



Life Group Study Series

Joshua: Week Two

23rd October 2016

Bible

Joshua 2:1 (NIV)
Rahab and the Spies

1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

Sermon Summary

After the encouraging opening chapter, in which Joshua is immediately obedient and the Trans-Jordan tribes make good on their promise, the narrative takes a turn to the ambiguous when the spies that Joshua has sent end up in a brothel in Jericho! This is especially poignant because Shiitim, the place Israel is encamped, was the scene of moral failure of the people of Israel (see Numbers 25; Psalm 106:28; Hosea 9:10) that involved sexual immorality and idolatry. We should be a little apprehensive when we find that the spies went to a prostitute's house **and stayed there**. And our apprehension only grows when we find out that they aren't actually very good spies as the king of Jericho finds out about them almost immediately. 007 and 8 they are not.

This is when something very unexpected happens: Rahab, the prostitute in whose house the spies are, protects them, hiding them on the roof and sending the king's men on a wild goose chase. If that wasn't unexpected enough, her confession of faith should floor us. She acknowledges the Lord, the paralyzing fear that has overcome the people of the land, and bases her acknowledgement of the Lord on what she has seen the Lord do: how the Lord dried up the Red Sea and how they Israelites destroyed the Amorite kings on the eastern side of the Jordan. What is so surprising about this confession is that she is the epitome of the Canaanites; she is a prostitute (see Leviticus 18:24-28 for the sexual wickedness of the Canaanites)!

The rest of the narrative tells how she bargains for her life and those of her family. The spies swear to spare all who are gathered in her home (identified by the scarlet cord hanging from the window) as long as Rahab doesn't tell anyone what they are doing (even though the king already knows!).

At this point, it is worth remembering Deuteronomy 7:1-2 and 20:16-17 in which the Lord commands the people not to make a treaty with any Canaanites or to show them mercy. The spies have made a promise to spare the first (and only) Canaanite they've met as well as her family and those who belong to them! What is so interesting is that the narrator doesn't judge their actions, nor are we told that Joshua was upset with the spies when they returned or that the Lord was angry either! We are left to ask if they've done the right thing!

And they have. The reality is that this story, while it demonstrates the Lord's provision and bolsters the confidence of the people and introduces Rahab for her role in Joshua 6, also functions to remind us that while judgment was coming to the people of the land, **the Lord delights to save**. And he incorporates people into his kingdom from the most unlikely places. If a Canaanite prostitute could be incorporated into the people of God (and the lineage of Jesus; see Matthew 1) where else might He be at work in our world.

We have been sent by the Lord to a world that He delights to save. We are not spies – covert agents who need to keep our identity secret – but participants in the mission of God to restore all things in Christ. In fact, we should be a bit like the Israelite spies; totally obvious. **Let's be terrible spies.**

Where might God be at work in the people you care about? Where might you hear an unexpected confession of faith? Let's keep our eyes open to where the Lord is at work.

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a LifeGroup discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

You might want to have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Opening Discussion: Share a moment from your life where you think you've seen God at work in an unexpected place. This could be in a situation or in someone's life, it could be almost anything, however great or small it may seem.
2. Take a (brief!) moment to read Joshua 2:1. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there is a word/phrase in this passage that 'jumps out at you'. What is it? (Try to resist the urge to explain why this word/phrase jumped out – this is about observing, not judging). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you into that word/phrase. Take some time to share what these words/phrases/pictures are.
3. Now take a quick look at Deuteronomy Chapter 7 and chapter 20, how might the spies' disobedience in saving Rahab be justified?
4. It's easy to read the Bible and make justifications subconsciously for things that are actually quite surprising. For example, the narrator leaves the spies' activity in Rahab's house ambiguous. Why do you think he did this?
5. Rahab's confession in chapter 2:8-11, is based on what the Lord had done for the Israelites. What has the Lord done in your life that could help others see and understand more about God?
6. In many ways Rahab was an unlikely candidate to confess God as her Lord, who is the least likely person you know to confess God as Lord? Why do they seem so far away from faith in God?

Prayer

Take some time to reflect on each other's answers to question 6. Pray that the Lord would continue to do His work in their life, and that we might have the eyes to see it.

Extras

To help inform this series, Marc also asks:

1. Next week we will be looking at Joshua 3-4. Have a read of the crossing of the Jordan.
2. What things strike you as significant? What questions do you have about the text?
[Please feel free to email these to Marc.Rader@gymeabaptist.org.au]