

# God Protects

## CAN GOD USE NON-BELIEVERS FOR HIS PURPOSES?

Focal Verses • JOSHUA 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will AFFIRM that God protects us and that we can trust in Him, APPRECIATE God's protection, and EXPRESS praises to God for His protection and faithfulness.

### In Focus

Andre turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Dr. Harris, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, Dr. Harris said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

Dr. Harris was holding the handle of the door. On the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as the doctor opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness. Turning to his friend Andre, Dr. Harris said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing—I know my God is there, and that is enough."

*When we face the unknown, it is an opportunity to trust God in new ways. When have you had to trust God to keep you in an uncertain situation?*



### Keep in Mind

"And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us"  
(Joshua 2:24, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Joshua 2:3** And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

**4** And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

**5** And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

**6** But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

**7** And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

**8** And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

**9** And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that

your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

**2:15** Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

**16** And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

**2:22** And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.

**23** So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them:

**24** And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

## The People, Places, and Times

**The Immorality of Canaanite Religions.** The first books of the Bible present the Canaanites' religion and lifestyle as immoral. They served false gods and used religious prostitution during their worship ceremonies. Rahab could have been one of the religious prostitutes. God warns the Israelites not to interact with the Canaanites. The text reads, "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images....Thou shalt make no covenant with them nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee"

(Exodus 23:24, 32–33, KJV). God also revealed to his people that the Canaanites had a period that they would rule in sin, but eventually they would be defeated, and He would give the land to the Israelites. (See Genesis 15:16).

## Background

Numbers 22–25 provide important information about the Israelites' situation in the book of Joshua. To summarize, when the king of Moab saw how the Israelites had defeated superior forces of both Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, he realized that these Israelites would never be defeated by military might alone. Instead of assembling his army and attacking the Israelites, Balak, the king of the

Moabites, recruited a prophet from Mesopotamia named Balaam to curse Israel. He thought the well-known prophet would be able to bring evil to the Israelites by influencing the will of the gods. However, instead of cursing the Israelites, God caused Balaam to bless them. Despite God's protection, the Israelites willfully gave themselves over to idolatry (Numbers 25:1–3).

God commanded Moses to apprehend the ringleaders of the idolatry and execute them in broad daylight so all the people could witness their punishment. One of the men was so bold that he paraded a Midianite woman before Moses and all the people and took her into his tent to sleep with her. His actions so enraged Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the high priest, that he took a spear and rushed into the man's tent and drove the spear through him and the woman simultaneously.

The killing of this man and the leaders of the unfaithfulness appeased God's anger, and He ended the plague against the people, but not before 24,000 of them had perished. The 24,000 who died from the plague were the last of the generation who revolted against God and Moses before entering the promised land. (see Numbers 26:64–65).

Two years after these incidents, the Israelites were still camped at the Acacia Grove. Now, they were under the leadership of Joshua, preparing to go in and take their inheritance.

*Why might God use a pagan prostitute (like those who ensnared the Israelite men) to accomplish His will?*

## At-A-Glance

1. God Protects the Spies  
(Joshua 2:3–9, 15–16)
2. The Spies Encourage Joshua  
(vv. 22–24)

## In Depth

### 1. God Protects the Spies (Joshua 2:3–9, 15–16)

Before launching an attack, a good leader will always try to gather as much information about their enemy as possible. However, Joshua remembered what had happened when Moses publicly sent the 12 spies on a mission to gather information on the opposition they faced. The men brought back a report that struck fear into the people's hearts and caused them to revolt against Moses and God. This commander was taking no chances. He secretly sent out two spies to check out the land of Jericho and report back to him.

Somehow, the two men traveled across the Jordan River and the eight miles through the land to Jericho without being spotted by any lookouts. They made their way to an inn being run by a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. God's divine protection is not only in the fact that the two men managed to cross the Jordan River and reach the city undetected but also in their chosen house. The entire city must have been on alert for strangers coming to spy on the city.

