

# JOSHUA: WINNING YOUR BATTLES

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## WHY WE ARE IN A BATTLE (Joshua 1)

There once was a young man who thought it would be great to be a soldier. Everyone would respect him. He would be paid for traveling and seeing the world. What could be better? It wasn't long, though, before he found he was in a battle for his life. He had enemies who were trying to destroy him. He had to learn how to fight for his life. Many people become Christians thinking this will be the end of all their problems, God will take care of everything and now life will be smooth and perfect. Then they, too, find out they are in a battle with an enemy committed to destroying them. As Christians we, too, must learn to fight for the victory that is ours. It's always been that way for God's people.

Genesis begins with man in God's presence in Eden, but sin soon changes that and the book ends with the Jews in slavery in Egypt (a picture of the world). In Exodus we see God's redemption by the innocent blood of the lamb and His deliverance by power through the Red Sea. Leviticus contains God's directions for His newly-redeemed people. In Numbers we see redeemed man's first attempts (and failures) to walk by faith. Deuteronomy is a reminder of how God has always been faithful to His people. Then in Joshua the battles begin! Whereas God provided salvation and did their first fighting for them, now His people are required to learn to fight for themselves.

Crossing the Jordan and entering the land of Promise didn't mark the end of the battle but the beginning! While we don't fight Canaanites and Philistines, we do have enemies trying to destroy us: the world, Satan and his forces and our sin nature. He has freely provided salvation and fought our first battles for us. But now He expects us to fight to gain the victory He has provided. Of course He helps us, as any parent would help their children learn to grow and mature. But also like a good parent, He doesn't do for us what He expects us to do for ourselves. So, we shouldn't be surprised at the battles we face, but we do need to learn to fight as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The book of Joshua is God's warfare manual for His warriors today. You have enemies trying to destroy you., so don't be surprised if life seems like one battle after another. This new series of blogs will look at lessons in the book of Joshua that will help us have victory. Start reading the book of Joshua and learn about how victory can be yours.

***Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

*What battles are you currently facing in life?*

*Do you ever get discouraged and want to quit?*

*Are you disappointed because God doesn't prevent the battles?*

*Why does He allow them to continue?*

## **THE BATTLE OF COURAGE OVER FEAR (Joshua 2)**

Have you ever had to replace a person who had done an outstanding job? Now it's up to you to fill their shoes at home, work or church. That's the situation Joshua found himself in when Moses died. Moses was a living legend, the kind of person it is impossible to replace. Moses was extremely gifted in leadership and an intellectual genius. Joshua was an average, run-of-the-mill kind of guy. But everyone is looking up to him to replace Moses. In addition, he has the added responsibility of leading the Jews into the Promised Land and defeating the giants that had kept them out 40 years earlier. Talk about a daunting assignment!

As if that isn't bad enough, God leads them to an impossible entry point. The Jordan River in flood stage just couldn't be crossed. Even if it could, blocking their access to the land on the other side of the river was the mega-fortress Jericho, the strongest military installation in the land! What God was expecting of Joshua was humanly impossible. In addition, it seemed like God was clearly making a mistake in what He expected of Joshua. This was clearly beyond Joshua's ability and skill.

Do you ever feel like God is expecting the impossible of you? What is happening just doesn't make sense – God seems to be going about things all wrong. What are we to do? Well, what did Joshua do? He believed God's promises that He would be with Joshua (Joshua 1:1-9). God promised that He would give them the land (Joshua 1:2-6) but they would have to fight for it. Joshua was to lead the people in battle and God would give them the ultimate victory. Victory is assured, but the battle must be fought. God gave Joshua personal promises as well. He told Joshua that He would never leave or forsake him (Joshua 1:5). This promise is repeated for us in Hebrews 13:5. Three times God told Joshua to be strong and courageous and to not be afraid. Obviously Joshua struggled with this, as we do today. We, too, have God's promises to carry us through our times of fear. Acquaint yourself with the following verses, write them down, memorize them, and whenever you are attacked with fear fight back using your Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Psalm 118:6; 23:4; Genesis 26:24; 15:1; Exodus 14:13; Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 31:6; Matthew 14:27; 2 Chronicles 32:7-8.

***Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”***

*When are you most tempted to be afraid?*

*What advice do you give others who struggle with fear?*

*Why is fear sin?*

## **PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE (Joshua 3)**

Most battles are one or lost before they are fought. Those who are alert and prepared to fight will win. Those who aren't will not. Before God led the Jews to enter the land and fight for their rights, He told them to prepare themselves (Joshua 1:10-11). The Jews spent 3 days preparing themselves and their possessions to enter the land and fight. During this time 2 spies were sent into Jericho to gather information about it as well (Joshua 2). It's easy to wonder why they bothered doing this. If God is sovereign and He promised them the land, then why bother sending in spies and getting everything ready? It's because God expected Joshua (and us) to trust Him as if everything depended on Him but to prepare and fight as if everything depended on themselves. We must totally 100% trust in God while totally 100% doing our very best. As parents we will protect and rescue our children, but we expect them to do their part to the very best of their ability. The same is true of our heavenly Father.

The Jews also had to renew their commitment to God (Joshua 3:5). It's important for us to make sure our commitment is continually renewed (Romans 12:1-2). The battle is won or lost in our mind before it is actually fought. That's why it's important to have a special time to connect with God by prayer and Bible reading each day.

Most of our battles are lost because of lack of preparation. We aren't ready when attacked. We haven't prepared. We don't know God's Word. We have sin in our life and our armor is faulty. We are spiritually weak. Then we wonder why we are defeated. We aren't prepared. Preparation means knowing when and where to expect attack. Do you know your weak areas, what leads you to sin? What are your plans and preparations to be ready when attacked? Jesus was ready when Satan attacked Him in the wilderness. He knew just what Bible verse to use to counter Satan's lies. Are you aware of what lies Satan uses to get you to sin? What verses do you have ready to battle his deception with truth? God told the Jews to not let His word depart from their mouth, to meditate on it day and night and to do everything written in it (Joshua 1:7-8). When that happens, God assures victory (Joshua 1:8b). Are you ready for the battle? It will come – prepare now for it, don't be surprised! "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9)

***Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.***

*How prepared are you for the next spiritual battle you will face?*

*Do you know where you are weak and susceptible to attack? Satan knows, so you better be aware as well!*

#### **THE BATTLES GET HARDER AND HARDER (Joshua 4)**

When the Jews who left Egypt found themselves trapped at the Red Sea, God miraculously parted the waters and let them walk through on dry ground. They were newly redeemed and didn't know how to face their enemies. Now the second generations finds themselves in the same situation, but God doesn't bail them out so quickly, They know more about Him and have grown in the faith, so more is required of their faith. That's how it is with us, too. That's why it seems our tests get harder and harder – because they do! God keeps stretching our faith and expecting more and more of us.

God's directions were for the priests to go first. Priests were the go-betweens representing God to man and man to God. Each believer today is a priest (1 Peter 2:5-9), so these priests picture us. They were expected to carry the Ark of the covenant, which was God's throne and represented His Presence with the people, into the Jordan River. Normally that would be no big deal for the Jordan River is usually about 2 to 3 feet deep and only 20 or so feet wide. But in flood stage, which was when the Jews were to cross, it became ½ mile wide and 12 feet deep. So, walking across the bottom was no option for the priests!

In addition, the walk into the water was no pleasant stroll where the water quietly lapped around your ankles and slowly got deeper. The water was raging and boiling as it rushed down to the Dead Sea. And the walk into the water was very, very steep. Once the priests started over the top there was no stopping or turning back until they got to the bottom. Carrying the heavy Ark didn't make it any easier! Now if God would have opened the waters while they watched it would have been easy for the priests to enter the water, but God told them the waters wouldn't separate until they put their foot into the Jordan (Joshua 3:13). That meant they had to trust God and commit to obeying Him before they saw His deliverance! Sound familiar to what God expects of you?

But guess what happened? Immediately the waters opened and God even thought to dry the river bed instantly so they had a dry surface to walk on (Joshua 3:14-17). They took the Ark into the middle and stood there while the people crossed. That symbolized God's Presence holding back the

waters for them. The opening was quite wide in order to allow 2 ½ million people to cross. No doubt they remembered what God did for their parents. God was showing them He was the same and He would do the same for them – but He expected them to act in faith.

We, too, are required to live by faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The story is told of a woman who was known for her faithful obedience to God no matter what obstacles were in her life. One day a friend asked her what she would do if God told her to run and jump into a wall. She replied that it was her job to run and jump and it was God's job to take care of the wall. Maybe you feel like you are running into a wall. Don't worry about the wall. Just make sure you do the running and let God take care of the wall!

