

Today's Bible story is about crossing the Jordan River and conquering Jericho. After 40 years of the honeymoon in the wilderness, God and God's people are about to move into their new home in the Promised Land—Canaan. This moving is not gonna be an easy one for God's people as they face a wall of the Jordan River, a land of warriors, and powerful cities on the way. So, God prepares them, starting with their new leader and God's new partner, Joshua, by strengthening his heart, mind, and soul with a commend, "Be strong and very courageous." Now, it is the time for Joshua and God's people to put their faith in action for crossing the Jordan River and conquering Jericho.

Crossing the Jordan River was one of the key events in Israel's history. Just as God brought God's people out of the land of bondage by dividing the Red Sea, so God brings them into the Promised Land by dividing the Jordan River. No armies were chasing Israel this time as in Egypt. They could have built boats and taken their time to cross the Jordan River, but God led them by dividing the Jordan River for three reasons:

First, to put His confirmation on Joshua as Moses' authorized successor. He says in Joshua 3:7, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you." Second, God aimed to strengthen the people's faith that He is with them and will give them victory in the battles ahead (Joshua 3:10). And the third purpose for bringing His people through the Jordan on dry ground was to melt the hearts of the enemies (Joshua 5:1).

To make sure that the people saw this miracle as an act of their holy, covenant-giving God of Sinai with the faith in action of God's people, the priests led the way into the river carrying the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant contained the two tablets of the covenant from Mount Sinai at the wedding ceremony of God and God's people. The priests stood in the middle of the riverbed with the Ark of the Covenant until all Israelites walked across the river.

Once on the other side of the Jordan, Israel camped at Gilgal. All the males who had been born since the exodus were circumcised as an act of national consecration to the Lord. Then all Israelites celebrated the Passover, and the next day the manna ceased, and the people ate the fruit of the land (Joshua 5:2-12).

We can imagine that the faint-hearted among the people could still say in the plains of Moab, "Well, we can still go back to Egypt if things don't work out." But not anymore. The Jordan has closed behind them; the manna has ceased; and before them lies Jericho. The only choices now are to move forward and conquer according to the word of the Lord.

The story of the conquest is told in the book of Joshua. The battle begins at Jericho, and it can be summed up like this. The spies from the Israelites went into the walled city of Jericho and hid at the house of Rahab, noted as a prostitute. Rahab had faith in God and informed the Israelites of Jericho's fear saying, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (Joshua 2:9).

She helped the scouts hide from the king's soldiers, then left a window open for them to escape since her house was next to the city wall. Rahab demanded the spies affirm an oath as she swore not to give their plans away, and congruently, they vowed to spare Rahab and her family when the battle of Jericho occurred. She was to fasten a scarlet rope in her window as the symbol of their protection.

God instructed Joshua with an unusual strategy for the battle of Jericho. He told Joshua to have his army march around the city once a day for six straight days. While marching, the soldiers played their trumpets as the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant around the city of Jericho.

On the seventh day, the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho seven times. At Joshua's order, the men made a loud shout, and Jericho's walls miraculously fell down. The Israelite army raced in quickly, conquering the city, and as promised, only Rahab and her family were spared. The battle of Jericho was not the battle of a sword, but the battle of faith.

Here is the lesson from today's stories. Joshua felt unqualified for taking over Moses' leadership position at first. But he was willing to partner with God as God promised to be with him every step of the way, just as he had been for Moses. By holding the promises of God, he was willing to make himself available for God. God utilized him greatly in establishing a new home in the Promised Land when he put his faith in action. This same God is with us today, guiding us and calling us. Would you be willing to partner with God?

If you are not sure about your calling in life yet, then hear about Rahab, the prostitute in Jericho. For conquering Jericho, God utilized Rahab, the prostitute, the hooker. There's a joke in that. But at the same time, there isn't because many of us run around thinking that we're morally reprobate. We're morally bankrupt, and God could never use us. If you are one of these people, then read the Gospel Matthew chapter 1.

From there, you can learn that God favored Rahab by making her one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World. Rahab is named in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus as the mother of Boaz and great-grandmother of King David. Although she'll forever bear the label "Rahab the harlot," her involvement in the story of Jericho declares God's peculiar grace and life-transforming power.

Rahab did not wait to put all her life together before responding to God. Just as she was, she seized the "God moment" by putting her faith in action. This same God is with us today, looking for partners who are willing to put their faith in action for Him. Would you be the one today for God? The choice is yours. Amen.