

The Faith Dare  
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Joshua 2

Opening Discussion Question: Who has an early memory of a lie you told as a child?

The hero of our story today told a lie under very CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

SPIES, a KING, and a PROSTITUTE! The scripture passage this morning reads like a NOVEL. Like an ACTION THRILLER. But, it's not FICTION...it's a true account of how God used a SCARLET WOMAN and a SCARLET CORD to bring about His will. It's a lesson about finding COURAGEOUS FAITH in an UNLIKELY PLACE and an UNLIKELY PERSON.

Let's begin with verses two through seven:

Joshua 2

Rahab and the Spies

2 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look! Some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 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." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

- Verse 2: So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. It begs the question, WHY would they go THERE?

The Expositor's Bible Commentary says:

*Rahab's house was the only place where the men could stay with any hope of remaining undetected and where they would be able to gather the information they were seeking. Moreover, her house afforded an easy way of escape since it was located on the city wall (v.15). In view of the spies' very precarious circumstances, it seems highly unlikely that they engaged Rahab's professional services.* — Madvig, D. H. (1992). Joshua. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 3:

- Bottom line, we don't know if this was more than just a place to hide. What we DO know is it was obviously a GOOD PLACE to hide and from which to ESCAPE!
- The king of Jericho heard about the spies. Somehow Rahab's house of ill repute was identified as their location. And the king sent a message CONFRONTING Rahab and saying "bring out the men...the spies."
- Question: Scripture doesn't tell us, but, what do you think the penalty might have been for harboring spies? What would have been the easiest and safest thing for Rahab to do?
- Verse 4: What DOES she do? She tells a HALF TRUTH... "Oh yes, they were here..."
- Then, she tells a BIG LIE...a CREATIVE LIE...that famous line: "They went thataway!" They got out through the city gate at dusk...RUN QUICKLY and you can catch 'em!
- All the kings horses and all the kings men went on a "wild goose chase" a "snipe hunt for spies!"
- Let's stop and deal with a tough Biblical question. Was it okay for Rahab to lie...if so, why? Is it EVER okay for a Christian to lie? What do you think? Under what circumstances? What about Christians who lied to Nazis to protect Jews?

Is it ever okay for a Christian to lie under certain circumstances? R.C. Sproul writes: *"The short answer I would give to that is yes, there may be occasions when God-fearing people are called upon to lie in the sense of speaking something that is not the truth. Rahab('s lie is) reported and later on (she is) included in the roll call of heroes. It doesn't explicitly say God blessed or sanctified (her) for lying, but it seems to imply that there's not a word of rebuke for (her) blatant dishonesty in (this) situation."*

(For another situation like this: Exodus 1:15-20 <http://goo.gl/3rv8l> )

- What kind of circumstances might "justify" a lie?

Sproul again:

*"...the situations falling most clearly into that category would involve war, murder, or criminal activities. If a murderer comes to your house and he wants to know if your children are upstairs in bed and you know it's his intent to murder them, it's your moral obligation to lie to him, to deceive him as much as you possibly can to prevent those lives from being taken."*

We pick back up in verse 8:

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, "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. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[b] 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.[c] 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

- So Rahab got rid of the king's men and went to the roof where the spies were hidden.
- She stashed them under "stalks of flax". A plant used to make linen...they'd soak the stalks in water and lay them out in the sun to dry.
- Verse 8: Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof to talk to them.
- Question: Verse 9...what does Rahab say she KNOWS about the Israelites? God had given them the land.
- Also verse 9: What important INFORMATION did she share with the spies about what was happening in Jericho? The people of Jericho were "melting in fear" of the Israelites.
- In verse 10 she reveals her knowledge of God's powerful deliverance of His people...the Red Sea...the defeat of the Amorites. She was a Jericho prostitute but she KNEW about how God had delivered His people.
- Here's a point to note: Unbelievers are observing God's people and often see the DIFFERENCE in how God takes care of us. Rahab appears to have believed in God's POWER to DELIVER his people, maybe more than some of the Israelites may have!
- Look at verse 11: "When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."
- Question: What did Rahab confess in the last part of verse 11? What does that say to you about this PAGAN PROSTITUTE and her understanding of the God of Israel? What was she a GREAT EXAMPLE of?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*"What a confession of faith from the lips of a woman whose life had been imprisoned in pagan idolatry! She believed in one God, not in the multitude of gods that populated the heathen temples. She believed He was a personal God ("your God"), who would work on behalf of those who trusted Him. She believed He was the God of Israel, who would give the land to His people. This God whom she trusted was not limited to one nation or one land, but was the God of heaven and earth. Rahab believed in a great and awesome God!"*

When Rahab was faced with a situation that THREATENED HER VERY LIFE, she chose to risk it all because she BELIEVED God is who He says He is!

This SCARLET WOMAN became a WOMAN OF FAITH because she BELIEVED. And Rahab is REMEMBERED in scripture for her COURAGEOUS FAITH.

James 2:18:

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

Then verse 23: And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"[b] and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

[Then James actually COMPARES Abraham the father of Israel to Rahab:]

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

- The book of James is not the only place Rahab is mentioned again in scripture. She's also mentioned in Hebrews 11...we call it the HALL OF FAITH:

Hebrews 11:31 says...

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

- Back to Jericho: Rahab didn't just PROTECT the spies. She cut a deal with them. In verse 12 she says:

12 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 13 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."

14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land."

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 Now she had said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

- Then the spies came up with a SECRET SIGNAL. They said, "Tie a scarlet cord" from the window of the house. When we come back to take the city, if we see the SCARLET CORD your house and all your family in it will be SPARED.

21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23 Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

- The spies kept their end of the bargain. Joshua Chapter 6 tells us that Rahab and her family were spared as the rest of the city was BURNED TO THE GROUND.

This PAGAN PROSTITUTE faced a CHALLENGING - LIFE THREATENING situation, and she acted with COURAGEOUS FAITH that God would take care of her and her family IF she TOOK THE RISK TO DO THE RIGHT THING.

- Rahab's COURAGEOUS FAITH wasn't just rewarded by saving the lives of her and her family. Her faith was rewarded with a special place in Bible HISTORY.
- As Paul Harvey used to say, here's the "REST OF THE STORY."
- Not only do we read about Rahab in James chapter 2 and Hebrews 11 because of her COURAGE and FAITH and her ACTIONS to further God's plan. Rahab has a more prominent place in the story of the Gospel.

Turn to Matthew chapter 1.

You see, Rahab the PROSTITUTE wasn't just an ACCOMPLICE who helped the spies and whose family was spared destruction. Oh no!

Matthew 1:1-6

The Genealogy of Jesus

1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

And so on...down to verses 5 and 6:

5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, (PAUSE)

You see Rahab the HARLOT married a man named Salmon; and they had a son named BOAZ who married RUTH...their grandson was named JESSE...the father of KING DAVID. Rahab was the great, great, great, great GRANDMOTHER to Joseph, who married Mary "of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

Rahab wasn't just rewarded by surviving the battle. She was given a place in the FAMILY TREE of the EARTHLY family of Jesus!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- So, What's YOUR Takeaway? What lesson does the story of Rahab have for YOU?
- We all face CHALLENGING SITUATIONS. Maybe our life isn't at stake...but perhaps our REPUTATION or our LIVELIHOOD are.
- When we're faced with a challenging situation, we have a decision to make: Do we TRUST GOD and ACT? Or, do we COWER in fear?
- If we will just HAVE FAITH IN GOD, and be COURAGEOUS enough to DO THE RIGHT THING, God can use ANY ONE OF US for His perfect plan...just like He used a PAGAN PROSTITUTE named Rahab.