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The Twelve Spies

Scripture: Numbers 13:1-14:35

Theme: Faith sees God's faithfulness; fear sees only obstacles

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

"Faith in Action: Rahab's Bold Trust" (High School Lesson Overview) Rahab's story in Joshua 2, 6 challenges us to confront the tension between theoretical belief and lived obedience. While her faith was rooted in God's promises, knowing His sovereignty over Jericho, her action required reckless courage: sheltering strangers, lying to enemies, and trusting God's timing despite the stakes. Theologically, this reveals that faith isn't passive assurance but dynamic obedience, a posture of vulnerability where we risk our reputations, comfort, or safety on God's behalf. Real-world application? Like Rahab, modern believers must ask: Where are we hiding in our lives that we must stand firm? Her story isn't just about spies or cities; it's a warning: Faith without action risks becoming empty words, yet Rahab's example proves that when trust meets boldness, God's promises are fulfilled in ways we never imagined. (Volunteer tip: End with a discussion: "What 'Jerichos' in your life demand boldness? How can we pray for courage to 'fall down' like Rahab?")

Bible Story

Sunday School Lesson: Rahab , Faith in Action Joshua 2:1-24, 6:1-25

The walls of Jericho stood as a monument to human strength and fear, towering, impregnable, and guarded by a city's defenses that seemed unbreakable. Yet, in the same breath, the people of Israel, who had only days earlier crossed the Jordan on dry land, stood paralyzed, their courage wavering as they approached the city of Canaan. The Israelites' confidence had been shaken by the massive armies of the Amorites, who had already crushed the nations of the Jordan Valley with iron discipline. Desperate, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho under the cover of night, risking their lives to scout the land. The city's inhabitants, however, welcomed them not with suspicion but with hospitality, a stark contrast to the brutality they would later inflict upon the Israelites. This moment, though fleeting, was a turning point. It revealed something profound: faith in God was not just an internal conviction but an active,

tangible choice, one that demanded courage, sacrifice, and the willingness to defy the status quo.

Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho, became the first woman in Scripture named by faith. Her home, which had once been a place of moral ambiguity, became a sanctuary for the spies, hiding them in a bull's hide (a symbolic reference to her own life, which was often described as "a harlot" in Canaanite culture). Her action was not a spontaneous impulse but a calculated response to the unseen power of God. When the Israelites' army approached Jericho, Rahab's faith was put to the test. Instead of fleeing or betraying the spies, she risked everything, her reputation, her safety, and her life, to save them. Her words, "Surely I know that the Lord has delivered the land into your hand" (Joshua 2:9), were not mere words; they were a confession that the God of Israel was not bound by the limitations of human cities. This faith, however, was not passive. It demanded action: Rahab lowered the spies down a window, climbed a roof, and then, when the Israelites' army came, she bound them with scarlet thread, a visual reminder that the God of the Hebrews had already won the battle. Her faith was a bridge between the Old Testament and the New, showing that God's people were not just those who confessed His name but those who lived it in ways that transformed their world.

The real-world implications of Rahab's story extend far beyond the walls of Jericho. Her faith was not about escaping judgment but about trusting in God's promises even when the outcome was uncertain. In a world where many of us face moral dilemmas that defy easy answers, whether it's lying to protect someone, making choices that contradict societal expectations, or acting in ways that seem "unrighteous" by worldly standards, Rahab's example challenges us to ask: What would it look like to live faithfully when the cost is high? The Israelites had seen the power of God at the Red Sea, yet Jericho's walls were still standing. Rahab's action was a declaration that faith is not just about believing God can do the impossible, it's about believing He will use you to do it. Her story invites us to consider whether we, like her, would choose courage over comfort, even when the world condemns our actions.

The final chapter of this story unfolds in Joshua 6, where the Israelites' faith is put to the ultimate test. After Rahab's intervention, God commanded Joshua to march around Jericho's walls seven times, blowing trumpets and shouting, an act of obedience that defied logic. The city fell not because of human strength but because God had promised to give it to His people. Rahab, who had hidden the spies, was not forgotten. Instead, she was honored as a descendant of Abraham, her faith remembered as a precursor to the Messiah (Matthew 1:5). Her story ends not with her becoming a pious wife but with her being saved from destruction, yet again, her faith was not passive but active, rooted in action. This raises a critical theological question: How does faith intersect with obedience? Rahab's story shows that true faith is not about having all the answers but about trusting God enough to follow His commands, even when they seem irrational or costly. In a world where many of us struggle with doubts or feel like our faith is not enough, Rahab's example reminds us that God is not bound by our limitations. He calls us to live in ways that honor His name, even when the cost is steep.

Why does this story matter? Because Rahab's life exposes the tension between the theology of grace, the idea that God's mercy and salvation are unconditional, and the practice of faith, the daily choices that make our belief real. Her story challenges us to ask: Where are we called to act like Rahab? In a world where many of us avoid moral dilemmas out of fear or comfort, Rahab's courage invites us to ask: What would it look like to trust God enough to risk everything for His purposes? Whether it's hiding strangers, speaking truth to power, or standing against injustice, Rahab's story is a reminder that faith is not just about belief, it's about action. And in a culture that often measures success by external standards, her story teaches us that God values our lives not for what we achieve but for how we choose to live, even when the world does not understand. Ultimately, Rahab's faith is a bridge between the Old Testament and the New, showing that God's plan was not just to rescue Israel but to rescue all people, including those who, like Rahab, were once outside the circle of God's favor. In a world where salvation is often tied to identity, her story asks: What does it mean to be saved by grace, regardless of our past?

Key Verse

Numbers 14:9

Joshua 2:11 encapsulates a profound theological insight: God's sovereignty isn't confined to the spiritual realm or abstract theology, He is present in every layer of reality, from the heavens where angels dwell to the earth where

history unfolds. This truth demands humility: if God is sovereign over creation, our struggles, choices, and even the most mundane aspects of life aren't "accidents" but moments where His will intersects with ours. Real-world application: This verse calls us to recognize that divine presence isn't passive, it's active. When facing uncertainty (like in the hidden situation of Rahab's house), faith isn't wishful thinking but trusting in a God who governs all, demanding we surrender our anxieties to His authority. Theologically, it also challenges us: if He's everywhere, why do we sometimes feel distant? The answer? Our relationship with Him must be intentional, like cultivating a garden where He is the gardener, not just the soil.

Activities

Activity 1:

Students design a collaborative comic strip or diagram mapping Rahab's actions in Joshua 6, exploring how her faith intersects with the broader narrative of Israel's conquest. The activity critiques militarism vs. divine strategy.

Supplies needed:

- *Uses minimal supplies and leverages creativity to engage abstract theological ideas.*

1. Theological Reflection (5 min)
2. Divide students into groups of 3, 4. Each group reads Joshua 2:1, 4, 12, 13, 24 and identifies:
3. What risks did Rahab take? (Physical, moral, social)
4. What motivated her faith? (Fear of God, love for strangers, or something else?)
5. Prompt question: "Was Rahab's action a 'faith response' or a 'calculated survival strategy'?" Discuss how her choices contrast with other biblical figures (e.g., Lot, Moses).
6. Debate Prep (5 min)
7. Assign each group one of these themes to debate as a class:
8. "Rahab's hiding the spies was an act of justice, not just courage."
9. "Her faith was conditional, she only trusted God after seeing evidence (the spies' return)."
10. Encourage them to cite scriptural passages and real-world analogies (e.g., whistleblowers, refugees).
11. Timed Discussion (5 min)
12. Present the debate topics to the class. Use the timer to limit responses to 1, 2 minutes per side. Vote on which argument resonated most.
13. Real-World Connection (2 min)
14. Ask: "Where do we see Rahab-like courage today? How might her story apply to issues like xenophobia, persecution, or systemic injustice?"
2. "The Walls of Jericho: Visualizing Faith in Practice"
16. Biblical Outline (3 min)
17. Distribute or project the key events of Joshua 6 (e.g., Rahab's hospitality, the spies' mission, the city's destruction). Have students note:
18. What was Rahab's role in the plan? (She wasn't a soldier but still played a critical role.)
19. How does her story fit into God's larger purpose? (The conquest was symbolic, not literal; Rahab became a "mother of Israel.")
20. Comic Strip Activity (7 min)
21. Option 1: Sequential Art
22. Assign 3, 4 students to act as "scenes" (e.g., Rahab offering a red cord; the spies returning; the walls falling). Each student draws their scene, then rearranges them to tell the story chronologically. Add speech bubbles to dialogue (e.g., Rahab: "The Lord your God...").
23. Option 2: Theological Diagram
24. Work in groups to create a mind map linking Rahab's actions to themes:
25. Faith vs. fear

