True Way Presbyterian Church Dr. Rick Griffith

10 August 1997 Single Message

NIV 40 Minutes

**Scarlet Lady, Scarlet Rope**

***Joshua 2***

**Topic:** Faith

**Subject:** Participation in God’s certain-to-succeed plan to reach the world

**Complement:** still requires risk on our part

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit to step out of their comfort zone to be part of God’s plan.

# Introduction

### Interest: Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear Singapore, Happy Birthday to you!

#### I know I’m a day late but I don’t think you would have come here yesterday just to hear me sing to you!

#### Seriously, I rejoice with you for 32 years of progress at great odds. Think of the risk involved 32 years ago:

##### A tiny island competing in the world of big, powerful nations! That’s risky!

##### Little resources but its people—not even its own water supply—that’s risky!

#### The “Singapore Experiment” was in some sense a “great risk,” but now in our stable society it’s hard to get people to risk.

##### Despite the very low crime rate, people continue to bar up their houses as if we live in a war zone—why risk, lah?

##### There’s little risk in getting training in a field and then not being able to find a job. The number of law school applicants is limited to prevent a glut in the market, which will tempt lawyers to go after frivolous lawsuits.

##### Housing in our society is controlled, which diminishes the need to risk. Little real speculation occurs—you just move in when your HBD flat is ready.

### Need: Please don’t get me wrong, as if I think this is bad! We all appreciate a secure society! But I do have my fears of what this is doing to us as believers. Why?

#### Did you know that as Christians we have an even more sure future, yet our lives as Christians still involve a measure of risk?

#### What are *you* risking for the sake of Christ?

### Subject: Today we’ll see how risk plays a part for you as a Christian even when you know that you are on the winning team. (Restated: When you know what God is going to do and that His plan will succeed, how does God expect us to risk?)

### Background: First let’s look at how Israel risked even when they knew God would be victorious. To start with, Israel had God’s sure promise of the land.

#### In Genesis 15:18 God had promised Abraham the entire land—all the way from the Sinai Peninsula’s stream of Egypt way up to the Euphrates River in modern Iraq.

#### Six hundred years later, in Joshua 1:3, 6, 11 we see Israel promised whatever land they stepped on (read)—that’s like being guaranteed enormous profits on stock if you’ll only put your money down!

#### So they had God’s promise, but what would the people do?

### Preview: Let’s look first at how three different people responded, then secondly we’ll see some parallels today. Notice first that…

# I. The people in Joshua 2 all participated in God’s plan to conquer Jericho by putting themselves at personal risk.

**[Although everyone we’ll see in this chapter obeyed God, they did it in such a way that their own lives were put in jeopardy.]**

## Joshua risked his leadership by sending out spies to get military information on how to conquer Jericho (1a).

### Joshua could have been paralyzed by fear of the Canaanites, but he was willing to risk defeat by sending in spies.

#### In fact, these spies themselves could have given put him in a dangerous position by revealing information harmful to Israel.

#### Remember that Israel was still on the east side of the Jordan River, in Shittim. And it was safe there, for God had already used them to defeat the peoples on the eastern side.

#### Why not just stay there? Because God had promised the western side too—and it was time to risk, to act.

### But why was it so important to conquer Jericho?

#### Jericho was the first city inside Canaan—about 5 kilometers from the river, and it had the strategic location which guarded the entire southern section of Israel.

#### In fact, this spot has been so vital over the centuries that Jericho has been destroyed and rebuilt 23 times! Each conquering nation also used it for their own defenses.

### Was sending in spies an act of doubt on Joshua’s part?

#### Not any more than seeing a showlat before buying!

#### Remember that nearly 40 years earlier Joshua himself had been one of 12 spies sent into Canaan—but it was a Baptist meeting and the congregational vote was one of unbelief. (I can say this since I’m a Baptist!) The majority concluded that they were sent in to see *if* they could conquer the land.

