

RAHAB WELCOMES SPIES

Taylor was delighted to hear that the wife of her former pastor was coming to town for a conference. She offered to pick her up from the airport. Instead of a hotel, Taylor opened her home to Sister Irma—and the use of a vehicle to get back and forth for two days.

“I can’t put you out like that,” pleaded Irma. But Taylor was so insistent that the older woman relented to Taylor’s hospitality.

But it didn’t stop at a place to stay: Taylor had bought many of Sister Irma’s favorite foods. She cleaned her house from top to bottom. Most of all, she prepared her daughter to share a room with her while Sister Irma was staying with them, giving up the private bedroom. Somewhat surprisingly, her daughter didn’t seem to mind one bit. She was getting into the excitement of sharing their home and going out of the way to make a guest feel comfortable.

When they brought Irma home from the airport and showed her to a bedroom with her own bathroom, it brought tears of joy to the weary face of their friend.

“I can’t take your bedroom, Taylor,” Sister Irma said.

“You can, and you will,” said Taylor. “I’m so glad to have you visit us and be in our home.”

“Wait until you see what we have cooking for dinner!” added Taylor’s daughter, with a grin.

1 When have you had the opportunity to surprise someone else with hospitality?

2 Why do you think that breaking bread together is a way to build close fellowship?

⁸ And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; ⁹ And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

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 you this land 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 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. ¹¹ When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Rahab Acknowledges God

After deceiving the men sent to search and kill Israelite spies, Rahab goes up to the roof where she has hidden them under stalks of flax, a plant used for making linen and rope. She explains why she sheltered spies from their pursuers and lied to the leaders of Jericho.

Rahab has heard that Yahweh (whose name is often rendered as “the LORD” in translation) has already given the land of Canaan over to the Israelites. She says that fear of the Israelites had gripped the people of the land, including those living in Jericho (Josh. 2:9). She describes the rest of the people as “melting in fear,” showing the degree of dread that the Canaanites are experiencing. Such fear explains why the king of Jericho, aware of the Israelite’s presence on the east side of the Jordan, was looking out for spies.

But why were the people of Jericho and the surrounding country so afraid? In verse 10, Rahab shares that they had heard about the mighty deeds of God. God had delivered the Israelites through the Red Sea when they came out of Egypt (Ex. 14:21, 29–31). God had

helped Israel defeat mighty Amorite kings, Sihon and Og (see Deut. 2:24–3:11). God says at that time, “I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble” (Deut. 2:25). God prepares the way by putting residents of Canaan to a decision: either face the same powerful God who defeated mighty opponents, or flee.

Rahab describes this fear in Jericho by saying: “When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you” (Josh. 2:11). This repeated image of melting, or dissolving, confirms to the Israelite spies that God has really given the land to them. Later, in their report to Joshua, they say, “The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us” (v. 24).

By her incredible testimony, Rahab acknowledges Yahweh. Reflecting on the reports about God and His people, as well as the fear that has gripped the Canaanites, Rahab says to the spies, “For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below” (v. 11). These words resemble Moses’ words to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4:39, where Moses adds, “There is no other” (Deut. 4:39).

Rahab’s declaration is that Yahweh is very strong, exercising His power throughout heaven and earth. She knows that God is more than capable of defeating the Canaanites and coming into the land. Rahab expects Jericho to be conquered, and so she shows courageous hospitality to those in alignment with God’s will. She acknowledges that Yahweh reigns above all others.

1 What does Rahab acknowledge about Yahweh?

2 According to Rahab, why were the Canaanites melting in fear?

3 What might be a difference between fear of God and reverence for God?

¹² Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: ¹³ And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

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¹⁶ And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city. ¹⁷ And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

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.”

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¹⁶ The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! ¹⁷ The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

God Is Faithful to Rahab

Rahab desires a covenantal arrangement with the spies she has housed and protected. Now with the danger abated, she asks for something in return—the very kindness she had shown to them. Given her conviction about Yahweh’s power and Jericho’s impending destruction, she requests safety, since she believes that the Lord can protect her and her family. She seeks the aid that is given to a covenant partner in need, for the God of the Israelites is compassionate and faithful to any who seek Him. She even requests that such kindness will extend to all her relatives—her father and mother, brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them. The spies accept her request, swearing an oath and instructing her on what to do when Israelites enter the city.