However, God directed the Israelite spies to one person in Jericho whom He had chosen for divine appointment. Scripture describes her as "Rahab, the prostitute." In pagan Canaan, prostitutes who served in the worship of Baal-Peor were highly honored and respected in the community (see Numbers 25:1–2). It was not unusual for strangers and foreigners to go to Rahab's home so the spies would not appear suspicious there. Others who passed through the house would provide the spies with information on the situation in Jericho.

Somehow, the spies were spotted before they reached Rahab's house. The news was reported back to the king of Jericho. When the king heard the news of the two spies in the city, he immediately dispatched a contingent

to Rahab's house to capture them. Somehow, Rahab had been alerted to the coming of the king's men and had hidden the two spies. She met the king's men at the door and deceived them into thinking the spies had gone. She first acknowledged that the men had arrived earlier but denied knowing who they were. Then she lied to the king's men: "I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them" (v. 5, NLT).

Many have argued whether Rahab's lying was justified, but the argument misses the point. Rahab was a pagan. She was acting according to her convictions, not the Law. God knew what Rahab was doing. The means did not justify the end, but when she later turned to God (v. 11), her lying, as well as her pagan prostitution, were forgiven.

*Is it ever faithful to do the wrong thing for the right reasons? Why or why not?*

## 2. The Spies Encourage Joshua (vv. 22–24)

After confessing her trust in the one true God, Rahab demanded a promise from the spies: "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" (Joshua 2:12–13, NLT). The two spies agreed to her terms, and she later helped them escape.

The walls of Jericho were said to be more than 10 feet high and 12 feet thick; this allowed for houses such as Rahab's to be built into the wall themselves. Using a rope, the two spies lowered themselves through her window to the ground outside the city. Rahab instructed them to go into the hills and wait three days before returning across the Jordan River. The spies instructed Rahab that when they returned with the Israelite army, she would tie a scarlet cord in the window they had just climbed down

from. This cord would serve to identify Rahab's house to the attacking Israelites and cause them to spare all within (v. 18). The scarlet cord reminds us of the lamb's blood above the doorpost in Egypt which caused the "death angel" to pass by the houses of the Israelites (Exodus 12:1–23); the cord also looks forward to the redemptive work of Jesus that saves us all (Mark 14:12–16; John 1:29; Hebrews 11:26–28). The spies departed, went to the mountains, and waited as Rahab instructed.

Meanwhile, the king's men continued to search diligently for them but to no avail. After three days had passed, the spies descended from the mountains, made their way back across the Jordan River, and gave their report to Joshua: "The LORD has given us the whole land," they said, "for all the people in the land are terrified of us" (Joshua 2:24, NLT). Joshua's trust in God was rewarded with a glowing report from the spies.

*Has God ever protected you in an unexpected way? Share that story.*

## Search the Scriptures

1. How did Rahab respond to the king's order to bring out the two men who had entered her house (Joshua 2:4–5)?

2. What promise did Rahab extract from the two men for hiding them and helping them escape (vv. 12–13)?

## Discuss the Meaning

1. When the king's men arrived at Rahab's house to apprehend the two spies, Rahab lied and told them they had gone. Was she justified in lying to protect God's people?

2. Can God use other people's wrong actions for the benefit of His people? Why or why not?

## Liberating Lesson

Before gaining salvation and knowledge of the Lord, Rahab earned her living as a

prostitute. Yet this woman married a man who was an ancestor of King David and is listed in the bloodline of Christ (Matthew 1:5–6). Both James and the writer of Hebrews commend her for her faith (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). How does Rahab's story relate to the undesirable people in our community? Is it possible that God has a special mission for some gang member, drug dealer, or prostitute in our communities?

