

The Book of Joshua, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Rahab and the Spies at Jericho

Joshua 2:1–24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal weight of this lesson rests on a single, glorious truth: the God of Israel is the God of all the earth, and His grace reaches the believing outsider. Rahab is a Canaanite, a Gentile, a woman whose former life sat far outside anything respectable in Israel, and yet she becomes one of Scripture's clearest portraits of saving faith. Help the class see that God makes Himself known beyond the borders of the covenant, that He receives the one who trusts Him regardless of background or past, and that this grace anticipates the gospel going to every nation. Guard the class against two errors: do not flatten Rahab into a mere moral example, and do not commend her deception as if every detail of her conduct is a pattern to follow. Keep the focus where Hebrews 11 and James 2 put it, on her faith and the works that flowed from it.

Be ready to handle Rahab's former life and her lie to the king with honesty and restraint. Scripture never sanitizes Rahab's past, but it never lingers on it either; it commends her faith, not her trade and not her falsehood. Acknowledge the moral tension in her deception without turning the lesson into a debate about it, and without holding it up as a model. The text and the New Testament keep the spotlight on a Gentile heart that heard, believed, confessed, and acted. Let your teaching do the same.

This lesson is also aimed squarely at the spiritual formation of your students. Many of them carry a quiet fear that their past has disqualified them, or that grace is for other people. Rahab's scarlet cord answers that fear. Press the truth gently into their hearts: the God who pulled a Canaanite woman to safety is the same God who welcomes them in Christ. And press it into their hands: like Rahab, true faith does not merely feel, it acts, and it reaches out to gather others under the shelter of God's mercy. The aim is not merely that they admire Rahab, but that they trust her God and live like she did.

Question 1

Student Question:

When the king of Jericho demands that Rahab hand over the spies, she hides them and points the search party in the wrong direction (Joshua 2:3–7). Look closely at verses 9 through 11, where Rahab explains why. What had she heard about the Lord, and what conclusions about Him had she drawn? What does her confession reveal about how God makes Himself known even to those far outside the covenant?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joshua sends two men to spy out the land 'even Jericho' (Joshua 2:1), the first fortified obstacle to the conquest. The narrative wastes no time placing them in Rahab's house, a detail the text states plainly and without embarrassment. God's purposes are about to be advanced through an unlikely door.

The heart of the answer is Rahab's confession in verses 9 through 11. She says, 'I know that the Lord hath given you the land,' and then explains how she knows: the people of Jericho have heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea and what Israel did to Sihon and Og. The reports of God's mighty acts had crossed the Jordan ahead of Israel and landed in a Canaanite heart.

Notice the movement in her confession. She begins with what God has done (the Red Sea, the kings), moves to its effect ('our hearts did melt'), and arrives at a settled conviction about who God is: 'the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.' This is not vague religious feeling; it is a clear-eyed conclusion about the living God.

What God makes plain here is that He reveals Himself beyond the borders of the covenant. The same news terrified the whole city, but only Rahab let it lead her to faith. The evidence was identical; the response was not. This is Romans 1 in reverse: where the city suppressed the truth, Rahab received it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God makes Himself known to those far outside the covenant; no one is beyond the reach of His self-revelation or His grace.
- Saving faith begins with hearing and believing the testimony about what God has done (compare Romans 10:17).
- The same evidence can harden one heart and soften another; the difference lies in the response of faith, not in the strength of the proof.
- Rahab's confession shows that genuine faith reaches a settled conviction about who God is, not merely a passing fear of Him.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific things had Rahab heard, and how had those reports shaped her conviction about the Lord?
- Why do you think the same news that made Rahab believe only made the rest of Jericho afraid?
- Where do we see God revealing Himself today to people we might assume are far beyond His reach?

Question 2

Student Question:

Rahab said, 'as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt' (Joshua 2:11). The whole city heard the same reports, yet only Rahab let what she heard reshape her life. Where have you heard the truth about God clearly but kept it at arm's length, refusing to let it change the way you actually live?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Rahab says the whole city's heart melted (Joshua 2:11), yet only she crossed from fear into faith. Fear of God is not the same as faith in God. Many in Jericho trembled; one woman trusted.

The point for the class is uncomfortable but vital: hearing the truth about God is not the same as letting it change us. Jericho had the same information Rahab had. The difference was not knowledge but surrender.

This is a self-examination question. Press your students to locate the place where they have heard clearly and yet held back, where knowledge has not become obedience. We are all capable of admiring a truth from a safe distance.

