

June 14, 2026

AMAZING GRACE: JOSHUA 2:4-21

Introductory Activity Option 1 (Adapted from ETB LG, 27)

“Introduce: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 19 of the PSG. [The Bible demonstrates God often uses flawed, unlikely people to do His will. For example, Abraham and Sarah both laughed in unbelief when God told them they would have a son in their old age. God made David the greatest king of Israel and established an eternal covenant with him even though David came from humble beginnings and committed egregious sins. Paul had been a persecutor of believers before his conversion. Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute, is another unlikely person God used to accomplish His plans.] Encourage adults to suggest other imperfect Bible characters used by God to fulfill His plans.

Ask: *Why does God so often use unlikely, imperfect people to accomplish His purposes?* (PSG, p. 19)”

Skip to Summarize and Transition

Introductory Activity Option 2

Ask: Tell (or read) the story on page 20 of the Explore the Bible Commentary. (See attached.)

Summarize and Transition: In today’s lesson, we will look at a time when God used an unlikely hero to save some of His people. In Joshua chapter two, our focus shifts from the Israelites camped on the east side of the Jordan to the Canaanites living in the walled city of Jericho.

Last week, we looked at chapter 1 of Joshua. We learned that Moses, the longtime leader of the Israelites, had died, and God had installed Joshua to be the nation’s new leader. God then commanded the people to prepare to cross the Jordan and take the land. Today, we see that Joshua, not knowing the details of God’s plan yet, sent in two spies to “Go and scout the land, especially Jericho.” (2:1) On page 20 of The Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide, the author tells us about this.

Joshua sent two spies to scout the area so they could bring him a report on what his troops should expect when they went up against it.

Archaeologists believe Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world.

It is located in the well-watered lower Jordan Valley. Its location was important because several routes that led west into the central hill country of Canaan emanated from the city. Therefore, it was a key junction for those traveling east.

Jericho was an important city and the first “obstacle” for the Israelites in taking the land. It stood “like a sentinel to bar Israel’s progress into the land.” (Preaching, 33) When the spies arrived in the city, they took refuge in “the house of a prostitute named Rahab.” (v.1) Rahab’s home was probably more akin to a tavern or watering hole. This would have been a likely place for travelers to blend in and get intel on the people. Somehow, word got to the king of Jericho that the spies were there, so he sent word to Rahab to turn them over. Our lesson will pick up at the point. As we look at this story, we will see that “God used Rahab, an imperfect person, to accomplish His plans.” (ETB LG, 25)

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Joshua* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* (NAC)
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Joshua (TOTC)

1. A BOLD ACT (JOSH. 2:4-7)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 2:4-7.

Explain: As we said before, chapter 2 turns our attention to the residents of Jericho. So, let's do just that and imagine life in Jericho at this point. The 2 million-plus roving nation of Israel was camped just across the Jordan River. The king of Jericho was probably on high alert. It appears that this nation, consisting of escaped Egyptian slaves, was on the cusp of an invasion. The flooded Jordan River would keep them at bay for the time being, but if they found a way across, his city would be in their crosshairs. He probably had his guards on high alert. He probably assumed spies would come to assess the city's fortification and its preparedness. He might have had his informants roaming the city looking for spies. It seems that some of these informants had seen some foreigners at Rahab's establishment. The Israelites' spies might have sought lodging there or maybe just asked too many questions. Whatever the reason for their discovery, the king sent men to command that Rahab point them out and turn them over.

Explore: Instruct the group to examine the passage and call out how Rahab demonstrated her bravery.

She Hid the Men: First, Rahab hid the men. This is the first inclination that Rahab was a wise and decisive person. In our imagination, we probably do not get it exactly right, but we can imagine the scene of the men sitting at a table in Rahab's establishment. She walks over to them and whispers that they should come with her. They follow her to the roof. She tells them that they have been spotted and they should hide under the drying flax stalks on the roof. This was brave because if the king's guards searched her house, she would be implicated in the conspiracy.

She Misinformed the Guards: Second, she misinformed the guards. Let's just put it plainly, Rahab lied to the guards. Scholars have spilt a lot of ink on this point. Some try to justify her action. Some say it is wrong to justify them because that misses the point. Again, I say let's do what the chapter is doing and focus our attention on the Canaanite herself. Fact one: Rahab was a pagan woman who did not know Yahweh God or His law. Fact two: Rahab was an immoral woman who had to use her wits to survive. She has already demonstrated her ability to read a room by hiding the men. Fact three: Rahab was convinced that the God of the Hebrews was going to defeat her city. We will see this in the coming verses. I contend that everyone knew war was coming. Rahab was just out ahead of everyone else, and she chose the winning side.

