

Living by Faith, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 8: Faith That Crosses the Sea and Brings Down Walls

Hebrews 11:29–31

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

These three verses carry serious doctrinal weight, because they showcase faith in action at three decisive moments and bring the whole study to its sharpest point about the nature of saving faith. At the Red Sea, the same parted water that saved Israel destroyed the Egyptians; the physical path was identical, but faith made all the difference. At Jericho, God commanded a strategy that looked absurd by every human standard, marching and shouting rather than fighting, so that when the walls fell, no one could credit human method. The victory was plainly God's, yet it came only after the people obeyed exactly what He said. And Rahab, a Gentile prostitute, is named among the faithful because she heard what God had done, believed He was the true God, and acted on that belief at the risk of her life. Taken together, these accounts teach that the faith God honors is an obedient, active trust, not bare belief and not mere human effort, but a trust that does what God commands even when the command seems foolish.

Be ready to handle the central doctrinal issue at Question 9 with care. James 2:25 explicitly says Rahab was 'justified by works' when she acted on her faith, and this is one of the clearest texts in Scripture against the idea of salvation by 'faith only.' Faith and obedience are not opposites here; the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. This is the consistent pattern of Hebrews 11 ('by faith Abel offered,' 'by faith Noah prepared,' 'by faith Abraham obeyed'), and it sets up the connection to the gospel itself. The world calls many of God's commands foolish, just as marching around a city seemed foolish, but the message of the cross is the power of God to those being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). Help the class connect Rahab's risking obedience to our own response to the gospel, including the command to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4), which the world may dismiss but which God has appointed.

At the same time, aim this lesson squarely at the heart. Many in the class carry a private fear that their faith is too small or their past too stained for God to use or forgive. Rahab is God's answer to that fear, a vivid picture of grace reaching the outsider and lifting the unlikely into the hall of faith. The spiritual-formation goal is to grow disciples who will step into the sea God opens, obey when His way makes no worldly sense, and rest in the truth that grace can reach anyone who turns to Him in trusting obedience. Teach so that students leave both sobered by the call to obey and lifted by the hope that the door of grace is open to them.

Question 1

Student Question: *Verse 29 says, 'By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.' The Israelites and the Egyptians*

walked into the very same parted sea, yet one group was saved and the other destroyed. What made the difference between them, and what does this teach us about the nature of saving faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Draw the class into the striking detail of the verse: the physical circumstances were identical. The same walls of water, the same dry path, the same sea. What separated the saved from the drowned was not the path but the posture of the heart toward God. Israel went forward in faith at God's word; the Egyptians pressed in to destroy God's people in defiant opposition. The same act, in faith or in unbelief, led to opposite ends.

Underline what this says about faith. Faith is not a vague spiritual feeling; it is trusting God enough to step where He directs. Israel had no power to part the sea or hold back the water; they simply walked the path God opened. Saving faith always responds to what God has done and said, and it moves accordingly. The Egyptians trusted their own might and were swept away.

Help the class feel the sobering edge here. Proximity to God's work is not the same as faith in God. A person can stand near the things of God, even walk the same ground as His people, and still perish in unbelief. The difference is whether the heart is bowed in trusting obedience or set in self-will.

Connect it forward to the believer's life. God still calls His people to step into paths that require trust, where the only ground we have is the word He has spoken. Faith walks in; unbelief either refuses to enter or tries to use God's way for its own ends and finds no safety there.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as the dividing line between salvation and destruction, even in identical circumstances
- Saving faith expressed in moving forward at God's word
- The difference between nearness to God's work and genuine trust in God
- God's power, not human ability, as what opens and holds the way
- The peril of approaching God's things in self-will rather than faith

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the same parted sea save one group and destroy the other?
- What does it mean that faith is shown by moving forward at God's word?
- How can a person be near the things of God and still lack genuine faith?

Question 2

Student Question: *When have you faced your own Red Sea, a situation that seemed to have no way through? What did that moment reveal about where your trust was actually placed?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the great miracle into personal reflection. Nearly everyone has stood at some impossible edge, a diagnosis, a loss, a fear, a closed door, where no human way forward could be seen. Invite the class to name such moments honestly, without rushing to tidy conclusions. The Red Sea was real terror before it was a triumphant memory.

Help students see what pressure reveals. Hard places expose where our trust truly rests. Some discover they had been leaning on their own competence or resources all along. Others discover, in the crisis, that God's word was more solid than they knew. The goal is not to shame anyone for fear at the water's edge but to learn where confidence is actually anchored.

