

# going deeper study guide

## wise moves: rahab



LIFE GROUPS

doing life together

*"Courage is found in unlikely places."*

J. R. R. Tolkien

*"Removing the faults in a stage-coach may produce a perfect stage-coach, but it is unlikely to produce the first motor car. "*

Edward de Bono

*In Life Groups, kids, youth and adults study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life.*

### Unlikely Honoree

Confession time: I have often been left scratching my head when reading Hebrews 11 and finding Rehab mentioned in the "Hall of Faith" (v. 31) right alongside Abraham, Moses, Enoch, Samson, David, and others. She seemed an out of place member of this club – an unlikely hero of the Bible. It wasn't her seedy profession (rarely is her name ever used without a descriptor such as "the harlot" tagged on - more on that later) that creates the disconnect for me. After all, David is on this list too (v. 32) and we know what a train wreck some of his decisions were, right?

No, it's the actual deed that she did that is credited to her as faith that actually puzzled me. It just seemed to pale compared to what some of the other folks bring to the table. Moses parts the Red Sea - Rahab hides a couple dudes on her roof. See what I mean? I think there's more here though than initially meets the eye – and maybe some things we can apply to our own lives as well.

Let's set the context. Read:

-- Joshua 2:1-16

-- Hebrews 11:31

-- James 2:18-26

Q :: Both Hebrews 11 and James 2 state that what Rahab did was evidence of her faith. That seems to me to not be immediately obvious how. It seems kind, generous, helpful, merciful - but how was what she did a FAITHful act?

Q :: When compared to the great and mighty deeds of some of the other biblical "Hall of Faith" members, what can we learn from Rahab's inclusion on this list?

Q :: We learn in Proverbs that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". How does Rahab demonstrate this principle?

Q :: If you've been in the church for some amount of time you've probably heard the very churchy definition of the term "fear of the Lord" given as "a reverent awe". But when I read the story in Joshua 2 I do not see that type of fear being demonstrated. Instead, I see the good, old-fashioned "I fear God because He can destroy me". This completely jives with the passage from Matthew 10:28 that says: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (NIV). For what other reasons, and in what other ways, might it be "wise" to fear God?

Q :: Rahab's action was potentially very costly. What did Rahab risk by doing what she did?

Q :: The idea that "it's not the size of the deed, but the level of faith that's in it" is a very powerful concept. We see this dramatically demonstrated in Rahab's story. What very practical things can we glean from this truth, and how might we apply them?

## Unlikely Heroes

Everyone loves an underdog story. The unlikely hero that comes up big when it counts. The more unlikely the hero, the more we end up pulling for them. As a comic book collector since I was a boy, I have seen this same principle borne out in the pages. While nobody (curiously) suspects that Clark Kent is really Superman, or that billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne is really the caped crime fighter Batman, it wasn't until more than 20 years after these titles launched that the concept of the unlikely hero was really pushed to the limit. In August 1962, comic writer Stan Lee had an idea for a new superhero. The primary objection to the concept: the normal alter ego of the hero was to be a nerdy high school kid who had more problems in his personal life than he did fighting his enemies. That a scrawny high school bookworm would also be a powerful superhero was deemed just too unbelievable an idea for the public to buy into. It was such a mold-breaking notion that even his creators doubted it would be accepted. So they told their story and tucked it into a comic called *Amazing Fantasy*; issue #15, which was to be the last issue of that series. In case you haven't figured it out, that character was Spider-Man, and, to say the least, they were more than a little wrong about his chances for success.

When observed through the right set of glasses, it's easy to see how the creators of Spider-Man were using a biblical storytelling model to tell their tale (even if they weren't aware of it). Aren't most all of the heroes of Scripture prime examples of "unlikely heroes" at their core. Moses: murderer. David: adulterer and murderer (he didn't do the deed, but he did set it up). Even Jesus qualifies as an unlikely hero from an earthly perspective. In John 1:46, it reads: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked." – that's not exactly a vote of confidence. Like Spider-Man's radioactive spider bite that sent the powerful venom deep into him and produced something altogether new and powerful, ordinary Biblical folks became the storied heroes of our faith after something new enters in and produces incredible change deep in their lives.

