



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

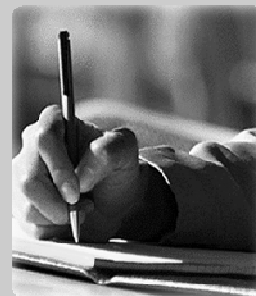


HG63: Inhabiting The Promised Land (2/7)
Rahab: Protecting The Two Spies

Joshua 2:1-24

Home Group Study Notes

22nd January 2012 - Andy Smith



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Would you rather eliminate hunger and disease or be able to bring lasting world peace?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1) Rahab found herself in an unexpected situation when the two spies appeared at her door. Has there ever been a time when you have found that God has put you in an unexpected situation? What did you do?

2) The whole city of Jericho was said to be "melting with fear" just like watching the news today gives us a lot to be afraid of. How does faith in Jesus strengthen you when society seems to be worried about so much?

3) Rahab created a lasting legacy because of her faith. What do you hope to be remembered for?

To conclude, we have looked at Rahab's faith and how it changed her life and the lives of her family. I want us to focus now on our faith, to challenge us to deepen our relationship with Jesus and to help us think about the how our faith can impact the lives of those around us.

A Singular Faith

Our faith should be something that we have come to all by ourselves. Just because your family have always come to church, or just because you are a person who does good things doesn't mean you have faith. Also, you cannot make other people have faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is something each person has to come to all by themselves. It is our mission to share this faith with others. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands us to: "go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

How we make disciples is vital to fulfilling the call Jesus puts on our lives. A good friend of mine, who is a vicar in the USA, puts it like this, "Every action I do, every word I say is either gospel or not-gospel." We have so many people in our lives that need to know the love of Jesus – let's not waste any opportunity to "step into the promised land".

A Stable Faith

To be stable means we need to be committed to a deep relationship with Jesus. We need to be reading about him in the Bible, talking and listening to him through prayer. You wouldn't say you had a deep relationship with someone you only acknowledged one morning a week in church. Let's get serious about relating to Jesus, who invites us into new life with him.

A Sympathising Faith

How we relate to other people, shows our deepest desires. Do we desire to see God's Kingdom come here in our town? John 13:34-35 says this, ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Not only do we have to love our town and the people in it, we have to love each other. Jesus is saying here that the love we have for each other shows others we believe in Him. Everyone turn to their neighbours and say, "I love you." Seems odd perhaps? Hopefully not ... it should be natural for us all. If we don't love each other, how can we expect to love the people of Billericay?

A Sanctifying Faith

Our faith should not just change us but those around us. Rahab's family had their lives changed – Rahab herself became part of Jesus' earthly family. The faith of the centurion in Matthew 8 amazes Jesus so much that He is able to heal the servant without even going to him. I wonder how much our actions actually show others Jesus. Jesus is the only thing that is going to change this town. He is the only thing that can change people because he is the only thing that can save us from death. Rahab was facing death and she knew it but her willingness to change and have faith in God meant she was given a second chance at life. Is that not the gospel message right there? We are all given a second chance at life, no matter who we are – prostitute, thief, liar, cheat, broken – it doesn't matter because Jesus Christ loves us all.

Rahab's life after Jericho was vastly different to the one she left behind. When we encounter God, we have a choice. We can choose to acknowledge God is there but if we stop short of changing then we have not properly repented and 'turned from' our old ways.

What is God saying to you today? I know there are many areas of my life that I need to change. It's a lifetime's work but it is something we must be committed to as a church. We have to show God we mean it when we sing worship songs to Him, that we mean it when we pray "Your will be done". Our worship has to be lived out through action otherwise they're only words and noise. St Paul puts it like this in 1 Corinthians 13:1: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal".

Being religious and coming to church are not enough – God demands that we are 'set apart' and holy which is what sanctified means. To have a sanctifying faith means that, like Rahab, we are changed by the love of God. The change in Rahab was a big one. She went from being at the bottom of the social ladder, to a new life of freedom living amongst the Israelites. If we jump forward a little to Joshua 6:17, the text confirm that Rahab was saved. It says, "Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent."

And then verses 22-25 say this: ²² Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." ²³ So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. ²⁵ But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

So, amidst all the destruction, Rahab and her family not only escape, they become part of the Israelite nation. This could be a happy ending for Rahab but it's not the last that we read about her. Rahab's faith meant that she built a legacy through her family. Back at the beginning of this talk I asked if anyone knew about their family tree.

If we look at Matthew 1:5-6 we can see that:

⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**,

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of **King David**.

Rahab went from being a pagan prostitute in Jericho, to becoming the Great, Great Grandmother of King David. This also means that Rahab was a direct descendant of **Jesus**. Matthew is telling us this because he wants to let us know something about who Jesus is. The whole of Matthew 1 is there so that people know that the Jewish Messiah came from a family that had prostitutes, non-Jews, adulterers, good people, bad people – every kind of person. Matthew is telling us that Jesus is for everyone and not just for the Jewish people. Jesus came as the Messiah to rescue the whole world and he came from a family that not everyone would have been proud of.

Rahab played her part in this – she took the opportunity God gave her and turned her life around. She became a symbol of great faith in Jewish culture, the writer of Hebrews mentions her in a long list of people held up because of their great faith in chapter 11:31: By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

4) Spurgeon categorised Rahab's faith as having four characteristics - singular, stable, sympathising and sanctifying. How is your own faith in these 4 areas? Could you be stronger in some? What changes could be made?

5) Rahab's faith impacted the lives of those closest to her. How could/does your faith affect your nearest and dearest?

