



BY FAITH

MAY 24 - AUG 2

(6) "Jericho and Rahab"

HIGHLIGHT: *Hebrews 11:30-31 NLT*

H

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

30 It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

E

EXPLAIN

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

The Hebrews spent 400 years in bondage to the Egyptians and 40 years wandering through the interior Sinai peninsula and other wilderness areas under Moses' leadership. Moses is dead and God gives Joshua (probably in his nineties) the task of leading Israel's occupation of Canaan which had been promised to Abraham almost five centuries before.

Hebrews 11

v.30 While the text says that it was the **faith of the people of Israel that caused them to march around Jericho for 7 days**, causing its **walls to come crashing down**, it had to be Joshua's faith that encouraged them to do what seemed to be impossible. Remember what we are dealing with here: 400 years of slavery had corroded Israel's heart, bleached the fight out of them. A quick trip to the Promised Land turned into 40 years of grumbling, disbelief, idolatry, and bold-faced rebellion against God—so much so that many of them never completed the journey (see Numbers 14:26-38; 26:65; 1 Corinthians

10:1-5). It seems that Joshua, the old man, may have had some misgivings about himself and/or the people. For 40 years he witnessed the fickleness of people—and Moses had been their leader. Moses had performed miracles; Joshua had never performed one. How would he lead these people into a land filled with their enemies? Whatever questions he had, God reassured him that He would not fail him or abandon him (see Joshua 1:5-9). That was the strength that Joshua was counting on; not his own, but God's (see Psalm 121:1-3)—even when His way seemed utterly absurd (see Joshua 3:13-17; 5:13—6:1-5). Joshua's confidence in God strengthened his people's confidence. They obeyed his "anything-but-military" strategy for taking Jericho—the opening wedge of their campaign to take Canaan. Israel's old mindset of doubt and frustration gave way to hope and singing.

v.31 Whatever it was that triggered **Rahab the prostitute's faith** she seemed a most unlikely person to be used by God to help Israel. (1) She was a Canaanite—an enemy of Israel (see Joshua 2:1, 9-11 and Judges 1:9-10). (2) Rahab lived in an ancient world where a woman's prominence was rare—though God chose to use them for His glory (Miriam, Moses and Aaron's sister [Exodus 15:19-21], Deborah [Judges 4—5], Ruth became a blessing to Israel (Ruth 4:13-17, God spared his people from Haman's evil plot by using a woman named Esther (Esther 2:16-18; 4:13-14). (3) She was a prostitute. (4) She was dishonest. While Rahab was on the outermost circle of faith God used her for His purposes. There is no doubt that the nearer she would come to the Lord the more she would recoil from her previous lifestyle. Oh, the grace of God—that He is willing and able to use the most unlikely of us—and, in the process, transform us (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). "Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Through God's working in her life, Rahab became the great, great grandmother of King David—the ancestor of Jesus the Messiah (see Matthew 1:1, 5-6). Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

APPLY

A

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How does Joshua demonstrate true faith in God?
3. What can we learn from the faith of the prostitute Rahab?
4. What can we learn about God from Joshua and Rehab?
5. How do Joshua, Rahab, and everyone else mentioned in Hebrews 11 point to Jesus Christ?

RESPOND

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. In reading the stories of Joshua and Rahab, faith in God is a big part of them. One could ask, "Where did their faith come from?" Read the story of Rahab in Joshua 2. Her faith in God came from God revealing to her his plans to give their land to the nation of Israel. He revealed to her that He was "the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below." (Joshua 2:11) Take a look at your own life. Where did your faith in God come from? Where has God revealed himself to you so you would trust Him, put your faith in Him?

What are potential areas of your life that you still are not trusting in God?

2. Hebrews was written to a suffering church. The church was being persecuted and some of them were likely considering abandoning the faith. In Hebrews 11, we see a list of men and women who we can look to for hope (we ultimately look to Christ, but they serve as examples for us). Some of these saints are not even mentioned by name and clearly died in faith, because of their faith (see Hebrews 11:36-38). How can these examples, and ultimately Jesus (see Hebrews 12:1-3), help sustain us in times of suffering? Pick one of the men or women we looked at in Hebrews 11 and journal about how their example can help you. Also, include in your journal how Jesus is even better than that person.