

# The Spies in Jericho

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Date: 29 June 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] Open up your Bibles to Joshua chapter 2. We are going through the book of Joshua. Today we're in Joshua chapter 2. There's a person, her name is Rosaria Butterfield. She's a Christian author and speaker, but that was not always the case.

Previously, she was a devout atheist, a tenured college professor at Syracuse University of English and Women's Studies, and an open member of the LGBTQ community. She experienced a dramatic and radical conversion to Christianity in 1999.

Writing about her life before coming to Christ, she said, quote, The word Jesus stuck in my throat like an elephant tusk. No matter how hard I choked, I couldn't hack it out.

Those who professed the name commanded my pity and wrath, end quote. So, she was not looking for a relationship with Christ, but he called her to himself.

Her conversion experience actually began in 1997, so it was a period of two years. And she wrote an article, back in 1997, she wrote an article about a Christian group, and it received a lot of backlash.

[ 1 : 13 ] A lot of praise from people who agreed with her, and a lot of harsh words from Christians. But one person who reached out to her was a pastor of a local church. He wasn't harsh, he wasn't rude, he wasn't unkind.

He just asked her to defend her position. Asked her some specific questions. Would you defend what you claimed about this Christian group? And she realized that she couldn't defend what she wrote.

She just felt angry towards Christians and Christianity and Christian groups. And so, this began, actually, a friendship between these two unexpected people.

The lesbian college professor who hates Christianity and the pastor of the local Reformed Presbyterian Church. But they became friends. The pastor and his wife got dinner with her. She found that they were kind and cordial, patient. They weren't harsh and rude and insensitive to her. And over a period of two years, she read God's Word. She read the Bible.

[ 2 : 11 ] Multiple times, in fact, she read the Bible. And eventually, one ordinary day, as she calls it, she gave her life to Jesus. And listen to how she described it.

She said, quote, Jesus triumphed, and I was a broken mess. Conversion was a train wreck. I did not want to lose everything that I loved, but the voice of God sang a sanguine song in the rubble of my world.

I weakly believed that if Jesus could conquer death, he could make right my world. I drank tentatively at first, then passionately of the solace of the Holy Spirit.

So, Rosaria Butterfield, she's a Christian. She's saved. She's been made new. She understood the risks of believing in Christ and professing faith in Christ, both in her profession and in her personal life.

And still, she obediently followed the Lord. And the amazing thing about her is that it wasn't just this head knowledge that changed, where she came to understand and realize the truth, but there was genuine life change, a complete transformation in her life.

[ 3 : 20 ] Now she's, like I said, a Christian author and speaker, very well known. Today we're going to look at Joshua chapter 2. We're talking about Rahab, and I want you to see how God works in the lives of those he calls to himself.

I also want you to see that there's no sin that can get you so far that God won't save you. If someone like Rahab can be saved, if someone like Rosaria Butterfield, or frankly, if someone like myself, and I'm sure many of you would say the same thing about yourselves, if God can save any of us, then he will.

He will. Rahab is a prime example. She was a prostitute. She was a Canaanite. That means she was a foreigner. The Israelites really weren't supposed to be around her. And she was an idol worshiper. You know, Canaanite religion had multiple, multiple false gods. Baal, you know, Baal from the Bible, Marduk. There's all these different false gods, these localized idols that these people worshipped.

So Rahab, in the midst of being a prostitute, in the midst of being an idol worshiper, in the midst of her rejection, she heard of the Lord, and she believed.

[ 4 : 32 ] And it completely changed everything about her life. God broke through, and he rescued her from darkness and ultimately from destruction. And so Rahab, in that way, is a picture of what salvation looks like.

You see, the Israelites were coming in to Jericho, and they were going to completely destroy the city. The only way that Rahab would be saved from death was if God would graciously pull her out of that and take her in himself.

So the story of Rahab, it's an amazing story about how everything gets flipped on its head. Okay? Like, all of these things are, like, reversed in the story of Rahab. So the first thing that you see is immediately these two spies go into Jericho.

And at the end of the chapter, they come back, and they tell Joshua, God's given us the land. You remember what happened last time? There were 12 spies sent in. Two came back with a good report, and 10 came back and said, no, they're too scary.