#### But this case, Joshua sent these men in not to see *if* they could conquer Canaan, but *how* to do it. He was expecting that the Lord would use him to defeat the city through conventional means.

#### But as a good general, he sent these guys in to collect information—especially about Jericho.

### But the point is that he acted! He didn’t just sit there and expect God to do everything.

(Now we’ll see another person who risked based on God’s promise to conquer Jericho. Now you might expect *Israelites* to risk, but someone from *Canaan* itself?! Yet here the pagan…)

## Rahab risked her life by providing military information because of her trust in God (1b-21).

### Rahab risked here own life by protecting God’s messengers (1b-7).

#### Before I address the kind of risk Rahab entailed, let’s answer two brief but pertinent questions you may be thinking:

##### First, are we to say that God blessed her lying? And if so, does this mean that He does the same today for you and me?

###### We are hard-pressed to prove that God blessed her for lying. This chapter (and even the other places Rahab is mentioned in Scripture) claim that God honored her protection of the spies, not her lying.

###### But you say, “OK, she protected them, but she did so through lying!”

Agreed. But she was from a society of liars and she did not have the same revelation about truthfulness that you and I have today.

She had heard of the *works* of God but not the *word* of God.

So God saw her heart more than her method. God could have protected the spies without her lying anyway. And even if they were killed, Jericho still would have been conquered.

In any case, God expects much more from us than He did of Rahab.

##### The second preliminary question is, “What were these spies doing in a prostitute’s house anyway? Did Rahab perform *this* favor for them too?!”

###### No, there’s no hint of any sexual activity between the spies and Rahab.

###### Also, I’d say that if you want to find out military information then you don’t go to the well where the women talk. You go to where the men go!

###### Most people wouldn’t think it unusual for male strangers to enter Rahab’s house, so this was a place where their cover wouldn’t be blown.

###### In fact, I was a bit surprised to learn the meaning of the Hebrew word “Rahab.” It means “to make broad”! A broad named “broad”!

(But God had changed her heart. She used to be risqué Rahab, but now just…)

#### Think about how she had become “risky Rahab.”

##### She risked her life by even having the men stay at her place at all, after having learned that they were Israelites. Certainly someone would find out about this, which is exactly what happened. She could have immediately turned them away or else reported them to the king.

##### She also risked her life by defending the spies when the king’s men came to capture them. If the people of Jericho knew she had actually hid them, she would have been killed.

##### She even risked staying in the city, for there was a possibility that someone may have seen what she had done.

##### In fact, three times in the NT she is honored:

###### Hebrews 11:31 holds her up as a model of faith.

###### James 2:25 says she was a righteous woman.

###### Matthew 1:5 says she even later became part of the messianic line itself! Inside Jesus’ veins flowed the blood of Rahab!

(But why did Rahab risk so much? Why risk to the point of possible execution?)

### She risked her life by giving the valuable military information about Jericho’s fear because she knew God was acting on Israel’s behalf (8-21).

#### Now I said that she risked her life by giving the valuable military information that Jericho knew God was acting on Israel’s behalf.

#### I can hear some of you saying, “Military information? She didn’t give any useful military information—like which side of the city was least defended, where the wall was weakest, or which day was the best time to attack. You don’t mean to say that Rahab noting the fear of the people of Jericho was ‘military information’?”

#### Well, yes—this was valuable data! In fact, after Joshua found this out in verse 24, the next verse says he left *the very next morning* to cross the river towards Jericho! Knowledge that fear had gripped Jericho and all of Canaan provided a powerful impetus to get the enemy before they got over their fear!

(Perhaps I should have said this earlier, but we can’t forget the third group who risked because they knew God’s will—and that’s the spies themselves. In verses 22-24 we see that…)

## The spies risked their lives to encourage Joshua’ faith in God with news of the Canaanites’ fear (22-24).

### How did the spies risk their lives?

#### They risked by not only entering enemy *territory*, but by entering an enemy *city*!

#### They risked by even taking a vow that if anyone inside Rahab’s house was killed, the spies could be killed in retribution. That’s what verse 19 means when it says “his blood be upon our head if a hand is laid on him.”

