

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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Can God Use Me?

Joshua 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

Key verse: “They said to Joshua: ‘Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us’” (Joshua 2:24).

Jericho was the invasion point through which Joshua and the Israelites would begin their campaign to take the Promised Land of Canaan. Jericho was located five miles west of the Jordan River. It was a walled, fortified city, supplied by springs of water. In preparation for the battle, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho.

While the spies were staying at the house of a local woman named Rahab, word somehow reached the king of Jericho that the two were there. He sent these orders to Rahab: “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land” (v. 3).

Rahab hid the two spies on her flat roof under “stalks of flax” (v. 6). She told the king’s men that the spies had been in her house but were now gone. Then she sent the king’s men on a goose chase outside the gates of Jericho, looking for the two spies (vv. 4-7). With Rahab’s help, the spies were able to escape back across the Jordan River and report to Joshua: “Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear of us” (v. 24).

Those words are almost identical to what Rahab had told the spies before they left Jericho: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you” (v. 14).

This story is more than a spy story. It centers on the remarkable story of this woman named Rahab. In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews includes her among the Bible’s examples of faith in God (Hebrews 11:31). And James 2:25 cites Rahab as an example of faith that is demonstrated by good works.

Most amazing of all, this Rahab is almost surely the same Rahab mentioned in Matthew’s genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5). If so, this woman from Jericho became the wife of Salmon, the mother of Boaz, and an ancestor of David and of Jesus! And to make Rahab’s story even more improbable, Joshua 2 tells us that she was a prostitute.

Now, many Bible scholars point out that this was probably not an occupation that she freely chose. In the ancient world, women were often forced into prostitution, to pay back family debts or merely to survive. Unfortunately, “sex slavery” is a growing

business in our world today. This was more than likely the plight of this woman from Jericho named Rahab.

Remarkably, she became a person whom God used in His big story of salvation. The story of Rahab ought to be a challenge and an encouragement to us—if God could use this woman with her tainted occupation, God can use you and me for His purposes too!

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren challenges the excuses people often make for why they can't serve the Lord: "Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was codependent, *Rahab was immoral*, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan woman had several failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. That is quite a variety of misfits, but God used each of them in his service. He will use you too, if you stop making excuses" (italics mine).

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