

STUDY GUIDE

FOUR SESSIONS

RAHAB



Don't Judge Me,
God Says I'm
Qualified



Kasey Van Norman

Jada Edwards

Nicole Johnson



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God Says I'm

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STUDY GUIDE | FOUR SESSIONS

Kasey Van Norman, Jada Edwards,
Nicole Johnson

With Karen Lee-Thorp



ZONDERVAN

Known by Name: Rahab

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

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How This Study Works

Rahab: Girl Boss

Do you love everything about yourself, or are there things in your past or present that you criticize yourself for? Do you feel like others are judging you? Do you feel like you're not worth anything to God? If you struggle with these questions, then you have something in common with a woman in the Bible: Rahab.

Rahab's story is the story of a girl boss. She was assertive, confident, a woman doing what she had to do to support her family. But her identity was shaped by her environment and upbringing. She didn't have a Bible study to attend or a podcast to download because she grew up in a culture that believed in many gods, not God. A highly sexualized, anti-God society. But one day two strangers knocked on her door, and she glimpsed the possibility of a better life. She chose to believe in a God that she'd only heard stories about. Her legacy became an example of what happens when we as women trust our intuition about what God says about us, not what the world says about us. Through her story we can learn to shed those unhelpful labels that others put on us, and

those fears that we have in our own hearts, and revel in God's unconditional love.

Rahab: Don't Judge Me, God Says I'm Qualified is a study for women who want to get into the real, messy parts of our lives that are usually under wraps. Through video of a Bible teacher, a Christian counselor, and an actor playing out present-day dramas, we will explore first the human perspective: how Rahab felt, how she saw herself, and how others saw her, as well as how we see ourselves. We will also discover God's perspective: how he sees Rahab and how he sees us. We will find our own stories in the pages of Scripture.

A Typical Session

A session of the study will go like this:

Check In. In Session 1 you'll introduce yourselves. In later sessions you'll have a chance to share something you discovered about yourself in-between sessions.

At a Glance: Rahab. This is a quick snapshot of an age-old problem we still deal with today, Rahab's age-old solution or mistake, and a taste of God's wisdom on the subject.

Watch The Video. Each video segment is 20–25 minutes long. It opens with a drama and then moves into a fast-paced teaching. Session 1 begins with all three of the presenters together, talking about the theme of the series. This study guide contains space for you to take notes on what you see in the video.

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Group Discussion. The heart of the study is your conversation with the other women in your group. You'll be talking mainly about the real experiences of your lives. However, because this

isn't group therapy, we strongly recommend that you commit yourself to the group ground rules discussed below.

Closing Prayer. End with your group leader or a volunteer reading aloud the prayer suggested in this section. Of course, any offered prayer is acceptable.

Keep This Close. These are a few short, memorable lines from the video that you may want to copy into your phone to go back to during the week.

On Your Own. Finally, you'll find five or six activities you can select from to carry your exploration of the topic deeper during the week. There is one verse of Scripture you can memorize and come back to over the remaining sessions of the study. There are journaling ideas. You can read Rahab's story in the Bible. You can pray or reflect on the drama. Do whichever of these activities you find helpful. Don't feel pressure to do more than you have time for. You'll have a chance to share something you got out of these activities when your group gathers next time. You'll also have a chance to recite your memory verse together.

Group Ground Rules

This study gives you more of an opportunity to open up about your real life than most studies. You won't be pushed, but you will be invited, to talk about how you see yourself and how you live. But your group is not a therapy session. It's not led by a counselor. If you need professional counseling or a forum to share the story of your past, ask your group leader or church leaders to recommend resources.

The following ground rules will help you stay on track. You should go over them in your first meeting to be sure that everyone understands and agrees.

Confidentiality. Everything shared in the group must stay in the group. Don't repeat to outsiders what others share, even if you are all friends. If a group member misses a meeting, don't bring her up to date by sharing what others said in her absence. If something happens in the group that upsets you, don't discuss it with someone outside your group. Go to your group leader.

Disclosure. This should be a safe place to tell the group the difficult truths of your past. However, the group does not need all the ugly details. Give your group the four-or five-sentence summary of your situation. If you need someone to hear the whole story, ask your group leader to help you get connected with a counselor. She can help you find the person on your church staff who has the names of counselors in your area.

Tears. It's often good to cry when you share something hard. You're not embarrassing the group. If someone in your group cries, avoid words and actions that attempt to fix her sadness or solve her problem. Comfort is good; fixing is not. Don't let tears derail your time together. Keep going. The woman who has tears will be better sooner if the conversation carries on.

Shared Airtime. Everyone in the group needs an equal chance to talk. Avoid telling long stories, especially about your past or about what you are struggling with today. If you have a lot on your mind that needs to be said, ask your group leader to help you get connected with a counselor.

Present Orientation. Rahab's past will come up in the study, and you'll have some time to think about your past. But for group discussion, concentrate on talking about who you are today, shaped by your past, but not living in the past. Don't ask the group to sit through an account of what you went through. That's for counseling.

