

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

September 13, 2026

**Heroes of the Faith**  
**“Rahab: God’s Unlikely Trusted Ally”**  
**Hebrews 11:31**  
**Rev. Mike Fordham**

Have you ever wondered how much faith it took for the first person to ride in the very first elevator ever invented? Otis elevators have been the industry standard for more than 150 years. While Elisha Otis did not invent the elevator, he did devise the braking system that ensured its safety. At the time, most elevators were little more than open platforms, and they'd come apart and people would be seriously injured if the cable broke. Without a trustworthy braking system, elevators were earthbound and building heights were limited to a mere 6 stories. Sounds scary! With the new braking system invented by Otis, the sky was the limit. The braking system for elevators made modern skyscrapers possible. But initially Elisha Otis had trouble selling his elevators, until 1854 when he concocted a creative sales pitch at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in Manhattan. Every hour at the exposition, Otis stepped into his machine. He gave the order to an assistant who cut the rope. The crowd held its breath. The brake kicked in, the elevator stopped and Otis announced: “All safe, gentlemen. All safe.” With this demonstration, Otis quickly sold his first three elevators for \$300 apiece. Today, New York City alone has about 84,000 elevators, and it's estimated that the equivalent of the world's population travels on an Otis elevator, escalator, or moving walkway every three days. *It took a great deal of faith and trust in the elevators and the braking system to get on one in those early days.* Today, we meet another fascinating hero of the faith by the name of Rahab. From Rahab, we learn we all come to a point in our lives where we are faced with the decision of whether or not we will take a step of faith and say “yes” to God's invitation to accept His love and follow Him. To then daily walk in trusting faith with God one step at a time, where, as we learn to trust God more and more, God will transform our lives, and then use us to accomplish His will.

**HEBREWS 11:31**

***It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.***

## **RAHAB CHOSE TO BELIEVE IN GOD**

The first reason we learn as to why Rahab was listed as one of the heroes of the faith is that ***Rahab Chose to Believe in God***. The story of Rahab as found in *Joshua 2-6* is set in the ancient city of Jericho, the most important Canaanite fortress city in the Jordan Valley. Jericho was a heavily fortified city directly in the path of the advancing Israelites, who had just crossed the Jordan River to make the Promised Land their new home. Before entering the land west of the Jordan, Joshua sent two spies to look over the land. The two spies found a safe place to hide out, at an inn run by a prostitute by the name of Rahab. Somehow the king of Jericho heard that two Israelite spies were staying at Rahab's Inn. The king then ordered Rahab to hand over the spies. Rahab lied to the king and said she didn't know who the men were and that they had already left town at dusk. The truth was she hid them upstairs on the roof. Later that night, Rahab went to the rooftop to talk with the spies. She told them how the citizens of Jericho had been fearful of the Israelites ever since they defeated the Egyptians via the Red Sea miracle that occurred some forty years prior. Then Rahab makes a crucial statement of faith to the spies in *Joshua 2:11*, ***"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."*** Why is this so significant? Jericho was one of the principal seats of idol worship and represented all that was the vilest and most degrading in the religion of the Canaanites. When Rahab made this statement, she was saying that after all she heard about the Israelites' miraculous conquests, and learned about the Israelite nation, she could not help but take the step of faith to believe that the God of the Israelites is the one true God and Savior! She was converting over to Judaism and abandoning all the gods she grew up learning about and worshipping to now worship the only true, living, almighty God called, Yahweh.

Before Rahab turned to God, God first chose this Gentile, Canaanite woman, a prostitute, to join the family of God. Many years later, God says to the Israelites through the prophet Isaiah in *Isaiah 43:10-11*, ***"<sup>10</sup> But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the Lord. 'You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God—there never has been, and there never will be. <sup>11</sup> I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Savior.'"*** Rahab was simply recognizing that God chose her, a wayward sinner and in response, she said "yes" to God becoming her God, to know Him, to believe in Him and understand that He alone is her God and Savior. The great protestant reformer, Martin Luther, describes what the first step of faith is that Rahab and all of us are to make at some point in our lives, when he says, "Faith is the 'yes' of the heart, a conviction on which one stakes one's life." Rahab would have been considered by the Israelites to be the worst of sinners and yet for God, no one is out of reach of God's love and grace. All we have to do is take the first step of faith and that is to say "yes" to God's invitation to be our God and Savior.

