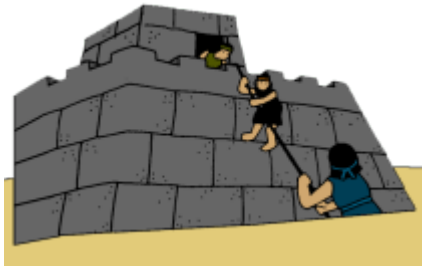


# Rahab Helps the Spies



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

**Suggested Theme:** God works with all kinds of people to do His will. Even people with sinful pasts can change and be an important part of God's work.

**Memory Verse:** "God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would do good works. God had planned in advance those good works for us." [Ephesians 2:10, ICB](#)

## Story Overview:

Joshua sent two spies over the Jordan River and into the city of Jericho. Rahab, a woman in 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 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.

## Background Study:

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Lord decided to give His people the land He had promised them. The Book of Joshua records Israel's movement into the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. The Israelites 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 had spied on forty years before. In Jericho, the spies lodged in the home of Rahab. She was a prostitute. The 1st century A.D. Jewish 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 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. When the spies left, Rahab tied the scarlet cord in her window.

The spies returned to Joshua, bringing a good report and expressing their confidence that God had given the land to the Israelites. 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 what we understand to be God'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.

"It was by faith that Rahab, the prostitute, welcomed the spies and was not killed with those who refused to obey God." [Hebrews 11:31, ICB](#)

## Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring some flax leaves or stalks to the gathering to 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!"

## 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 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. People lived in the land, but they did not believe in God. God wanted His people to have the land.

Joshua chose two men to 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 Rahab's house. The king sent soldiers to find them. When they reached Rahab'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 Rahab'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.

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

## **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 or other group participation.

[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 how YOU tell 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 and Reflection Questions:**

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

### **Review:**

1. What was the name of the city in the Promised Land where Joshua sent two spies? (Jericho)
2. Whose house did the spies stay in? (Rahab)
3. Why did Rahab want to protect and help the Israelite spies? (She had heard about God and all of the amazing things He had done for the Israelites, and she believed in Him. She knew God would help them conquer Jericho.)
4. What did Rahab do when the King sent soldiers to arrest the spies? (She hid them in the flax drying on her roof and told the soldiers that the spies had already left)
5. How did the spies get out of Jericho? (They climbed down a rope that Rahab put out of her window)
6. 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)
7. Why did God save Rahab and those in her house from the Israelites' attack on Jericho? (Because she helped protect the Israelite spies from Jericho's King)
8. Years later, who was one of Rahab's descendants? (Jesus)

### **Reflection:**

1. What do you think it felt like for the two spies to lay on the roof under flax stalks?
2. How do you think Rahab felt when the King's men came to look for the Israelite spies at her house?
3. How do you think the Israelite spies felt when they hid from the King's men on the roof, under flax stalks?
4. Do you think the two spies trusted that God would protect them from the King's men? Would you have trusted God would protect you, or not?
5. Have you ever been afraid? Why were you afraid?
6. How can God help us when we are afraid? What should we do?
7. Rahab did not always do good things, but she did a very good thing by helping the spies. Do you know anyone who used to do bad things, but changed and now does good things instead?

### **Prayer:**

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

### **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.

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## Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

### Activities:

- Make something from flax, or bring some to show the children.
- 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.
- If other groups meet at the same time your group is, then take the children “spying.” They could count how many people were in the other groups or compile information like the number of Bibles people brought or who wore boots. Discuss what things the spies would have wanted to discover in Jericho.
- “Hide n Seek” or “I Spy” are other fun games that match this story well. Discuss the fact the spies were hidden.
- Find pictures of walled cities or bible time houses in bible encyclopaedias.
- Older children might benefit from hearing a faithful Christian talk about how they used to lead a sinful life but now live for the Lord. The earlier life mustn't be glorified or dwelled on.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

### Crafts:

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

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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## Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Craft: Red cord braided bookmark \(Bible School Materials\)](#)
- [Printable paper craft \(Sunday School Sources\)](#)
- [Other: Rahab hides the spies’ activities \(Hands-On Bible Teacher\)](#)

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**Date**

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