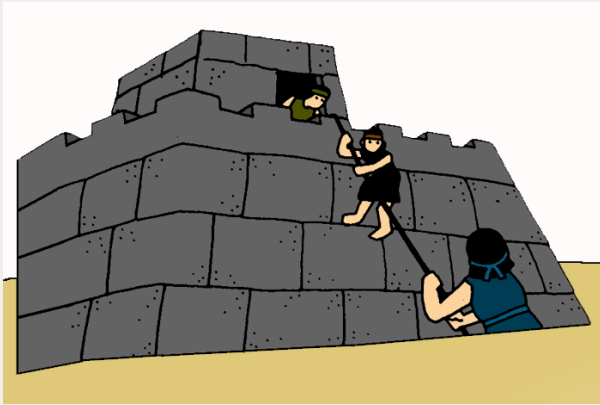


Rahab Helps the Spies



Scripture Reference: [Joshua 1-2](#)

Suggested Emphasis: Even someone with a sinful past can change and be an important part of the Lord's work.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



Other Online Resources

Story Overview:

The Lord had chosen Joshua to conquer the land of Canaan. Joshua wanted to form a battle plan so he sent two spies over the Jordan River to the city of Jericho. Rahab, a woman of the city, let the spies stay at her house. When the city officials searched for them, she hid them on her rooftop under stalks of flax. She told the spies that she would not turn them in as long as they promised to save her and her family when they returned to conquer Jericho. Before escaping to the nearby hills, they instructed her to tie a red cord in her window so that they would know where she was when they came back. Even though Rahab had lived a sinful life (she was a prostitute) she decided to change when

she heard about the things God had done ([Joshua 2:8-11](#); [Hebrews 11:31](#); [James 2:25](#)). Later in her life she married an Israelite. One of her descendants was Jesus ([Matthew 1:5](#)).

Background Study:

After they had wandered in the wilderness for forty years, it was time for the Lord to give his people the land that He had promised them. The book of Joshua records Israel's movement into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The Israelites were camped on the east side of the Jordan River across from the city of Jericho. Jericho was a fortified city well supplied by strong springs which helped to make it an oasis. It was located just five miles west of the Jordan.

Joshua sent two spies to scout the land. This must have been an exciting time for him. He was sending spies into a land that he, himself, had spied on forty years before. In Jericho, the spies lodged in the home of Rahab. She was a prostitute in Jericho. The historian Josephus refers to her as an innkeeper. The spies would have wanted somewhere to stay where they would be inconspicuous.

Rahab had heard what God had done for Israel. She had heard about how the Lord dried up the Red Sea and how the Israelites conquered many cities east of the Jordan River. She heard about these things and decided to help the spies.

The king of Jericho had also heard about the Israelites but he took the opposite approach. He knew that they were an enemy to be reckoned with. When he heard that there were spies in his city, he sent men to arrest them.




Rahab hid the Israelite spies on her roof under stalks of flax. The roof would have been a common site for drying flax so the men could easily have been overlooked. The king's men did not even look on the roof, however, because Rahab gave them a false lead. She told them that two men had been there, but they had left the city at dark. She encouraged

the men of the city to pursue them, saying that they should be able to overtake them.

After the king's men left, Rahab told the spies what she had heard about Israel. She knew that Israel would overtake Jericho. She asked the spies to spare her and her family when the Israelites invaded. The men promised to protect anyone in her house. Rahab's house was built into the city wall so she was able to let the men down out of a window so they could leave the city. As they were leaving they told her that she would only be saved if she tied a scarlet cord to her window. That way the spies would know where Rahab was when they took over the city. They also reminded her that she and her family would not be saved if she told anyone that the Israelites were about to invade Jericho. As soon as the spies left, Rahab tied the scarlet cord in her window.

The spies returned to Joshua, bringing a good report and stating their confidence that God had given the land into Israelite hands. They said that the people of Jericho were afraid of Israel.

Rahab does not fit the general description of a godly woman. It is difficult to reconcile her profession and the fact she lied with the Lord's will. But the fact is that Rahab was considered righteous for saving the lives of the spies ([James 2:25](#)). From this point on, we read good things about Rahab. We will learn in a future lesson that she and her family were indeed saved when Jericho was destroyed ([Joshua 6:24-25](#)). She later married an Israelite (Salmon). Her son was Boaz (who married Ruth) and one of her descendants was Jesus ([Matthew 1:5](#)). Even someone with a sinful past can change and be an important part of the Lord's work.

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring some flax leaves or stalks to class and show the children. You could also show them some items made from flax. If flax is not available, find pictures in books to show. "Flax is a very useful plant. Its leaves are soft and moist when they are growing on the stalk.