Move toward hope and growth. God did not part the sea until the people were trapped against it. Often the way only opens as we step toward it in trust. Encourage the class that the God who made a path through the water is the same God present in their impossible places, and that these moments, painful as they are, become the very settings where faith grows.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Impossible circumstances as the testing ground of faith
- Crisis revealing where our trust is actually placed
- The temptation to rely on our own resources at the water's edge
- God often opening the way only as we step forward in trust
- Hard places as the settings where faith is formed and strengthened

Discussion Prompts

- What was a Red Sea moment in your own life?
- What did that pressure reveal about where your trust really rested?
- How have you seen God open a way only as you stepped toward it?

Question 3

Student Question: *Verse 30 says, 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.' God's plan for taking Jericho was to march, not to fight. Why do you think God gave such an unusual command, and what does the falling of the walls reveal about whose power actually won the victory (compare Joshua 6:2, 16)?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Start with the sheer strangeness of the command. By every standard of ancient warfare, marching silently around a fortified city for seven days was no strategy at all. There is no military mechanism by which circling walls makes them fall. God designed it that way on purpose, so that the victory could not be mistaken for a human achievement.

Point the class to Joshua 6:2 and 6:16, where God says, 'I have given Jericho into your hand,' and Joshua tells the people, 'the Lord has given you the city.' The walls fell because God brought them down, not because the people had a clever plan or superior force. The strange command stripped away every human explanation and left only one: God did this.

Draw out the principle. God often works in ways that confound human wisdom precisely so that the glory belongs to Him alone. He chooses methods the world calls foolish to display that the power is His. This will become important at Question 9, where the same pattern shows up in the gospel itself.

Apply it gently. We are tempted to trust God only when His plan matches our reasoning. Jericho teaches that God's ways do not need to make sense to us to be right, and that the victories that matter most are won by His power working through our obedience, not by our ingenuity.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's unconventional command designed to display His power, not human strategy
- The victory belonging clearly to God ('the Lord has given you the city,' Joshua 6:16)
- God working in ways that confound human wisdom so the glory is His
- The temptation to trust God only when His plan matches our reasoning
- Divine power as the true cause of victories that matter most

Discussion Prompts

- Why would God choose such an unusual way to take Jericho?
- What do Joshua 6:2 and 6:16 reveal about whose victory it really was?
- Where are you tempted to trust God only when His plan makes sense to you?

Question 4

Student Question: *Are there areas in your life where you tend to rely on your own strength, cleverness, or planning rather than on God? Where might He be asking you to trust His power instead of your method?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses Jericho into self-examination. Most of us are far more comfortable trusting our own competence than resting in God's power, especially in the areas where we feel capable. Help the class identify where self-reliance quietly takes the place of dependence on God, whether in work, finances, relationships, or even spiritual matters.

Clarify that the call is not to abandon planning or effort. Israel still had to march; the people still had to act. The issue is not whether we use our minds and hands, but whether our final confidence rests in our own ability or in God. Faith works, but it does not trust the work; it trusts the One who gives the increase.

Encourage honest, specific reflection and hope. Ask where God may be inviting them to loosen their grip on their own methods and lean on His power. Often He allows us to come to the end of our own resources precisely so that we will learn to depend on Him, and that dependence is not weakness but the very posture of faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-reliance as a subtle substitute for trust in God
- The difference between using our effort and trusting our effort
- Areas of competence as the hardest places to depend on God
- God bringing us to the end of our resources to teach dependence
- Dependence on God as the posture of faith, not a sign of weakness

Discussion Prompts

- In what area are you most tempted to rely on your own strength?
- What is the difference between working hard and trusting your work?
- Where might God be inviting you to lean on His power instead of your method?

Question 5

Student Question: *Notice the rhythm of Jericho: the people marched in obedience for seven days, and then God brought the walls down. How do human obedience and divine power work together here, so that the victory is clearly God's and yet the people still had to do exactly what He said?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question sits at the heart of the lesson's doctrine, so handle it with care. Jericho holds two truths together that people often pull apart. The walls fell by God's power alone; no amount of marching could topple stone. And yet the walls fell only after the people obeyed exactly, for seven days, on God's terms. Obedience did not earn the victory, but it was the appointed condition through which God gave it.

Help the class avoid two errors. The first says, 'God does it all, so my obedience does not matter.' Jericho refutes that: had Israel refused to march, or marched their own way, the walls would have stood. The second says, 'We accomplish it by our effort.' Jericho refutes that too: the marching itself had no power to break a wall. The truth is that God works through the obedience He commands.

Show the pattern running through all of Hebrews 11. By faith Noah built, by faith Abraham went, by faith Israel marched. In every case God supplies the power and the promise, and faith supplies the obedient response. The two are not rivals. Obedient faith is simply trust doing what God says and leaving the outcome to Him.

