SESSION 2

Amazing Grace

God used Rahab, an imperfect person, to accomplish His plans.

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** (F)
of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is
panicking (G) because of you. 10 For we have **heard** (H) 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** (I) is
God in heaven above and on earth below. 12 Now please swear
to me by the Lord that you will also **show kindness** (J) 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** (K) 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** (L) to the window through which you let us down. Bring
your father, mother, brothers, and all your father's family **into
your house.** (M) 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 to the window.

Exploring 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. Then, it was spun into thread.

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

F "Shakes with fear" (CEV); "great fear" (NIV); "fear of you" (ESV).

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

H 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.

I Rahab again acknowledged Israel's God. She reflected devotion and loyalty to Jehovah.

J "Deal kindly" (ESV). The Hebrew (*hesed*) usually refers to God's lovingkindness. The men promised both kindness and faithfulness (v. 14).

K 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.

L The Hebrew wording suggests this was different from the rope used in verse 15. Some scholars see a connection between this red cord and the blood on the Israelites' doors at Passover.

M Again, this is similar to Passover, where families found safety inside the homes marked by blood.

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NOTES

A Bold Act (Josh. 2:4-7)

- Joshua sent two Hebrew spies on a mission to scout the land of Jericho. Despite putting herself in danger, a prostitute named Rahab provided shelter and security for them.
- While the agents of the city's king conducted their search, Rahab hid the Israelite men among the stalks of flax on her roof. She also misdirected the king's men as they extended their search outside the city walls.

A Kind Action (Josh. 2:8-13)

- After the king's agents left, Rahab explained why she had shown kindness to the Hebrew spies. She knew about the great things God had done for Israel, and she knew that He had given the land of Canaan to His people.
- In light of the kindness she had shown and her faith in God, she asked for mercy when Israel conquered Jericho.

A Daring Escape (Josh. 2:14-16)

- The men affirmed they would show grace and mercy to Rahab and her family as long as she did not reveal their mission.
- She helped them escape by letting them down through a window in the city wall. She urged them to go in the opposite direction of the king's agents and to hide for three days.

A Firm Assurance (Josh. 2:17-21)

- As they left, the Israelite spies again stated their commitment to the oath they had made to Rahab and her family.
- As a sign of her commitment, they told her to leave a scarlet cord hanging from the window. Rahab did as she was directed.

Summary Statements

God used Rahab, an imperfect person, to accomplish His plans.

- Following God often requires leaving one's comfort zone and stepping out in faith.
- We can be encouraged that God's acts will always demonstrate His character.
- Relying on God's grace leads to security, even in difficult situations.
- We can be assured of God's work in our lives by regularly reflecting on what He has done in the past.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 11:31

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.)

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at **goExploreTheBible.com.**

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ENGAGE

Bonus: When have you felt like the wrong person for a job? How did you overcome that?

- The Bible shows how God often uses flawed, unlikely people to do His will. Abraham and Sarah both laughed when God told them they would have a son in their old age.
- God also made David the greatest king of Israel and established an eternal covenant with him, even though David committed egregious sins. And Paul had been a persecutor of believers before his conversion.
- 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? (PSG, p. 19)

EXPLORE

A BOLD ACT (JOSH. 2:4-7)

Bonus: When have you been forced into taking a step of faith? How was it a good thing?

- Joshua sent two spies to scout the promised land (Josh. 2:1-3). However, they were reported to Jericho's king. Rahab was sympathetic to their cause and hid them.
- Rahab then lied to the king's agents. She said the Israelites had exited the city and she didn't know where they were going. She encouraged the king's men to chase quickly to catch up with them.
- The Scriptures do not justify Rahab's lying. What is commended in Scripture is Rahab's faith in God. She put her life in danger to help the spies (Heb. 11:31).

What is the relationship between boldness and faith? (PSG, p. 22)

A KIND ACTION (JOSH. 2:8-13)

Bonus: How would you define "kindness"?

- Rahab later explained why she hid the spies. She said that she knew God had given Canaan to the Israelites. She believed it was as good as done.
- God's acts at the Red Sea a generation earlier and against the powerful kings Og and Sihon more recently had caused the Canaanites to fear. The Hebrew wording suggested their courage had melted away.
- Rahab showed the men kindness because she wanted them to show her family kindness in return. The Hebrew word translated "kindness" is *hesed*. It appears some 250 times in the Old Testament and is the word most often used in the Old Testament to denote the Lord's faithful, lovingkindness toward His people.