By Joshua 6:16, the Israelites have entered the land and spent six days marching around the city of Jericho. This is what the Lord instructed Joshua to do: “March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days” (Josh. 6:3). On the seventh day,

they were to march around the city seven times, while seven priests blew ram's horns in front of the ark of the covenant. On the seventh time around, the priests were to sound a long blast and the whole army was to give a loud shout. Then the walls of Jericho would collapse (vv. 4–5). These instructions from God were predicated on the promise that God had already delivered Jericho into the hands of the Israelites (v. 2).

The seventh time around the city, the priests sound a long blast and Joshua commands the army, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!” (v. 16). The city and all that is in it are to be “devoted to the LORD” (v. 17). The Israelites are instructed to keep away from the devoted things so that they do not bring destruction upon themselves. In other words, they are not to bring any of the Canaanites into their camp or take any plunder for themselves.

But one exception is made among the entire city. In verse 17, Joshua tells the army that Rahab and her household are to be spared because of her hospitality toward the Israelite spies. This demonstrates God's faithfulness and kindness to those who revere Him and seek His help. God heard Rahab's plea for safety after she acknowledged His power and showed kindness to His people. God accepted Rahab into His covenantal fellowship and gave help in her time of need. In that way, Rahab's salvation reminds us of Israel's salvation from Egypt. Through God's grace, she becomes part of God's people.

1 What does Rahab seek from the Israelite spies?

2 What does the sparing of Rahab's household communicate about God?

3 How is Rahab's story like the story of the Israelites coming out of Egypt?

What God Does

I did a double-take when he walked through the door. I hadn't seen this guy since high school, and I didn't particularly like seeing him now. I remembered him as a tough guy, a bully, even a villain—the kind of guy who liked to make others feel small. What on earth was he doing at a Bible study?

I could tell that he recognized me. I rummaged through my thoughts, trying to remember his name. “Hey,” I squeaked out with phony enthusiasm, “How’s it going, man?”

His response wasn't phony. He was excited to see a familiar face—excited to see me. And . . . was that light in his eyes? Was that joy? He introduced himself to the group and shared how Jesus had changed his life. He had been confronted with the reality of the living God, and he didn't shrink away or hide. He didn't cling to the false gods of his youth. Instead, he sought kindness from the God who is faithful to those who revere Him. He started following the way of Jesus.

God showed me a person who had been turned around—who had been an outsider like Rahab. Somehow, this new follower of Jesus was enthusiastic to have a share in God's future, by grace. He had a place in God's story and was playing a role in God's kingdom.

This is what God does. He accepts those who turn to Him in faith. He honors those who submit to His will and walk in obedience. He gives broken people a place in His future, no matter how jaded their past may be. He can work through a high school bully or a Canaanite woman within the walls of Jericho. He can work through you or me.

God is faithful to those who revere Him and seek Him. How will you respond today?

1 What does the faith and transformation of an unlikely follower tell us about God?

2 Share about a time you witnessed God work in and through an unlikely person.

3 How should we respond to the God who is faithful to those who revere Him?

God Draws Near

Although not an Israelite, Rahab nevertheless displays a fear of God and a desire to serve His people. She demonstrates that she is an ally to God's people and purposes. Who are the "kingdom allies" in your life? These might be people who are not yet believers, but who show that they desire the things of God. Write at least one name below and pray this over them:

God, _____ shows by their words and actions that they are not far from You.

Bring them to the foot of the cross, so that they may have faith in Jesus' name.

Key Text

And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

—Joshua 6:17 KJV

The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

—Joshua 6:17 NIV

Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of September 28 through October 3

Mon. Joshua 23:1–11—Hold Fast to the Lord.

Tue. Joshua 24:1–13—Reaffirming the Covenant.

Wed. 1 John 1:8–2:5—Obey Christ's Commandments.

Thu. Luke 9:57–62—No Turning Back.

Fri. Matthew 22:34–40—The Greatest Commandments.

Sat. Psalm 25:12–22—God, Deliver Your People.

Next Week: Joshua 24:18–27

Consider this question: "What is a vow or a promise that you have seen tested over time?"