Bring it home. This guards us from both a passive faith that waits for God to act while ignoring His commands, and a proud self-reliance that thinks our works produce the result. The faithful disciple obeys fully and trusts God completely, giving Him all the glory when the walls come down.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's power and human obedience working together, not in competition
- Obedience as the appointed condition, not the cause, of God's victory
- The error of passive faith that ignores God's commands
- The error of proud self-reliance that credits human works
- The consistent Hebrews 11 pattern: God supplies power, faith supplies obedient response

Discussion Prompts

- How do God's power and the people's marching fit together at Jericho?
- Why is it wrong to say obedience does not matter because God does it all?
- Why is it equally wrong to say our effort produced the victory?

Question 6

Student Question: *What is one act of obedience God has clearly called you to that you have been putting off? What would it look like to take that step this week, even before you can see the result?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves from Jericho's pattern to personal action, so model gentleness and avoid producing mere guilt. Most believers have at least one clear command they have been delaying, perhaps a reconciliation, a confession, a habit to surrender, a step of generosity, or for some, obedience to the gospel itself. Naming it honestly is the first step toward taking it.

Highlight the phrase 'before you can see the result.' Israel marched six full days with no visible change in the walls. Obedience often looks fruitless for a long stretch before God acts. The temptation to quit is strongest on the silent days. Encourage the class that faithfulness is measured by obedience, not by immediate results.

Press toward one concrete step this week. Push past vague intentions to a specific, doable action. Faith is a muscle that grows by use, and the very act of obeying, even when the outcome is unseen, strengthens trust and positions us to see God work in His time.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of delaying clear obedience
- Obedience that continues even when results are not yet visible
- Faithfulness measured by obedience rather than immediate outcomes

- The strength of the temptation to quit on the silent days
- Concrete, specific steps of obedience as the path of growth

Discussion Prompts

- What clear act of obedience have you been putting off?
- What would taking that step look like this week?
- How does Israel marching six silent days encourage you to obey before you see results?

Question 7

Student Question: *Verse 31 says, 'By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.' Rahab was a Gentile outsider with a shameful past. What does it tell us about the grace and reach of God that she is included by name among these heroes of faith (compare Joshua 2:11)?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Let the class feel how surprising this inclusion is. Rahab was a Gentile, a woman, and a prostitute, three strikes against her in the eyes of the world and of religious respectability. Yet the Spirit names her here among the giants of faith, and even places her in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:5). God's grace reaches exactly the people the world writes off.

Point to Joshua 2:11, where Rahab confesses, 'the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.' She had only heard reports of what God did at the Red Sea and to the kings beyond the Jordan, yet she believed more truly than many who had seen it all. Her faith was real, and it reached out to the God she had only heard about.

Draw out the contrast in the verse itself. Rahab 'did not perish with those who were disobedient.' The whole city had heard the same reports she had; the difference was that she believed and acted while they hardened themselves. Grace was available, but only faith laid hold of it.

Apply it to the heart. No past is too dark and no person too far outside for the grace of God. Rahab stands as living proof that God delights to save the unlikely, and that what matters is not where a person has been but whether they will turn to Him in trusting obedience.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's grace reaching the outsider and the person with a sinful past
- Rahab's confession of faith based on what she had only heard (Joshua 2:11)
- The contrast between Rahab's faith and the city's disobedience
- Rahab honored among the faithful and placed in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:5)
- What matters is not a person's past but their turning to God in faith

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it remarkable that Rahab is named among the heroes of faith?
- What does her confession in Joshua 2:11 show about the reality of her faith?
- Who in our day might we be tempted to write off the way the world wrote off Rahab?

Question 8

Student Question: *Is there anything in your past that whispers you are too flawed or too far gone to be fully used or fully loved by God? How does Rahab's story speak directly to that lie?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a tender question, and many in the class will feel it deeply, even if they never say so aloud. The enemy loves to convince believers that their past disqualifies them, that grace is for others but not for them. Create a safe climate where this quiet shame can be named and brought into the light.

Let Rahab preach the answer. If God could take a Gentile prostitute and place her among the heroes of faith and in the family line of the Messiah, then no past is beyond the reach of His grace. The point is not that her sin did not matter, but that her faith met a grace larger than her sin. The same grace is offered still.

Move the class toward freedom and hope. Encourage them that God does not merely tolerate the forgiven, He uses them, honors them, and weaves their stories into His purposes. The voice that says 'too far gone' is a lie that Rahab's name in Hebrews 11 silences. Invite them to bring their past to the God who specializes in redeeming it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lie that one's past disqualifies them from God's love and use
- Grace larger than the sin it covers
- God not merely tolerating but honoring and using the forgiven
- Shame brought into the light as the path to freedom
- Rahab as enduring proof that no one is beyond God's reach

Discussion Prompts

- What past wound or failure whispers that you are too far gone?
- How does Rahab's place in Hebrews 11 answer that lie?
- What would change if you truly believed God wants to use you, not merely tolerate you?