**2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight.**

*When is a time you had to step out in faith, trusting God in a difficult time?*

*How did it turn out?*

*What did you learn from it?*

*How can this help you with the difficulty you are facing today?*

## **REMEMBER YOUR VICTORIES (Joshua 5)**

Everyone has their 'war stories' – accounts of special battles they have fought and victories won. As Christians we will start collecting such accounts from our own lives. The problem is that we often forget past victories just when we need to remember them most! God doesn't want that to happen. He records many of His conquests in the Bible for us to read. For those in Joshua's day He had another way of accomplishing this as well. God had one representative from each of the 12 tribes go back into the dried river bed and bring a large rock from it onto the land and put them into a pile (Joshua 4:1-7).

The purpose was to make a reminder to all of what had happened there. Every time they would see this unusual arrangements they would remember. Others would ask and then hear about God's great works at that place. The place was named 'Gilgal' which means 'circle' of stones. It was a lasting testimony to what God had done there.

Do you have a pile of your own stones to remember your past victories and deliverances? They can be a great asset to faith when the next major difficulty comes. You can keep a journal and record what God has done. Marking special verses in your Bible can serve the same purpose. Keep a bulletin from a special service that really touched you. Or you can write down every good thing that happens on a separate slip of paper and put it in a thanksgiving jar to be read on Thanksgiving. Keeping an object that reminds you of the event is good, too, if you keep it displayed where you can see it and remember. Taking a picture and displaying it is another way to commemorate an event. These memorials are important. They help us remember and they are testimonies to others of the great works God has done.

The Jews also celebrated the Passover at Gilgal (Joshua 5:10). This was also a reminder of God's great provision and deliverance. It reminded them of how God had delivered their nation from bondage in Egypt. Jesus Himself instituted the Lord's Supper, which is built on and supersedes the Passover, as a memorial to His death and resurrection. Each of us should have our own memorials of what God has done, and we should remember them often. They will reinforce our faith for the next time it gets tested – and there will definitely be a next time!

***Lamentations 3:22-24, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.***

*What are some of your greatest memories of times God protected or delivered you? (Write them down and keep them in your Bible so you can refer to them in times of need.)*

*How can those memories help you as you face current battles?*

### **TOTAL COMMITMENT IS NECESSARY FOR VICTORY (Joshua 6)**

The Jews have just miraculously crossed the Jordan River because God separated the waters and dried up the ground. Jericho awaits nearby. Spies from Jericho have seen what happened to the Jordan and the people are scared to death. The Jews are strong in their faith having just seen what God has done. So now would be the perfect time to follow up their advantage and strike Jericho – right? Wrong! God just doesn't do things the way we would expect. Joshua 5 is no different. What God does weakens and incapacitates all the Jewish men for several days, making them totally vulnerable for a week or more.

Instead of attacking Jericho God has the Jewish men be circumcised. And that is no simple, easy matter for grown men! Why would God do this? Because He demands 100% obedience and commitment from His people in order for them to win their battles. To the Jews circumcision was the outward sign of inner submission and obedience to God. It showed they were God's special, set-apart ('holy') people. Clearly they had ignored this command and now, before they could fight their battles and have victory, this had to be corrected.

If we had to draw a parallel with our lives today we could say that baptism is similar in that it is the way God commands for us to outwardly show our submission and obedience to Him. Still, God clearly demands more than outer obedience but wants inner commitment from our heart. He doesn't want us to perform a ritual – He wants us! Before we can start to have victory in our spiritual battles we must make sure we are totally committed to God and living a life of holy obedience in all areas. If not we fight alone – and that's why we are often defeated.

London businessman Lindsay Clegg told the story of a warehouse property he was selling. The building had been empty for months and needed repairs. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash all over the place. As he showed a prospective buyer the property, he took pains to say that he would replace the broken windows, bring in a crew to correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage. The buyer said, "Forget about the repairs. When I buy this place, I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site." That's God's message to us! Compared with the renovation God has in mind, our efforts to improve our own lives are as trivial as sweeping a warehouse slated for the wrecking ball. When we become God's the old life is over. He makes all things new. All He wants is the site and the permission to build. There are still some trying to "reform," but God offers "redemption." All we have to do is give Him the "property" and He will do the necessary "building."

