

LIVING BY FAITH: WOMEN WHO TRUSTED GOD



Faithful women. Faithful God.

Faith moves us beyond belief to action—but what does that look like? We see many people in Scripture who put their trust in a God they couldn't see and the God who made Himself flesh and dwelt among us.

Women, of course, also had encounters with God that moved them forward in their faith with courage and conviction. In this study, we'll meet several of these women. We'll discover women who showed wisdom in difficult situations and marginalized women who often went unnoticed in their culture. Each of them has a faith story to share, just as you and I have a faith story that is worth sharing.

Dive into the next six weeks and take a journey with faithful women whose personal stories may show them to be heroes in their day. Better yet, join a journey with a faithful God who is always the Hero of our gospel-centered faith.



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Living by Faith: Women Who Trusted God

Session 1 **Rahab: Courageous Faith** Joshua 2:1-14

Session 2 **Deborah: Encouraging Faith** Judges 4:1-9; 5:1-5

Session 3 **Hannah: Faith That Prays** 1 Samuel 1:1-2,9-11,17-18,26-28; 2:1-3

Session 4 **Abigail: Intervening Faith** 1 Samuel 25:2-3,14-17,23-28,32-35

Session 5 **The Poor Widow: Faith That Gives** Luke 12:13-21; 21:1-4

Session 6 **The Samaritan Woman: Faith Worth Sharing** John 4:10-18,28-30



DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

How “Living by Faith: Women Who Trusted God” supports the Discipleship Plan (see page 12):

Obey God and Deny Self. Living by faith is a matter of trust: trust in God and what He has told us. We cannot separate faith and trust from obedience. A growing disciple is one who is continually learning to trust God and to express that trust through obedience.

A black and white photograph of a person in a kayak navigating through turbulent rapids. The person is wearing a helmet and a life vest, and is holding a paddle. The water is white with foam, and the surrounding rocks are visible.

SESSION 1

RAHAB: COURAGEOUS FAITH

► ***The Point***

The power of God that leads us to fear Him also leads us to trust Him.

► ***The Passage***

Joshua 2:1-14

► ***The Bible Meets Life***

Courage comes in many shapes and sizes. We readily think of the soldiers who volunteer to go into harm's way. But courage can also be far less obvious—even hidden. Every summer as we celebrate America's independence, we think of the over ninety-six thousand who fought for the cause of freedom during the Revolutionary War—and some twenty-five thousand who never came home. Another equally brave group fought too—Washington's spies—but they had to keep their courageous acts to themselves.¹

The cause of American independence was carried out with the help of ordinary people who kept up appearances as farmers, merchants, and homemakers. Yet nothing was ordinary about what they did in secret. They had an extraordinary mission. An unlikely group dubbed the Culper Ring, their courage and brave actions were key to Washington's military success.² The Bible also tells us of spies and one woman who courageously aided these spies. Rahab was a prostitute and an unlikely hero, but her courage was fueled by the same faith you and I can apply when facing opposition.

► ***The Setting***

Israel left four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, received the Ten Commandments a few months later, and journeyed through the desert arriving near the promised land. However, because of their failure to trust God, Israel had to wander in the desert for forty years. After Moses died and Joshua was installed as leader, he sent two spies to Jericho. Rahab, an inhabitant of Jericho, demonstrated courageous faith in God by helping those spies.

What does the Bible say?

Joshua 2:1-14

¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there.

² And it was told to the king of Jericho, “Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.” ³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land.” ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, “True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. ⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.”

⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

¹² “Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father’s house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”

¹⁴ And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, prepare two signs: one that reads, “FEAR” and the second that reads, “NOT A FEAR.” Post one sign on a wall on one end of the room and the second on the opposite side of the room. Lead group members to stand in the center of the room. Explain that you will read aloud a word or phrase and then class members will move to the side of the room that describes how they feel about that word or phrase.

Use the following words and phrases:

spiders, heights, rides at amusement parks, shellfish, jumping out of an airplane, claustrophobia, terrorism, big dogs, germs, darkness, balloons, clowns. As group members move to each side of the room, call for one or two volunteers to explain their choice for each word or phrase.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 13 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “Who comes to mind when you think of courage?” Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 14 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of fearing and trusting God by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 1**, the “Living by Faith” poster, to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the specific focus of each session.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 14 of the PSG: “The power of God that leads us to fear Him also leads us to trust Him.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to give group members the courage to stand up for Him.

