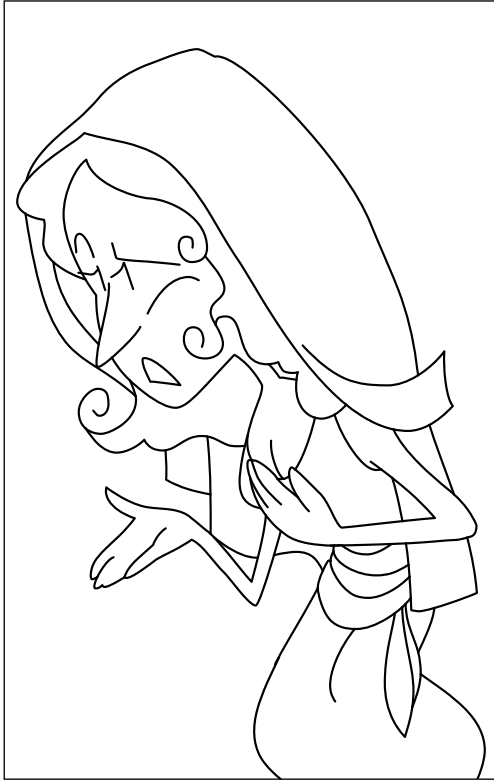


Rahab and The Spies



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Joshua 2:1-14

Joshua chose two men as spies and sent them from their camp at Acacia with these instructions: “Go across the river and find out as much as you can about the whole region, especially about the town of Jericho.” The two spies left the Israelite camp at Acacia and went to Jericho, where they decided to spend the night at the house of a prostitute named Rahab. But someone found out about them and told the king of Jericho, “Some Israelite men came here tonight, and they are spies.” So the king sent soldiers to Rahab’s house to arrest the spies.

Meanwhile, Rahab had taken the men up to the flat roof of her house and had hidden them under some piles of flax plants that she had put there to dry. The soldiers came to her door and demanded, “Let us have the men who are staying at your house. They are spies.” She answered, “Some men did come to my house, but I didn’t know where they had come from. They left about sunset, just before it was time to close the town gate. I don’t know where they were going, but if you hurry, perhaps you can catch them.”

The guards at the town gate let the soldiers leave Jericho, but they closed the gate again as soon as the soldiers went through. Then the soldiers headed towards the River Jordan to look for the spies at the place where people cross the river. Rahab went back up to her roof. The spies were still awake, so she told them: “I know that the Lord has given Israel this land. Everyone shakes with fear because of you. We heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea so you could leave Egypt. And we heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings east of the River Jordan. We know that the Lord your God rules heaven and earth, and we’ve lost our courage and our will to fight.

“Please promise me in the Lord’s name that you will be as kind to my family as I have been to you. Do something to show that you won’t let your people kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and their families.” “Rahab,” the spies answered, “if you keep quiet about what we’re doing, we promise to be kind to you when the Lord gives us this land. We pray that the Lord will kill us if we don’t keep our promise!”

Commentary

The two spies discovered more than just how strong a city Jericho was when they stayed at Rahab's home. Her words told them that the news of what God had done to rescue, guide and fight for the people of Israel had already spread to nations far away. God's protection of his people in the desert was clearly well known and had already drawn some outsiders, like Rahab, to recognize that Israel's Lord was the one true God. No wonder she was prepared to put her life at risk by hiding the spies on her roof and sending the soldiers off on a wild goose chase.

Rahab's faith in Israel's God must have come as a surprise to the men, but she was one of many people in the Bible from outside Israel who decided to put their trust in the Lord. She asked for protection for her whole family when Joshua eventually took the town, and this request was honoured. This outsider also later married an Israelite and, as is recorded in Matthew's Gospel (chapter 1), she became an ancestor of the family line into which Jesus was born. God's rescue plans clearly include people from every nation, not just Israel.

Questions

- ▶ How did Rahab put her faith in God into action?
- ▶ Why might the spies have been surprised by what she told them?
- ▶ What different reactions might there have been back in Joshua's camp to the news that they already seemed to have a 'friend on the inside'?
- ▶ Rahab believed that Joshua would take Jericho before it happened. How can we show faith like this?



Visual aid

Use red rope as a focus. Later in the story, the spies tell Rahab to put a red rope at her window so that the invaders will know where she is and won't attack her home. This red rope becomes a sign of her faith in God.



Activity idea

The spies have to hide from the soldiers. As a family, play a simple game of hide and seek. Which place in the home turns out to be the best place to hide?



Prayer idea

The spies had to trust someone whom they had thought of as an enemy, but this enemy turned out to be a friend to whom God had already spoken. Write out the seven letters of the word ENEMIES on separate pieces of card and, on the reverse, write the seven letters of the word FRIENDS. Now, as you pray about different people who, for some reason, make you feel afraid or in danger, turn over each letter of the word 'enemies' and ask God to help you love them as 'friends', just as he does.

Key verse

We know that the Lord your God rules heaven and earth (Joshua 2:11).

New Testament story link

Acts 10: Peter discovers that a Roman soldier named Cornelius is not an enemy but a friend.



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