

Study Guide for Lesson 3 -God has plans

Rahab was a prostitute – Naomi was a widow

Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study. Thank God that He is in control. Spend a short time discussing the introduction.

Scripture readings

A. Rahab

1. She had a house, she was a prostitute, she took in lodgers. There is speculation that Rahab's house may have served as an inn, the perfect place to gain information.
2. At this time, Canaan consisted of small city states, each with its own king. This king would have ruled Jericho and the areas around it. As to how and why, it's interesting to discuss but it's only speculation since Scripture doesn't tell us.
3. How “common” was Rahab? We already know that she had a house; in verse 6 we learn that she was also a business woman. The flat roofs of ancient houses were used as work spaces. Stalks of flax had to be soaked in stagnant water to separate the fibers, and then laid out to dry before they could be used for making linen or rope. No mention is made as to whether she participated in the finishing process or whether she just rented her roof out. Each participant will have a different answer about lying.
4. In vs9, Rahab states “I know” - here is the saving faith mentioned in Heb 11:31. Faith is always a gift from God. Vs 10 “we have heard” -word of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and Israel's defeat of two kings had traveled this far. Vs 11 “the Lord your God, He is God” -Rahab professes and acknowledges that Yahweh is God of all. Moses prophesied the “melting” hearts in Exodus using the same Hebrew verb.
5. Her request that they “swear by the Lord” is another proof of faith. There may be many answers to why would a woman with mother, father, sisters and brothers would turn to a life of prostitution.
6. The oath sworn “by the Lord” was binding to all.
7. In Joshua 4:9 the phrase “to this day”and Joshua 24:31 seem to show that the book of Joshua was written after the time of the man Joshua. “She lives in Israel to this day” may mean that she still lives in Israel through her offspring.
8. She was saved by faith then demonstrated her righteousness buy her actions in saving the spies.

B. Naomi

1. Famine, moved to a new place where she didn't know anyone, her husband dies and both her sons die. There was nothing wrong with the move to Moab. During famines, both Abraham and Jacob went to Egypt.
2. Moabites were the descendants of the incestuous union of Lot and his older daughter. At this time there was no prohibition against marrying Moabites – that would come later.
3. There would be no hope of returning home or redeeming her property. Her grandsons would be shunned.
4. In Vs 6 Naomi hears that the Lord has provided food for the Israelites- the famine has ended and she sets out for Judah. These women cared for one another. “She kissed them, and they

lifted up their voices and wept. Vs 11-12 refer to the marriage law found in Deut 25:5-6 where Naomi's husband's brother would be obliged to marry her and have a son to perpetuate her husband's name and line. That son, when he grew up, would then be required to marry Ruth or Orpah, his brother's widow – this wouldn't be fulfilled because Naomi was too old. Orpah went back to her people and to her gods – she renounced the God of Israel.

5. Ruth's beautiful confession of loyalty and faith. It contains a plea against separation, a promise of family loyalty, a confession of faith and an oath against separation. "May the Lord do so to me" was a common oath formula calling the Lord as witness.
6. Do not call me Naomi (pleasant, lovely); call me Mara (bitter). Even though she felt that God had dealt bitterly with her, she still acknowledged Him as El Shaddai. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest.
7. The edges of the field were not to be harvested, fallen grapes not picked up but left for the poor. Boaz was a relative and a worthy man. The NIV calls him "a man of standing". In Ruth 1:2 we learned that Naomi's husband was an Ephrathite – David was also an Ephrathite from Bethlehem.
8. In Matthew 1:5 we read the genealogy of Jesus. Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab.
9. With God all things are possible. There is no definitive answer. There are many good articles on *goel*.
10. Just a note - King David was less than 10 generations

C. God has a plan

The answers in this section will differ from person to person.

Applications for today

How can we take what we've learned and use it as encouragement? Does knowing that we are a part of God's plan free us to move forward more boldly?

I have been involved in prison ministry for many years, but it took me a long time to say, "Yes" to this ministry. A friend had asked me to work in the prison with her and I had told her, "No", repeatedly. She finally asked me if I would lead music for her one time when she was leading a retreat. Just one time, as a favor to her. I reluctantly said yes. When the time came for the weekend, God opened my heart to the prisoners, to their desperate need to know that God loves them and forgives them.

At that time, we had male pastors and deacons working on our team with their wives. At one point, our governing body decided that we could no longer have male clergy on women's weekends. The prisons protested because they felt it was good for the inmates to have examples of healthy marriages, but the decision stuck.

I asked the national board how we were supposed to find enough female pastors and deaconesses. (We need one per table with 5 tables per weekend) Long story short, this is how I started on my journey to become a deaconess in the AALC. I had no plans to do prison ministry. I had no plan to become a deaconess. But God had plans for my life.

Encourage your group to share how God's plans have worked in their lives.

One more point. What if we fail? Romans 8:28 states that ALL THINGS work together for good for

those who love God and are called according to His purposes. Even if we think we've failed, God can still use us.

Conclusion

Rahab was a foreign prostitute – Naomi was a widow. The common thread is faith in the one true God. They didn't know God's plan for their life, they couldn't see how God would use them. They simply lived lives of faith, acknowledging El Shaddai, the Almighty, even in times of bitterness and trials. God has plans that we can't understand. He allows to see bits and pieces in Scripture, but we see dimly, we know in part. Praise God that He knows all and allows us to have a part in His plans. It is a comfort knowing that God can use less than perfect people (and that's all of us), broken vessels (also all of us), for His good and perfect plan. If God can use a prostitute and a widow in the lineage of Jesus, what can He do with your life?