Advice. Avoid giving advice to other group members. If someone reveals a problem she is having and doesn't seem to know what to do about it, it can be tempting to suggest solutions. Avoid doing this. You can give her the gift of listening to her and accepting her as she is, and you can pray for her later on your own. Likewise, you should avoid asking the group to suggest solutions for situations you are facing. If you feel out of control and need help, ask your group leader to help you find a counselor.

What Materials Are Needed for a Successful Group?

- ➔ Television monitor or screen
- ➔ DVD player
- ➔ Four-session DVD
- ➔ One study guide for each group member (you will be writing in the study guide, so you will each need a copy)
- ➔ Bible(s) (at least one for the group, but encourage all members to bring their Bibles)
- ➔ Pen or pencil for each person




SESSION 1

Your Past Has purpose

An abstract background featuring a map of the Middle East, including the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding regions, rendered in shades of green and white. The map is overlaid with a textured, painterly effect. The text is centered over the map.

Rahab DIDN'T
LET HER PAST
CONTROL
HER FUTURE
WITH GOD



We all have a past. And not just any past, a past that is presently living and active—shaping the way we think, believe, and act right this very moment. How we remember our life determines not only the way we relate to ourselves and others, but more importantly, how we relate to God.

For example, some believe their backstory is too boring to be useful: relatively average, safe, no “traumatic” memories to speak of. From this vantage point, God looks more like a frail, old grandpa who would rather “bless our heart” than test us toward a life of suffering and sacrifice in his name. Or perhaps your past feels a bit too scandalous and sinful to be relevant in any plan involving holiness. From this angle, God looks more like a leather-wearing, skin-inked, biker bully than an approachable friend who longs to satisfy your deepest desire.

If you feel unqualified to approach God or be used by him, join the club. The Bible is full of misfits who feel the same way. It is also a book brimming with the unchanging faithfulness of a God who gives meaning and purpose to both boring and scandalous people. In this study we’re going to see the truth of this in action through the story of Rahab, a woman in the Bible who didn’t let her past control her future with God.

Check In

Welcome to the first session of *Rahab: Don't Judge Me, God Says I'm Qualified*. To get started, give everyone a chance to do the following:

- ➔ Say your name, unless everyone in the group knows you. Then, in three or four sentences, describe one of the places where you grew up.

Take a minute on your own to write down your response to this question (you won't have to share your answer):

- ➔ How much do you believe that God can work through you to accomplish his plan for good in the world? A lot? A little? What helps you believe that? What gets in the way?

At a Glance RAHAB



Where in Scripture: Joshua 2

Age-old problem: Being defined by your past and allowing it to determine your future

Rahab's solution: Take a risk, trust God, make a change

God's timeless wisdom: Everything that happens in our life exists to make God more fully known to us and others. From horrific wounding at the hands of an abuser to marrying the love of our life. From a monotonous nine-to-five job to beach sand melting between our toes. Nothing exists for its own sake. Everything exists for the sake of Christ! *"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:15–16 NIV).*

Play the video segment for Session 1. It's about 23 minutes long, and you will be introduced to three speakers. As you watch, use the following outline to record thoughts that stand out to you.

DRAMA: *Nicole*

Reflecting on the shoes we've worn in our past can remind us of some of the most painful times in our lives.

There are plenty of shoes we never wanted to walk in.

TEACHING: *Jada*

Even if you feel stuck or defined by your old identity, God can re-identify you.

Sometimes you become a part of what your culture says is normal.

We all have religious frames of reference.

To be used on mission, all you have to do is open your heart.

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TEACHING: *kasey*

Sometimes you just need a little pressure to know there's another way.

Pressure points are the catalyst for change.

Somewhere along the way we have created our own version of the truth.

Our truth is designed to help us survive. *God's truth* is designed to help us thrive.

Thriving: Colossians 1:9-14

Rahab knows she needs deliverance, and she is desperate.

Group Discussion

Leader, read each numbered prompt to the group.

1 What stood out to you most from the video?

2 What is your honest, gut response to studying Rahab?

3 Our “truth” is a product of the experiences and environment in which we were brought up. What was one experience in your upbringing that made a big impression on you?

4 As a **child** we soak in the way people deal with conflict and love, or not. Share an example from your past.

5 As we move into **adolescence**, we decide if all of these core beliefs are true or false, based on the people around us. Share an example from your past.

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6 In our **twenties**, we test-drive those beliefs. Share an example from you past.

7 In our **thirties and forties**, we may realize that there could be another way. Share an example from your past.

8 Think about your upbringing. Describe one way you learned to *give* love (such as cooking meals, giving gifts, spending time, working hard) and one way you were taught to *guard* love (such as expectations, busying yourself, resisting people's demands while avoiding direct confrontation, blame, isolation).



