

# Rahab: Failure to Family

BY Margie Patton

---

Background Scripture: Joshua 2:1-21; Joshua 6:17-18, 22-23, 25

Key Scripture: Joshua 6:25; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

No one in the Bible better exemplifies

1 Corinthians 5:17 than Rahab. Her transition from failure to family was life-changing for her, her family members, the nation of Israel, and, through her descendants, the world. The Bible, from Joshua to James, shows her transformation was decisive, influential, and faith-based.

The wanderers known as the children of Israel were amid profound change. They were finally about to enter and conquer the land God had promised their forefathers many years before. God had made them a great (populous) nation; now He was about to give them their land. God had commissioned Joshua to lead the people into Canaan. The first hurdle they faced was the mighty city of Jericho.

Jericho was one of the oldest and most well-fortified cities in the world. Its walls were 20 to 30 feet thick with strong gates, whose inhabitants were wicked and cruel idolaters. The city had not only to be taken, but also utterly wiped out. Joshua sent spies to see first-hand what they could expect to face in Jericho. He must have thought back to 40 years earlier when-

Moses sent him, Caleb, and ten other men on a spying mission. Joshua opted to send only two men. Did he remember how difficult it was for twelve to agree? Perhaps he knew this mission needed the stealth and speed that only two men could achieve. The Bible doesn't tell us the names of these two men, but they must have had Joshua's complete trust. Their objective was to view the land, especially Jericho.

We don't know all the places the spies went, but we do know where they ended up—the house of Rahab, "... and they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there" (Joshua 2:1c). Many scholars believe her house served as an inn, so it made sense that they "lodged" there. I do not believe the spies came to her house because she was a prostitute, but because she was an innkeeper. Perhaps their arrival was part of their strategic plan. Indeed, it was part of God's providential plan. If indeed her house was an inn, much like the roadside inns in the early days of our country, or an English village pub even today, it would provide the spies with lodging and a hot meal. Even more importantly, the inn offered a



*October Study*

*As soon as the men departed, Rahab lost no time  
fastening the cord out the window.*





place where they would be inconspicuous and would blend in with the other strangers there. Also, they could hear what the locals and travelers were saying about the threat of the Israelites and their God. Rumors, as well as facts, were circulating and spreading fear. The Bible says the people were fainting or melting because of fear (Joshua 2:9b, 11). The spies had already discovered how the city was laid out and knew Rahab's house was built into the city wall, thus, providing a quick escape plan. No doubt, God led them to this house where they would find everything and everyone necessary to make their mission succeed. God could have provided another way and a more "respectable" ally, but in His great mercy and love, He wanted to provide salvation for this woman, Rahab. Apparently, she had already been seeking another way of life, wanting something more. God knew she would respond to the opportunity to leave her life of prostitution and idolatry for the new beginning, the clean slate only God offers.

We don't know what occurred that evening at Rahab's place, but someone realized these two travelers were Israelite spies and reported it to the king. Somehow Rahab managed to slip the spies up to the roof of her house and conceal them under the flax before the king's men arrived at her home. When the soldiers ordered her to bring the men out, she told them a persuasive lie. Oh, yes, they had been there all right, but they were already gone. If they hurried, they might be able to catch them. Perhaps she was well-known to the king's men. A prostitute/innkeeper was a respected member of the community in Jericho. At any rate, the soldiers believed her, and the Bible does not indicate they even bothered to search her house before dashing out to chase down the spies.

As soon as the pursuers were far from the city, and the city gates were closed and barred for the night, Rahab went to the roof and spoke with the men whose lives she had just saved. Her decision to side with the Israelites was not a whim based solely on what she had seen of the two men. She was well-informed about the Israelites and their powerful, pro-

ductive, providing God. She had experienced enough of Jericho's wicked, pagan, empty culture and wanted something better, something personal, something on which to build her life. Rahab was probably very accustomed to making deals. She told the spies that since she had helped them (saved their lives, in fact!), they could repay her by saving her and her family when they invaded the city.

The men were grateful to Rahab for her protection and advice. They pledged to her that, "... when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you" (Joshua 2:14b). If she tied the scarlet cord in the window through which they were about to escape and gathered all her family into the house, they would all be saved. As soon as the men departed, Rahab lost no time fastening the cord out the window. She probably checked often to make sure it was securely tied!

The days of waiting must have seemed long to Rahab and her family. Perhaps they were puzzled during the seven days the Israelites marched around Jericho. I wonder if she watched them out the window where the scarlet cord hung. Those days, she clung to the promises the spies had made to her. Her heart did not melt with fear but sang with anticipation!

