



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES

Happily Ever After: Rahab: Lesson 20

This week we are blessed by the opportunity to study a wonderful lady named Rahab. Some people are known or identified by their profession, and this is certainly the case here. Her name is mentioned eight times in Scripture, and five of those times she's referred to as "Rahab the harlot." Talk about your past haunting you! Although it may seem like that at first, we'll soon see why the Holy Spirit chose to refer to her as such. Her occupation no longer identifies her but glorifies God! Her history is part of her testimony. It speaks volumes of God's forgiveness, love, faithfulness, and mercy. I can't wait to read more about her. I pray that as we continue, we "find" ourselves in Rahab. Have you ever felt worthless or like you've been discarded? Have you ever felt "not good enough" or disqualified from God's Kingdom because of your past and what you've "done"? I think we can all relate to her. Her testimony is one of redemption, adoption into God's family, and the richness of God's grace! We, too, can have a happy ending when we put our faith and trust in Christ Jesus! Rahab, you inspire and challenge me to be bold and brave in my faith! Can't wait to meet you!

First Day

Before we meet our leading lady, let's set the stage a bit and see what's going on with the nation of Israel at the time, because context is always important. From Exodus 3 to Deuteronomy 34, the Bible focuses attention on the ministry of Moses, God's chosen servant to lead the nation of Israel. When Moses dies, Joshua, a "new" servant of the Lord, would take his place. (Moses was never forgotten, though, his name being mentioned 57 times in the book of Joshua!) Joshua was chosen to lead God's people into the Promised Land. It is under the leadership of Joshua where we meet Rahab. Weirsbe points out that "The practical message of the book of Joshua is that God keeps His promises and enables His servants to succeed if they will trust Him and obey His Word. The spiritual message is that God has a rich inheritance for His children now, and they can claim it by faith."

1. Read Joshua 1:1-18. What promises did God give to Joshua and the Israelites?

The Israelites' pilgrimage began in Egypt where they had been enslaved by Pharaoh. Max Lucado gives us a brief and concise history lesson: He writes, "After God raised up Moses to be the leader of the people, the Israelites stepped on dry ground through the Red Sea and entered the wilderness. There, in the desert, they were liberated from Egyptian bondage. But you wouldn't have known it by listening to them. Just three days into their freedom, 'the people grumbled to Moses and Aaron in the desert ... 'It would have been better if the Lord had killed us in the land of Egypt; You have brought us here to starve us to death' (Exodus 16:2-3). Then, when God called the people to cross over into Canaan, Moses sent 12 spies into the land. When they returned, all but two of them said the mission was impossible. The giants were just too big for them. (Numbers 13:33). So God gave them time to think it over. He put the entire nation in time-out for nearly forty years. They walked in circles. They ate the same food every day. Life was an endless routine of the same rocks, lizards, and snakes. Victories were scarce. Progress was slow. They were saved but not strong. Redeemed but not released. Saved from Pharaoh but stuck in the desert. Redeemed but locked in a routine. Four decades of tedium. And then the day came when God appeared to Joshua, Moses' successor, and said, 'Arise and go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving them (Joshua 1:2). The time had come, and Jericho was the first test.'"

2. Read Joshua 2:1-24. Observe the facts and briefly summarize the story in your own words.

3. What facts do we know about Rahab?

4. What city was Israel trying to conquer?

5. If God had "promised" them the land, why do you think they still sent out spies?

Jericho was one of many "city-states" in Canaan, each ruled by a king (12:9-24). It sat just north of the Dead Sea, covering about eight or nine acres, and there is archaeological evidence that double walls about 15 feet apart protected the city. The city was obviously indwelt by Canaanites, which are known to have been extremely barbaric. They participated in various

orgies, buried babies alive, and the city contained many Canaanite temples. Liz Higgs mentioned that there were two kinds of prostitutes at that time; “The religious ones who worked at the Canaanite temples, and the run-of-the-mill harlots who worked for cash. Rahab was the second kind. The Hebrew word was *zoonah*; the Greek word was *porne*.” Such an ugly word.

6. What are some lessons you see from Rahab upon first reading?

Tomorrow we’ll go a little deeper into her life, but aren’t you already amazed? Why did they stay with her? How did she even know about God? What is happening? Oh, sooo many questions!

Memory Verse of the Week: “By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.” Hebrews 11:31

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. How exciting that she’s in the Hall of Faith!

