

# Rahab

HER NAME MEANS

*“Storm,” “Arrogance,” “Broad,” or “Spacious”*

**HER CHARACTER:** Rahab was both clever and wise. She saw judgment coming and was able to devise an escape plan for herself and her family. As soon as she heard what God had done for the Israelites, she cast her lot with his people, risking her life in an act of faith.

**HER SORROW:** To see her own people destroyed and her city demolished.

**HER JOY:** That God had given her, an idolater and prostitute, the opportunity to know him and belong to his people.

**KEY SCRIPTURES:** Joshua 2:1–21; 6:17–25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

## *Monday*

HER STORY

*J*ericho may be the world’s oldest city. Established nearly six thousand years before Miriam and Moses completed their desert wanderings, its ancient ruins can be found just seventeen miles northeast of Jerusalem. Gateway to Canaan, it was also the home of a prostitute named Rahab, whose house nestled snugly into its thick surrounding walls.

As well as entertaining locals, Rahab welcomed guests from various caravans whose routes crisscrossed Jericho. Men from all over the

East brought news of a swarm of people encamped east of the Jordan. Rahab heard marvelous stories about the exploits of the God of the Israelites—how he had dried up the Red Sea so they could escape their Egyptian slave masters, and how he had given them victory in battle against Sihon and Og, two kings of the Amorites. For forty years the God of the Israelites had trained and toughened them in the desert. Such rumors spread fear in Jericho.

While men talked, another man planned. Moses was dead, and Joshua, son of Nun, had been appointed leader of the Israelites. Nearly forty years earlier Joshua had spied out the land along with Caleb and a group of others, urging the Israelites to take hold of the land of promise. This time there would be no shrinking back. Once the Israelites crossed the Jordan River and destroyed Jericho, the land would open like a melon with the rind peeled back. He could taste the victory.

Joshua sent two spies to Jericho to probe its secrets. The spies soon made their way to Rahab's house, where she hid them beneath stalks of flax drying on the roof. Later that day, Rahab received a message from the king of Jericho, asking her about the spies who had taken refuge in her house.

"Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from," she lied to the king's messenger. "At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them."

As soon as the king's men left, she hurried to the roof, quickly warning her two guests: "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us.... The LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death."

To this remarkable statement of faith, the men replied: "Our lives for your lives!" thus sealing the bargain.

Quickly, the two spies handed Rahab a scarlet cord, instructing her to tie it in the window on the side of the house built into the city

wall. The invading Israelites would see it and spare everyone inside. Then Rahab instructed the men to hide themselves in the hills for three days until their pursuers abandoned the chase. With that, they slipped out the window and scrambled down the walls of Jericho.

Joshua was smiling long after the spies had left him with their good report. Now was the time to move. He marshaled the people and led them across the Jordan. Though the river was at flood stage, a massive army of Israelites crossed on dry ground. God was with them just as he had been when they left Egypt. Only this time, no one was chasing them—Israel had become the pursuing army, ready for battle!

The news that the waters of the River Jordan had parted for the Israelites terrified the inhabitants of Jericho. Rahab watched anxiously from her window in the wall as the Israelites gathered around the city like a growing storm. Would these fierce warriors with their powerful God remember the scarlet cord? For the thousandth time she reminded her family, especially the little ones, not to take even one step outside the house, lest they perish.

That first day Rahab watched as seven priests carrying an ark led thousands of men around the city. She braced herself, but nothing happened. The next day and the next, for five more days it continued. Then, as the sun was rising on the seventh day, the men of Israel marched again, encircling Jericho seven times. Suddenly, she heard the ram's horn sound and then a thunderous cry, loud enough to split a mountain. The city walls shattered and the Israelites rushed in. Rahab tried to plug her ears to the mayhem outside her home. When the battle of Jericho was over, Rahab and those she loved were spared. Her faith had saved not only herself but her entire household from the terrible judgment decreed for her city.

Jericho's end reminds us of Sodom's. In Sodom, Lot and his daughters were spared; in Jericho, it was Rahab and her family who were spared. But unlike Lot or his wife, Rahab never once hesitated. She is the only woman singled out by name and commended for her faith as part of the great "cloud of witnesses" mentioned in the book of Hebrews. A prostitute living in the midst of an idolatrous people, Rahab was like a brand plucked from the fire. Her own people destroyed, she left everything behind, becoming an ancestor of King David and, therefore, one of Jesus' ancestors as well.

Rahab's story is a dramatic one. It shows us that God's grace accepts no boundaries. The red cord that saved Rahab and her family reminds us of the red blood of Jesus, who still saves us today, and of Isaiah's words, that "though your sins may be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Rahab put her faith in the God of Israel and was not disappointed.