She Diverted the Guards: Third, she diverted the guards. Rahab then sent the guards on a wild goose chase. She told the guards that the men had slipped out of the city just before the gates were closed for the night. She then got rid of the guards by telling them to hurry and leave in order to

Notes:

"In the absence of any direct divine instruction, Joshua is doing the responsible thing in sending out his scouts." (Preaching, 34)

"It is best not to excuse Rahab's actions, but neither to be troubled by them. In so far as the narrator and Israelite reader would understand that her acceptance among the people of Israel would also provide the means for forgiveness...It stresses the deception, not in order to condemn Rahab, but to magnify her personal risk in hiding the spies." (TOTC, 95)

"Her rescue is far more to the glory of God than any attempted whitewashing of her behavior. The point is that an immoral, pagan woman would never have been considered as a candidate for God's rescuing grace in the midst of the judgement that he was about to inflict on her city." (Preaching, 34)

catch up to the spies. The guards then leave and give chase, heading toward the “fords of the Jordan.” This would have been the logical place to cross the water and escape back to the safety of their people.

We Too Should be Brave.

While we can take the analogy only so far, Rahab does provide us with an example of bravery. As we said, she had chosen the God of Israel over the city of Jericho. She did not understand everything there was to understand, but she chose a side. Followers of Jesus have picked a side. In declaring our faith and submission to the Lordship of Christ, we have chosen the winner. However, we must *daily* pick a side. We must bravely stand for Christ in an immoral and anti-Christian world.

Discuss: What are some ways that we show bravery in our walk with Christ? (To elicit conversation, you might ask, “How does a high school student bravely follow Christ? How might a person show bravery in their finances? How might a person show bravery when asked to serve in the church? How might a person show bravery when they encounter a person in need? How might a person show bravery when working for an unethical boss?”)

Summarize Transition: We can learn from Rahab. While her actions were not in line with the dictates of God’s law, she demonstrated her faith in God through her actions. High school students do likewise when they refuse to succumb to peer pressure. Believers do likewise when they practice principles of biblical stewardship. Church members do likewise when they answer the call to serve despite their feelings of inadequacy. We show bravery when we stop and help someone in need or maintain our moral principles in the face of pressure to act unethically in the workplace.

Let’s be honest, all of this is uncomfortable. Living bravely will cause us to step out of “our comfort zone.” Rahab could have just continued to go along safely and let things play out with the spies. However, she saw the writing on the wall and chose to side with Yahweh God. She teaches us that “Following God often requires leaving one’s comfort zone and stepping out in faith.” (ETB LG, 29) In the next passage, Rahab is going to reveal the reason behind her actions.

2. A KIND ACTION (JOSH. 2:8-13)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 2:8-13.

Explain: Here, we get the most important part of this chapter. Normally, when we consider Joshua chapter two, we focus on the exciting action. However, the most exciting action in this chapter is taking place in the heart of the unbeliever. Rahab's confession is the focus of this chapter (see Preaching, 36) because it reveals how she came to faith in Yahweh God. Verses 9-13 "represents one of the longest uninterrupted statements by a woman in a biblical narrative." (TOTC, 96) Her words in verses 9-11 reveal a

three-part confession. They also reveal the confession necessary to come to faith in Jesus today.

Rahab Confesses that Her City is Lost: In verse 9, she confesses, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you." She reveals that she sees the reality of the situation: death is coming to the city. "The city of Jericho presented itself as a hard nut to crack, but within its shell it had already crumbled." (Preaching, 39) The people of Jericho could not do enough to save themselves. They were concerned with their physical lives. They should have been concerned with their spiritual lives.

Everyone Must Confess that They are Lost. This is an essential step in anyone's journey to faith. They must first understand that they cannot save themselves. No one comes to faith in God without first understanding that they can do nothing to save themselves. We all have a sin problem that is leading to death and eternal separation from God. There is nothing we can do about it in our own strength.