Help them see that faith is not finally about how much we know but about whether we will let what we know reshape how we live. Rahab acted on far less light than your students have; the question is what they will do with the light they have.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Knowing the truth and obeying the truth are not the same; faith is truth allowed to change us.
- Fear of God's power can coexist with refusal to surrender to Him; only Rahab's fear ripened into faith.
- Spiritual danger often lies not in ignorance but in familiarity, hearing so often that we stop responding.
- Each of us is accountable for what we do with the light we have received (Romans 15:4; James 1:22).

Discussion Prompts

- Where in your life have you clearly heard a truth from God but kept living as if you had not?
- What is the difference between being moved emotionally by a truth and actually obeying it?
- What would it look like this week to act on something you already know God is asking of you?

Question 3

Student Question:

Rahab's confession reaches its high point in verse 11: 'for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.' Compare this with Deuteronomy 4:39. What is Rahab declaring

about who the Lord is, and why is it remarkable that this confession comes from a Canaanite inside a condemned city rather than from Israel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Rahab's confession in verse 11, 'the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath,' is nearly word for word the confession Moses gave Israel in Deuteronomy 4:39. A Canaanite arrives at the very truth Israel was commanded to take to heart.

This is a confession of God's universal lordship. He is not a local deity confined to one nation or one territory; He rules heaven and earth. Rahab grasps that the God of Israel is in fact the God of all, which is precisely why Jericho cannot stand against Him.

The remarkable thing is the source. This towering confession comes not from a priest or an Israelite but from a Gentile woman inside a city under judgment. The light of who God is had reached the darkest corner of Canaan.

For the class, this underscores a theme that runs to the end of the Bible: the Lord is the God of all the earth, and His glory is meant to fill it. Rahab is an early sign that God's purpose was never to save one nation only, but to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord is God over all heaven and earth, not a regional or national deity (Deuteronomy 4:39; Psalm 24:1).
- True confession names who God really is; Rahab confesses His universal sovereignty.
- God's saving purpose was always aimed beyond Israel toward all nations (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8).
- That a Canaanite reaches this confession highlights both God's wide grace and Israel's accountability to know Him.

Discussion Prompts

- What exactly is Rahab confessing about the Lord, and how does Deuteronomy 4:39 deepen it?
- Why is it significant that this confession comes from an outsider rather than from Israel?
- How does Rahab's confession point ahead to the gospel going out to all nations?

Question 4

Student Question:

Rahab risked her life for two men she had just met, acting on a conviction she could not yet fully see proven. When has following God required you to take a real risk before you had all the assurance you wanted? What did you learn about Him in that moment of stepping out?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Rahab risked everything for two strangers on the strength of a conviction she could not yet see proven (Joshua 2:4–6, 15–16). Faith for her was not a private feeling; it was a dangerous, costly action taken before the outcome was certain.

This is a transformational question, inviting students to recall moments when following God meant stepping out before they had all the assurance they wanted. Real faith almost always involves acting on a promise before we see it kept.

Help the class see that Rahab's risk was not reckless; it was rooted in her settled conviction about who God is. Because she was sure of Him, she could be unsure of everything else and still move.

Draw out the relationship between conviction and courage. Where students are paralyzed, it is often because their grip on who God is has gone slack. Strengthen the conviction and the courage tends to follow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith frequently calls us to act before we have all the assurance we would like (Hebrews 11:1).
- Courage flows from conviction about who God is, not from certainty about the outcome.
- Following God can carry real cost and risk; Rahab put her life on the line.
- We learn the trustworthiness of God most deeply in the very moments we step out for Him.

Discussion Prompts

- When has obeying God required you to take a real risk before you had all the assurance you wanted?
- What did that experience teach you about God that you could not have learned from a safe distance?
- Where might the Lord be asking you to step out in faith right now, before the way is clear?

Question 5

Student Question:

Rahab does not simply ask to be spared; she pleads for her father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all they have (Joshua 2:12–13). What does her concern for her whole household reveal about the heart of true faith, and how does this echo the way God deals with families throughout Scripture?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Rahab does not bargain only for her own life. She pleads for her father, mother, brothers, sisters, and 'all that they have' (Joshua 2:12–13). The first instinct of her new faith is to gather her loved ones into the same mercy she is seeking.

This concern for the household reflects a pattern that runs all through Scripture. God repeatedly works through families, and faith naturally reaches outward to those we love (Genesis 7:1; Acts 16:31; Joshua 24:15).

Be careful here to draw the timeless principle without overreaching. Rahab's household was not saved by her faith apart from their own coming under the roof; each had to be inside the house under the scarlet cord. But her faith was the means by which the offer of rescue reached them.