Notes

BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR

Want to know about biblical culture, people, archaeology, and history? *Biblical Illustrator* has articles that tie to each session in this study at lifeway.com/BI.

LIVING BY FAITH:
WOMEN WHO
TRUSTED GOD

- ▶ **RAHAB: COURAGEOUS FAITH**
Joshua 2:1-14
- ▶ **DEBORAH: ENCOURAGING FAITH**
Judges 4:1-9; 5:1-5
- ▶ **HANNAH: FAITH THAT PRAYS**
1 Samuel 1:1-2, 9-11, 17-18, 26-28; 2:1-3
- ▶ **ABIGAIL: INTERVENING FAITH**
1 Samuel 25:2-3, 14-17, 23-28, 32-35
- ▶ **THE POOR WIDOW: FAITH THAT GIVES**
Luke 12:13-21; 21:1-4
- ▶ **THE SAMARITAN WOMAN: FAITH WORTH SHARING**
John 4:10-18, 28-30

TIP: When helpful, use this “Notes” column to record additional discussion questions, concepts, and activities that connect the study content with your specific group.



10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Joshua 2:1-7

¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." And they went and came into the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab and lodged there. ² And it was told to the king of Jericho, "Behold, men of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land." ³ Then the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." ⁴ But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from." ⁵ And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them." ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof. ⁷ So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Joshua 2:1-7 on page 15 of the PSG.

RECAP: The spies had legitimate concerns as they scouted Jericho. The city was a part of the Amorite kingdom, a kingdom whose destiny was determined as far back as Genesis 15:16 when God told Abram that his descendants would return to the land now possessed by the Amorites. Their fate was confirmed in Deuteronomy 20:17 when the Israelites were commanded to wipe out the Amorites because their sin would influence their own culture.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 2**, the "Living by Faith Map," to show Jericho on the map and give context to some of the other areas the Israelites had traveled and won victories.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 15 of the PSG: "What are your initial observations about Rahab?"

TRANSITION: Fear of God can fuel our courage. In the next verses, we learn that fear of God is grounded in the confidence of who God is and what He does.



ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When has the fear of God given you courage for a difficult task?

Joshua 2:1-7 Commentary

[Verses 1-2] The second chapter of Joshua details the entry of two spies into Canaan, the promised land. The Hebrew grammar leads scholars to believe the spies did not have sexual relationships with Rahab, despite her occupation. The spies may have gone to Rahab's house because it was built into the city wall and provided easy access (Josh. 2:15). Perhaps the spies thought they could gather information from military men who visited Rahab's house. Likely other men who had information on the defense of Jericho (possibly government officials) also visited Rahab's house. Whatever the reason, Rahab had a courageous faith in God that set her and her family apart from Jericho's other inhabitants who were killed later (6:21). Rahab's courageous faith working with her actions saved herself and her family.

[Verses 2-3] Joshua did not describe how the king of Jericho got the information the spies had come to Rahab's house. Likely men who visited the house told the king what they had heard or seen. The inclusion of **tonight** indicates the information was current and time sensitive. The phrase **search out the land** reveals the information was correct when compared with what Joshua told the spies (2:1). The king's representatives ordered Rahab to bring out the Israelite spies in order to interrogate them. The words **bring out** are the king's command, not a friend's polite request. Who knows what the king may have done if Rahab refused his order? The king's men repeated the spying charge, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to Rahab for the defense of her life and her home.

[Verses 4-5] Rahab had a difficult choice to make—follow the king's "request" and turn over the spies or follow what her faith told her to do. Verse 4 reveals her actions; verse 11 will tell us more about Rahab's heart and her courageous faith. The first part of verse 4 indicates Rahab must have received information regarding what the king and his men were about to do. Rahab already had made her decision: she had hidden the two spies. When questioned, she made up a story that sent the king's men away from her house and from the two Israelite spies. To "sell" her story, Rahab also spoke with this note of urgency: **"Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."**

[Verses 6-7] Earlier Rahab had hidden the two Israelite men under stalks of flax on her flat roof, taking care to arrange the flax to cover them in case the roof was searched. The flax plant grew two to three feet tall with blue flowers and fibrous stalks. When the stalks were dried (frequently on the flat roof of a house) they were washed, combed, and later woven into linen cloth. Apparently, Rahab's story was so good the king's men did not search her house. Instead, they pursued the spies along the road to the fords of the Jordan River, about five miles. As soon as the men left on their pursuit, the city gate was shut, reflecting the fear, terror, and even panic the people of Jericho were feeling.



