:17-21

Consider how the scarlet cord is reminiscent of the blood on the doorposts during the tenth plague in Egypt.

The spies told Rahab that if she did not follow their instructions, then they would no longer be obligated to the oath they had sworn to her. First, they told her to tie a scarlet cord to the window through which they were escaping. Its purpose was to show the Israelites what household's inhabitants they were to spare in their assault. It is reminiscent of the blood that was placed on the doorframes of the Israelites and the spared lives of the Israelite firstborn in Egypt during the tenth plague. As the Israelites trusted the Lord to spare their lives, Rahab had to trust God that His people would spare her. Second, Rahab needed to bring her family into the house and make sure they stayed there. If any of her family members failed to stay within, then the spies would not be responsible for their deaths. Third, if Rahab should betray the spies by reporting their mission to the authorities in Jericho, then they would be released from the oath they made.

Rahab communicated her faith in the Lord and His people again, saying she understood and would do as they had instructed. As soon as the spies departed, she tied the scarlet cord to the window. Her obedience was yet another demonstration of her faith in God as she put her life and the lives of her family in His hands.

Rahab demonstrated her faith by obedience. In what practical way do you need to show your faith?

APPLY THE TEXT

What has God done in your life in the past to assure you that He is at work in your life? How do God's acts in your life demonstrate His character?

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