In addition to taking this step of faith, Rahab sealed it by making a public profession of her faith, openly declaring it to the Israelites spies. Rahab received the promise that is found in *Romans 10:9-11* that says, ***"<sup>9</sup> If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is by***

*believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scriptures tell us, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.'*" The most crucial decision any human being will ever make is to take the step of faith to accept Jesus' invitation to receive His love and follow Him for the rest of their lives. Rahab took that step and it changed her entire life.

### ***RAHAB COURAGEOUSLY TRUSTED GOD BY RISKING HER ENTIRE LIFE FOR GOD***

Rahab's faith journey did not stop with turning her life over to God to be her God and Savior. Rahab took her initial step of faith a step further by each day continuing to take little steps of faith in trusting God. We learn from Rahab that out of her daily faith and trust relationship with God. ***Rahab Courageously Trusted God by Risking Her Entire Life for God.*** Not only did Rahab take a huge risk to hide the spies from the king and then send the king's men away, but Rahab also took her faith in God a step further by agreeing to help them escape as long as she and her family would be spared during the upcoming battle. Rahab put her and her family's life at risk to save God's spies. Rahab didn't just say that she believed and trusted God, she put her faith into action and risked everything to follow God. *James 2:25* puts it this way, *Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road."*

Rahab looked to be in a no-win situation where if she followed God and the Israelites, she risked being killed as a traitor by her king, but if she rejected God she and her family would most certainly die in battle. She chose well when she chose to follow God, the one true king, the ruler of all, the one who wins all battles. In so doing, she found everlasting life. With God, no matter how hopeless life might seem, we are never in a no-win battle because God is with us and when God is with us, we are always on the winning side. God only asks us to choose Him and trust Him in all of life's decisions. Rahab had the courage to choose God's will for her life because she had faith and trust in God, knowing His ways are always the best. As we follow God in this world, there will be times our faith and trust in God will be put to the test. If we have true faith and trust in God, we will then have the courage to follow God no matter the consequences.

At age 26, Ken Elzinga joined the faculty of the University of Virginia. After a tenured colleague warned him that being explicit about his faith would hinder his career, Elzinga was stunned to see a flier with his face on it placed at a prominent campus location. A campus ministry had posted it to advertise a talk he had agreed to give. A relatively new believer, Elzinga worried. Would fellow professors think less of him? Might this harm his tenure? He experienced a dark night of the soul, returning to campus and secretly taking the poster down. But the next morning, Elzinga put the poster back up. After hours of soul-searching, he concluded that his life was not about career ambition but about faithful discipleship, and that being private about his faith was not an option. In the four decades since, Elzinga has been named professor of the year multiple times and is still a speaker in high demand. He will be the first to say that serving only one master has been liberating. Why? Because pleasing an audience of one makes us less anxious, less sensitive to criticism, and more courageous. Rahab is included in *Hebrews 11's* heroes of faith as one of only two women in the list because she demonstrated active, courageous trust in the God. It takes courage based in faith in

God to speak up for Jesus in our world, to live for God, to face an uncertain future, to walk through physical difficulties, to let go of control of our life and give God full control, to give 10% of your income to God, to work with integrity in business when nobody sees it or when it might prevent us from getting a raise or a promotion, to not compromise our walk with God in order to fit in with the in-crowd at school or work or in the community.

### **GOD REWARDED RAHAB'S FAITH**

As Rahab believed in God and courageously put her faith to work in trusting God, *God Rewarded Rahab's Faith*. Again, what is amazing in this story is that God directed two spies to go to a woman, a Gentile, a Canaanite, a prostitute running an inn in the most ungodly of cities. Through this woman who said "yes" to God, God then kept His promise of not only saving her and her family's life when the walls of Jericho came crashing down and the Israelites won the battle, but God also saved His people through her step of faith and trust in God. Not only were the Israelites saved through Rahab's faith, but we also learn that after Joshua's miraculous conquest of Jericho, Rahab and her family were adopted into the family of God, the Israelite nation. Then, in time, Rahab married Salmon, an Israelite from the tribe of Judah. Rahab then gave birth to a son, Boaz, who married another foreign woman by the name of Ruth, about whom we learn in the book of Ruth, was also adopted into Israel. Rahab was also King David's great-great-grandmother. Later, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, is a descendant of Rahab, which then puts Rahab in the family tree of Jesus, the one true God and Savior of the world. All this was made possible because she said "yes" to believing in and trusting the one true God and Savior. It is truly amazing what God's grace can do in any life, even the worst of sinners, when we say "yes" to believing in and daily walking in a trusting relationship with God.