On that seventh day, the day of Jericho's destruction, Joshua fulfilled the promises of his two spies. He made sure everyone knew Rahab and all those in her house would remain safe. They were brought from the fire, destruction, and ruin to a protected place.

We can only speculate about what happened to Rahab's family. Joshua 6:23b says, "... and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel." We know Rahab left her old life behind, accepted the God of Israel as her own, and married an Israelite man named Salmon. She became Boaz's mother and King David's great-great-grandmother (Matthew 1:5). She went from living in Jericho to living outside the Israelite's camp to living among them

(Joshua 6:25b). What a journey—from failure to family! Everything about Rahab’s life changed when she chose the Israelites and their God.

I grew up in a home where my parents lived out their Christianity faithfully, and I attended a church that taught the truths of the Bible even to small children. When I was eight years old, I gave my heart to Jesus and accepted His forgiveness and salvation from the punishment of my sin. I don’t think God delivered me from my wicked past so much as He delivered me from a possible wicked future. That is just as amazing as what He did for Rahab. I have never walked a mile in Rahab’s shoes, but there are still important lessons I can learn from her.

### Be Decisive Like Rahab

---

We should be decisive like Rahab. God had been preparing her heart for the night she met the spies. He gave her the desire and the opportunity; now, she had to decide. She made a wholehearted, 100%, no-turning-back choice. She was willing to do whatever it took to change her life completely. She gave up her home, profession, past, and future. I do not think Rahab ever regretted her choice. I don’t imagine that her life after the fall of Jericho was easy. Some Israelites may have mistreated her because she was a Canaanite and a former prostitute. She possibly faced gossip and cold shoulders. It may have taken years for her to feel genuinely accepted. (How welcoming and helpful are we to women who have left a life of sin to become followers of Christ?) Yet, she stuck with her decision to serve Jehovah.

---

#### Application:

Rahab made a “wholehearted, 100%, no-turning-back choice.” Describe a time in your life when you made a decision as decisive as Rahab’s. What were the consequences of that decision?

### Be Influential Like Rahab

We should be influential like Rahab. She persuaded her entire family to stay with her in her house to await deliverance, and because of her, they survived. They listened and heeded her instructions. Contrast that to the lack of influence Lot had over his family or that we sometimes have over ours. Rahab also was a powerful influence over her son, Boaz. In the book of Ruth, we see him as a considerate, kind, thoughtful man who treated Ruth and Naomi with great respect and honor. He must have learned that from his mother! Rahab’s influence even extends down through the centuries. Her name is mentioned three times in the New Testament. Matthew 1:5 lists her name in the lineage of

Jesus, and she is an example of faith in both Hebrews and James. Rahab never dreamed she would be favorably remembered throughout the ages and also be an ancestor of the Messiah!

We usually do not know how far and wide our influence extends. Through those we teach, mentor, rear, love, and minister, we can impact the lives of countless people. Wouldn’t it be lovely in Heaven to hear from people we helped become a Christian or mature in their faith by something we said or did and didn’t even know?

Application:

How were the following women of the Bible influential:

Esther, Lois, Deborah, Naomi.

Name some ways we can be influential.

---

### Productive Like Rahab

We should have faith that produces amazing works. Rahab's faith produced works. She welcomed and protected the spies; aided in their escape; gave them good advice; hung the scarlet cord; waited inside her house. These outward acts demonstrated her inner faith (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25-26). Great faith can produce great works that please God and live on long after we are gone. Because she had faith, she believed the promises of the spies that she would be delivered from the destruction of Jericho. Our faith helps us cling to God's promises, even when asked to wait, when we don't understand what is going on, or when our situation seems hopeless. If Rahab could have confidence in the pledge of the spies, we can have confidence in the promises of God. Those promises never disappoint or fail.

---

### Learn Like Rahab

Lastly, we can learn from Rahab that God's grace knows no boundaries. Romans 5:20b reminds us that, "... where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." God loves the woman involved in hideous sins just as much as He loves the woman who teaches Sunday School and sings in the choir. He holds out His rescuing hand to any woman who is addicted to drugs, who cheated on her husband, or who aborted a child. Sadly, we often turn our backs on these women, considering them hopeless cases. Rahab's story reminds us there are women in our sphere of influence just waiting for us to show them our God of hope, power, love, compassion, and grace Who can help them overcome any failure. *W*

Application:

Discuss how Matthew 5:13-16 applies.

Name some things our influence can produce.

*Margie Patton and her husband, Wayne, worked for 40 years in Christian education in St. Croix, USVI, Georgia, Illinois, California, Tennessee, and Hawaii. Since retiring a few years ago, they have homeschooled several of their nine grandchildren, and Margie currently has 25 private piano students. They live in Farmington, Missouri, and serve the Lord at Leadington Free Will Baptist Church.*