26. Hospitality and justice
27. Divine strategy vs. human violence
28. Group Presentation (3, 5 min)
29. Each group shares their creation. Ask: "How does Rahab's story challenge or reinforce common assumptions about war, faith, and morality?"
30. Critical Reflection (2 min)
31. Discuss: "God used Rahab's courage to advance His mission. How might modern communities use faith to dismantle injustice without replicating Rahab's circumstances?"
32. Why These Work for High Schoolers:
33. Intellectual Honesty: Both activities push students to grapple with why Rahab acted as she did (not just "she was brave") and connect it to broader theological debates (e.g., pacifism vs. redemptive violence).
34. Real-World Application: Activities like the debate and comic strip encourage critical thinking about ethics, systemic issues, and faith in marginalized contexts.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended, intellectually engaging discussion questions that explore Rahab's Faith in Action from a theological, historical, and real-world perspective, designed for high school students (15, 18 years old):
- 1. Moral Ambiguity and Ethical Dilemmas
- Rahab is often praised for her faith, but her actions, hiding strangers under straw in a foreign city, raise ethical questions. How would you respond if confronted with a similar moral dilemma: placing your life in danger for another's? What does Rahab's choice reveal about the nature of faith in practical circumstances (e.g., standing by a friend, protecting the vulnerable, or defying social norms)? Consider how her story might challenge or inspire you in a time when quick judgments (or silence) might be expected.
- 2. Faith and Strategic Sacrifice
- Joshua 6 shows that Rahab's faith wasn't just personal devotion, it was a calculated act of solidarity with God's people. How do you think Rahab knowingly risked her life to ensure Israel's deliverance? What does this say about faith as a strategic choice rather than a passive belief? How might modern believers use faith to take risked action in contexts where justice, hospitality, or unity demands boldness?
- 3. Theological Themes: Covenant, Redemption, and Identity
- Rahab's story intersects with the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12) and later with Israel. How does her inclusion in Israel's lineage (Gen. 21:21; Heb. 11:31) challenge or affirm the idea of God's covenant as inclusive? Does her story complicate or reinforce the idea that faith is inherited or earned through action? How does this connect to contemporary debates about identity, belonging, and marginalization (e.g., refugees, immigrants, or outcasts)?
- 4. Real-World Application: Faith in Marginalized Spaces
- Rahab lived in a city (Jericho) that was under threat from God's people. Today, many places of faith and justice operate in similarly precarious environments (e.g., refugee camps, religious minorities under persecution, or communities fighting systemic oppression). How might Rahab's example inspire you to:
 - Protect the vulnerable in your own context (e.g., through advocacy, charity, or solidarity)?
 - Risk reputation or safety for a cause you believe in?
 - Reject the temptation to compromise when faith demands boldness?
 - Bonus Reflection: What is one specific way Rahab's story could challenge or inspire you to act this week?
- These questions encourage students to grapple with:
- Theological depth (faith as action, covenant, identity),

- Moral complexity (what does faith cost?),
- Real-world relevance (how does this apply to justice, community, or personal discipleship?), and
- Personal commitment (how might their own faith be shaped by Rahab's example?).

Prayer Focus

"Lord, as we study Rahab's story, a woman of faith who risked everything to protect strangers while hiding her own people's shame, grant us courage to trust You in ways that challenge convention. May our minds and hearts be shaped by truth, yet our lives marked by action: boldness in obedience, humility in witness, and the faith that transcends fear, just as Rahab's did." (Theological + real-world ties: Her narrative bridges covenant loyalty (Joshua 2:13) with ethical responsibility, seeing others' need as sacred. For students, this becomes a prayer for discernment: where does God call us to "do the unexpected" for justice or love?)

>> Missions Spotlight

In many parts of South Asia, women face enormous social pressure. Missionaries working among women in rural India share Rahab's story to show that God values and saves women of faith, regardless of their past or social status.

-> To the Cross

Rahab was a foreigner and a sinner, yet she believed in Israel's God and was saved. She's listed in Jesus' family tree (Matthew 1:5) and in the 'Hall of Faith' (Hebrews 11:31). Salvation has always been by faith, not by being the right nationality.