#### The spies also risked getting caught en route back to Joshua. Hiding up in the hills to the west of Jericho was helpful, but not a sure strategy.

### No wonder why this encouraged Joshua! Joshua could see that if God’s hand was upon people who risked their lives like Rahab and the spies, He could take care of Israel in facing people who were terrified of them.

(So even though God had promised to give Israel the land, all three characters had to risk to play a part in this plan. But what about us? What’s God’s plan today? How can *we* show trust in God to participate in this plan?It’s the same way today…)

# II. Participation in God’s certain-to-succeed plan to reach the world still requires risk on our part (Main Idea).

#  [Even though God will bring the gospel throughout the entire world, it still takes a measure of risk for us to be involved in it.]

## God’s plan now is not defeating Jericho but to defeat Satan by reaching the world for Christ.

## This plan will definitely succeed.

### Matthew 24:14 says that at the end of this age, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

### Revelation 7:9 speaks clearly of the people who will be saved in a yet future time: “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.” Verse 14 goes on to say that these people are all saved from every people group in the world!

### In other words, our task to reach at least one person from every ethnic group in the whole world will succeed! Wow! How wonderful to commit yourself to a task that God Himself says will succeed! And the most important task there is anyway!

(Our task is not only parallel to Joshua 2…)

## We, like Joshua, Rahab, and the spies, also need to risk to be part of God’s plan. Let me suggest four areas, each starting with an “M”:

### Master: Some here need to risk like Rahab—risk entrusting your life to this wonderful God—despite the fact that you don’t know how your family or culture will respond.

#### Notice that Rahab made the decision to follow God *first*, then she entrusted God to help her convince her family to believe too.

#### Or will you let *others* make the most important decision of your life?

### Materialism: Others of us need to risk by rejecting materialistic priorities.

#### This also risks that people may not understand us.

#### When I graduated from business school and told my parents that God had called me to be a missionary, my mother said, “Why go to Asia and tell people your religion? They already have religions that they have been happy with for centuries! I can’t believe my son would graduate with honors and then go beg for money!”

#### I learned recently that TTC has two lawyers and SBC has four doctors presently studying for church or missions ministry. What kind of misunderstanding do you think they had to undergo?

#### One of our students left the SAF with only six months left until getting his retirement pension! Now doesn’t that sound… stupid? Not if he knew that was God’s plan—which he did!

#### A colleague of mine was talking to a professional Christian businesswoman a few years back. This Singaporean lady was interested in becoming a missionary, but she expressed a need to have some money to “fall back upon” in case she couldn’t cut it as a missionary. My friend asked her how much money she felt was necessary to provide this kind of security. “Oh, a million dollars,” she said—and with all sincerity! Somehow I think it takes a greater measure of risk than she showed to be part of God’s plan to reach the world!

### Missions: If God calls you to minister somewhere outside of Singapore, most of the time that location will be less secure than here. God calls us to risk.

#### I don’t want to minimize or legitimize any coup attempt, but I think of one such coup which cost some people their lives.

##### In the particular case I’m thinking of, all of those killed were political in nature.

##### In other words, there was not a security risk for non-political persons.

##### I say this because one Singaporean missionary in this country was forced by her Singapore church leaders to return.

##### Why? Because they were concerned for her, sure. But she was very disappointed in this decision, insisting that she was in no danger—yet the “low-risk” perspective of her superiors and family overruled.

##### We know there’s a certain measure of risk related to missions, so why always insist upon such a risk-free perspective?

##### In the case which I just mentioned, having to leave put this missionary in a credibility crisis where the nationals had the perspective that she will serve God and them unless there’s the remotest chance that it might cost her something.

#### An SIL missionary recently told me that Wycliffe here has not had a Singaporean career applicant now for three years! From the whole country! I have a feeling that our inability to trust God with a greater measure of risk has something to do with it.