10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Joshua 2:8-11

⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Joshua 2:8-11 on page 16 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to demonstrate how Rahab displayed the fear of God.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 16 of the PSG: "How can fear of God lead to trust in God?"

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 17 of the PSG. Rahab made several statements that revealed she had a pretty good idea of who God is and what He is capable of.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some milestones that are evidence of God being at work in our world?

- ▶ **God had given the land to the Israelites.** The actual mission hadn't yet occurred, yet Rahab knew the Israelites would conquer Jericho.
- ▶ **Jericho was in a panic.** Rahab sensed the fear and had heard how all the people were panicking throughout the city.
- ▶ **God's protection of His people was well known.** God's reputation had reached the ears of those in Jericho.
- ▶ **God is God over all.** This was Rahab's confession. She knew who God is, and she was ready to follow Him.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we discover that it's the fear of God that leads us to trust Him.

Joshua 2:8-11 Commentary

[Verses 8-9] The writer continued describing the situation of the two Israelite spies Rahab had hidden on her roof. After Rahab sent the king's men away, she went upstairs to where she had hidden the spies under drying stalks of flax. Rahab made a remarkable statement: **"I know that the Lord has given you the land."** In contradistinction to the people of God who had experienced God's power in the plagues in Egypt and the resulting exodus from Egypt, Rahab apparently based her knowledge of God on what she heard (v. 10) about God's actions in supporting and defending Israel. Rahab, a lowly prostitute, heard about God, believed in Him and His promises, and acted on her belief. Rahab's actions revealed she knew who God was, is, and would continue to be. Remarkable! The inclusion of Rahab's story in the Book of Joshua reveals God's character by turning upside down the standards of society. We see by Rahab's using God's personal name, she understood who God is. God had first revealed His personal name, *Yahweh* (indicated by "Lord" in many English Bibles), to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3). Built on the Hebrew verb meaning "to be," my Hebrew professor translated God's personal name as "I will be who I always have been," stressing God's character, continuity, and consistency.

Rahab made two related statements that demonstrate the fear (respect) of God is grounded in the confidence of who God is and what He does: **"the fear of you** [referring to God and His people] has fallen **upon** us [referring to the inhabitants of Jericho]" and **"all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you."** The technical name for this Hebrew grammar form is parallelism—the idea in the first clause is repeated in the second clause. Some scholars see the second clause being the result or an elaboration of the first clause. Both clauses are grounded in Rahab's confession of who God is and what He has done.

[Verses 10-11] Rahab mentioned two specific actions God took for Israel. First, God had guided Israel away from Egypt to the Red Sea. He also protected His people from the army of Egypt by drying up the water of the Red Sea before them. Then God drowned the Egyptian army. Second, Rahab mentioned **Sihon** and **Og**, the two Amorite kings God completely destroyed east of the Jordan River (Deut. 2:24–3:11). Rahab told the two Israelite spies the result of having heard about God's actions: first, the people of Jericho lost heart; second, everyone's courage failed. These two reactions mirror the parallelism found in verse 9. Perhaps the most comprehensive and significant part of Rahab's confession is the final part of verse 11. These words reveal the extent of Rahab's confidence of who God is and what He does. **For the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath** indicates an extensive and comprehensive knowledge of who God is. Few if any in Israel had exhibited or professed this depth of knowledge about God. Rahab adopted Israel's God as her own. The New Testament writers of the Book of Hebrews (11:31) and the Book of James (2:25) both commended Rahab's faith.



15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Joshua 2:12-14

¹² *"Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign*
¹³ *that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."* ¹⁴ *And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."*

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Joshua 2:12-14 on page 17 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 18 of the PSG: **"What experiences have served as the foundation for your trust in God?"**

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 18 of the PSG. The faith of Rahab reminds us of some key truths about our own faith: **God was at work.** Joshua and the army didn't spare Rahab's life and her house—God did.