6) What are the missional implications of a strong faith? What difference could it make to Billericay?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG63: Inhabiting The Promised Land (2/7) *Rahab: Protecting The Two Spies*

Joshua 2:1-24

Home Group Sermon Notes

22nd January 2012 - Andy Smith

Introduction

How many people here have traced back their family tree? It's a lot easier to research these days with more and more census data now available online. I've had a look back at my Grandfathers side and managed to get back to around 1550. Hailing as I do from the north-east, there are an array of miners, farm hands, ship builders and tradesmen going back for generations. The most interesting thing we found was a couple of odd names but there were no really distinguished characters that jumped out. Perhaps you have some inventors or philanthropists or even missionaries in your family. Maybe there are some notorious or infamous people in your bloodline? Who knows?

The person we are studying today is famous for a number of reasons. Rahab was a prostitute who lived on the edge of the large pagan city of Jericho. In this account from the book of Joshua, we hear about how she saves not only the spies sent by Joshua but manages to save herself and her family because of her actions. As we look into her character this morning we will also see that her legacy goes far beyond 24 verses in the Old Testament. We will see that Rahab was a woman of bravery, a woman of intelligence, a woman of strength and most importantly a woman of FAITH.

I want to talk about how our faith can change our lives and the lives of those around us. In the first part, I want to look at Rahab's story and how her faith sets an important example for us today. In the second part, I want us to focus on how we can use the example set by Rahab to start "inhabiting the promised land" and to ask some searching questions of us all to help us grow in our faith for the benefit of others.

So let's begin by turning to Joshua 2. We pick up where we left off from Paul's sermon on Joshua 1: Joshua has replaced Moses as the leader of the Israelite nation and has started to mobilise the people for entering into the Promised Land. In verse 1, Joshua sends two spies over the river to "look over the land, especially Jericho." Joshua knew that Jericho would be the first place that his army would have to fight and therefore needed to know what he was up against. So off the spies go and head straight into house of a prostitute – Rahab's house.

You might be forgiven for thinking that this was perhaps an example of "boys being boys" by ending up in a brothel. However, it was probably the cleverest place for two strangers to head to as the majority of people would not have thought twice about seeing strange men going into a brothel. But the passage tells us that they are spotted straight away – maybe they weren't very good spies? It is more likely that the people of Jericho were feeling somewhat 'edgy' about the Israelites being so close by and were on the lookout for anyone from out of town. Rahab even says in verse 9 that everyone in the city was "melting in fear" because of the Israelites – they had heard what God had done, they knew about the victories God had given the Israelites and they were scared.

Notice though that they didn't change their ways despite knowing about God's amazing power. In fact, Rahab is the only person to act on what she knows to be true. Rahab acts by protecting the 2 spies – hiding them under piles of straw on the roof. She then sends the pursuers out of the city thus ensuring the men aren't found. It is however her confession to the spies in verses 9-13 that show us more about her faith. Rahab confesses that the whole city is scared and that they have heard about how God led his people out of Egypt. She also acknowledged that God is the one God of Heaven and Earth. The great Baptist preacher from the late 19th century, Charles Spurgeon, highlighted four areas of Rahab's faith in one of his typically passionate sermons. Spurgeon noted Rahab had:

- A Singular Faith
- A Stable Faith
- A Sympathising Faith
- A Sanctifying Faith

Rahab lived on the edge of a great city. She was a prostitute and therefore at the bottom of the social ladder. She was one step short of rejection. Her house, built into the wall would have made her extremely vulnerable to enemy attack. It is in this situation that her **Singular** faith is built. She is on her own and yet she comes to understand the power and majesty of God. She was intelligent enough to put her own life at risk, so she could ultimately save it. I wonder how much time we spend thinking about the power and the majesty of God? It's easier to think of Jesus as a friend who I have a personal relationship with but that is often at the expense of remembering that He is the creator of the universe and is therefore *sovereign*. God being sovereign means that He gets to have his way regardless and that is exactly what Rahab saw coming. God was leading his people to freedom and Rahab wanted to be part of that.

Rahab's ability to follow through with her plan and not be shaken shows her faith to be **Stable**. When the king sends people to her house to look for the spies, Rahab remains calm and faithful to the spies. I'm not sure how calm I would be if the police came banging on my door. How strong is your faith? Ask yourself if the things you do each day strengthen your faith or weaken it. When life throws surprises your way are you able to stand firm in your convictions? Jesus tells the story of the wise man building his house upon a rock, so that when the storm came the house stood firm. Is that your faith? Is it our faith? If a storm were to arrive would we find our house was knocked down because it was built on sand? Or would we be like Rahab in verse 11 and say, "God is the King of heaven above and earth below."

When talking to the spies, Rahab manages to save her family too. She isn't selfish; her **Sympathising** faith highlights her loving nature. She could have asked the spies to take her with them. By thinking about others, Rahab is able to save the lives of those she loves. The kindness that she displayed was given back to her. How do we as a church show kindness to others? How do we as individuals love our families and our neighbours? Do we display a 'sympathising faith' by putting others before ourselves? The Good News we have in Jesus Christ is not ours to keep. We are indebted to others to share it with those around us. Our faith should be something that benefits other people.

Ultimately, Rahab's faith changed her – this is what Spurgeon referred to as her **Sanctifying** Faith. Rahab heard about God and changed. She acted differently – she repented. To repent is to literally "turn from" and do something else. We teach our children that in order to be sorry they need to do more than just say the word – they have to show us that they mean it. When we are sorry, we try our hardest to not make the same mistake again.