

A FAST Biblical Portrait: Rahab
An Example of Life-Changing Choices
John Kain, 2010

We meet Rahab early in the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan, beginning with Jericho: "Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there" (Joshua 2:1).

Apparently the presence of the Jewish spies attracted some attention, because the king of Jericho sent orders for Rahab to bring out the men who had entered her house. Instead, Rahab took the two men and hid them among stalks of flax she was drying on her roof. She then told the king's men that the Israelites had already left.

From the Israelites' perspective, Rahab was a hero, but in helping them, Rahab betrayed her own people. She stepped out in faith in a God she had heard about—and she lied to protect his people. Women are capable of great acts of faith, just as we men are. God works through ordinary women and ordinary men alike.

Courage and Faith

When the authorities of Jericho arrived at Rahab's door, she courageously protected the Israelites hidden on the roof. Yet this bravery is not the only reason she is a godly example for us men. Rahab also expressed an amazing faith in God. Hear her declaration to the Jewish spies:

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.
For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea
before you when you came out of Egypt,
—Joshua 2:9-10

This statement reveals why Rahab betrayed her people: she had heard the life-changing news about what the Lord had done, and she had believed. Many times we men hear what the Lord has done, but we refuse to believe—or, worse, we believe but we refuse to act on that belief. Rahab believed and acted, even though her actions put her life at risk.

Again, we men may talk about stepping out in faith, but many times that step has little meaning because the drop-off is small. But deadly consequences awaited Rahab with her step of faith: “Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death” (Joshua 2:12-13). Rahab had faith not only in what God had done and could do, but she also had faith that he—acting through his people—would spare her family. That is faith!

Why was Rahab a prostitute if she not only had a father but also brothers to help provide for her? The Bible doesn't explain. What we can appreciate, though, is that Rahab was an outcast from her society, yet she trusted that the Lord would not reject her. Relegated to a life of prostitution for whatever reason, Rahab trusted that the Lord would not abandon her.

A Life Changed by Faith

In an act that revealed her changed life and her new commitment to the Lord, Rahab let the spies down a rope through the window. (Her house was on the outer side of the city wall, and she lived within the wall itself.) The two spies then explained to Rahab that she must not betray them and that she must put a scarlet cord in the window before the city was attacked. Failure to act, despite her claim of faith, would result in her destruction. So, stepping out in faith, Rahab tied the cord... and waited (Joshua 2:14-21).

Rahab's faith and action saved not only herself but her entire family (Joshua 6:17). We men today have this same opportunity, and it presents itself in many forms. We can pray for and with our spouse and/or children whenever we sense they need God's help. We can read the Word out loud to our families and openly express our excitement about walking with God each day. We can bring our families to places of worship to gather with other believers. And, dads, we can gather in father/son groups to discuss what it means to be a godly man. By walking in faith, godly men *and* godly women open the door for the Holy Spirit to work not only in our lives but also in the lives of their loved ones.

So what happened to Rahab and her family? They survived the destruction of Jericho and lived in Israel after their city's fall. Hers was indeed a life-changing faith—for her and for those she loved.

One more point. The New Testament chroniclers didn't need to include women in their genealogies, but Matthew included four women of faith: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. And we can definitely learn from courageous Rahab who let her faith in God change her life.