Question 9

Student Question: *The same chapter that praises Rahab's faith is matched by James 2:25, which says, 'In the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?' Rahab did not merely believe in her heart that the God of Israel was the true God; she acted on that belief at the risk of her life, hiding the*

spies and tying the scarlet cord in her window. How does this teach us that the faith God honors is an active, obedient faith rather than belief alone, and how does this confront the popular idea that we are saved by 'faith only' apart from obeying God? Connect this to the way the gospel itself calls us to respond, including commands that the world may call foolish, such as being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (compare 1 Corinthians 1:18–25; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, so give it the most room and teach it clearly. Hebrews 11:31 praises Rahab's faith, and James 2:25 says she was 'justified by works' when she acted on that faith. These are not contradictory; they are two sides of one truth. Rahab's faith was not a private opinion that the God of Israel was real. It was a trust that put her life on the line, hiding the spies, defying her own king, and tying the scarlet cord as the appointed sign of her trust. Faith and obedience were one act.

Make the central point unmistakable. James 2:24 says plainly, 'a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.' Scripture itself uses the very phrase and denies it. The faith that saves is never bare belief; it is trust that obeys. This is the consistent witness of the whole chapter we have been studying: by faith Abel offered, by faith Noah built, by faith Abraham went, by faith Israel marched, by faith Rahab acted. In every case, faith did something. A belief that never moves to obedience is not the faith the Bible commends, for even the demons believe, and shudder (James 2:19).

Draw the line to Jericho's lesson and to the cross. God's command to march around the city seemed foolish, yet obeying it was the path to victory. In the same way, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). The world scoffs at the idea that God works through means that look weak or strange. But faith does not require God's commands to make sense before it obeys them.

Bring this home to the gospel itself, carefully and biblically. Just as Rahab's faith expressed itself in a specific act of obedience, the New Testament shows that saving faith responds to the gospel by hearing, believing that Jesus is Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and then living faithfully thereafter (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). The world may call baptism a mere ritual or an unnecessary work, just as marching seemed foolish and Rahab's cord seemed flimsy, but these are the appointed responses God has given. We are not saved by works of our own merit that put God in our debt; we are saved by grace, through a faith that trusts God enough to do what He says. Help the class see that obeying the gospel is not earning salvation but receiving it on God's terms, exactly as Rahab received deliverance by trusting and obeying.

Close with both clarity and warmth. The doctrine matters because lives hang on it, yet the heart of it is grace. God offers salvation freely, and the only fitting response to such grace is a faith

that trusts Him fully and obeys Him gladly, even when His commands run against the wisdom of the world.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rahab 'justified by works' when she acted on her faith (James 2:25)
- Scripture's own denial of salvation by 'faith alone' (James 2:24)
- Faith that saves as active, obedient trust, never bare belief (James 2:19)
- The consistent Hebrews 11 pattern of faith expressed in obedient action
- The message of the cross as foolishness to the world but the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)
- Obeying the gospel as faith's response on God's terms: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and baptism into Christ for forgiveness (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27)
- Obedience to the gospel as receiving grace on God's terms, not earning salvation by merit

Discussion Prompts

- How do Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 together define the faith that saves?
- Why does Scripture itself reject the idea that we are saved by faith alone?
- How is the world's view of baptism like its view of marching around Jericho, and what does faith do in response?

Question 10

Student Question: *Looking back over Hebrews 11:29–31 as a whole, the crossing of the sea, the falling of the walls, and the rescue of Rahab, name one concrete way Jesus is forming an obedient, trusting faith in you right now. What is one step of trust or obedience He is calling you to take this week?*

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage and turns it toward transformation. The three scenes share one thread: faith that trusts God enough to act on His word, whether stepping into the sea, marching around the walls, or risking everything on a scarlet cord. Ask each student to bring that thread into their own life right now.

Encourage concreteness over generality. The step might be entering a frightening situation trusting God to make a way, obeying a command that the world calls foolish, releasing self-reliance to depend on God's power, or for some, responding to the gospel itself in trusting obedience. Push gently past vague resolve toward one specific, nameable action for this week.

Lift their eyes to Christ, who is the goal of the whole study. Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2), and the aim is not merely stronger willpower but a life increasingly shaped into His likeness as we learn to trust and obey the Father as He did. Remind the class that the

same God who parted the sea and dropped the walls and saved Rahab is at work forming that very faith in them. Close by praying over the specific steps named.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal application of obedient, trusting faith to one concrete area of life
- Faith expressed in specific action, as in all three scenes of the passage
- Christ as the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2)
- Spiritual formation into the likeness of Christ as the aim of the study
- The role of prayer in taking a step of trust and obedience

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the three scenes speaks most to where you are right now?
- What one concrete step of trust or obedience is God calling you to this week?
- How can this class pray for and encourage you in that step?