Rahab confesses that the Israelite God is Powerful. In verse 10, Rahab recounts the mighty acts of God. She starts at the beginning. Everyone in Jericho still remembers what God did at the Red Sea when He delivered His people from bondage. It had been 40 years, and people were still talking about the time God had pushed back the waters to deliver His enslaved people. She also recounts the recent acts of God. Just across the Jordan, Israel, with God's help, had just recently defeated King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan (Num. 21:21-35). We can assume that since Rahab knew about the beginning and ending of Israel's journey, she knew of other mighty acts of God. The historical and historic mighty works of God convinced her that the God of Israel was powerful enough to destroy those who oppose Him and save those who stand with Him.

Everyone Must Confess that Only God is Powerful to Save. Unbelievers first understand they have a sin problem and there is nothing they can do to address it. They must next understand that only God, through Christ, can deal with their sin problem. One way they can come to this realization is through the work of God in the lives of His people. The testimony of a believer is powerful because it recounts the powerful work of God in the believer's life. We all have a testimony, and we should be ready to share it. Our basic testimony can be shared in five minutes and has three points: Who I was Before I Met Jesus, How I Met Jesus, and What I am Like Because I Met Jesus. **(Teacher's note: Before your group time, you might ask someone to prepare a five-minute testimony with those three points. Ask them to share that testimony at this point.)**

Rahab Confesses that Her Gods are Useless. In verse 11, Rahab again recounts the fear of her people. The spies should have recognized God's hand in this. In Exodus 15, Moses led the Israelites in a song of praise after God delivered them through the Red Sea. The lyrics of the song

Notes:

Rahab's account "marked the beginning and the end of Israel's trek through the desert." (TOTC, 97)

"Rahab has learned her history well and responds with a reaffirmation of the fear of those who opposed Israel and with the confession that only Israel's God controls the destiny of the world." (TOTC, 98)

"The sheer historical force of what God has done and what he will yet do generates within her the faith that is prepared to risk her life in order to save it and the lives of her family (vv. 12, 13)." (Preaching, 37)

prophetically speak of this moment in Jericho, among others. Exodus 15:14 and 15 say, "When the peoples hear, they will shudder; anguish will seize the inhabitants of Philistia... all the inhabitants of Canaan will panic." It is not just the historical acts of God that cause the people to fear. There is a supernatural act of God that causes them to fear as well. God promised the Israelites that He would send forth a fear of Himself in Ex 23:27. It reads, "I will cause the people ahead of you to feel terror and will throw into confusion all the nations you come to." Rahab declares that this prophetic, supernatural fear had come upon herself and the people.

She then makes a dramatic statement, and in doing so, she confesses that her gods are useless. She says, "The LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below." Note the word that Rahab uses for God in this verse. It is LORD. This is the personal name of Yahweh God. She recognizes that Israel's God did this work, not some other false deity. "For Rahab, there is nowhere where God is not God, including Jericho." (Preaching, 36)

Everyone Must Confess their Faith in Christ Alone: Likewise, the unbeliever today must confess their faith in Christ alone. It is not enough to know we have a sin problem. Nor is it enough to know that God is powerful; we must realize that Christ is the only trustworthy way to seek salvation. Like the walls of Jericho, the lush landscape of the Jordan valley, and the lucrative trade route of the Ancient Near East, people trust in many things for salvation. A person must come to the point where they realize that the "gods" of this world cannot save them.

Summarize and Transition: When the spies first encountered Rahab, she might have come off as a licentious woman. She might have appeared to be a harsh woman when dealing with the regular patrons of her establishment. But underneath God was doing something in her heart. He was drawing her to Himself. He had put a fear into the hearts of the entire population, but Rahab seems to be the only one with eyes to see and ears to hear. We encounter people like this every day. They are hard and harsh, but we can never know what is going on in their hearts. That is why we need to invade dark lands and scout for lost souls. We must be emissaries of light in dark places and share with those we encounter. In the next passage, we will continue with our story and see how the spies respond to Rahab's confession.