- ▶ **Belief leads to faith, which leads to action.** Rahab believed. Because of this faith, her works and actions followed.
- ▶ **Trust in God affects future generations.** Ultimately, Rahab's trust and faithfulness allowed her to be listed in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5-6).
- ▶ **Walking in faith is a daily process.** We are to turn daily from our past and trust God with our future.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 18 of the PSG: **"What has God done in the life of our group that can be a testimony to others?"**

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity, "Fear and Trust," on page 19 of the PSG to help them.

*Use the following scales to indicate where you feel you are now in regard to fear of God and trust in God (1 is not characteristic of you and 10 describes you completely).
 [Scales 1-10 are printed in the PSG for each of the statements given.]*

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When have you seen God reward faith in Him?

Joshua 2:12-14 Commentary

[Verses 12-13] After Rahab confessed her faith in God (end of v. 11), she requested the spies reward her for her protection of them. Rahab's use of the words **swear to me by the LORD** indicates the forcefulness of her request. The use of God's personal name, **the LORD**, reveals its seriousness. Although Rahab was a Canaanite, she confessed her faith in the God of Israel. Rahab recognized God as "God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (v. 11). Rahab's fear of God led her to trust Him. For this reason, some Bible scholars have written that we should view Rahab as an (adopted) Israelite. This position is supported by the results of the battle of Jericho. The fulfillment of the two spies' promise to Rahab to protect her and her family is found in Joshua 6:22-25 where Rahab's courageous faith was rewarded by rescuing her family who then became a part of Israel.

What did Rahab demand from the spies? First, Rahab required the spies show kindness to her family. The Hebrew word translated **kindly** usually is printed in English as *chesed*, a term rich with meaning. Other English words used to translated *chesed* include: loving kindness, goodness, favor, and mercy. Found some 253 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, this word is frequently used to describe God's actions toward His people. God's actions flow from His perfect character. Second, Rahab expressed her reasoning: **"as I have dealt kindly with you."** The idea of reciprocal kindness was central to the hospitality many people showed during those centuries. Third, assuming a positive response, Rahab further requested that the spies give her **a sure sign** (literally, "a sign of truth"). Rahab not only wanted an immediate response from the Israelite spies, she also wanted a true sign she could see and base her trust on.

[Verse 14] Rahab's fear of God led her to trust Him; the Israelite spies' fear of God led them to trust God and to commit their lives to Rahab. The spies responded, **"Our life for yours even to death!"** This commitment had a further promise: **"We will deal kindly and faithfully with you."** This commitment used the same Hebrew word translated kindness in verse 12. However, this promise did have a stipulation: **"If you [Rahab] do not tell this business of ours."** The word translated **faithfully** refers to another aspect of God's character and describes how God keeps His promises. This same Hebrew word carries the meanings of reliability elsewhere in the Old Testament. The spies further indicated when the fulfillment would come: **"When the LORD gives us the land."** This fulfillment likely took place several weeks later (Josh. 6). Rahab is mentioned three times in the New Testament. In addition to the commendation of Rahab's faith in Hebrews and James, she is listed as the mother of Boaz and great-great-grandmother of King David in Jesus' genealogy (Matt. 1). These New Testament references reflect the importance of her faith in the salvation history of Israel. Just as Rahab's fear of God led her to trust Him, our fear of God should lead us to make a bold stand for God based on our faith.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Joshua: Leader of the Conquest" (Summer 2015), "Jericho: That Ancient City" (Fall 2001), and "Rahab in Jewish History" (Summer 1994) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 20 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week.



Notes

- ▶ **Express thanks.** Pray and thank God for His faithfulness and His promises. Remember that your past does not determine your future.
- ▶ **Tackle the wall.** Is there a “wall” in your life that you need God to tear down? Trust Him to do so. Journal your fears and write out Scriptures that remind you of God’s faithfulness.
- ▶ **Leave a legacy.** Ask God to guide you in leaving the right kind of spiritual legacy to those who follow you. It begins with sharing your faith in Christ. Seek opportunities to talk and pray with someone who needs to turn from sin and trust in Christ.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 20 of the PSG:

Just as soldiers must take a courageous stand for what they believe in, we are often called upon to exhibit courageous faith in the Lord. With God’s help, we can be victorious.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking the Lord for His mighty power. Ask Him to grant us courageous faith to overcome any obstacles we might face.



EXTRA!

Free additional ideas for your group are available at

BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra