

Faith In Real Life: Stories of Hope In A Messed Up World

Part 3: When Ordinary People Take a Step of Trust, God Moves

Joshua 2: RAHAB

Summary: God moves in powerful ways through ordinary people who take one real step of trust... proving that your past, doubts, or failures can't disqualify you from His purpose.

Main Ideas:

Faith can feel slippery... like trying to grab hold of fog.

When ordinary people take one real step of trust, God moves.

God's heart is always to save people.

It takes courage to do the right thing when we don't know if it will work.

Faith is acting in trust when you don't have all the answers

Faith is the tool God uses to craft amazing stories.

Seeing ourselves as God sees us is an ongoing process.

God's story is bigger than your past or doubts.

Invitation: Pick one area to really trust God

Discussion Questions:

1. Who's someone whose faith inspires you, and what about their trust in God stands out to you?
2. Why do you think faith can sometimes feel hard to hold onto or define in real life?
3. What stood out to you most about Rahab and her faith?
4. What might "taking one step of trust" look like in your life right now?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Is there someone whose faith inspires you? What stands out to you about them?

- We've heard the big stories... people freed from addictions or generosity that goes viral.

But if you're like me, sometimes faith is confusing. It feels difficult to hold...

Faith can feel slippery... like trying to grab hold of fog.

- It can feel like something some people just "have," while others wonder if they ever will.

So what is faith really?

- It has to be more than just believing the right things and doing the right religious motions?
- Can it do anything for people stuck in routines, doubts, and disappointments?
- How do we know if we have faith at all?

This series is about real people who faced fear, failure, and doubt, but found hope anyway.

Today, we meet maybe the most unlikely example... Her name is Rahab.

- By every imaginable standard, we shouldn't even know Rahab's name...

From the outside, no one would pick her to be part of God's story.

- Her background should have disqualified her.
- Her own neighbors had written her off.
- But her story shows what happens when someone decides to trust God just as they are.

Her story answers a question we all ask at some point: "Can someone like me, with my fears or past, really take a step of faith that changes things?"

If you think your story disqualifies you, Rahab's story is proof it doesn't.

You don't have to be a spiritual giant or have a squeaky-clean past for God to work through you.

B/c... When ordinary people take one real step of trust, God moves.

GOD: 650 yrs before Rahab... God made a promise to Abraham.

- He would be the father of a great nation
- The whole world would be blessed b/c of his family.
- His descendants would inherit the land of Canaan... called the Promised Land b/c it was promised by God to Abraham.

BUT... God said it wouldn't be easy and it wouldn't be quick-

The plan unfolds through centuries...

- Slavery, deliverance, and wandering.
- Now, led by Joshua, Israel stands before the Promised Land.

But there was just one problem...

- Land wasn't empty... other nations were busy building cities and creating their own distinct cultures.
- So God commands his nation to go conquer and destroy these nations...

This is the stuff that makes a lot of people uncomfortable... for good reason.

- Don't want to give a pat answer... but this also isn't the main point for today

When we look at history, we see that these cultures were pretty barbaric.

- Systematic evil... child sacrifice, incest, institutionalized abuse of women
- The target of God's judgment was evil that had wrecked lives for generations... God's heart was always to save people.
- God's heart is always to save people.

And that's where Rahab enters the story: as Israelite spies step into enemy territory, they stay at the house of a woman no one would expect to become a hero of faith.

But as we said... When ordinary people take one real step of trust, God moves.

Joshua 2:1-7

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, "Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night. But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land." Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, "Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them." (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

Can you imagine Rahab's stress and fear? One wrong word or glance and she's dead.

- It's not like she woke up that morning looking to be involved in ancient international affairs.
- The pressure for self-preservation must have been intense in that moment.
- But she refuses to give up her guests... putting their safety above her king's demands and her ethnic/national identity.

It takes courage to do the right thing when we don't know if it will work.

We read it like she's a brave hero... but how did she know hiding the spies was the right thing?

Look at this through the eyes of a Jericho-ian.

- Rahab is a straight-up traitor.
- She's aiding and abetting invading enemies.
- Faith doesn't always look good to those around you.

Often, when I've heard this story discussed, there's a big deal made about how she was a sinful woman who God used to save his people.

But don't read Rahab as someone making sinful lifestyle choices for fun.

- She's a casualty of ruthless economies, powerful men, and a broken culture
- AND she is someone God sees, when no one else does.

She was a victim of the very same systematic evils God wanted to wipe out.

But why does she protect the spies?

- Listen to Rahab's words here... she reveals what's really going on in her heart.

Joshua 2:8-14

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and

Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. "Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families." "We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety," the men agreed. "If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the LORD gives us the land."