The lesson for the class is that genuine faith is never merely self-centered. The moment grace touches us, it stirs a longing to bring others into its shelter. A faith that has no concern for the people around us has not yet understood the heart of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- True faith reaches outward; it longs to bring others into the mercy it has found.
- God works through families and households throughout Scripture (Genesis 7:1; Acts 16:31).
- Rahab's faith opened the door of rescue to her family, yet each still had to come under the roof.
- Concern for the lost around us is a mark of a heart that has truly been touched by grace.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Rahab's plea for her whole family reveal about the nature of saving faith?
- How does Scripture show God's heart for families and households?
- Who are the people God has placed in your life that your faith should be reaching toward?

Question 6

Student Question:

Rahab tied the scarlet cord in her window and gathered her loved ones under her roof, doing everything in her power to bring them to safety (Joshua 2:18–19). Who are the people in your life that you long to see brought to safety in the Lord, and what are you actually doing to gather them in?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Rahab tied the scarlet cord in her window and gathered her family under her roof, doing all she could to bring them to safety (Joshua 2:18–19). Her faith did not stop at feeling; it took concrete, visible action on behalf of others.

This is a personal question meant to move from admiration to imitation. Ask students to name the specific people they long to see brought to safety in the Lord, and then to name what they are actually doing about it.

Many of us carry a quiet burden for loved ones who are far from God, yet our concern never becomes action. Rahab models the move from longing to laboring. She did everything in her power and then trusted God with the rest.

Encourage the class to take one practical step: a conversation, an invitation, a prayer spoken aloud, a relationship rebuilt. The scarlet cord had to be tied; faith that gathers others does something.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith that loves others moves from longing to concrete action (James 2:25–26).
- We are called to do what is in our power and entrust the outcome to God.
- Concern for the lost that never becomes action is not yet the faith Rahab displayed.
- Small, faithful steps (a conversation, an invitation, persistent prayer) are how we gather others in.

Discussion Prompts

- Who are the people you most long to see brought to safety in the Lord?
- What are you actually doing to gather them in, and what is one step you could take this week?
- What keeps your longing for others from turning into action, and how might Rahab's example help?

Question 7

Student Question:

The spies tell Rahab her household will be spared only if the scarlet line is bound in the window and her family stays inside the house (Joshua 2:17–20). Why does God so often attach His promises of rescue to a clear, visible sign that must be trusted and obeyed? What does this pattern teach us about the nature of saving faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The spies bind their promise to a sign: the scarlet line in the window and the household kept inside the house (Joshua 2:17–20). The rescue is sure, but it must be trusted and obeyed in a specific, visible way.

This pattern runs throughout Scripture. God ties His promises of deliverance to signs that call for trusting obedience: the ark, the blood on the doorposts at Passover, the bronze serpent lifted

up. The sign does not earn the rescue, but the rescue is received by trusting and obeying the sign.

The scarlet cord has long reminded readers of the blood of the Passover lamb and, beyond it, of the blood of Christ. Be careful not to overstate the typology or to read New Testament baptism back into Rahab's act, but it is fair and accurate to say that God's way of saving has always joined a sure promise to a trusting, obedient response.

For the class, this teaches the nature of saving faith: it is not a bare feeling but a trust that takes God at His word and does what He says. Rahab believed, and so she tied the cord. The believing and the obeying were one act.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God often joins His promise of rescue to a visible sign that must be trusted and obeyed (Exodus 12:13; Numbers 21:8–9).
- The sign does not earn salvation; it is the appointed way the promise is received by faith.
- Saving faith is never a bare feeling; it takes God at His word and acts on it.
- Draw the timeless principle of trusting, obedient faith without reading New Testament baptism anachronistically into Rahab's life.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God so often attaches His promises of rescue to a sign that must be obeyed?
- What do the Passover blood and the bronze serpent have in common with the scarlet cord?
- How does this pattern shape the way we understand true, saving faith?

Question 8

Student Question:

Rahab had to wait days, even weeks, between tying the cord and the day the walls finally fell, trusting a promise no one else could see. Where in your life are you being asked to keep trusting a promise of God during the long, quiet stretch before you see it kept?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Between the day Rahab tied the cord and the day the walls fell lay a stretch of waiting. She had to keep trusting a promise no one else could see, holding steady while nothing visibly changed (Joshua 2:21; 6:22–23).

This is a personal question about the long, quiet middle of faith. Ask the class where they are being asked to keep trusting God in the gap between a promise made and a promise kept.

Often the hardest part of faith is not the first leap but the long wait that follows. The cord is tied, but the walls have not yet fallen. Help students name where they are tempted to give up because the answer is slow.

