



Hide & Seek (Rahab)

Dec 3-4, 2022

Merry Christmas! Can you believe that it is already that time of year again? There is so much about Christmas we enjoy. The incarnate God, the decorations, music, church services, and family are just a few of the things that give us that warm and fuzzy feeling.

One of the great things about Christmas is how families will travel thousands of miles to be together. We all have members of our family that are a little difficult. Perhaps they have made decisions that we cannot support, or just have a personality that doesn't align with yours. And yet, we still find it valuable to spend time with them this time of year.

Our Christmas series is going to look at the family line of Jesus. Some of Jesus' ancestors are not the type of people you would expect. One in particular was Rahab, who was a prostitute. It is hard to believe that God would not only use a prostitute to usher the Messiah into the world but would even spare her from the destruction of Israel's army. But that is the Gospel! The Gospel is God rescuing some of the vilest people on the planet from the condemnation of their sin through faith in Christ. The Gospel is about transformation. Rahab went from prostitute to righteous by her faith in God.

The study this week is going to take a deeper look at Joshua chapter 2. As a story of redemption and transformation, we hope that your group will have a great discussion about the passage and how we, as Christians, share in that redemption and transformation.



1. What are some of your favorite family traditions during Christmas?



Read Joshua 2:1-24



2. Did God tell Joshua to send spies into the land? Was Joshua taking initiative, or being presumptuous?

Joshua takes initiative – In the text there is no evidence that God told Joshua to send spies into the land. God told him to, “get ready to cross the Jordan river.” It seems that in Joshua's mind, sending spies was one way of “getting ready.” God's sovereign power and supernatural miracle working on their behalf did not nullify Joshua's responsibility to do everything he could to prepare well (Proverbs 16:9). The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Making plans and being prepared is not contradictory to living a life of faith and following God's will in our lives. The problem comes when we make plans without seeking God's direction or refuse to be open minded to change those plans or cancel those plans if God directs us otherwise.



Application: As long as we are seeking to follow God's will, He appreciates initiative. Throughout the Bible we see that believers should "walk" or "arise" or "run." These are all action words. We are not to "float" or "sit" through life. If God has called you to something, get started!



3. Why is Rahab's occupation and character important to the story?

A prostitute named Rahab – How many of you have ever met someone named Rahab? It is not a common name. Few people name their children Rahab. Why? Because in the Bible she is normally referred to as, "Rahab the prostitute." Rahab is identified as a harlot multiple times. (Joshua 2:1, 6:17, 25, James 2:25, Hebrews 11:31.)

Many scholars/teachers/pastors have tried to argue that the word for Rahab could mean "innkeeper." They argue that she was a businesswoman who ran a simple business perhaps a lodge and restaurant.

Why do they argue this? Do you think Rahab was an innkeeper or a prostitute? Why? There is no compelling reason to conclude this. Rahab is a story of God's grace, not a story of a good person deserving of salvation.

Some feel compelled to make this argument simply because being a prostitute is not a good thing. Thus, many want to protect Rahab's reputation. But the power of this story is that God would use someone like Rahab. I believe that is why her occupation is repeatedly stressed. God wants to teach us an important lesson. He can use Rahab. He can redeem Rahab. He can use anyone. He can redeem anyone. If Rahab was merely an innkeeper, the point would not be nearly as memorable. Rahab's story gives hope to every sinner that they too can be redeemed and fit into God's plan.

The Hebrew word "Zoonah" is used, which means harlot. In Greek (in the New Testament), "porne" is used. These words make it very clear what Rahab's was. We don't need to try to brush over her sins or her history. It should not be surprising that she was a prostitute. Even a "holy" nation like Israel often had prostitutes. A pagan place like Jericho would surely have many. This likely was considered a "necessary evil." Rahab would have had a low social status like prostitutes do even today.

Because she had her own house, she could have had a dual business, both running an inn and also hiring herself out to sleep with visitors. The spies may have wished to find a quiet night's rest out of the public's eye in this "shady" area of town and rented a room at her house.



Rahab is identified in the Bible five times as a prostitute. Here are a few verses on this issue (Deuteronomy 23:17-18, Proverbs 6:20-7, Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Harlots were social and moral outcasts in Israel. They were the lowest parts of society. This is someone who routinely, on a day-to-day basis, sold herself for money to gratify others' sexual lusts. As 1 Corinthians 6 shows, this life is incompatible with a life following after God. This lifestyle is never necessary either. God will always provide for His followers if they seek Him first. No believer has to turn to this life or any sin in order to provide for himself/herself. Unless we think we are better than her, see Matthew 5:27-28. Yes, Rahab was a sinner. But so are all of us. We cannot reach God's standard any more than she could.

God is in the business of saving sinners. Her sinful past makes her faith in God and subsequent life transformation even more amazing. From Rahab's story we will learn that God shows mercy and grace to save even the worst of sinners.

