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Bible Study | Faith in Action

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Prepare

- Bible
- Journal
- Pen/pencil

Get Started

One of Jesus' most recognized attributes from the Gospels is His compassion. We often pray to be like Him in this way, that we would observe the needs of image bearers around us and be quick to meet those needs as image bearers ourselves. But Jesus' acts of compassion often came at great risk. Are we as willing to pray that prayer and follow Him when showing Christlike compassion could cost us?

Study and Learn

- **Read Joshua 2; 6:22–25.**

Start by looking back at Joshua 1:1–2 to remember the context for chapter 2. Moses had just died, and the time for wandering in the wilderness was over. Joshua was being commissioned by God Himself to lead Israel into the promised land. What a full-circle moment for Joshua—out of the original ten spies who went to scope out the promised land, he was one of only two who believed God would help His people defeat their enemies and take the land. Now 40 years later, Joshua was finally helping lead a new generation of Israelites into that land.

So how did he start? By sending some spies to scope out enemy territory!

During their mission to spy on Jericho, the spies made their way into the home of a woman named Rahab. Rahab's home was strategically located for the spies as it was connected to the city wall. But word about these spies got around, and the king's men came looking for them. So Rahab hid the spies, sent the king's men on a wild-goose chase, and helped the spies escape.

We should note several important details about Rahab's portion of this story. She lived in the land of Canaan, which was an enemy of Israel. As she was hiding the spies, she told them she knew why they had come and what they were planning to do, and based on stories she had heard already, she fully believed God would give them victory (vv. 9–11). She had no guarantee she would be spared when she accepted them into her home. And yet she chose to help them anyway, seemingly *before* she asked them to save her (vv. 12–13).

Rahab was faced with a risk either way. She could risk being killed by the king for aiding enemy spies and lying to him about it, or she could risk turning the spies in and being destroyed by the Israelites. Her actions revealed the truth of her faith—she risked the wrath of her leaders to show compassion to the Israelites. Why? Because she believed in the power of their God. She heard, she believed, and she was saved!

• **Read Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; and James 2:25.**

Rahab was not simply spared in the battle of Jericho; she was included in the lineage of Jesus and was commended in Scripture for her faith. Having a woman included in one's genealogy was unusual, but Rahab being listed as a prostitute is noteworthy. This mention of her occupation was not to condemn her in Matthew's account; rather, it is a declaration of how remarkable her faith was. Regardless of how she came to be a prostitute, the reality is that she was a sinner—an enemy of God—just like the rest of us. But she risked everything in faith that this God and His people would have compassion on *her*. As it turns out, her risk was worth it!

Apply

We may not be faced regularly with a life-and-death scenario like Rahab, but compassion often comes with varying risks.

- What are some risks you have encountered when showing compassion?
- How do you weigh being wise with also being courageous as you take risks in showing Christlike compassion?
- What attributes of God or Bible verses about Him help remind you He is worth the risk?

Follow Up

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus' compassion often came with great risks, yet He was compassionate anyway. The Incarnation itself is an example of God's compassion despite the great cost (John 3:17; Phil. 2:1–8).

Risk in this regard is not the same as a gamble, which we often associate with the word *risk*. Jesus knew His purpose for coming into the world, and He knew the dangers He would face. But He also knew the victory was guaranteed.

Just like we learned from Rahab's story, we have to decide whether we truly believe God is sovereign and the victory is ultimately His and whether we're willing to face hardship on earth because we believe He's worth it now and for eternity.

Pray God would give you wisdom and courage as you seek to follow Him despite the risk.

Commit to Memory

Verse: **Hebrews 11:31**

Challenge: **Philippians 2:1–8**

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Today's teachers are under a lot of pressure. In addition to academic expectations and testing requirements, students bring numerous emotional and physical needs into the classroom.

Teachers continue to see the consequences of learning loss caused by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have concerns about state-approved curriculums. Increasingly, students enter the classroom with special needs, health concerns, and high levels of anxiety. And school safety remains a top priority.

Now more than ever, teachers need support, and the church is well suited to partner with them. As another school year begins, consider how you or your group could adopt a teacher and his or her classroom this year.

Make Contact

If you know a teacher, start with him or her. Ask whether he or she knows of a new teacher or a teacher who could use some support in the coming year. Or contact the principal of the school where you wish to serve, and ask for help identifying a teacher who could use a hand.

Ask your teacher friend or the principal to introduce you to the teacher. If he or she hasn't returned to the classroom yet to start planning the new year, send a card or email to introduce yourself. Explain that you would like to serve during the upcoming school year, and ask for one or two ideas that would help get everyone off to a good start.

Refrain from stating *how* you'd like to help at this point. Your goal is to come alongside the teacher, so let him or her make the first suggestions if possible. Needs might be cleaning and refreshing the classroom, rearranging desks, making copies, or providing a welcome gift for each student. Be flexible and willing to implement the teacher's suggestions. Most importantly, begin praying for the teacher. Pray the love of Christ would overflow through you into this new relationship.

Personal Encouragement

Look for ways to encourage the teacher(s) you serve beyond the classroom. Consider gift cards to his or her favorite stores or restaurants, a home-cooked meal, or special treats. Be open to opportunities to talk about issues of faith, even as you carefully maintain the boundaries that will allow for future partnerships. Let the teacher know you are praying daily for him or her and his or her students.

Katie, a mom to two elementary school-age daughters, helps lead volunteers at her children's school in Georgia. The group meets regularly with school administrators to make sure students and their families have what they need. They provide backpacks, new shoes, and diapers, as well as volunteers to welcome visitors and coordinate events. The key is consistently showing up, she said.

Katie went on to share, "We ask, 'What can we do?' Sometimes it's presence; sometimes it's a [practical] need. But the goal is to create a relationship of confidence and trust so that teachers can approach us without fear to let us know what we can do that will help them help our children."

More Ideas!

- Help organize and facilitate fundraising events.
- Eat lunch with students who don't have visitors on special days (like Grandparents' Day or Thanksgiving).
- Support grant writing efforts.
- Help students who are learning a new language.
- Participate in projects that beautify the classroom or school campus.

CARRIE MCWHORTER is a former college writing instructor who counts many teachers among her family and friends.