Encourage them with the truth that God's promises are sure even when they are slow. Rahab's scarlet cord still hung in the window the day Jericho came down. The Lord remembered her, and He remembers us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith must often endure a long wait between a promise made and a promise kept (Hebrews 6:12).
- The hardest stretch of faith is frequently the quiet middle, not the first step.
- God's promises remain sure even when their fulfillment is slow (2 Peter 3:9).
- Endurance is itself an act of faith; Rahab kept the cord in place until the walls fell.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you being asked to keep trusting a promise of God during a long, quiet stretch of waiting?
- What makes the waiting harder than the first step of faith?
- How does Rahab's steady trust before the walls fell encourage you to keep holding on?

Question 9

Student Question:

The New Testament returns to Rahab three times. She is listed among the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:31), held up as proof that living faith acts (James 2:25), and named in the very lineage of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:5). Drawing these passages together, what do they teach us about how God receives the believing outsider, and how does Rahab's place in Christ's family tree display the reach of His grace to all nations (Galatians 3:8–9, 26–29)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The New Testament returns to Rahab three times, and together they form the doctrinal high point of this lesson. Hebrews 11:31 lists her among the heroes of faith: 'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.' Her faith, not her past, defines her.

James 2:25 holds her up as proof that living faith acts: 'Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?' James is not pitting faith against works but showing that real faith works. Rahab believed, and her belief moved her hands. This guards us from a faith-only notion that never bears fruit; genuine faith is a trusting, obedient faith.

Matthew 1:5 places Rahab in the very lineage of Jesus the Messiah. A Gentile woman, once an outsider in every sense, is woven into the family tree of the Savior. The grace that spared her did not merely rescue her; it honored her, drawing her into the story of redemption that would bless all nations.

Gather these threads for the class. Rahab displays how God receives the believing outsider: not on the basis of pedigree or past, but on the basis of faith that takes hold of Him and acts. Her place in Christ's line previews the gospel reaching every nation, the promise to Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8–9).

Be careful to keep the doctrinal lines clean. This is grace to the outsider who believes, not salvation by mere feeling and not approval of Rahab's deception. And it is not a future earthly restoration of national Israel that is in view, but the one family of faith gathered in Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Greek and all who belong to Him are Abraham's heirs (Galatians 3:26–29).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God receives the believing outsider on the basis of faith, not pedigree or past (Hebrews 11:31).
- Genuine faith acts; James commends Rahab's living, working faith and guards us from a barren faith-only notion (James 2:25–26).
- Where Old Testament faith is discussed, draw the timeless principle of trusting, obedient faith without reading New Testament baptism back into Rahab's life.
- Rahab's inclusion in Christ's lineage (Matthew 1:5) displays the reach of grace to the Gentiles and the blessing of all nations in Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8–9).
- The promise to Abraham finds its yes in Christ and His church, the one family of faith, not in a future political Israel (Galatians 3:26–29).
- Rahab is commended for her faith, not for her former life and not for her deception; keep the focus where Scripture puts it.

Discussion Prompts

- What do Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25, and Matthew 1:5 together teach about how God receives the believing outsider?
- How does James use Rahab to show that real faith always acts?
- What does Rahab's place in the line of Jesus reveal about the reach of God's grace to all nations?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole of Joshua 2, from Rahab's confession to the scarlet cord in her window. Name one specific way the Lord is using this story to form Christ in you. What is He asking you to believe about His grace, and what is He asking you to do in response, this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone. Invite the class to look back across the whole of Joshua 2, from Rahab's trembling confession to the scarlet cord hanging in her window, and to ask what the Lord is forming in them through it.

Rahab's story holds together belief and action, confession and courage, rescue received and rescue extended to others. Help students name the specific place where the Spirit is pressing this story into their lives.

For some it will be the truth that grace reaches even them, that no past is too far gone for the God who pulled a Canaanite woman to safety. For others it will be the call to a faith that acts, that gathers others under the shelter of God's mercy rather than admiring grace from a distance.

Close by pointing them to Christ. The scarlet cord in Rahab's window has long reminded the Lord's people of the blood that saves, and Rahab herself stands in the line that leads to Jesus. The God who welcomed her welcomes us in Him. Ask each student to name one specific belief to hold and one specific action to take this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rahab's faith unites believing and doing; mature faith holds both together.
- Christ is the goal of the story; the God who saved Rahab welcomes sinners in Jesus (Matthew 1:5; Ephesians 2:12-13).
- Spiritual formation moves from admiring a truth to embodying it; the aim is a changed life, not merely a moved heart.
- Each student should name one thing to believe and one thing to do in response this week.

Discussion Prompts

- As you look back over Joshua 2, what one truth about God's grace is the Lord asking you to believe more deeply?
- What one specific action is He asking you to take in response, this week?
- How does seeing Rahab in the line of Jesus change the way you think about God's welcome of you?