You may have heard of John Newton who was born in London in 1725. He lost his mother at a young age and went to sea as a teenager. In time, Newton grew rebellious and eventually joined the horrific captivity of human beings in transatlantic slave trade, and in time even commanded his own slave ships. Then, on March 21, 1748, a violent storm battered his ship off the coast of Ireland. Fearing his ship would sink, Newton cried out to God for mercy. Newton survived the storm and marked the date as the beginning of his spiritual conversion like Rahab experienced. His life didn't change right away though as he continued in slave trading until health issues ended his career. Newton later became an Anglican clergyman and eventually, he wrote the poem that would become the hymn to accompany a New Year's Day sermon in 1773. The words "*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me*" reflected his deep remorse and gratitude for his spiritual rescue. The lyrics were first printed in 1779, and it wasn't until later in life, that Newton publicly repented of his past, upon which time he partnered with British abolitionist William Wilberforce to help pass the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which ended the slave trade in the British Empire. The song, "Amazing Grace" is in essence his testimony of what happened to his life when a miserable sinner and wretch such as himself just said "yes" to believing in and beginning a trusting relationship with God. His testimony reads, "*1 Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see. 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed! 3 Through many dangers, toils*

*and snares I have already come: 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. 4 The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures. 5 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease: I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and peace. 6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear to shine; but God, who called me here below, will be forever mine."*

Have you taken the step of faith to say "yes" to believing in Jesus the one true God and Savior? Won't you this day say "yes" to beginning a faith relationship with God? If you already have, are you walking closely with God and learning to choose to trust Him more and more every step of your faith journey with Him or are you drifting away from God and instead choosing to trust yourself or choosing the things of this world over God? God is calling you back to trust Him. For those who are going through tests of your faith and trust in God, God is with you and invites you to trust Him and to continue to turn the controls of your life over to Him and leave the results to Him.

As we leave this place let us do what *Colossians 2:6-7* says, "<sup>6</sup> And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. <sup>7</sup> Let your roots grow down into him and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." If you commit to doing just what Colossians calls us to do, I invite to make a public profession of faith by saying a hearty, "Amen!"

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:** (Books marked with \* are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Be Confident: Live by Faith, Not by Sight*, Warren W. Wiersbe
- *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer
- *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney
- *The Class Meeting*, Kevin Watson
- *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, Jerry Bridges
- *The Holiness of God*, R. C. Sproul
- *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Henry Blackaby & Richard Blackaby
- *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer
- *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Don't Waste Your Life*, John Piper

### Icebreaker Questions

1. What is something you regularly trust—an elevator, airplane, GPS, doctor, mechanic, etc.—without fully understanding how it works? What makes you willing to trust it?
2. Have you ever taken a risk that felt intimidating at the time but ultimately led to something good? What helped you take that first step?

### Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Rahab chose to believe God. In Joshua 2:11, Rahab declared that Israel's God was "the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below." What do you think moved Rahab from simply *hearing about God* to actually *placing her faith in God*? What is the difference between knowing things about God and truly trusting Him?
2. Pastor Mike emphasized that Rahab did not merely say she believed—she acted on her faith, even when it involved significant personal risk. Where is the line between genuine faith and merely agreeing with Christian beliefs? How does James 2:25 help us understand the relationship between faith and action?
3. Rahab faced what appeared to be a "no-win situation," yet she chose to trust God rather than her circumstances. What situation in your life right now requires you to trust God even though you cannot control—or perhaps even predict—the outcome? What might one concrete step of faithful obedience look like?
4. The sermon reminds us that following God can require courage in everyday areas such as work, finances, relationships, integrity, and openly living out our faith. Which of these areas is most difficult for Christians today? Where are you personally most tempted to compromise, remain quiet, or maintain control rather than trust God?
5. Rahab's past did not disqualify her from God's grace or His purposes; she ultimately became part of the family line of Jesus. What does her story teach us

about how God sees people whom society—or even the church—might consider “unlikely”? How should that truth affect the way we see our own past and the people around us?

6. What impacted you most from the sermon?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?