When the stalks and leaves are dried they can be used to make baskets and all sorts of things. People have been doing this for many years. Long ago, people who lived in cities used to put flax stalks out on their roofs so the sun would dry them. The roofs back then were flat and you could easily walk on them. In fact, some people even went up on the roof to sleep when the weather was hot. In today's bible story we are going to read about a woman in the city of Jericho who put flax stalks up on her roof to dry. It was a good thing because that flax saved the lives of two people!"

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The Story:

Joshua was the new leader of God's people. He knew that he must lead the Israelites into the land that God had promised them. They were tired of wandering around in the desert. They were ready to build homes and have farms. The new land was beautiful and good. It was the perfect place to live. Joshua knew that because he had been there as a spy forty years ago.

The new land was on the other side of the Jordan River. There were people living in the land but they did not believe in God. God wanted His people to have the land.

Joshua chose two men to go and explore the land. They were to sneak into the large city of Jericho and see how strong the enemy was. The men pretended to be ordinary travellers. Once inside Jericho they looked for a place to stay. The two spies found their way to the house of a woman named Rahab. She had been a bad woman in the city but she had heard about the Israelite people and she decided to let the spies stay with her.

Rahab knew that the King of Jericho would want to hurt the spies so she decided to hide them. Where could she hide them? She remembered that she had put stalks of flax on her roof. They were spread out to dry. That would be the perfect hiding place! She told the spies to go onto the roof and hide under the flax stalks. No one would see them there.

The king had been hearing all about the Israelites. He knew they might attack his city. He told everyone to watch out for strangers. He knew the Israelites might send spies.

And he was right! Someone told him that the spies were staying at Rehab's house. The king sent soldiers to find them. When they reached Rehab's house they banged on the front door shouting, "The king demands that you bring out the two men that are staying here. We know they are spies."

It was a good thing that Rahab had hidden the spies. She hurried downstairs to open the door for the king's men. She said, "Yes, two men were here but they have just left. If you hurry you should catch them."

"They'll have gone toward the river," shouted a soldier and they set off in pursuit.

The Israelite spies lay very still in their hiding place. Soon Rahab returned. The two men asked her why she had risked her life to protect two foreign enemies.

"I will tell you why," she said. "I know the Lord has promised you this land and most of my people are afraid of your people. We have heard how God divided the sea for you and brought you throughout the wilderness.

"When you attack this city promise me that you will save my life and the life of my family."

The men agreed. "If you tell no one about our visit we will see that you and your family are not harmed."

By then it was night and the city gates were shut, but Rehab's house was built on the city wall. She brought a rope and fastened it to the window and the spies climbed down to the ground outside the city wall.

"Escape to the mountains," she advised them. "Hide there for three days until the search is over."

Before they left, the spies said, "You must tie a piece of scarlet red cord in this window so we will know your house from a distance when we march against the city. Whoever is inside the house will be saved." The spies were glad that Rahab saved their lives. Even though Rahab had been a bad woman in the past, now she was helping God's people! Rahab and the spies did not know it yet but, in the future, Rahab would marry an Israelite and her descendants would follow God. In fact, hundreds of years later, one of her descendants would be Jesus Christ.

When the two spies returned to Joshua they gave their report. Joshua knew that it was now time to enter the land.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. What was the name of the city where Joshua sent two spies? Jericho
2. Whose house did the spies stay in? Rahab
3. What did Rahab do when the King sent soldiers to arrest the spies? She hid them in the flax that was drying on her roof. She told the soldiers that the spies had already left.
4. How did the spies get out of Jericho? They climbed down a rope that Rahab put out of her window.
5. Why did Rahab put a red cord in her window? So that the Israelites would know where she lived when they came back to conquer Jericho. Everyone in her house would not be hurt.
6. Years later, who was one of Rahab's descendants? Jesus

Song Suggestions:

- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- [I'm in the Lord's Army Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Make something from flax or at least bring some to class today.
- Pre-schoolers: Tie a red streamer to your window and then take the children on a walk outside to "find" the window with the red cord tied in it.
- Take the children "spying" to find out some information. You could try to count how many people are in the adult class without the adults knowing that you are there. Or

they could count how many people have black shoes, etc. Discuss what kind of things the spies would have wanted to find out in Jericho.

- “Hide n Seek” or “I Spy” are other fun games that go with this story. Discuss the fact the spies were hidden.
- Find pictures of walled cities or bible time houses in bible encyclopaedias.
- Older students might benefit from hearing a faithful Christian talk about how they used to lead a sinful life but now they live their life for the Lord. It is important that the earlier life not be glorified or dwelt on.

Crafts:

- Use a red cord to make bracelets or some other craft.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Rahab Helps the Spies” printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for “Rahab Helps the Spies” printables to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Rahab and the Spies colouring page & puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Printable paper craft \(Sunday School Sources\)](#)
- [Red cord braided bookmark \(Bible School Materials\)](#)
- [Rehab hides the spies activities \(Hands On Bible Teacher\)](#)

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