



2

God Uses Rahab

Key Theme

- God uses people to accomplish His perfect plans.

Key Passages

- Joshua 2:1–24, 6:25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why Rahab had faith in God.
- Describe how God used Rahab to accomplish His plan for His people.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will place bookmarks at Joshua 2 and Hebrews 11.

Students will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and then practice saying the verse together and/or with a partner.

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today's study passages.
- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



Studying God's Word

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Rahab was a sinful woman who became an unlikely hero of the faith. Providentially, God granted her faith and used her to accomplish His plan for the Israelites. Rahab was rewarded and later included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. She is mentioned in Hebrews as a great woman of faith.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through Joshua 2
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: A Righteous Lie?

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Students will discuss the lie Rahab told to hide the Israelite spies and examine biblical passages that provide clear prohibitions against lying.

- Student Guides
- Pencils

Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Joshua 2; Matthew 1:1–16 (noticing in verse 5 that Rahab is an ancestor of Jesus); Hebrews 11:31; and Acts 4:13–21.

The Israelites under Joshua's leadership were again on the move. God had promised Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob that He would deliver the Promised Land to them. The generation of Moses's day—because of their lack of faith, disobedience, and idolatry—was denied entry into this Promised Land. Moses and the entire generation (except for Joshua and Caleb) then died. Joshua was now the leader of the younger generation, and God had demanded his complete obedience to Him and His Word in order to be a part of the fulfillment of His purpose (Joshua 1:6–9). As already demonstrated, the way to success would be far from easy. There were many nations to conquer, yet God would provide the means—the strength and courage needed for success—provided the Israelites remained obedient.

Now Joshua, as the new leader of the people, was sending two of his men on a spying mission to view the land, especially Jericho (Joshua 2:1).

The two spies entered Jericho and found lodging with Rahab, the prostitute. Although this may seem odd at first glance, upon further consideration, Rahab's home on the wall could offer a safer and inconspicuous haven for the men. However, in God's divine providence, the men were found out. When Rahab realized who they were, she was introduced firsthand to the God of Israel she had heard of and feared (Joshua 2:10–

11). In the face of this providential visit by two of God's people, Rahab demonstrated her faith and offered protection to the spies (Joshua 2:3–6, 2:15–16). Her faith saved her family from destruction (Joshua 6:17). And her faith, by God's amazing grace, put her in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5).

The question we might ask is how would this woman, this harlot, know about the God of Israel? She was well aware—as apparently all in Jericho were—that Israel was a nation whose God had delivered His people in a dramatic, miraculous fashion from Egypt. This God had also provided victory for His people over the most notorious kings on the other side of the Jordan, including King Og of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:4). This was no small feat, and Rahab had come to worship this God of Israel.

Rahab was willing to stake her life and her family members' lives on the ability of God to defeat her own people and yet deliver her! She misled the pursuers who were sent by the King of Jericho to apprehend the spies, and she concealed the spies until she helped them escape back to Israel (Joshua 2:2–6, 2:15–16). Rahab acted upon her belief that the God of Israel would carry out His promises to give the land to His people, and by doing so, she showed an utter dependence upon Him. This faith was remarkable enough to be held up to all future believers as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:31)!

The fact that God would bring to saving faith and use a Gentile woman to fulfill His purpose foreshadowed His intention to break “down the middle wall of separation” (Ephesians 2:14) between Jew and Gentile in Christ, and to make Gentiles “fellow heirs, of the same body” with Jews in Christ (Ephesians 3:6).

This grand scheme of Christ's salvation of sinners from every nation was in the background when God used Rahab to help deliver Israel's spies in return for the protection of her and her family from the ultimate fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:25).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Many raise the question as to whether God blessed Rahab's lie to the king's men when they came for the Israelite spies. If so, when is it OK to lie? Or, is it ever right to lie? No. Lying is sin against a holy, perfect God (Proverbs 12:22). However, God frequently uses the sinful acts of both the righteous and unrighteous to execute His purposes.

God wanted to show His amazing grace and sovereignty in this situation. Rahab was a deliberate sinner, and in likelihood an idolater, given that she lived an immoral life in a city of an idolatrous nation. Her knowledge of the true God was no doubt incomplete, being based upon what was discussed among her people, not upon a principled or careful instruction from Scripture. It was from this incomplete knowledge of God that she chose to lie on behalf of the spies. And in God's mercy, He overlooked the sin, acknowledged her faith, and redeemed the situation.

To focus on the lie instead of the reward that our holy, sovereign, merciful God granted her does not give God the glory due His name. One lesson to be learned from Rahab is not about Rahab at all but about God—how He did not judge her nor reward her

according to her sin but saved her by grace through the faith He gave to her as a precious gift (Ephesians 2:8), just as He does for all of His people.

Rahab's imperfect actions of faith and courage resulted not only in her salvation from destruction but also in a place in history as an ancestor of Jesus, a place in God's providential plan that resulted in Jesus's birth and saving mission (Matthew 1:5). If we wonder why God would use a woman like Rahab to fulfill His purposes, perhaps we have not fully faced the effect our own sin has against a holy God. Only then can we recognize the greatness of God's mercy in offering forgiveness to us through Jesus's death and Resurrection.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Heavenly Father, you dwell enthroned in heaven above and on earth beneath. How marvelous is your Word, Lord. You have revealed your sovereignty and your mercy in the passages we are studying this week. Please help me understand your truths and at the same time present them in a way my students will understand. May the beauty of this account of Rahab—a harlot who believed—give hope, courage, and strength to my students. Holy Spirit, move among us in such a way that we all become excited about the ways an almighty God can use us to accomplish His perfect plan.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Joshua 2 and Hebrews 11 with strips of paper.
- They will put Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verse together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the Memory Verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



Review

Last week we looked at Joshua's assumption of leadership after the death of Moses. God called Joshua to study His commands and obey them. As Joshua meditated day and night on the Book of the Law, he was able to tell truth from error and walk in obedience.

- ? What did God promise to Joshua as he obeyed His commands? *That he would prosper.*

We also saw how Jesus used God's Word to refute the temptations of Satan. Jesus was able to turn away from sin when He faced temptation. Because of His obedience, we

have redemption from our sinful state and the Father sees Christ's righteousness when He looks at His children. Knowing God's truth is essential to obeying His commands. If we don't know what is wrong, we can't avoid it. If we don't know what is right, we can't do it.

Today we are going to continue looking at the Israelites' move into the Promised Land under Joshua's obedient leadership and how God uses people to accomplish His plans.





Studying God's Word

► Write on the board, "Is it ever right to lie?"

READ THE WORD

Let's read Joshua 2:1–7 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Joshua 2:1–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What was the goal of the spies sent by Joshua?** *To secretly spy out the land they were about to move into, especially Jericho.*
- ? **Where did the pair find lodging?** *In the house of Rahab the harlot (prostitute).*
- ? **How did the king of Jericho respond to hearing of the spies?** *He sent men to Rahab to arrest the spies.*
- ? **How did Rahab respond?** *She hid the spies on her roof among bundles of flax, and then lied to the king's men, telling them that she had seen the two spies leaving the city gate.*
- ? **How did the king's men respond?** *They pursued the men toward the Jordan River.*

Discover the Truth

Let's stop for a minute to think about the geography around Jericho. The spies had come from the camp at Acacia Grove (Shittim) west toward Jericho. Rahab told the king's men that she saw the spies heading back toward the Jordan, so they pursued them east toward the Jordan along the road that led to a crossing. We will look at this a bit more in the next part of the passage. *Show the Jericho Spies Map.*

The spies sought refuge with Rahab, a harlot. A harlot was a woman who did not obey God's command to have only one husband. She lived a sinful lifestyle.

Show the picture of Rahab's Home on the Wall from the Resource DVD-ROM. Rahab lived in a unique location. Her house was built right on the wall of Jericho. Her home offered a safe place for the spies to hide.

Not only did Rahab lie to the king's men, but she also persuaded them to pursue the men in a direction she knew was false. She flat-out lied to save the men from being discovered. We will find out why she did this as we examine the rest of the chapter in a few minutes, but let's think about what Rahab did for a minute. I am going to have you examine Rahab's actions in light of the biblical passages that talk about her.





A Righteous Lie?

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students turn to the A Righteous Lie? activity in their Student Guides.

So, did Rahab do the right thing by hiding the spies and lying? Think through these questions and passages and we will talk about them in a few minutes. Answer the first two questions on your own, and then you can work in small groups to answer the rest.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Go over the questions and answers with the class.

? Before you begin, do you believe Rahab did the right thing by lying to hide the spies?

Allow discussion.

? When is it right or good to tell a lie? Many students may think it is OK to tell a lie to protect someone or in circumstances that no one will get hurt.

For each of the following passages, summarize what we learn about Rahab:

- **Joshua 6:17** *Rahab and her family shall live because she hid the spies.*
- **Joshua 6:25** *Rahab and her family lived because she hid the spies.*

- **Matthew 1:5** *Rahab was adopted into Israel and became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus.*
- **Hebrews 11:31** *Rahab hid the spies by faith.*
- **James 2:25** *Rahab was justified by receiving the messengers and sending them out to safety.*

For each of the following passages, summarize what we learn about lying

- **Exodus 20:16** *Bearing false witness against a neighbor (lying) is a sin.*
- **Proverbs 12:22** *Lying is an abomination before God.*
- **Revelation 21:8** *Liars will be cast into hell.*
- **Colossians 3:9** *Lying is a part of the sinful nature of people before they are saved.*
- **Titus 1:2** *God does not lie (and we are to imitate God—Ephesians 5:1).*

? **Is Rahab ever praised for telling a lie?** *Nowhere in Scripture is Rahab's lie commended or connected to her faith. Her hiding of the spies and sending them out in secret is, but not her lying.*

? **How have these passages influenced your thinking about the lie Rahab told?** *Discuss answers, noting that it was wrong for her to lie even though a "good" result came from it.*

? **Is there such a thing as a righteous lie?** *There is not a case in the Bible where lying is commended (the Hebrew midwives in Exodus are never commended for their lies, either), and it is consistently condemned as sinful. A righteous lie is an oxymoron.*



READ THE WORD

Now that we have read about Rahab's lie and what Scripture has to teach us about lying, let's finish the account by reading Joshua 2:8–24.

Why would Rahab, a prostitute from a pagan city, protect the Israelite spies? She was not even an Israelite! Let's read our text and see if we can find the answer.

Have someone read Joshua 2:8–24 aloud, or consider having someone read as the spies while another student reads Rahab's parts.

Joshua 2:8–24

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What had Rahab heard about the Israelites and their God?** *She had heard about the Red Sea crossing (v. 10) and how the Israelites utterly destroyed Og and Sihon and their kingdoms (v. 11).*
- ? **What had this news done to the people of Jericho and the surrounding lands?** *They were fearful of what would happen to them. Words like terror, fainthearted, and melting hearts are used to describe their fear.*
- ? **What did Rahab conclude about what would happen as the Israelites entered Canaan?** *She knew that the Lord would give the land to the Israelites (v.9).*
- ? **What did Rahab proclaim about God?** *In verse 11, she acknowledged that the Lord God is God of heaven and earth and that He is able to deliver the land to the Israelites.*
- ? **What request did Rahab make?** *To spare the lives of her and her family.*
- ? **What sign did the spies command her to make to avoid being killed by the Israelites?** *She was to tie a scarlet cord in the window and have all of her family in her house.*
- ? **What advice did Rahab give the spies?** *To go to the mountains to the west of Jericho and hide for three days before they return to their camp*
- ? **How did the spies escape Jericho?** *Rahab let them out of her window over the city wall so they could flee to the mountains.*
- ? **What report did the spies bring to Joshua after the three days?** *They reported their story and knew that God had given them the land because of the fear of the people before the power of God.*

Discover the Truth

Rahab had heard about what God had done for the Israelites, specifically at the Red Sea crossing, and their absolute victory over the kings of the Amorites. It was God's mighty deeds for His people that made Rahab look to God for hope. She knew that He was the God of all of creation, not just some little god who operated in some local area.

Hebrews 11:31

From these few important verses, we know that God had opened the heart of Rahab as she heard the accounts of the Israelites. She heard that God had saved them from Pharaoh in Egypt. No doubt she had heard how God parted the Red Sea to allow them to escape. She had heard that God had allowed them many victories over their enemies before they even reached Jericho. At some point, Rahab accepted that the God of the Israelites was different than all the false, pagan gods worshipped in her city. She believed that the Lord God of the Israelites is God in heaven above and on earth beneath—the one true God!

There is a verse in the New Testament that tells us about Rahab. It's in Hebrews 11:31. Turn there in your Bibles. *Have someone read Hebrews 11:31.*

? Something saved Rahab from being killed in the end. What was it according to this verse? *She had faith.*

Yes. Rahab had faith. God granted Rahab faith, setting her apart from all the other people living in Jericho. She had heard of the Lord of the Israelites and trusted Him. She demonstrated her faith by saving the spies and believing God would do what He said He would do. God is sovereign, and Rahab was a part of His sovereign plan. The spies came to her house, she received them in, and they were saved from the king's men. Believe it or not, God had even more in store for Rahab!

? Which attributes of God had Rahab found faith in? *She had recognized God's omnipotence in controlling the waters of the sea and His sovereignty in conquering the kings of the Amorites.*

? How did Rahab demonstrate her faith in God? *Rahab's faith was demonstrated in her willingness to hide the spies who were sent by God at the risk of her own life. She knew she could trust a God mighty enough to part a sea and wipe out entire armies.*

? How did the spies demonstrate their faith? *In fulfilling the task Joshua, God's chosen leader, sent them on and acknowledging that God would indeed fulfill His promise to give them the land.*



SOVEREIGN
OMNIPOTENT



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God used the faith of Rahab and that of the spies to accomplish His plans. Although Rahab's lie cannot be commended, her faith in hiding the spies and giving them direction can. She fully trusted what little she knew about God. The spies trusted that God was willing and able to fulfill His promise to give the Promised Land to His chosen people just as He had promised to Abraham hundreds of years earlier.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What do we learn about God through this account where a lying prostitute was adopted into God's chosen nation and became an ancestor of the Messiah? *God is gracious to pardon sin for those who trust in Him. He can take any life and transform it by His power. There is no sin too big to be forgiven by the blood of Christ.*
- ? How could the account of Rahab and her sinful life be used when sharing the gospel with others? *Many people think that their sin is too big for God to forgive. Rahab could be used as an example of God's grace to show that no one is too sinful to be beyond God's salvation.*
- ? How does an account like this—one where a person's sin is put on display—help to demonstrate that the Bible is true? *It shows that the Bible is not a description of perfect people who were used by God as examples, but that the heroes of the faith were flawed individuals who needed God's grace. A record that whitewashed every activity and every person would not be trustworthy because we know that there are no perfect people. God uses broken vessels for His service.*
- ? What have you learned about how Scripture supports itself by looking at the passages related to Rahab and what God says about lying? *The Bible is a comprehensive book that explains itself and is self-supporting. All of the passages about Rahab tell the same story—she was commended for her faithful actions, not her lie.*
- ? If you were faced with a situation where it seemed like lying would be the action that would best protect someone from harm, how might you respond in a way that demonstrates your faith in God? *God is holy and would never expect us to sin to accomplish His plans (Romans 6:1–2). He knows that we do fail and will forgive us in Christ, but we should never sin because we believe that something good might come from it. We must trust that God can accomplish His plans through us without a hint of sin. Things might not turn out for the best in our eyes, but we must obey God by faith, trusting that His will can be accomplished apart from our sin (Romans 8).*



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:8–9 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His clear guidance from Scripture.
- Ask God for wisdom in responding to difficult situations.
- Praise God for His grace offered to us in Christ.

