



ADDRESS THE CHRIST- MESS

ADDRESS THE CHRIST-MESS, PART 3: LABEL MAKERS

Some labels withstand the test of time: *Conan the Barbarian*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. But your nickname in grade school? Probably not. Some labels are honoring: *Alexander the Great*. Others aren't as flattering: *Rahab the Harlot*. But is God able to do something through us regardless of what our labels, our pasts, or our reputations might suggest? You bet.

BIG IDEA: People with pasts are the point.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were you known for in High School? If you wore a label in High School, what would it be? (*In-crowd, out-crowd, band geek, jock, nerd, Goths, shop class*)
2. What were you known for in College? What label did you wear in College? (*Partier, Greek, slut, drunk*)
3. Today, what are you known for? What labels you now? (*Single, divorced, unemployed, fired, bankrupt*)

For many of us, our identity centers around the biggest mistake or the biggest hurt of our lives. When we look in the mirror, we see a person who is labeled. We see someone who is broken. And we think that it is highly unlikely and improbable that God could never use you because you are used. Broken. Messed up. You are labeled.

4. If you could give yourself a label, what would it be?
5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Joshua 2:1-7.*

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. 2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. Joshua 2:1-7 (NIV)

6. Why do you think two men from God's army were doing in the home of a prostitute? Do you think it is okay today to associate with such people? (*Read Luke 15:1-2*)
7. Why might people have discounted Rahab as a person that God could use? How did God honor her?
8. Rahab hid the spies and then lied to the authorities when they came looking for them. When, if ever, is it okay to lie? How do you know?
9. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Joshua 2:8-16.*

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. 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." 14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the LORD gives us the land." 15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way." Joshua 2:8-16 (NIV)

10. Rahab told the two spies: "I know that the Lord has given you this land..." Upon what was her declaration of faith based? How could she be a prostitute, so easily tell lies, and not be a part of God's chosen people, yet be attributed with great faith?
11. Why do you think some people have a difficult time talking about their past? Why do you think the spies chose to overlook Rahab's past and trust her to help save them?
12. In what ways can you relate to Rahab? Are there any labels, habits, or "guilty pleasures" that keep you from wholeheartedly following Jesus? What does her example show us about God's ability to change people, freeing them from their slavery to sin?
13. Read Joshua 6:1-25. Four chapters later and a lengthy bit of time passes before Rahab sees the spies again. What do you suppose calmed her anxiety as she waited for the Israelites to come?
 - a. Knowing the scarlet cord was in the window
 - b. The spies promise
 - c. Trust that God would honor her faith.
 - d. Doing her part to get ready.
14. In Joshua 6, the Israelites conquer Jericho and Rahab is protected. In what ways do you connect with Rahab's circumstances?
15. Given Rahab's label, why is it so remarkable for her to be included in Jesus' ancestry?
16. What excuses have you used to spurn God's grace? What is keeping you from moving in God's direction?

Isn't it interesting that when the Israelite spies offered to spare Rahab's life, they said nothing about her lifestyle? Abandoning her trade was not part of the deal. *Changing* her life wasn't discussed. She acknowledged Israel's God as *the* most powerful God and then hid his servants. That was it. **Rahab's label was not an obstacle to God. And neither is yours!** The reality and the embarrassment your label reflects is not an obstacle to God's grace. You, like Rahab, are invited as you are—label and all. You, like Rahab, have been invited to join God in a relationship initiated by faith, not adherence to a set of rules. Grace doesn't require people with embarrassing labels to shed those labels as a prerequisite. Grace is what empowers us to do so.

MOVING FORWARD

On the one hand, Rahab does not deserve to be in Jesus' ancestry. Her reputation is questionable. Her profession is condemnable. She has no platform of personal righteousness. But her past is no match for God's grace. While her lifestyle should have brought judgment, her faith brought forgiveness. And God ended up using her life in his larger story.

Rahab's life reminds us of who we are and what we need—a savior from our sin. And the incredible news is, we are relentlessly invited into a relationship with the only one who can do anything about it—Jesus.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Joshua 6:25