### Application for Activation

Rahab demonstrated her faith in God by being very kind to two strangers she had never met. This week, pray and ask God to direct you to a stranger who needs a bit of kindness. Then, show your love and faith in God by extending that kindness.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

---

---

---

---

---

---

#### Sources:

- Auld, A. Graeme. *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984. 15–22.
- Baltes, A. J., ed. *Biblespeech.com*. <http://biblespeech.com> (accessed November 5, 2009).
- Bible Study Tools.com. *Old Testament Hebrew Lexicons*. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv> (accessed February 26, 2010).
- Exell, Joseph S. *The Biblical Illustrator*, Vol. 3: *Joshua*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975. 32–39.
- "Flax." *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Butler, Trent C., gen. ed. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991. 497.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. *Holman Old Testament Commentary*, Vol. 4: *Joshua*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2002. 27–42.
- Harris, J. Gordon, Cheryl A. Brown, and Michael S. Moore. *New International Biblical Commentary, Joshua, Judges, Ruth*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000. 71–73.
- Hess, Richard S. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Vol. 6: *Joshua*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996. 88–107.
- Howard, David M., Jr. *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 5: *Joshua*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1998. 99–117.
- Ironside, H. A. *Joshua: An Ironside Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1950, reprinted 2008. 27–37.
- Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980. 27–30.
- Lange, John Peter. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical. Joshua–Ruth*. Translated by Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976. 45–52.
- Life Application Study Bible* (NLT). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, Inc. <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (accessed November 6, 2009).
- Packer, J. I., Merrill C. Tenney, and William White Jr. *The Bible Almanac*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1980. 143–44.
- Spence, H. D. M. and Joseph S. Exell. *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 3: *The Book of Joshua: 1–11*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975. 25–42.
- Strong, James. *New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*. Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, and International Bible Translators, 1994. 2003.
- Woudstra, Marten H. *The Book of Joshua*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981. 66–76.

## Say It Correctly

Bashan. 'bā-sh n.  
Eleazar. ehl-ih-EE-zar.  
Shittim. SHIH-tim.

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 36

Leviticus 14–15  
Psalm 19:1–6

### DAY 37

Leviticus 16–18  
Psalm 19:7–14

### DAY 38

Leviticus 19–21  
Psalm 20:1–5

### DAY 39

Leviticus 22–23  
Psalm 20:6–9

### DAY 40

Leviticus 24–25  
Psalm 21:1–7

### DAY 41

Leviticus 26–27  
Psalm 21:8–13

### DAY 42

Numbers 1–4  
Psalm 22:1–5

## Notes

---

---

---

---

# People Choose Sin

## HOW CAN PEOPLE ESCAPE THE CYCLE OF SIN?

Focal Verses • JUDGES 2:10–19

### Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **RECOGNIZE** that God gives us choices to follow Him or not; **REFLECT** on how human sinfulness leaves us in need of God's help; and **ASK** God to help us to obey Him.

### In Focus

Everyone at the office gambled, including those who announced their belief in God. Bets were taken for college games and professional games. Marcus' coworkers regularly picked numbers to play the lottery, yet they did not understand why he refused to participate. He kept thinking about how his father had lost their home as a kid because he had gambled away his savings. He thought about the example he wanted to set for his own son as a believer. The organizer of the gambling pools cornered Marcus, stating there was no harm in supporting his favorite sports team; besides, half of the money was going to the good cause of stocking the office refrigerator with snacks.

Marcus thanked his coworker for his invitation to gamble but decided to regularly donate money for the items he consumed from the office refrigerator instead. On some occasions, he also brought in items that he had purchased to add to the office's snack supply. Marcus did not judge what the other believers were doing. He simply established an example in the workplace for them to follow if they chose to.

Marcus felt that he should not gamble but instead live out his faith in the workplace. He did not force his beliefs on others, but he lived out what he believed was right.

*Was Marcus making a godly choice or was he being too extreme? How do Marcus' actions reflect his witness as a believer in the workplace?*



### Keep in Mind

“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10, KJV).