



bigIdea small group discussion

Who are some people that you think that God would or could never use? The type of person that, because of their label, would make God look bad? Murders? Adulterers? Child molesters? Terrorists? Traitors? Prostitutes? Whores? The answer may not only surprise you, but give you hope that God can use you, no matter what label you may wear.



BIG IDEA: Your label isn't an obstacle for God to use you.

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, 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. Read *Joshua 2:1-7*. 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*)
5. Why might people have discounted Rahab as a person that God could use? How did God honor her?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. Read *Joshua 2:8-24* and *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.

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.

THINK ABOUT IT

Do you want to get in the game but feel like you can't do anything? Does Satan try and blackmail you with your past? Today it ends. If you're not serving, find a place to serve. You qualify! If you're not in a Community group, get in one. You qualify! Giving financially? You qualify! Mission trip? You qualify! Telling others about Jesus? You qualify! It's time to take your place in the body. You qualify!

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

In what ways do you feel like your past is getting in the way of God's future for you? Have each person pick two ways he/she will be available to be used by God this week, even if he or she feels unlikely. Then, as a group, pray together, asking God specifically to help you see and believe that He really can and does "make all things new"—including you.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. *Read Matthew 1:5-6, 16.* What ways do people sometimes continue to let their past determine their future? What do you make of the fact that the New Testament includes Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus Christ?

The New Testament's inclusion of Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus is a strong, definitive statement that our pasts do not have to determine our future because of our forgiving, redeeming God who makes all things new. Any life surrendered to Christ can and will become a great life with a hope and a future. In fact, God takes great joy in using such lives to show that his love and grace is real and beyond all that we can ever ask or imagine. God reveals his character to us when he intentionally chooses Rahab to be an ancestor to the Savior of the world. Why would we choose to live in shame and fear when we serve such an amazing God?

2. Kings get their right to rule by who they're related to and their genealogy. If you were writing the genealogy of Jesus, would you have included Rahab? Why or why not? Why is the inclusion of Rahab and others in Jesus' genealogy proof that people didn't write the scripture, but God did? What point do you think including Rahab in Jesus' genealogy is God trying to make to you and me?
3. *Read Ephesians 2:10.* Paul wrote that each of us is a "work of art" that God created to do good works. Name two or three ways your life would look different if you truly believed you were an invaluable masterpiece of God.
4. Do you think it's true that God invites even people who seem not to have any talents or abilities to help with what He is doing? Why or why not?
5. *Read Hebrews 11.* Make a list of the people that God uses to illustrate faith. What do these people have in common? How are they different? If you were making a list of 'Who's who of the faith', would you have included Rahab?
6. *Read James 2:14-26.* What is the underlying problem of faith without works, and works without faith? What is the solution? How does Abraham (Genesis 22) and Rahab (Joshua 2) prove James' point?