They're too big. We can't go in. And so that's been flipped on its head. That's been redeemed. You also have the story of someone who the Israelites really weren't supposed to go around. They weren't supposed to intermingle with in any real way.

[ 5 : 37 ] And Rahab, she was a prostitute. That was obviously a sinful lifestyle. She also was a Canaanite, which means she was the enemy. She was their target, in fact. And yet they spent time with her, and they realized, because of her confession of faith, that God had completely, radically altered her worldview and her life.

So Rahab's just an example. The Bible is filled with examples of people who were unexpectedly transformed and used by God powerfully.

You have, of course, the example of Moses who murdered someone. And then as an 80-year-old, God called back to go and release his people, to take his people out of captivity.

You have the Apostle Paul. He was a persecutor of the church. And God radically converted him, changed his life. Changed his life. Everything was different after that day.

So whether we look at the story of Rahab or someone like Rosaria Butterfield or the Apostle Paul, the amazing thing to see is that the work of God didn't end with their belief.

[ 6 : 41 ] The work of God in their lives transformed them so that they were faithful and obedient to him and what they did afterwards. When we're converted by God's Holy Spirit, our lives should look entirely different.

So as we look at the Rahab story today, I want us to consider the ingredients. The ingredients to a radical conversion experience.

So using Rahab as the example, I hope you'll see what the finished product is when you put those ingredients together. So the ingredients are a recognition of what God has done, an acceptance of who God is, and faith that God will save.

Let's pray together, and we'll go to the Word. God, thank you for who you are again. Father, as we gather together now, I pray that you would show us your truth in your Word. We praise you together, and we ask your blessing on this time of preaching and hearing.

In the name of Jesus, amen. So this first thing that we're going to look at is the recognition of what God has done, this first ingredient.

[ 7 : 47 ] But I want to make something really, really clear to you before we go any further, and that is when I say ingredients, I don't mean to make conversion or salvation something formulaic.

That by doing three specific steps, suddenly everything can be different. That's not what I mean at all. I mean when you look back, both in Scripture and throughout history, at people who are saved, there's always at least, probably more, these three components.

At the end of the day, God is the one who draws us to himself. God is the one who makes faith come alive within us. God is the one who works in salvation. So when I say ingredients, I don't want you to think that I mean some formula to being saved.

What I mean, though, is the component parts that God brings together in the life of a person so that they will, by faith, believe in his Son. Okay?

And so as we look at the ingredients, the first one is a recognition of what God has done. So look with me at verses 8 through 10. It says, She had to express to them what she had come to understand, what she had come to recognize.

[ 9 : 23 ] And that was God had worked for them. He had gone before them. He had worked on their behalf all the way from the time they left Egypt until this time now where they're about to take Jericho.

They're on the precipice. They're on the edge of taking the land that God has promised them. And so Rahab came to understand that God was the one at work in all of those things.

But it wasn't just that Rahab came to understand that. She came to understand it personally. Right? The people of Jericho saw that this looked like their God was working for them, and they became terrified.

They were scared. They were filled with terror. But Rahab personally noticed that God was the one at work. And instead of turning in fear from the wrath of God that was coming, was very real, that was going to take place, in faith she appealed to the mercy of God.

So she saw what God had done, and instead of responding in fear, she responded in faith. God had told Moses that he would go before the Israelites and strike fear into the hearts of the Canaanites.

[ 10 : 34 ] So look with me at Exodus 23, 23, and 27. So verse 23 says, For my angel will go before you and bring you to the land of the Amorites, the Hethites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.

Verse 27, I will cause the people ahead of you to feel terror and will throw into confusion all the nations you come to. I will make all your enemies turn their backs on you and retreat.

See, God had gone before them. And the way that God had gone before them was by demonstrating his immense power, by parting the Red Sea. Right? You think, it's like, how did Rahab hear about that?

Well, I mean, here's the thing. That's a pretty incredible, pretty remarkable event. You know, that's miraculous. That's amazing. The sea opened up. It parted completely. And they walked across on dry ground.