3. A DARING ESCAPE (JOSH. 2:14-16)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 2:14-16.

Explain: In verses 12-13, Rahab made a plea for grace. She, a Canaanite resident of Jericho, did not deserve to be spared during the invasion. She was an enemy of God's people. However, through her actions to protect the spies, as we see in verses 14-16, she demonstrated that she was on their side. She asked the men to save her family during the coming invasion *because* of her actions. Her actions in verses 15-16 were actions of faith. Again, this Old Testament story does not allow us to draw direct analogies about salvation in a world after the cross and resurrection. However, we can see that Rahab's actions demonstrated her faith in God. The writer of Hebrews tells us this in Hebrews 11:31. He writes, "By faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed." In like manner, James writes in chapter 2:25, "In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route?" Again, we should remember that the OT world was different from the NT world. Rahab's

works did not “save her soul” in the way our faith in Christ does. Instead, her works (1) showed her faith and (2) *enabled her to enter into the family of faith through a new citizenship in Israel*. Let’s look at those two points.

Faith demonstrated by Works: In order to understand what James means in 2:25, we should read what he wrote in verses 17-20.

Read or have someone read James 2:17-20 (See Notes Box)

In Rahab’s case, she could have had all the faith in the world, but if she had not acted, she would have died in the city of Jericho. She was saved from physical death by protecting the spies and, as we will see, following their orders. Rahab was also saved from spiritual death as well because she entered the community of faith.

Faith Enabled Her to Enter the Faith Family of Israel: Joshua 6:25 tells us that Rahab and her family settled in the nation of Israel. The language she uses when speaking to the spies reveals her move away from Canaanite citizenship into Israel. She speaks of kindness (v. 12). This word is also translated “loving kindness” and is associated with God’s covenant with Israel. “Rahab and her family here ceased to be Canaanite and became part of Israel's family.” (TOTC, 101) The Gospel of Matthew tells us more. In Matthew 1: 5 and 6, we read, “⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.” And we know that from King David’s line Jesus was born as the Messiah. Rahab’s faith, lived out in her actions, saved her both physically and spiritually.

Summarize and Transition: The same is true for us today. We must act on our faith. We do so first by repenting of sin and making Christ Lord. We also do so daily by following the Lord faithfully through our works. These works do not save us, but they demonstrate our faith. The men made a daring escape down the walls of Jericho. Rahab made an even more daring escape from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. \

4. A FIRM ASSURANCE (JOSH. 2:17-21)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 2:17-21.

Explain: Here, the men assure Rahab of their commitment to protect her, and she does what is necessary to ensure that protection. The men were probably expecting Israel to lay siege to the city and bombard its walls. This scarlet cord would be a sign to avoid her portion of the walls. We should note that this scarlet cord is not a metaphor for Christ's blood. That would be reading too much into the passage. If anything, the cord is a sign, not of Christ’s work, but of her faith that the men would honor their commitment. It was yet another demonstration that she was siding with Israel and Israel’s God.

CONCLUDE

God used unlikely Rahab to save these men. But the amazing grace shown in the passage was not the grace given by Rahab or the men when they promised to protect her. The great, amazing grace was shown by God, who saw this woman’s faith, a faith demonstrated by her actions, and saved her both physically and spiritually.

Challenge: We should be challenged in two ways by this passage. First, we should live out our faith through courageous, faith-filled lives in a faithless world. Second, we should seek the lost among the hard and broken people we encounter every day.

James 2:17-20

¹⁷ In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder. ²⁰ Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?

Surprising Savior

(Explore the Bible Commentary, 20)

God continually surprises us with the kinds of people that he uses. Here's a story you don't hear every day about a man who lived in a rural area of Nigeria, the Barkin Ladi area of Plateau State. This man lived in a rural area that had experienced widespread ethnic and religious violence. In June of 2018, violence again erupted in his region. A group of predominantly Muslim herdsmen was violently driving predominantly Christian farmers out of the entire region. The herdsmen burned ten of the farmers' villages and killed many. This man single-handedly hid 262 Christians from these Muslim herdsmen. He sheltered Christian farmers and their families in his own home and in a public building nearby. He stood outside his home pleading with the attackers, offering his own life in exchange for the lives of those he sheltered. Because of his reputation and social position, the attackers relented. More than eighty Christians had already been killed in the attack. Who knows how many would have died if he had not intervened?

This man? He was an eighty-three-year-old Muslim named Abubaker [Pron: aboo-baker] Abdullaahi [Pron: ahb-doo-la-he]. Besides sheltering Christians in his home, what was the public building where he protected his Christian neighbors? It was the local mosque, and Abdullaahi served as its Imam. Because of his fearless actions, Abubaker Abdullahi received the 2019 International Religious Freedom Award by the US Secretary of State.