***James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,"***

*When did you first submit yourself to the Lord, committing to serving Him?*

*What areas in your life are the most difficult to keep surrendered?*

### **TRUSTING GOD OR DOING IT OURSELVES – OR BOTH? (Joshua 7)**

God clearly and repeatedly promised Joshua that the land of Palestine would be theirs for God was with them and was giving it to them. So then why did Joshua send spies into the land to check it out before they entered (Joshua 2:1)? Does this mean he didn't trust God's promises? Or was he

just trying to help God out? Why didn't he just march into the land in faith, trusting God to give it to them? Wouldn't that have been an act of faith? It certainly would have been, but that isn't what God wanted in this case. Sometimes He wants us to totally trust Him and move ahead in faith, but most of the time He wants us to use common sense and do our best while trusting Him. Clearly Joshua was not out of God's will in this. It wasn't lack of faith on Joshua's part. His faith was just as strong for he knew that no matter what the spies found, they couldn't win without God's help.

Even though we depend on God 100%, we still have human responsibility to do our part, to do our best. Sitting back and letting God do it all usually isn't an expression of faith but of being irresponsible. When Moses led the Jews to fight the Amalekites, he prayed depending 100% on God, but the people did their best fighting behind their leader Joshua. Nehemiah trusted God for His help in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, but he set a guard and made sure all his workers were armed. We trust God – but we lock our doors, we buy insurance, we leave a light on when we aren't home – we take common sense precautions all the while knowing God is in sovereign control over everything.

Any army must know its adversary and how they work. Paul tells us to not be ignorant of Satan's devices. James 1 tells us to ask for wisdom and God will give it. God works in and through us, not instead of us. Jericho was a formidable opponent, and God will give Joshua the battle instructions (march around the city...). Still, God expects Joshua to use wisdom and common sense, to make good judgments and to be responsible to do their best. God works through our wise choices and best efforts; He doesn't always override our irresponsibility and carelessness.

God didn't need the spies and their help. Actually, without His help they would have been captured and killed, but He led them to Rahab and safety. We expect our children to try their best even if we know they will fall short without our help. We teach them wisdom and common sense, but we know they will need our assistance. The same is true of God. It's been said we are to work as if it all depended on us but also trust knowing it all depends on God. Faith is no excuse to keep us from doing our best. So, trust God – but send out your spies as well!

***Jeremiah 17:7–8 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”***

*Remember some times you trusted in God and He provided for you.*

*Thank Him for those times.*

*When is it hardest for you to trust Him? Why?*

## **RAHAB THE PROSTITUTE (Joshua 8)**

Can you imagine having your worst sin recorded into the Bible for all to read, and not just once but for times? Suppose it actually became part of your name? That's what happened to Rahab, "Rahab the prostitute" is what she is called over and over again. Prostitution in Old Testament times was not considered a victimless crime and was punishable by death. Yet here she is, "Rahab the prostitute."

Obviously God choose and uses unlikely people. He used a young, ruddy, inexperienced boy named David to kill the giant Goliath. He used a shepherd and fig tree keeper called Amos to speak to kings. He used an impetuous, uneducated fisherman named Peter to start the church. So, if He uses a pagan prostitute to save the lives of Joshua's 2 spies, who are we to complain? She was unlikely a candidate as David or Amos or Peter. She was a Canaanite, not even a Jew. As such she was under God's curse, not blessing. She was a woman, and women were not respected in Canaan.

Jewish men would pray every morning, thanking that He didn't make them a woman. And as if that isn't bad enough, she is a prostitute. Couldn't God have done any better when looking for someone to help the spies and become an example of faith for us? It seems God goes out of His way to contact this woman and include her in His eternal plan.

You see, God values what the world rejects. God values and uses what world rejects. 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. Do you ever feel unworthy, unqualified, not good enough to serve God? If you do, then you're in the place where God can start using you. He chooses those who have nothing to offer so they will depend on Him and He will be glorified in what results. He uses us for the same reason. You may not be a prostitute, yet in God's sight you are no better! God chooses the weak in this world to be strong in Him. That's me! And that's you as well!

