Unit 8, Session 2
The Promise of Victory

Summary and Goal
The Israelites prepared for their conquest of the promised land, and first up was the fortified city of Jericho. In this session, we will see that word of God’s works and power had gone before the Israelites, and the people of Jericho were terrified. Yet that did not prevent everyone in the city from retreating behind their city walls, hoping they could hold out against the advancing Israelites, everyone except for a woman named Rahab. We will see that Rahab alone among the people of Jericho believed that God would be victorious and appealed to Him and His people for an act of kindness: to spare her and her family from the coming destruction.

Session Outline
1. An enemy recognizes God’s future victory and appeals for mercy (Josh. 2:8-13).
2. An enemy escapes destruction and lives to see God’s victory (Josh. 6:15-17,20-21).
3. An enemy becomes part of God’s people and shares in God’s victory (Josh. 6:22-25).

Session in a Sentence
God responds to whoever calls on His mercy and provides salvation to them.

Christ Connection
Rahab recognized God’s future victory and appealed to the spies for mercy so she would be spared from the coming destruction. When Jericho fell, Rahab received mercy and was brought in to become part of the people of God. Whoever trusts in Jesus and appeals to Him for mercy is spared from the judgment of sin and is brought in to become part of the church.

Missional Application
Because we have experienced victory over sin and death through Jesus, we tell people of every tribe and nation about Jesus so they too might trust in Him and become part of the one people of God.
READ: Use the paragraph in the DDG (p. 57) to share the hypothetical/potentially real scenario of a car breaking down in an unfamiliar area and having to rely on the mercy and kindness of strangers.

If your car has ever run out of gas, had a flat tire, or broken down, especially in an unfamiliar area, you probably understand what it is like to feel vulnerable and helpless. Perhaps you even needed to rely on the mercy and kindness of a stranger to call a tow truck, give you a ride to a gas station, or help you repair your vehicle.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What have you felt when you found yourself at the mercy of others? Why do you think you had that response? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Comment on how relying on the help of others can make us feel like a failure. But connect this to how we must come to Jesus in humility and weakness to respond to the gospel.

- Times like these can be challenging, even frightening. Many of us want to be strong on our own. We want to be able to handle ourselves, to provide for ourselves, to make our own way in life. We don’t want to be a burden to others, and we don’t want to be viewed as weak. And so, relying on the kindness, generosity, and mercy of someone else makes us feel like a failure.

- Times of needing others can actually be good for us, however. God can use them to chip away at our pride and independence, both of which are antithetical to the gospel. Relying on the kindness, generosity, and mercy of another—Christ Jesus—is at the very heart of the gospel. We cannot come to God in any other way than in a posture of humility, submission, and neediness. As has often been said, no one comes to the cross standing; we can only come on our knees. Our idea of strength is actually weakness, and it is only through our weakness that we are able to find true strength (1 Cor. 1:24-25).

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will see that word of God’s works and power had gone before the Israelites, and the people of Jericho were terrified. Yet that did not prevent everyone in the city from retreating behind their city walls, hoping they could hold out against the advancing Israelites, everyone except for a woman named Rahab. We will see that Rahab alone among the people of Jericho believed that God would be victorious and appealed to Him and His people for an act of kindness: to spare her and her family from the coming destruction.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit www.GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
**Point 1: An enemy recognizes God’s future victory and appeals for mercy (Josh. 2:8-13).**

**SAY:** At the command of Joshua, two Israelite spies infiltrated the walls of Jericho and scouted out the city. They took shelter with a woman whose reputation was tarnished but whose profession would provide them with cover and anonymity: Rahab the prostitute. When their purpose was discovered by the city authorities, she hid them and protected them from arrest, and then she made an important request of these spies.

**READ** Joshua 2:8-13 (DDG p. 58).

8 Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof9 and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan. 11 When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. 12 Now please swear to me by the Lord that you will also show kindness to my father’s family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death.”