## CITY WALLS

*J*ericho is probably best known today for its enormous walls, walls that fell because of the faith of the people of Israel (Hebrews 11:30). A wall around a city was its chief distinguishing mark. Anything without a wall was merely a village whose inhabitants would run to the nearest walled city for protection during a battle or war.

Rahab lived in a house on the wall of Jericho. She probably had a view not only of the city itself but also of the area outside of the protective walls. This view, which gave her the perfect vantage point for spotting potential customers as they entered and left Jericho, may have given her an advantage in running her business of prostitution.

Homes, businesses, watchtowers, archer positions—all could be built on top of or within walls that were as much as twenty to thirty feet thick. The stronger the system of walls around a city (some cities had both an inner and an outer wall), the more defensible the city was against invaders who came across the plains.

Most walls of major cities were built of huge stones and mortar. Some stones of the wall of the temple in Jerusalem still exist. Their dimensions: thirty feet long, eight feet wide, and three and a half feet high. Each stone weighs an unbelievable eighty tons!

But no stone was large enough to protect the city of Jericho from the power of God through his people; no battering rams were needed to breach its walls. All that was necessary was the faith of God's people in what he said he would do. And the walls came tumbling down!

## HER LEGACY IN SCRIPTURE

### Read Joshua 2:1-7

1. Rahab betrayed her city. What reason did she give for doing this? Can you think of any additional reason she might have had? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What do you think prompted Rahab to hide the Hebrew spies? Why would the house of a prostitute be a good place for the spies to go when they entered the city? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Although Rahab was a prostitute, the lowest of profession for a woman, what good characteristics did she have? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Why do you think God would choose to use someone like Rahab? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does this say about the people God might choose to use today to further His kingdom? \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Read Joshua 2:8-13

6. Rephrase in your own words Rahab's eloquent plea for her life and the lives of her family. \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Read Joshua 2:14-18

7. Why do you think the spies were willing to deal with Rahab, their lives in exchange for hers? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Rahab's brave actions spared not only her life but also the lives of their family members. What brave actions can you take to spare your loved ones from future difficulties and harm? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. Why do you think the spies made a deal with her? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Read James 2:25-26**

10. James mentions Rahab in his plea for believers not to forget that works are an important outgrowth of faith. How did Rahab's actions demonstrate this truth?\_\_\_\_

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11. What lessons in obedience and faith can you learn from Rahab the prostitute?\_\_\_\_\_

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12. James said Rahab was an example of the principle that real faith is linked to action. How did she demonstrate this?\_\_\_\_\_

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13. What risks have you been willing to take for your faith? What risks haven't you been willing to take your faith? Why?\_\_\_\_\_

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14. God commanded the complete destruction of Jericho and other Canaanite cities because of their extreme sins, including child sacrifice, shrine prostitution and injustice of the powerful against the weak. What does it say about him, then that out of the whole city he spared a prostitute and her family?\_\_\_\_\_

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## HER PROMISE

*T*he story of Rahab reveals again God's willingness to use the less than perfect, the outcast, what we might see as the unsuitable to accomplish his holy purposes. Throughout Scripture, with what can almost be seen as divine humor, God chooses a stutterer to speak for him (Moses), an infertile woman to be the mother of a nation (Sarah), a weakling to defend him (Gideon), a forgettable youngest son to be the most unforgettable king of his people (David), an unknown youngster to be the mother of his son (Mary), and a persecutor to take the gospel to the nations (Paul).

God doesn't wait for us to become spotlessly clean or totally mature in our faith in order to use us. Instead, he takes ordinary, willing people and accomplishes the extraordinary, both in their lives and in the lives of those around them. As he did with Rahab, he promises to use us, and through that experience to perfect us.

### Promises in Scripture

*He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.*

—ISAIAH 40:29–31

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

—ACTS 4:13

*When I am weak, then I am strong.*

—2 CORINTHIANS 12:10



## HER LEGACY OF PRAYER

*I know that the LORD has given this land to you 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. . . . Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you.*

—JOSHUA 2:9–10, 12

REFLECT ON: Joshua 2:1–21.

PRAISE GOD: For giving women key roles in his plan of salvation.

OFFER THANKS: That no one, including ourselves, is beyond the reach of grace.

CONFESS: Any unwillingness to take risks in order to follow God.

ASK GOD: To increase your awe of him.

### Lift Your Heart

Use a small red ribbon as a bookmark, tie a red ribbon around the pot of a favorite plant, or place some decorative red roping around a dried floral arrangement to remind you of the vital importance of living by faith. Each time you notice your scarlet cord, let it remind you of the lengths Jesus went to rescue you. Ask him, as Rahab asked the Israelites, to watch over and protect every member of your family. Say a silent prayer, asking God to increase your faith. Faith, after all, is what your life and the vitality of your relationship with God depend on.

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*Father, I praise you for the wonderful and unexpected ways you have acted in my life. Let the knowledge of your faithfulness increase my courage to take the risks that faith demands.*