You think word wouldn't spread after something like that? That was also, look at this. That was at the very beginning of their time when they left Egypt. Right? And then she also says, We've also heard how you destroyed the Amorite kings, Sion and Og.

[ 11 : 39 ] That was probably just a few months before this encounter with the spies in Rahab. So she, like, bookended all of the things that God had done for them throughout their time in the wilderness.

The other amazing things. Water from the rock. Manna from heaven. Quail to eat. All of the amazing things that God had done in between the parting of the Red Sea and defeating the Amorite kings.

Word had spread. People knew that God was going before the Israelites. So she recognized that God had worked. So how does this recognition come about?

Well, the first thing is we have to see that God has acted in history. Historically speaking, God has acted. The same thing is true for a New Testament believer. For someone who has come to Christ now, even in modern times.

For someone to understand that God is who he says he is. To believe that the Bible is true. There has to be a recognition of the fact that God has acted in human history. The greatest action that God ever did in human history was when he sent his own son.

[ 12 : 43 ] He stepped into our world. Jesus lived a perfect life. And he died on the cross for our sin. And then three days later, God brought him back. Rose him from the dead. Raised him to life. So we have the historical work of God here in history.

We know that God has worked. And Rahab pointed back to those two major events that caused panic. The other thing is that we see that God's work, that what he has done in history, is in its sum a declaration of his power.

God has acted in mighty, mighty ways to show his strength and his power. He also showed that he is God alone. You know, in the plagues there in Egypt, in the book of Exodus, each of the ten plagues are a direct attack on the false gods that the people of Egypt worshipped.

Each one of them. So God demonstrated by enacting all of these plagues on these people who prayed for safety for their crops. And prayed for the safety of their livestock. And prayed for good health. And they prayed for the water from the Nile to all these different, you know, fertility and land gods and goddesses and all those things. God demonstrated those gods and goddesses that you worship, they're not there.

[14:00] He alone is the Lord God. He alone is in power. And so he demonstrated his power there even in the plagues. And then throughout the journey in the wilderness, even though the people were disobedient consistently, God continued to demonstrate his strength, his power.

So when Rahab looked back on these things and when the people looked back on the things that God had been doing, they recognized their God is strong. Rahab took it a step further and said, he's the only God. He's the only God.

And that's why there's this individual response. You see, when we heard this, we lost heart and everyone's courage failed because of you is how verse 11 begins.

Rahab recognized that individually people have to respond to the work of God. And so many people who saw God work, their courage failed. They were terrified.

They lost heart. You know, instead of pursuing that God who is obviously mighty, instead of seeking that God and his mercy that has been made clear and demonstrated by the people of Israel themselves, the people decided to hide in their fear and their shame from what was coming.

[15:13] Instead of pursuing him, instead of asking for mercy, instead of asking for forgiveness, the people in their fear, they hid. Where Rahab, on the contrary, she responded in faith.

So when a person recognizes God's power, you either respond in fearful shame, like the people of Jericho, or you respond in faith. And you seek the mercy of God from what is coming.

And that actually leads us to this individual response to our second ingredient. You, let's hear, acceptance of who God is. Acceptance of who God is.

It's not really about acknowledging God. God, there's been a lot of people, a lot of really, really good people, a lot of really good church people who knew about God, right? Who knew what the Bible said. Maybe even had a favorite Bible verse.

Who didn't, by faith, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It's not just about acknowledging that. The people of Jericho acknowledged that God was strong. They were terrified of him. They knew he was strong. But they didn't take that next step from head knowledge to faith.

[16:17] There's an old quote that says that the distance between heaven and hell is about 18 inches. The distance is from your head to your heart. Knowing about God is one thing, but accepting and believing in God and accepting by faith is a completely other thing entirely.

But look here at verse 11b. For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and earth below. See, Rahab, she didn't stop at the head knowledge of that God is terrifying.

That God is mighty. That God is powerful. She recognized his power and then took it that next step by faith and said he is sovereign over everything.

He's the only true God. He's the only true God. And this is really interesting, but that language there, in heaven above and on earth below, it's only used a few times before this.