Q :: What are some problematic elements in the story of Rahab that make her seem a bit unlikely to be held out as a model and shining example of faith?

Q :: What are some of the things we tell ourselves – about ourselves – that we think disqualify us from being an example of faith to other believers?

Q :: The story of Spider-Man succeeded because people identified with nerdy Peter Parker – despite the strong doubts beforehand that forced the story into a book that execs had already decided that no one was reading. Yes, readers loved the web-swinging hero, but the story aspect that the Marvel Comics executives feared would turn people off was *the very thing* that drew people in. How might this apply to YOU and YOUR story?

## Unlikely Sources of Hope

OK, here's the deal. I read so much in the Bible that gives me hope. But not in the more traditional sense (what fun would that be, right?). Not in the sense of "I have hope that my eternal destination is all wrapped up and secure." No, I'm talking about the hope that looks at someone who is SUCH a hate-filled and detestable person as Saul of Tarsus, and God looks at him and says "THAT'S my guy! Throw some scales over his eyes for a few days, give him a new name to go with his new mission, and 'voila!' - ladies and gentlemen, the apostle Paul!" THAT gives me hope.

When I can read about what a hot mess David had made of things with the choices he made, and yet God doesn't cast him aside. David's story sometimes seems to be one failure after another and yet God calls him "a man after my own heart" – how on earth could that NOT give you hope?

These stories give me hope because I see the horrible decisions I sometimes make, the opportunities I have missed or squandered, the myriad of ways that I can fall flat on my face. Yet, in the stories of Scripture I see a God who literally (I mean, literally) wrote the book on taking the most unlikely and unworthy of people and crafting such an amazing story of His power at work in and through them that they wind up in Hebrews 11. That is a wonderful hope for us all.

Q :: Share something from the Bible that gives you hope.

Q :: What is there in Rahab's story that might give us hope?

Q :: Earlier I mentioned that you rarely hear Rahab's name without also hearing a descriptor like "the harlot" tacked onto the end of it. Any insights into why she might be referred to in that way, when other biblical characters don't maintain such a descriptor of what they were before their faith changed them?

## **Conclusion:**

In God's economy, we are not defined by the biggest mistakes we make in our lives. On the contrary, in the Lord's economy, one small, yet brave, act that demonstrates our faith in, and fear of, Almighty God is enough to land us in the "Hall of Faith"!

We are told in Scripture to not think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Romans 12:3). But I think it's safe to say that God sees us differently than we see ourselves. We see this demonstrated in Scripture as well. God comes to the cowardly, excuse-making Gideon with this bold proclamation: "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." Gideon then proceeds to try and talk God out of that description of him. I'm afraid we often do the same thing.

To be clear, I'm not advocating a lack of practicing Romans 12:3. Nor am I trying to say that we should go about thinking that we are hot snot either. The Apostle Paul called himself "the worst of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15-16), and if anyone could have been all high and mighty about themselves after their conversion it would have been Paul.

But like so very, very much in the Christian life, I believe there is a balance that needs to be struck. We are, after all, as believers, adopted as sons and daughters into the very family of the King of the Universe. We are called joint heirs with Christ. That makes us royalty. We're princes and princesses of Heaven. It's actually mind-boggling to consider.

I don't believe God wants us walking around thinking we're better than anyone else - but I don't think he wants us walking around thinking we're losers either. We were losers, before Christ - but not anymore. The most important thing though, is that we have not brought ourselves out of loser status and into the position of being royalty. Jesus did that. Jesus alone. Not me. Jesus. Alone.

THAT'S why I can't think higher of myself than I ought.

As we go out into this week, we have the opportunity to act in faith. We never know that but one act of simple faith may very well be the context from which God writes our own entry into Heaven's "Hall of Faith".

Your verse starts with: "By faith, . . ."

How will you fill in the rest this week?