### Ministry: We also feel that we risk a lot to share Christ with people here in Singapore.

#### Somehow we got the idea that the Religious Harmony Bill prohibits evangelism. But let me ask, “Have you read the Bill? It’s only 16 pages long.”

#### You know what it prevents? It prevents us from using the *ineffective means* of evangelism!

#### There’s nothing in it that prohibits Christians from having others over from different perspectives, but somehow we feel that we are risking a lot to have someone of another religion over for lunch or dinner.

(OK, so what’s the point of what I’m saying in this message? Simply this…)

# Conclusion

### Participating in God’s certain-to-succeed plan to reach the world still requires risk on our part (M.I. repeated).

### Are you afraid of risk? Really! Where is your security, *really*?

### Once a building was burning with a girl perched on the 4th floor window. The firemen couldn’t get the ladder truck between the buildings so they tried to get her to jump into the net. The problem? She was blind—and they couldn’t get her to jump into a net she couldn’t see! Then her father arrived and shouted through the bull horn that there was a net and to jump. The girl jumped so completely relaxed that she didn’t even break one bone in the 4-story fall. She trusted her life completely to her father, despite the risk (FAITH, example of—trusts in the Father’s voice).

### We have a Father too—He’s far more trustworthy, yet He still requires us to trust Him. What risk is God requiring of you today?

#### Do you need to trust Christ today for the first time—even though you don’t know how your family or culture will respond?

#### Do you need to risk by rejecting materialistic priorities?

#### Is God calling you to risk by leaving Singapore to serve Him?

#### Has the Lord laid on your heart a certain person here in Singapore? Someone whom you can invite over to help out of the peril of sin?

### Prayer: “Father, we have the sure Word that you will complete the task of reaching the world. Help us to be willing to risk whatever you require to join you in your work. In Christ’s name, Amen.”

 **Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage? Joshua has just been commissioned of God to take the land in chapter 1, where God exhorted him to be strong and courageous.”

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible? Actually, the author could have skipped directly from Joshua’s call in chapter 1 to the crossing of the Jordan in chapter 3 without the narrative being interrupted. Chapter 2 seems to record an incident that focuses around the woman Rahab, so she must be the focal point of this text. She certainly is the focus in terms of space covered, for she is the central person in the story.

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage? Israel is still on the east side of the Jordan, trusting the Lord to bring them into the land.

1 Why only two spies?

 Why secret?

 Is there any allusion to the former account of sending out twelve spies?

 Where’s Shittim?

 Why were the spies supposed to look over the land?

 Did this show doubt or faith on Joshua’s part?

 What was so significant about Jericho?

 Was Joshua concerned about “if” they could take the land or “how”?

 What does “Rahab” mean in Hebrew (believe it or not, it means “to be broad”! See Woudstra, 69, n. 7)

 Why did they go to a prostitute’s house?

 Were they involved in any immorality with Rahab?

2 How did the people find out about the spies to tell the king?

 Why was this such a tragic event to have the spies?

3-5 What caused Rahab to want to protect the spies?

 Did God bless Rahab’s lie? Can we do the same today and expect His blessing?

7 Which direction did the pursuers run?

 What’s the significance of shutting the gate?

8-13 How did Rahab get the news of God’s great acts for Israel?

 How was her response different from her people?

 What was she really saying—that she believed in Israel’s God?

9-11 Was the fact that the Canaanites’ hearts were “melting with fear” vital information to Joshua?

12-13 Was she simply asking to be spared or was she identifying with Israel’s God?

 Was she saying that she had acted like an Israelite and so wanted to be treated like one?

 What is the significance of Rahab wanting her whole family with her? (unselfishness)

 Was there any risk in Rahab informing her family of the spies?

14 Were the spies allowed to make any agreements to save pagan peoples?

15, 17 Why do some people believe this rope was red?

 What does this red signify? (Christ’s atonement is taught where?)