**EXPLAIN:** Reference the paragraph in the DDG (p. 58) as you note Rahab’s progression from what she heard to what she knew to putting her faith in the only One who could save her.

Rahab, along with all the people of Jericho, had heard about the God of the Israelites. They heard the stories of their escape from Egypt and their victories over their enemies, stories they accepted as fact, and they were so afraid. But there was something different about Rahab from all the other residents of her city—she knew what was coming (v. 9): God would be victorious and the Israelites would conquer the land and destroy the peoples of the land. She found herself on the losing side with no weapon that could withstand such power.

Rahab followed her understanding with a statement of faith that the God of the Israelites is God alone in heaven and on earth (v. 11). Though she had only heard about Him secondhand, she called on Yahweh Elohim, the Creator God, through His representatives, the spies, to show mercy to her and her family.

**Commentary:** Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.” Faith and hope are intertwined. We see in Rahab’s conversation with the spies that her hope and faith were not in herself, her city, or her people but in God because He alone is all-powerful. When all the others of her city were without hope, she could hope because she put her faith in the only One who could save.
INSTRUCT: Ask group members to begin filling in some responses to the questions on the table in their DDG (p. 58).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY DID RAHAB DESERVE JUDGMENT?</th>
<th>WHY COULD RAHAB HOPE TO RECEIVE MERCY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She was a Canaanite of the city of Jericho</td>
<td>She believed in the Israelites’ God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She was a prostitute</td>
<td>She asked for mercy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She was a sinner</td>
<td>She hid the Israelite spies **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPLAIN the answers in the table above using the following content.

- **Why Did Rahab Deserve Judgment?** It might be tempting to look at Rahab and wonder why she would be spared. First, she was of the wrong people: a Canaanite, numbered among the enemies of God and His people. Second, she was of the wrong profession: a prostitute. In summary, she was a dreadful sinner, an enemy in open rebellion against God. But here’s a key point of Scripture: All sinners deserve God’s judgment. If we are honest, we will be able to see ourselves in Rahab, for none of us are the right people.

- **Why Could Rahab Hope to Receive Mercy?** Rahab knew God’s reputation, and she took the next step and acted on what she knew, placing her life in the hands of this all-powerful God in whom she believed. Were Rahab’s knowledge and faith rough around the edges? Without a doubt. Did she understand God’s law? Most likely not. But did she understand that God was a God of mercy, a God who had rescued His people time and time again? This she understood, and this was what she clung to in her fledgling faith. This was the basis of her request for the Israelites to show kindness and mercy to her and her family and to spare them from the coming destruction—not because of who they were but because of who their God is.

**She hid the Israelite spies:** Faith is distinct from actions with respect to salvation from God—we are saved by grace through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9)—but actions are tied closely to faith in that faith without works is dead ( Jas. 2:26). Works flow from genuine faith, giving evidence that one’s faith is real. Rahab showed kindness to the spies and asked for kindness to be shown to her, but she was clear that she believed in the Lord God and that He had handed the land over to the Israelites. Therefore, the New Testament points to Rahab’s actions as an example of her faith (Heb. 11:31).

SAY: None of us have lived in a way deserving of God’s love, mercy, and kindness. None of us had shining faith the moment we first believed. We all came to Christ needy. We all came to Christ recognizing in a primitive way just enough of the gospel to be saved, just enough revealed to us by God Himself. We all came to Christ dependent on His undeserved mercy. And in this, we see the beauty of the gospel.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

- What can we learn about the nature of faith from Rahab’s example? (faith is based on knowledge of what is true; faith is based on the fear of the Lord; faith works itself out in actions)
Point 2: An enemy escapes destruction and lives to see God's victory (Josh. 6:15-17,20-21).

**SAY:** The spies left Jericho unharmed, thanks to Rahab’s protection, and returned to Joshua with their report: “The LORD has handed over the entire land to us. Everyone who lives in the land is also panicking because of us” (Josh. 2:24). But for all their scouting, God gave Joshua a curious battle plan against Jericho: no fighting, no siege, no military tactics; just marching around the city, once a day for six days until the seventh day.