1. Read Joshua 2:1-11 again. Why do you think the spies thought it was a good idea to stay at Rahab’s house?

Some older commentators believe that Rahab was more of an “innkeeper” than a harlot. I don’t think so, but I also read that innkeepers were usually women, and along with food and lodging, they offered “other things,” if you catch my drift. Liz Higgs calls them “amenities.” Her house was located by the city gates, making it a good place to stop for “weary travelers” as well as “quick exits.” Hmmm....

2. What story did she make up to protect the spies? How did she hide them?

Some people also have a problem with her lying. Well, if that’s you, let me ask you this. If soldiers came to your door to take your family and kill them, what would you do? Would you lie? Just saying...

3. Did Rahab seem to hesitate?
4. What risks was she taking by doing this?
5. Read verses 9-11. This is often called her “confession of faith.” Canaan was known for their idolatry and multiple pagan gods. What are some of the amazing things she says about the God of Israel in contrast with what she had grown up believing?

One author described her faith, saying, “First she heard the Word, then she believed. This belief led to faith, which then led to works. In the process, she was saved.” What a familiar progression for the New Testament Church!

6. What encouragement did she give to the spies? (Do you think the spies expected to find true faith in a brothel?)
7. How did Rahab show an amazing amount of faith and courage by what she did? What does James 2:25 say about this?
8. What can we see about God’s providence here? (Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe. This doctrine asserts that God is in complete control of all things.)
9. What “risks” are you willing to take to exercise your faith? Are you willing, like Rahab, to go “against culture” and stand up for the one true living God and live according to His ways? (What does Paul say about this in Romans 1:16-17?)

10. Kind of a random question, but does your heart still “melt” when you witness or meditate on God’s power? (Or how long has it been since you’ve thought about it?)

That’s it for today. See you tomorrow, ladies. Be brave! Be courageous! Be strong! Isn’t it awesome that the very command the Lord gave to Joshua in Joshua chapter 1 was the very characteristics they find in Rahab?

Third Day

Spend time meditating on your memory verse.

1. Read Joshua 1:1-24, focusing on verses 12-24. What did Rahab ask of the spies in exchange for helping them? Do you think it was appropriate for her to ask? Who else was she concerned about?
2. They made a verbal contract between them. What stipulation did the spies give?
3. Did the spies seem to trust her? (Read verse 24.) Why would they trust this harlot? How could it have been a trick?
4. How would the spies recognize her house when they came back for battle?

I thought it was so significant that she was concerned for her family. We don’t know if they were believers, what they thought of her occupation, or if they would even come to her home. I love that personal side of the story. Ladies, she’s not the only one concerned with her family, right? We all want our families to be saved, to make their own commitments to Christ, and be saved from judgment. Isn’t that the prayer of all our hearts? I thought it was sweet to see her heart for them as well.

5. Are there still members of your family who haven't come to the saving knowledge of Christ? Can you take time, right now, to lift them up to the Lord in prayer? Pray that their hearts would "melt" as they learn more about Him and His love for them.

6. God spotted a woman's faith and a tender heart in the middle of a pagan city, and saved her. A prostitute's house provided refuge for God's people, and God's people promise refuge for a prostitute. What does this tell you about God and the way He works?

Why did Rahab have a rope strong enough to let men down from her window? Hmm, had she done this before? It's really interesting that the Hebrew word for "rope" and "cord" are different words. The one she was supposed to hang out her window for the sign was a smaller cord, a mere ribbon. And notice she put the red cord out immediately after they left. Was red chosen because it would symbolize her profession and not draw any undue attention? Was it simply practical because red would show up more easily against the house? I like to think it's symbolic of the verse Isaiah 1:18 that says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be made white as snow." Red is also a symbol of blood, like the blood of a sacrificial lamb that was smeared over the doorpost of a house so that all who lived there would be saved when the Lord "passed over." What do you think?

7. Liz Curtiss believes that the red cord was a foreshadowing of something in the New Testament. Read Matthew 25:1-13. Write your thoughts.

8. Rahab and her family lived on the edge, anxiously waiting for Joshua and his soldiers to attack. I'm sure they were also watching for the obvious signs. Are you anxiously waiting and watching for the Lord's return? How do we practically "watch and wait"? What does that mean?