It's only used a few times before this, two times when the Ten Commandments were given and then one other time. But here in Exodus 20, the second commandment, do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything, in the heavens above or the earth below or in the waters underneath the earth.

[17:24] So God said don't make anything that you'll worship that looks like anything of this world because I'm separate from this world. I'm holy. I'm completely different. I'm above. I'm sovereign over the things of this earth and of heaven.

And then Deuteronomy 4, 39 says, Today recognize and keep in mind that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below. There is no other.

So you have this prostitute in Jericho named Rahab who saw what God had done and came to the conclusion that the people of Israel were supposed to come to themselves.

It's a pretty remarkable thing. And it's a testament to the fact that God works in people's hearts completely separate from what we have come to understand previously.

Right? God works in her heart. God worked in her heart based on what she saw. She probably, you can imagine, right, if she was willing to make such a bold declaration, confession of faith in this scene, she had probably been hearing these things over the years about the things that God had

done, the power that he had shown.

[18:28] And I can only assume that she had inquired about him, asked people around her about him. What do you know about Yahweh, the Lord? What do you know about him? You know, what can you tell me about him?

And over that time of seeking the Lord, God worked in her heart in such a way that she responded in faith, that she recognized what the true children of Israel, the people of Israel, were supposed to recognize themselves, which is the complete sovereignty and solo status of God.

So acceptance of who God is.

As he's revealed himself in history. So the second ingredient is acceptance of who God is. So someone recognizes God's work, recognize who God is, and then accept who God is.

And the third is have faith that God will save. The final ingredient to a radical conversion is a deep and abiding faith that God will save those who cry out to him.

[19:56] So this is the difference between Rahab and the people of Jericho. Instead of hiding, instead of ratting out the spies and trying to stand against God and knowing what he was going to do, instead of trying to stand in opposition, she pleaded for mercy.

She sought him and his mercy. So while the people of Jericho were doomed and they knew it, Rahab sought God by faith. And it didn't stop with what she knew.

So look here at verses 12 through 14. It says, What a beautiful picture, by the way, of salvation. Save us from death. Save us from yourself. God, you're coming to take this land. You're coming to judge. Save me from yourself. She asked God, and she asked the men.

They answered her, We will give our lives for yours if you don't report our mission. We will show kindness and faithfulness to you when the Lord gives us this land. She sought the Lord, and she trusted that she would be saved, and she lived in obedience.

[21:15] So this is what it looks like to have saving faith. We seek God. We pursue Him as He's revealed Himself. We trust that He is completely sovereign, that He is the only God. And then we live in obedience to Him.

We live in obedience. Because look what Rahab did. Verse 21, if you go further, it says, Let it be as you say, she replied. And after they went away, she tied the scarlet cord to the window. Remember the spies? They gave her that scarlet cord, and they said, Hey, we're going to be free from this if you don't have this tied around you.

And anybody who's not in the house, they're going to be taking, you know, their blood's on their own hands, you know? And so in faith, her faith led to action. Her faith led to action in a couple of ways. One, she hid the spies. She protected them. And then two, she tied the cord. She actually did. She said, You know what? I'm going to trust that because I have this tied around my window, they will uphold their end of the deal.

They will do what they said they would do. She wasn't really trusting in those individuals when it comes down to it. She was trusting in the faithfulness of God. That's what it looks like when we're obedient as Christ followers, when we do what God calls us to do, when we obey his word, what that shows, what that displays is a trust that God will be faithful, that God will accomplish whatever it is he says he will accomplish.

[22:32] So Rahab, in faith, she tied the scarlet cord. And then you go ahead to Joshua chapter 6, which we're a few weeks away from that. Joshua 6, 22 and 24 says, Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there and all who are with her, just as you swore to her.

So this is when they're taking the land of Jericho. The walls have come tumbling down. You know the song, right? The walls came tumbling down. You know, okay. They came tumbling down. And then Joshua said, Before they all went in there and took the land, he told the two spies, You know where she lives.

Go and protect her. Go get her. Verse 25, So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

They were protected. They were brought to safety. They were allowed to live because of Rahab's faith. And there's a really neat picture here, too, by the way. You know, Rahab knew of the salvation of the Lord.