**READ** Joshua 6:15-17,20-21 (DDG p. 59).

15 Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city seven times in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. 16 After the seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua said to the troops, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. 17 But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent.

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20 So the troops shouted, and the trumpets sounded. When they heard the blast of the trumpet, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. 21 They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 59) to highlight that Rahab was saved through the judgment that fell upon Jericho when their walls miraculously fell. Also recall how Israel escaped from Egypt through the judgment of the tenth plague (the death of the firstborn) and through the waters of judgment at the Red Sea (the Israelites crossed over on dry ground, but Pharaoh’s army was destroyed as God released the water upon them).

The last words before a battle hold significance. So we should note with care what—or rather who—Joshua mentions in his speech before the battle of Jericho: Rahab. It would have been easy for Joshua to ignore the two spies’ agreement with her, but Joshua understood that this woman had professed faith in God and had risked her life to prove that she believed in Israel’s God. So the trumpets blew, the men shouted, and as the city walls fell around her, Rahab escaped through judgment.

Voices from Church History

“He hath changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross brought death to life; and having wrenched man from destruction, He hath raised him to the skies, transplanting mortality into immortality, and translating earth to heaven.”

—Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215)
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What should we make of God’s pattern of rescuing His people through judgment? (though circumstances may be dire, God can and will rescue His people; the answers to our prayers for help and relief may not come as we expect them to; though the wicked may seem to prosper, victory and salvation are found in identification with God’s people; God is foreshadowing His ultimate rescue of people through the judgment of sin in Jesus on the cross)

EXPLAIN: Help your group imagine the scene of Jericho’s destruction.

- Hear the shouting of the troops who have been circling the city in silence for six days but now free to yell their way to victory.
- Hear the trumpets sounding, declaring the presence and victory of the Israelites and their God.
- Feel the vibrations of the wall, the source of protection and pride, crumbling all around the city.
- See the troops of Jericho trying to determine what breached their wall and how to defend against a power they couldn’t even imagine.
- Then hear the terror of humans and animals slaughtered by the invading army of God.
- Now picture the scene through Rahab’s eyes: She had risked everything, believing that the men representing a God she had only heard about would keep their word. Everything around her crumbled away and the Israelites charged into the city. Would the God of the Israelites really come through for her?

READ: Ask a volunteer to read the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 59).

The city was in ruins and the people destroyed, but when the dust settled, Rahab and her family were still alive. Her faith in God was vindicated. She had trusted that God would be victorious, so she placed herself at His mercy, and because of her faith, she lived through the destruction to see God’s victory. But God was not done with her yet.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

When have you had your faith in God vindicated? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)
**Point 3:** An enemy becomes part of God’s people and shares in God’s victory (Josh. 6:22-25).

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 6:22-25 (DDG p. 60).

22 Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, “Go to the prostitute’s house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her.”

23 So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

24 They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord’s house. 25 However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father’s family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 60) to highlight the **mercy** and **grace** Rahab and her family received from God.

When Rahab hid the spies, she asked them to promise that they would spare her and her family from death during Israel’s conquest of Jericho (2:12-13), but she would receive so much more. Removed from the city for their safety, they weren’t just sent on their way but were settled outside the Israelites’ camp, and later they were welcomed into the victorious people of God. In God’s **mercy**, Rahab and her family were allowed to live. In God’s **grace**, Rahab and her family were brought into the people of God.

**Commentary:** Initially Rahab’s family lived outside of the camp, most likely because of ceremonial uncleanness, being that they were previously idolatrous Canaanites without the law of God. But the end of verse 25 suggests that at some point Rahab dwelled among, not just near, her new people.

**SAY:** Through Christ, God showers us with **mercy** and **grace**. We are spared from the punishment of our sin in God’s mercy, and in His grace, we are brought into His family, into His church. By faith, we become God’s children; once enemies, now righteous sons and daughters (Rom. 5:10), but only by God’s mercy and grace.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 60).