 Is there an allusion back to the red hyssop on the door in the Exodus (Exod. 12:13, 22-23)?

16 What is the significance of going to the hills? (It has many crevices and caves.)

 Which direction were the hills?

17-20 Why did the spies want to make sure all of Rahab’s family were with her in the house?

 What did Rahab’s convincing of her family show about her faith?

21 Why did she tie the scarlet rope in the window at this point and not later?

24 How did the news about Jericho from the spies help Joshua?

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Identifying with God

God saves all despite race or background (grace of God).

God uses all types of people to accomplish His purposes.

God had declared that He would destroy the whole land of Canaan: “Canaan dismayed at the power of Israel’s God” (Woudstra, 66; cf. 1:3, 6, 11; 2:9, 24).

Identifying with Rahab

Recognize that God is the Lord of all.

Identifying with the spies

Rise above prejudice in fulfilling God’s will.

Identifying with Joshua, Rahab and the spies

We must risk to participate in God’s plan.

We must risk to be used of God.

Show your faith in God by putting yourself in situations where only God can get you out!

**Possible Illustrations**

The Scarlet Letter (“A” for adultery)

Risk-free Singapore (window bars, security systems)

CCC’s “circle of confidence” concept

My risk of showing up at FCC the Sunday after saying good-bye

Missionaries trusting God to keep them on the field financially

Rahab as an example of someone risking her life by believing in God (secret believer)

**Scarlet Lady, Scarlet Rope**

***Joshua 2***

**Exegetical Outline**

**E.I.: The way Joshua, Rahab, and the spies participated in God’s plan to conquer Jericho was by putting themselves at personal risk.**

# I. Joshua risked his leadership by sending out spies to get military information on how to conquer Jericho (1a).

# II. Rahab risked her life by providing the military information because of her trust in God (1b-21).

# III. The spies risked their lives to encourage Joshua’ faith in God with news of the Canaanites’ fear (22-24).

**Homiletical Outline** (simple inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Even if we knew for sure what the future held, we still would respond differently: apathy, investment, etc.

### Need: We have a sure knowledge of some aspects of the future as believers today, and have like responses. How are *you* responding?

### Subject: How should you respond when you know that you are on the winning team?

### Background: Israel had God’s promise of the land (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:3, 6, 11). Now what would the people do?

# I. The people in Joshua 2 all participated in God’s plan to conquer Jericho was by putting themselves at personal risk.

## Joshua risked his leadership by sending out spies to get military information on how to conquer Jericho (1a).

## Rahab risked her life by providing the military information because of her trust in God (1b-21).

## The spies risked their lives to encourage Joshua’ faith in God with news of the Canaanites’ fear (22-24).

# II. Participation in God’s certain-to-succeed plan to reach the world still requires risk on our part.

## God’s plan now is not to defeat Jericho but to defeat Satan through reaching the world with the gospel.

## This plan will definitely succeed (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 7:9).

## Yet we still need to risk to be part of this plan.

# Conclusion

###  Participation in God’s certain-to-succeed plan to reach the world still requires risk on our part (M.I.).

### Are you afraid of risk?

### What risk is God requiring of you today?

Previous Intro Not Used

### Interest: Suppose with me for a moment that you had an incredible ability to predict the stock price of Singapore Telecom. And your ability was 100% accurate. Not only did you know what the value would be next month, but you knew that the price was going to multiply a thousand-fold! In other words, if you invested $1 this month into Telecom it would be worth $1000 next month!

#### What would you do?

##### Some of us would sell all our other stocks tomorrow morning and buy ST.

##### Others of us would perhaps even sell our car, flat, or other items of value.

##### Why? Because the return in the end would be fantastic!

##### But I dare say that some of us here wouldn’t do anything at all. You’d recognize that this would take place, but maybe you’d be too busy to make any adjustments, or just apathetic.

#### My point here is that even if we knew for sure what the future held, we still would respond differently: apathy, investment, etc.