Right? She knew who God was. And she asked, she pleaded for salvation. And that salvation was so real to her that she told everyone she cared about.

[ 23 : 45 ] Right? It spurred her to protect them. The threat of death was so great that she brought her family in with her. Can I suggest that as Christians, we have to do a better job of taking the eminence of eternal separation from God more seriously?

The people that are in our family, the people that are our friends, our co-workers, who don't know Christ, are facing eternal separation and eternal judgment apart from God.

Rahab took the seriousness of death and told her whole family. She protected them. She protected them. We have a responsibility to do the same.

As we come to know Christ and know his salvation from imminent death, we should bring others along with us. We should tell everyone else, hey, the door is open.

Come to my house. Right? Come here where it's safe. Trust in the Lord. He'll keep us safe. I mean, can you imagine her dad being like, if you're sure, yeah, we'll go to your house. Okay, you know, whatever.

[ 24 : 54 ] That rope right there, they're going to remember that? No way. And sure enough, the walls went down, the people were being killed around them, and God protected them, offered them life.

So as we have opportunity, we should bring others in. We should bring others into the family.

Because it wasn't just Rahab who was brought into the family of Israel. It was her whole family. It was everyone that she cared about.

So verse 25 says, However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers. Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

You know, Rahab is mentioned three more times in the Bible. Three more times. All in the New Testament. And each time, there's a beautiful picture of her faith and the redemptive work of God in her situation.

Hebrews 11, in the Hall of Faith, This is where it lists all of the greats of the Old Testament and their great faith. The last one mentioned by name is Rahab. Verse 31, By faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed.

[ 26 : 07 ] There's this really interesting thing, too, that happens right after that in verse 32. It says, And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

So, it's interesting. The writer of Hebrews took time to write about Rahab and her faith, but didn't take time to write about David and Samuel. These giants of the faith, the prophets.

Elijah, think about that. All of these people who were giants of the faith, they didn't get mentioned as directly as Rahab did herself. She's a beautiful picture of faith. The faith that it took to do what she did to hide the spies.

In James chapter 2, it says, In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route?

And then verse 26 says, For just as the body is without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. Rahab's a beautiful picture, by the way, of faith taking action.

[ 27 : 04 ] She was obedient in the way that she protected the spies, and she was obedient in the way that she waited for them to protect her when they came for destruction. But most profoundly in the New Testament, and this is a beautiful picture of the transformative, redemptive work of Christ.

God brought her into the family of Israel, this Gentile, right, this outsider, brought her into the family of Israel, but then God quite literally brought her into his own family because Rahab was in the direct lineage of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew chapter 1, where it's listing the genealogy of Jesus, it says, Salomon fathered Boaz by Rahab. Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth. Obed fathered Jesse. You know, Jesse is King David's father. So you have this amazing, amazing picture of the redemptive work of God. I heard a sermon this week where the pastor said that Rahab went from prostitute to princess.

She was in the, literally, the king's line, the king of all kings, the king of the universe, all because by faith she sought the Lord.

[ 28 : 09 ] By faith she sought his mercy. She knew his wrath was coming. She knew there was judgment and that she deserved to be in with those being judged. But by faith she sought the Lord.

And so if you're here today and you don't have a relationship with God, let me tell you, the only way, the only way that you can be saved, the only hope that you have beyond this life is if by faith, by faith you cry out to Jesus, the son of God who gave his life for yours, who's able to save, and trust, trust that he'll keep you safe from the coming wrath, from the coming judgment.

And frankly, we all deserve to be a part of that judgment. We all deserve to face that wrath. But Jesus took it in our place. So have faith like Rahab.

Trust the mercy and the kindness of God. Let's pray together. God, thank you for your word. Thank you for this example of faith in Rahab.

God, I pray, God, I pray that our faith would lead us to action like hers did. I pray that by faith we would trust you deeply. And Lord God, I pray that by faith we would live for you daily.

[ 29 : 27 ] I pray now that you would bring your word to bear on the hearts and the lives of those who need to hear that today. We love you. We trust you. And it's in Jesus' name that we pray.

Amen.