**People of God:** Scripture describes the church as “the people of God.” Comprised of both **Jew** and **Gentile**, the church is created by God through the **atoning death** of **Christ**. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under God’s ruling care while we are protected and cared for by Him.
Essential Doctrine “People of God”: Scripture describes the church as “the people of God” (2 Cor. 6:16). Comprised of both Jew and Gentile, the church is created by God through the atoning death of Christ. The term “church” is used in two senses—of individual local churches composed of people who have covenanted together under the lordship of Christ and of the universal church composed of all believers in Christ in all times. As the people of God, the church seeks to live under God’s ruling care while we are protected and cared for by Him.

PACK ITEM 8: JESUS’ LINEAGE: Use the genealogy illustrated on this handout and the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 60) to show how Rahab’s story continued, leading to the coming of Jesus, the King of kings.

Though she was now part of God’s people, God still was not done with Rahab. In Matthew 1, we see that her story continued. Rahab married Salmon and had a son named Boaz, who fathered Obed, who fathered Jesse. Then came David, the king whose descendant would be the promised King of kings—Jesus. Surely Rahab had no idea what was in store for her on the day she asked in faith for two spies to spare her life.

SAY: In the same way, we have no way of knowing what is in store for us when we turn to Jesus in faith, trusting in Him for God’s mercy and grace. We cannot know what lies ahead of us, both the victories and the trials, but we can know one thing—God will use us beyond our greatest expectations. He is at work providentially to use all we experience for His glory and to continue His unfolding plan of redemption through His Son, Jesus.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

What are some ways God uses His people for His glory and mission? (believers can be an example for other Christians when they joyfully endure trials and suffering for Jesus’ sake; believers can bear witness to the gospel of Jesus as they interact with and serve unbelievers; believers can disciple and encourage one another to grow in the faith and be more like Christ)
My Mission

EXPLAIN: As we read Scripture, our tendency is to identify with those like Joshua, the heroes in the biblical stories we read. But we might struggle to remember—we might not want to remember—that all of us were Rahabs at one time. We all were sinners, enemies of God and in desperate need of His mercy and grace (Rom. 3:23). No one was ever so good that he or she didn’t need the grace of God, and no one was ever so bad that the grace of God couldn’t save him or her. The Rahabs of this world need to hear the gospel, just as we have, so let us fulfill our mission to carry the gospel to every tribe and nation so even more people can be welcomed into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 61), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have experienced victory over sin and death through Jesus, we tell people of every tribe and nation about Jesus so they too might trust in Him and become part of the one people of God.

- How will you follow Rahab’s example of faith in the one true God?
- What can your group do to grow as a welcoming group for all who are a part of it and all who could be?
- What people group will you pray for and strive to be part of reaching them with the gospel?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, none of us deserve to receive the mercy of being included among Your people. We deserve to be cut down and destroyed with the rest of the wicked. Yet You extend grace to enemies like us, not only in sparing us from Your judgment but also giving us a share in Your victory. Thank You for the inheritance we have in Christ and the salvation He accomplished for Your people. Help us to tell every tribe and nation about the mercy found in Your Son and the grace of being included among the people of God. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 62-64), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 65) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 62-64) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 65) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 62-64) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.

- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 2 as a part of point 1 in the session: While the people of Jericho believed in fear, Rahab believed in faith, which would lead to her deliverance from the coming judgment and inclusion with the people of God.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 3: “Nothing can stop God from bringing to pass what He wills.”
- Day 5: “When we trust in Christ, our old self is put to death and we have been given new life in Christ.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 65) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to reflect with gratitude on where they would be now had not someone invited them through the gospel to become part of God’s people.

- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

**Point 1:** An enemy recognizes God’s future victory and appeals for mercy (Josh. 2:8-13).

“Rahab’s *I know* contrasts with her ‘I didn’t know’ in v. 4. There follows a true confession in place of the former deceit. The phrases *terror of you has fallen on us* and *the land is panicking* repeat the same expressions from Exodus 15:15-16. Those predictions looked forward to reactions that Rahab describes [as] having been fulfilled. Confessions of God’s gift and sovereignty over heaven and earth begin and end the confession (Josh. 2:9a,11b). Situated within these confessions are statements about the fear that has come upon the Canaanites (vv. 9b,11a). All these expressions provide an envelope for the central confession of Rahab in v. 10. This confession is based upon the historic acts of God’s redemption of Israel at the Red Sea and against Sihon and Og. As with God’s historic act of redemption in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so Rahab’s confession of his gracious work in redeeming Israel from Egypt and beyond forms the basis for the salvation faith that she speaks with her mouth and believes in her heart (Rom. 10:9).”  

“Here was a ‘heathen’ woman who, because of what she had heard, was willing to abandon her Canaanite gods and confess total faith in the God of Israel. This is the reason why Rahab is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:31. Her confession of faith in the Lord is astounding for a non-Israelite. The great irony is that whereas Israel was still surveying the land to see whether the Lord ‘could’ give it to them, here was a Canaanite woman stating that she knew, as a matter of fact, that God had already given the land to Israel.”

**Point 2:** An enemy escapes destruction and lives to see God’s victory (Josh. 6:15-17,20-21).

“Jericho was destroyed. But the God of Israel is a God of justice and he shows no partiality. Many centuries later, a similar fate would befall Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17:7-23) and in 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 25:1-21). The nation of Israel was not immune from punishment for sin.”

“The list of people and animals here is not to provide an inventory of who was killed, but to emphasize the obedience of Joshua and the people. Verse 2 may suggest that, with the exception of Rahab and her family, the inhabitants of Jericho were military personnel.”
“The words ‘set apart’ translate the Hebrew cherem, which refers to ‘devoted things’ belonging exclusively to the Lord (often called the ‘ban’) … The concept of cherem can be difficult to understand today. How can the destruction of a city and the killing of all its inhabitants be justified, and how can one believe it was the Lord who specifically ordered these things? Part of the answer lies in recognizing the holiness of God and the sinfulness of the Canaanites. God is holy, and He created Israel to be a people totally consecrated to Him (Ex. 20:3; Lev. 18:1-5; 19:1-2). The persistent sins of the Canaanites, which were an affront to the holiness of God, finally demanded that His judgment be executed through their complete removal from the land (Lev. 18:24-28; 20:22-24). God would bless those who loved Him and kept His commands but He would punish those who hated Him (Deut. 7:9-10). The sins of the Canaanites are catalogued in Leviticus 18:1–20:27, and Deuteronomy 9:1-6 gives the theological rationale for their extermination. The Canaanites were arrogant and proud because of their strength, and the Lord had determined [to] bring about their destruction, driving them out ahead of Israel (Deut. 9:2-5). The concept of cherem demonstrates the utter seriousness of sin and its consequences—and points to the ultimate need for a Savior to rescue the human race.”

Point 3: An enemy becomes part of God's people and shares in God's victory (Josh. 6:22-25).

“Just as earlier the book is concerned to show that Joshua and the people had faithfully obeyed the commands of Yahweh and Moses, the same is true in this section. In v. 22 are found Joshua’s instructions for the two spies—the spies who had earlier made the oath with Rahab to spare her and her family on the basis of her faith, which had been demonstrated in her actions and her words. The instructions were that they should bring Rahab and her family out of the city alive, in accordance with their oath to her, and they did precisely that (v. 23). It is perhaps especially fitting that the two spies who had first met Rahab were given the assignment to go into the city and bring her and her family out.”

“Despite the fact that Rahab was a prostitute, she and her family lived among the Israelites from that time on, accepted because she saw and acknowledged the might of the Lord and allowed herself to become his instrument, hiding and protecting the spies (6:25; Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25).”

References
In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.