How should our beliefs about God impact the way we treat others? (PSG, p. 24)

A DARING ESCAPE (JOSH. 2:14-16)

Bonus: What are you are willing to risk for your faith?

- 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 her and her family kindness when Israel did capture Jericho.
- Rahab's house was built into the city's walls, so she could lower the men out a window. She directed them to take refuge in the nearby hill country, which was in the opposite direction of where the king's agents had gone.

Why does faith in God require obedient action? (PSG, p. 25)

A FIRM ASSURANCE (JOSH. 2:17-21)

Bonus: What are some basic principles you live by? What makes them so important?

- The spies gave Rahab some vital instructions. If she did not follow these instructions, they would no longer be obligated to their oath. First, they told her to tie a scarlet cord to the window. This would show the Israelites which house was to be spared in their assault.
- Second, she needed to bring her family into the house. Any family members found outside her home would be outside the oath.
- Finally, the men emphasized again her responsibility to protect them. If she betrayed them, they would be free from their promise.

What are some signs that remind us of God's grace in our lives? (PSG, p. 26)

CHALLENGE

As a group, list ways believers can encourage one another, even in difficult times.

How does relying on God's grace lead to security during difficult times? (PSG, p. 27)

Challenge individuals to reflect on God's work in their lives.

How do God's acts in your life demonstrate His character? (PSG, p. 27)

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

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BONUS IDEAS

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 26)

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?***

Direct adults to work in pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 26 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to report on their discoveries. Highlight that the Hebrew word *hesed* often describes God's unfailing love and loyalty to those who trust in Him. Lead a brief discussion on how that love and loyalty is revealed in today's session and how adults have experienced it in their own lives.

OBJECT LESSON: SIGNS

Prior to the Bible study session, prepare a short scarlet cord for each adult. Also, print photos of various traffic signs.

During the session, show adults the traffic signs and lead them to identify the purpose of each one. Say: *These signs lead us to act in certain ways on the road.* Point out that when we obey these signs, we increase our chances of getting from one place to another safely. Say: *Ignoring or disobeying the signs only leads to trouble for us and others on the road.*

Distribute the scarlet cords and discuss the significance of the cord in Joshua 2:17-21. Note that this "sign" was important for Rahab and her family because it led them to act in faith rather than ignoring the dangers. Ask: ***How can this small cord remind you that God keeps His promises and offers grace to His people?*** Encourage adults to use the cord as a bookmark.

DIG DEEPER

FACES OF KINDNESS

Throughout this episode in Israel's quest to make the promised land their home, significant movement swirled around one word: kindness. The Hebrew word used here (*hesed*) had a rich history in Israel. The writers of Old Testament books incorporated the word 250 times, as it served a vital role in conveying distinct aspects—or faces—of God's relationship with His people. In Joshua 2, kindness displays three faces.

Kindness can look like a tool (Josh. 2:12). Rahab recognized how the Lord empowered Israel in its successful march toward the land that He promised. She also knew the spies were Israelites and reasoned that being kind to them would give her leverage to survive the coming battle. Kindness became a tool in her attempt to win the favor of the Lord and His people.

Kindness also can look like a personal need (Josh. 2:12-13). While Rahab's kindness would make the spies take her seriously, it could not guarantee that she and her family would be spared. She had no choice but to ask the Israelite spies to meet her need.

Her request reflected the limitations of her position. While she hoped that the Israelites would accommodate her, she understood that she had no guarantees. She *needed* their kindness. For her, it was a matter of life and death. Yet, wanting something would not make it so. Her kind actions and her words were just steps toward seeing her need met.

Finally, kindness can look like a gift of grace (Josh. 2:14). The spies' response to Rahab's appeal rendered much more than she could have imagined. She asked for a guarantee, and they graced her with a promise, an oath that secured their word.

In those days, the Lord taught His people that they included Him when they pledged an oath (Num. 30:2). Therefore, the spies swore before the Lord that they would honor her request for kindness with their own lives. In doing so, their oath served as a gift that went well beyond what she expected.

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