***1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."***

*Are you guilty of judging others by first impressions, before you really get to know them?*

*Do you make quick first decisions about a person by their initial impression?*

*Have you ever been wrong?*

## **THE FAITH OF RAHAB (Joshua 9)**

Every once in a while a figure pops up in the pages of Scripture who just doesn't seem to belong. They come from outside Israel but seem to have stronger faith than God's people possess. There is Job, Melchizedek, Ruth, the Ethiopian Eunuch – and Rahab. This pagan female prostitute becomes an example of faith and is referred to several times in the Bible to show us what true faith really looks like. Where did her faith come from? The Bible doesn't tell us, but we do know that God reveals Himself to everyone through nature and their conscience (Romans 1) so that none are without excuse. She had heard about what God had done to the Egyptians. Something in her spirit knew He was the true God and she responded in faith. The arrival of the spies was a God-given opportunity to learn more about Him for surely she had many questions to ask them. Rahab clearly believed there was a God greater than her pagan idols, and she chose to trust Him.

It's one thing to choose in your mind to follow the true God, but often much more difficult to put that faith into practice. As a very young and untrained believer she found herself in a most difficult situation. She had to choose to be loyal to her city and their gods by turning in the Jewish spies, or to protect them and commit herself to this God of Israel. Either way, her life was at stake, and so were the lives of her family. She clearly stood for God, though, and her story of faith continues to use today. The writer of Hebrews (11:31), James (2:25) and Joshua all mention her. In fact, the only other woman given as an example of faith in Hebrews 11, the great chapter of faith, is Sarah. Clearly God is greatly impressed.

The great lesson from her life is that our faith must lead to action. It must be put into practice. She wasn't seeking for what God could do for her but was alert to what she could do for Him. She was willing to lose everything, to change loyalties, to join a new spiritual family – even though she thought it would mean a life of slavery. That shows faith.

Her faith is also seen in her remaining loyal to her own Canaanite family. She has the spies include them in their promise of protection. She tells them they need to stay in her home when Israel

attacks. They see the change in her as well. That's what convinces them to join her and side with the God of Israel.

We, too, have many opportunities to show our faith by applying it to our life situation. If our faith is real and live, it will make a difference in our daily life choices. We have opportunities nearly every day to put our faith into effect. Look for those chances. Some will be large, others seemingly 'little things.' But they'll be there. Remember Rahab. Put your faith in operation.

**Hebrews 11:1-3, 31 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ... 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.**

*What opportunities is God giving you today to put your faith into operation?*

*Think of someone you know who is a good example of practicing their faith. What can you learn from them?*

*Ask God to show you if there are areas in your life where you aren't applying your faith.*

### **LYING FOR A GOOD REASON (Joshua 10)**

Is it ever OK to lie? Is deception ever approved by God? Before you answer these questions, remember the story of Rahab and you might answer differently. Rahab hid the 2 Israelite spies in her Jericho home. She became a believer and committed herself to God and His people. When her townsmen looked for the spies, she lied about where they were and hid them. Then she helped them safely escape. And God repeatedly uses her as an example of faith (Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25). Is God approving of lying? Does He believe that the end justifies the means?

First, remember that Rahab was caught in the middle of a war. It was a war between God (Israel) and Satan (Canaanite nations). Rahab switched sides and joined God's side, thus becoming a traitor to her home town and people. She had a new loyalty to God and His people, and with it an obligation to help them in their battle against their enemies. Deception is a part of war. Spies aren't expected to tell the truth. If so, how do we justify smuggling Bibles into a country where they are forbidden? Are we required in the name of 'honestly' to reveal the location of our children to someone who has broken into our home with the intent of killing them? Was Corrie Ten Boom guilty of sin by hiding Jews from the Nazi's in WW II? When the Egyptian midwives refused to obey Pharaoh and kill the Jewish baby boys they lied and said the babies were born before they got there – and God blessed and rewarded them for their commitment to His cause.

Rahab was guilty of treason against her country, but not of lying in God's sight – for that is how wars are carried out and we must be as wise as wolves but as innocent as doves. Rahab was the one who was right, it was the rest of her countrymen who were wrong. They were in rebellion and sin and she doesn't have to support them and help them in it. I don't think she was aware of all that. I think she just found herself in a situation where a choice was to be made and she made it. She didn't consider all the moral implications; she just used common sense and did what was obvious to her – help her new friends and also her true God.

So, is it ever OK to lie? Is deception ever approved by God? Be careful how you answer. Don't be so quick to judge others who see things like Bible smuggling differently than you do. Clearly there is no one way for all believers in this. Also make sure you don't use Rahab to justify self-serving lies that are given for personal convenience. Make sure your total faith is in God and your

commitment is to do whatever He wants, like Rahab – then He'll show you how to handle the situation.

***Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices***

***Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.***

***Proverbs 12:17 An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies.***

*When are you tempted to twist the truth a little to make yourself look better, or to stay out of trouble?*

*Do others see you as a person of integrity and honesty?*

*Do you always keep your word, no matter how difficult it may be?*

### **GOD'S MANY WAYS OF WORKING (Joshua 11)**

It's interesting to ask people how they met. Each story is unique. God has many ways of bringing people together. Moses was watering some camels and ended up marrying the oldest daughter of the man who owned the wells. Boaz paid off a distant relative's debt by buying their land and got Ruth along with it. The Benjaminites grabbed women at a party and carried them off. Jacob worked 7 years for Rachel and got another woman on his wedding night (her sister). Xerxes held a beauty contest and married the winner, Esther. Hosea married the woman God chose for him but she had children by other men and ended up in prostitution. And a man named Salmon married a Gentile woman from Jericho whose name was Rahab. Tradition identifies Salmon (Matthew 1:5) as one of the two spies Rahab hid in Jericho.

It was unheard of for a woman to be mentioned in the genealogies of Israel, but Rahab is listed as a great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Himself (Matthew 1:5-6). She never thought God had a plan for her that included such things. She never imagined being married to a Jew, either. Yet that was God's plan for her.

Seldom does anyone look at their life and say that it played itself out as they had expected. Virtually all of us are surprised by the turns and twists that come along. Still, life doesn't just 'happen.' God has a perfect plan for each of us. He chose these things even before the creation of the world. This includes the person we marry. Sometimes we think they are the greatest blessing in the world, other times we may wonder if we made a mistake in whom we chose. But if we are following the Lord we know that He did the choosing and He never makes mistakes. If your marriage is going very well – thank Him. If there are struggles and difficulties, remember that this is the mate He chose (or allowed) for you and it is now His perfect will for you to grow together. Thank Him for it. He put you and your mate together to be a picture of heaven on earth, to live out in a daily way His love for us as His bride. Follow His example in this and, no matter how strange a start your marriage had, it is guaranteed a happy ending!

***Ephesians 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I***

**am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

*When is the last time you thanked God for your mate?*

*What can you do to be a better husband or wife?*

*Think of someone who is having marriage problems and pray for them.*

## **RAHAB AND GOD'S GRACE (Joshua 12)**

If there's one word that comes to mind when we think of Rahab and her story it is GRACE. She is a wonderful example of God's grace. That's probably why her story is told in Scripture, and why two New Testament writers refer to her (Hebrews 11:31 ;James 2:5). Rahab's whole life story speaks of Grace- and she knew it. Born an Amorite and therefore under God's judgment (Deuteronomy 7:1-2), because of her faith she and her family were spared from death and became part of God's special people, the nation of Israel. Not only that, but she became the great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 1:5). Now that's grace!

Grace is God's unmerited favor, God's Riches at Christ's Expense. God's grace means that our standing with Him does not depend on who we are and what we've done, but on who He is and what He's done. The word is found over 200 times in the Bible. The first time is when "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8) and the last in Revelation 22:21 when John concludes this great book with "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" Grace is a key part of Who and What God is. Yet He is a loving God, a God of grace, because He chooses to be so. He would still be God if He weren't a God of grace. He would still be holy, just and righteous. You see, He doesn't have to show grace – He chooses to show grace!

Think of what the Scripture has to say about God's grace: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2:4-9) "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:23-24 ) "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." (Rom. 11:6)

We usually think of grace with word "amazing", for it truly is! He has given us His amazing grace (2 Corinthians 8:9), amazing love (Romans 5:8), amazing life (John 10:10); an amazing position (John 1:12), amazing peace (John 14:27), amazing gifts (Romans 8:32), amazing salvation (1 Corinthians 2:9), amazing liberty (Romans 8:21), amazing future (Romans 8:18-19) and shown us an amazing concern (Matthew 11:28). That's because He's an amazing God!

Grace: where would you be without it? What would life be like on this earth? Where would you be for all eternity? Where do you need His grace in a special way right now? Ask Him for it. Then thank Him for it. Amazing grace, how sweet indeed is the sound!

***Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

*List as many ways as you can that God's grace is evident in your life.*

*Do you show grace to others the same way God shows grace to you? What about your mate?  
What can you do today to be more gracious to those around you?*