9. What do you think Rahab did as she waited?

10. It's important to mention that Rahab's faith was NOT in the red cord hanging out the window, but in God Himself. The fact that she hung the cord was a sign of her true faith, just like the Israelites who put blood on their doors (Exodus 12:21-28). Her faith was the most important thing about her. What does Hebrews 11:6 say about this?

11. Do people today put their faith in the wrong things? Give some examples.

Tomorrow we'll read the end of the story. Is she saved? Does she perish? We'll soon see!

Fourth Day

What's your verse?

1. Let's jump ahead a few chapters to Joshua 6:1-26. Such an interesting battle, right? Read and summarize the battle plan God gave to Joshua. Did it work? Why do you think it was so effective?

2. What did Joshua say to his people in verses 16-19?

3. Who did Joshua send to save Rahab according to verse 22?

4. According to verses 2-21, what happened when the walls fell down?

5. Imagine for a minute that you're Rahab. She and her family are huddled together in their small house, hearing the noise from outside. The marching, the horns, the screaming of the neighbors and friends. Was she worried they'd forget her? Was she at peace? Was she shaking? Was she holding her breath? What are some of your thoughts on this?

6. In verse 25, it says that Rahab dwells in Israel to this day. What do you think that means?

7. I'm trying not to spend a lot of time on the Battle and focus on Rahab and her part in it, but I can't just read it and not ask the question ... Why was this battle so important for the Israelites? What lessons can we learn from it, especially regarding times when we face impossible situations?

8. God used a harlot to not only hide the spies, but to help ensure a victory for the whole nation of Israel. Has God ever used the "unlikely" to accomplish His purpose in your life?

9. Read Hebrews 11:30-31. Only two women are specifically named in Hebrews Hall of Faith, Sarah and Rahab. That's pretty special. Is it clearer now why her occupation is still attached to her name?

10. Now to really blow your mind, read Matthew 1:1-16. Is Rahab in that list? Why is that so significant? Whose lineage is she in?

11. The Israelites had a tainted past, just like Rahab. Yet God used them both! What does that say to us concerning both our past and our future? Why is this such great news?

“Perhaps you come from a lineage of faithlessness. Or maybe your lineage is more of the faithless variety. Regardless, aren’t you glad we have a God who works according to His goodness and not ours? Because He is faithful, we still have a future. Because He is good, we still have a hope. We can praise Him because He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10). Instead, He forgives us and sees us as clean. As a result, we, like Rahab, can find ourselves in the lineage of Christ.” (Max Lucado)

12. Do you believe God wants to use you despite what you’ve done in your past, or do you have a problem believing that? How does the story of Rahab speak to your heart regarding that?

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory! Oh, isn’t it exciting?

1. Let's look at some overall lessons from our friend Rahab and the story of her life. First of all, how is she an example of true faith?

2. Rahab was probably looked down upon because of her reputation, even in a Canaanite city, yet God chose her, saved her, and used her. What does that show us about God and His character? Is He prejudiced? Does He have a heart for those discarded by society? Those who have sold themselves, their affections, their allegiance? One author wrote, "We have all 'sold out' in some way. Sometimes that makes us doubt if we deserve a place in the Promised Land." What refreshing news does Psalm 103:12 bring us?

3. Read the following verses and ponder what they have to do with this week's lesson.
 - a. Hebrews 10:14

 - b. Numbers 14:19

 - c. John 14:6

 - d. Romans 10:9

 - e. Romans 8:15-17

 - f. Romans 4:4-5

8. I'm sure that when Rahab walked out of that house, she didn't look behind, like Lot's wife. She became part of Israel's community and lived among God's people "to this day," not in the flesh but through her descendants. She didn't "long" for her old life. (Well, at least I don't think she did.) Whatever God has brought you out of or freed you from, do you find yourself looking back? Do you long for things in your past? Do you dream of the "leeks and onions" like the Israelites did (Numbers 11:5)? If so, how can you keep yourself from doing this? Why is it so dangerous?

9. Rahab reminds us that our past doesn't have to determine our future. What does that mean? Are you allowing your past to determine yours? (Read Romans 8:1)

I'll end with another great quote from Max: "We don't drop scarlet cords from our windows. But we trust the crimson thread of Christ's blood. We don't prepare for the coming of the Hebrews, but we do live with an eye toward the second coming of our Joshua--Jesus Christ." I pray that you are waiting and watching for His coming; preparing yourself for the Bridegroom. He's coming! Get ready and stay ready!