Rahab says.. The God of the Israelites isn't just another god... He's the God, above all. And if he is, maybe he could give me a new story too.

Rahab allowed her faith to guide her decisions.

- Notice also... She trusted before she had "cleaned anything up"

She let the truth of who God is disrupt everything she'd ever known, and risked everything, long before she knew how it would end.

Faith is not just knowing facts or performing good deeds.

- It's choosing to trust God and allowing that trust to shape our actions.
- Faith is acting in trust when you don't have all the answers

I think God allowed the spies to find Rahab not just for the spies but for Rahab.

He knew there was a forgotten and abused woman who was ready for a new start.

Every one of her neighbors heard about the Israelites' God and what he had done.

- Only Rahab decided to stake her life on it.
- She didn't let her past, her current situation, or her allegiances keep her from choosing to trust that God would rescue her.

Put yourself in Rahab's sandals: Would you risk everything for a God you'd only heard stories about?

She staked her life, her future, her family's future on the belief that God was bigger than her past or her city's gods.

So, the next day, the spies escape down a scarlet rope out of her window and report back to Joshua.

- The rope will tell the Israelite army not to attack anyone in that house.

Imagine the days that followed: Rahab doesn't know exactly when or how the Israelites will return.

- All she can do is tie that red cord, and wait... holding onto a promise that she can't see but has dared to trust.

The Israelite army finally arrives.

- Instead of attacking, God tells them to give the city 7 days to surrender, and when they refuse, the walls come down and the people are killed... but Rahab trusted God by keeping her red cord hanging in the window and Joshua remembers Rahab's courage...

Joshua 6:22-25

Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family." The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel. Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the LORD's house. So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

And that would be a good "end of the story," but it actually gets better... fast forward about 1400 years...

Matthew 1:1-6

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar). Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab). Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David.

Because of her choice to trust...

- Rahab gets a new family.
- Rahab becomes a hero.
- Rahab is written into the line of the King of Kings

Her single act of trust rewrites her story forever and echoes for eternity.

But her story isn't just ancient history. It sets the stage for God's invitation to each of us.

Remember: When ordinary people take one real step of trust, God moves.

Faith is not about a perfect record. It's about one real decision to trust in who God says he is, no matter your background, your wounds, or your fears.

- And choosing to act on that trust in big ways and small ways.
- Faith is the tool God uses to craft amazing stories.

YOU: Rahab's story proves there are no spiritual outsiders

- No past too messy, no reputation too ruined.
- God's welcome is for you.

Jesus, is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham... was born into Rahab's messy family tree.

He stepped into our brokenness to offer rescue and hope to people like Rahab, and people like us.

Real faith still looks like Rahab's... taking God at his word, even when you only have a promise.

But now that promise has a name: Jesus.

The same invitation given to Rahab goes out to each of us: Is today your day to trust Jesus?

- To let go of your fears, your past, your reputation, and trust him with your future?

You're invited to experience a faith that isn't foggy or out of reach, but real and life-changing.

If you're ready to receive that gift of new life, you can pray with me right now:

Heavenly Father, I believe your love is stronger than my past, present, or future. I trust that Jesus died for me. Today I declare that what you say about me is true. I'm loved, forgiven, and accepted.

And as we all go through our regular messy lives... each day, good or bad, is a chance to put that choice to trust into action.

In God's eyes, identity changes instantly, but our minds and habits change with time.

- Seeing ourselves as God sees us is an ongoing process.
- Be patient with yourself. Like Rahab, let God rewrite your story day by day.

YOU: So how do we walk through this process?

- We practice.
- Faith is like a muscle... it grows by being used

Invitation for this week... Pick one area to really trust God

- Forgive someone.
- Reach out for help.
- Make something right.
- Or simply say "yes" to God.

When we practice daily faith, we live out God's invitation for messy, ordinary people to trust.

No matter your past, your doubts, or your failures... His invitation stands for you.

WE: Not all of our stories are dramatic and make for good movies...

- But every story matters to God and is being used by him to create an even bigger story.

He invites us to play our part by taking small steps of faith every day.

- As our faith grows, so do our opportunities to see him move

Imagine having a trust so strong it withstands the monotony of regular life and the crises that inevitably come to every life.

- Having a trust that is more than the fog of "hope so" and "maybe."
- Enjoying a life of God bringing healing, peace, and hope through your daily steps of trust.

Imagine a community where every ordinary story is a story of trust.

- Full of reminders that God rescues and redeems, no matter what.

Together we can be a community that chooses a faith of action, not just words and hopes.

God's story is bigger than your past or doubts.

- He's calling you to trust.

What if, like Rahab, your step of trust became the story someone else tells one day?