Rahab is one of only four women listed in Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:5). Bathsheba and Tamar are two others and are similar in that their impurity was also recorded in the Bible. Ruth was a Moabite. It is interesting that all four of the women listed in Jesus' genealogy would be looked on negatively because of their sins or nationality. It is like Matthew is showing us that Jesus was born of sinners and took on our own sin to save us. At the same time, it shows us the hope that even the worst sinners can be restored and used by God. Indeed, the Savior of the world was descended directly from Rahab. He can redeem and transform the worst of sinners, as well as turn their lives around, and use their lives for His own glory.

In addition, Rahab was the mother of Boaz by Salmon (Matthew 1:5). Jewish tradition says that Salmon was one of the two spies. The spies were likely leaders of households, so Salmon would have been a very respected leader in the community. Rahab's staunch faith in God, and life transformation, evidently won his heart so that like Boaz later on, he willingly looked past her nationality and past life and took her as his own.



4. Was Rahab right to lie to the people that came looking for the spies? Why, or why not?

In which verse, or verses, did Rahab lie (2:4-5)? What do you think about this? Did she have a good reason? Was her lie acceptable? Are there times when we should lie for a good reason? (1 Timothy 1:10, Colossians 3:9-10, Proverbs 12:22, Exodus 20:16). Lying is sin with no exceptions. It is not surprising that she lied considering her environment and lifestyle. She was beginning to show a faith in God, but that didn't mean her choices were all immediately right or she would be perfect right away. What could she (or should she) have done instead?



In this case, the lie seems to be well intentioned. Although God was beginning to work in Rahab's heart, she was still heavily influenced by the culture around her. She had not yet learned of God's perfect holiness and hatred of every type of sin. Rahab had not been taught the Scripture, but nonetheless, it was a sin. Some sins are committed in ignorance, other sins are committed with good motivations, and some sins are committed intentionally. Do you know what all three have in common? They are sin.

How can we guard against committing sins in ignorance? What are some types of sins people commit, but perhaps have good intentions? What would you say to these people?



5. Re-read Joshua 2:9-11. What is significant about Rahab's statement, and how is it unique compared to the other people in Jericho?

Rahab's statement of faith in verses 9-11 – This is what she is most famous for.

Joshua 2:9-11 – 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 have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

Did Rahab have special information that other Jericho-ites did not have? No, they all heard of what the LORD had done for the Jews in Egypt. Her knowledge of the Lord was united with faith while the rest of the people in Jericho hardened their hearts and made up their minds to stubbornly resist until the last.

Application: Place your bet on the winning team – Rahab correctly believed that the Jews would defeat Jericho because of God's power. Basically, it was good against evil, the one true God against false gods. She believed that the power of the one true God would prevail. We must realize that God's victory over Satan is assured. Good will prevail. The world may look bleak at times, but ultimately all of God's prophecies will come true and He will finally judge all people who do not obey His Word. We can choose to follow God or the world. Following God will probably not be the popular choice, but it is the right choice and those who make the choice to follow Him with their lives will be rewarded.



6. Why was Rahab's faith significant for her family? How can your faith and/or sinful choices impact your family?

Through Rahab's faith her family is saved – She was concerned for her family. Rahab helped the spies and could have asked for a lot of things in return: money, a home, a wagon, animals, etc. But



her request was that her entire family could be spared. One person's faith can have a positive influence on those around them. Can you give any other biblical examples? In like manner, one person's sin can have a terrible negative effect on those around them. Can you give any biblical examples?

Application: We should use the influence we have for the good of others.

Here is the key lesson and applications from the life of Rahab:

God is in the business of saving even the worst sinners – To most people, Rahab was nothing, a nobody, lowly even. But to God, her soul was valuable. He loved her from creation, even in the middle of all of her sin. He chose to save her, Rahab, from before the beginning. When Jesus came, He spent a lot of time and effort on these types of people, so much so that the Pharisees often criticized Him for it (See Mark 2:13-17). What are applications can we make from this?

Here are a few ideas:

A. *Thank God that He saved you in the midst of your sin. Though our exact sins may be different from Rahab's, we are equally as guilty as she was. All of us have given in to the lusts of the flesh and eyes and the boastful pride of life. God loves us and redeems us in spite of all that. Righteous people don't need saving.*

B. *God can save any of your relatives or friends, no matter how bleak it looks. Maybe there is a friend or relative that you think is too hard hearted and will never change or believe. Don't give up on them. God can save anyone, no matter what they have done or how disinterested they seem to be.*

C. *No matter what bad habits you have now, there is always hope (1 Corinthians 10:13). If Rahab could change, you can change. It requires faith in a big God (Joshua 2:11). He is the God of heaven, meaning He has all power. And He is God on the earth, meaning He sees everything we do. He sees what we do, He cares about us as individuals, and He wants to see our lives transformed.*