Select a volunteer

to read the following:

God designed us to be shaped by the experiences and environment in which we were brought up. Sadly, we all grow up in a broken world with parents who are broken to a greater or lesser degree. Their challenges affected us profoundly. It would be easy, then, to blame our parents and our society for the difficulties we have. But recognizing where our flaws may have come from doesn't take the sovereignty away from God, nor does it take the responsibility off of us. God wants us to come to grips with the way our past has affected us because he allowed it and intends to use it. We must choose to release our parents and society and learn over time better ways of seeing the world and relating to people. With God's help we can transcend our families and our society and actually contribute to making them better.



9 Is there an identity, name, pair of shoes, or label from your past that you feel stuck with or proud of? If so, what is it? Why does this identity make you feel stuck or proud? Discuss how you might overcome the label or identity.

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10 Rahab was desperate for a new way of life. Are there things in your life that you are desperate to change? If so, what are they? Or if you have already made the change, how has your life been affected?

In preparation for the coming week, write one thing you want to gain from your study time:

(ex.: *hope for my future, a better understanding of who I am . . .*):

Closing Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to read this prayer aloud over the group:

Father God, you know everything about our pasts. Thank you for using all of our regrets, sin, failures, and inadequacies to remind us how desperate we are for a Savior. Thank you for using the best and worst parts, not in spite of us, but because of us. How grateful we are to be women, standing alongside our sister Rahab, qualified to take an active role in your eternal plan and purposes. Strengthen us this week as we open up more, and give us confidence to trust your plan. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Keep This Close

As you go on your way this week, here are some thoughts from the video that you may want to save in your phone or write on a sticky note so you can refer back to them:

- Our truth is designed to help us survive. God's truth is designed to help us thrive.
- Your past is a part of God's preparation so you can be a significant part of his plan.
- Even if you feel stuck or defined by your old identity, God has promised to use every part.



SESSION 1

On Your Own

Each session of this study also includes activities you can do each day between group meetings. These will help you work through and into a deeper understanding of both the Bible and how it relates to your personal life. **Don't feel you need to do all of these activities. Choose those that are helpful to you. The goal is to grow and develop a stronger relationship with God.** There will be time at the beginning of your next meeting to share whatever you've learned from these activities.

Memory Verse

There are many good techniques that may help you memorize Bible verses. Here are some of them:

- 1. Write out the verse by hand on paper, along with its reference (in this case, Jeremiah 1:5). We remember as much as 80 percent more of what we write by hand than what we type electronically. That's because handwriting stimulates a more helpful part of the brain than typing does.*
- 2. Even better, hand write the verse and reference five times.*
- 3. Read the verse aloud and act it out in an exaggerated way. Proclaim it dramatically. Actors have learned that the dramatic use of your body and voice will create associations in your brain.*
- 4. Go for a walk and recite the verse and reference aloud. Walking increases memory formation.*
- 5. Copy the verse and reference into your phone or onto a card you can keep with you.*
- 6. Return to the verse three times a day to rehearse it. Say it aloud. Do this for all four weeks of this study.*

Learning the verse with its reference will help you find it in the Bible if you want to read the larger story around the verse.



One thing we really hope you'll do is memorize a verse of the Bible. Committing verses to memory enables you to deeply internalize their truth and to have them with you when you need them. Here is the memory verse for Session 1:

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart."*

(JEREMIAH 1:5 NIV)

In this verse, God speaks to the young prophet Jeremiah and prepares him for the rough road ahead. He assures him that he, God, set him apart for service long before Jeremiah was aware of it. Everything that had already happened to Jeremiah was preparation for what God had made him for, and everything ahead was going to be woven into God's plan for the good of many people. God speaks these same words to you, because he has also set you apart for his service.


In Real Life:

DRAMA ACTIVITY: Shoes, Part 1

Little, white, patent leather shoes from age five and purple high tops from junior high remind Nicole of some of the most painful times of her life and the shoes she never wanted to walk in.

1

If you were going to tell a story about shoes (or some other artifact) that you didn't want to wear from your childhood, what would the shoes be? What is the story behind those shoes?



2 How did those shoes and that story affect the person you grew up to be? Do you still find yourself believing the story they told?

3 Have you ever worn shoes simply to “play a part”? If so, describe those shoes and why you wore them.

4 What would it look like to walk in your own shoes?

5 If God were to choose a pair of shoes for you, what do you think they would be like?

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The Bible says this about what we wear:

Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

(COLOSSIANS 3:10–11 NLT)

6 What do you think it means to become like your Creator? How do you suppose it's different from becoming like the good church girls you have seen or like whoever else you have tried to live up to?

7 How does it help you to know that it doesn't matter if you are "barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free" (Colossians



3:11)? The Message translation of this verse may be a bit clearer: “Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing.” What other things do you suppose don’t matter?

Jesus also says:

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

(MATTHEW 11:29–30 MSG)



What in this passage appeals to you? Why?

9 What is the hard part of doing what Jesus says here?

29

10 What are you going to do differently in your day-to-day life as a result of this exercise?

Rahab in The Bible

SCRIPTURE ACTIVITY

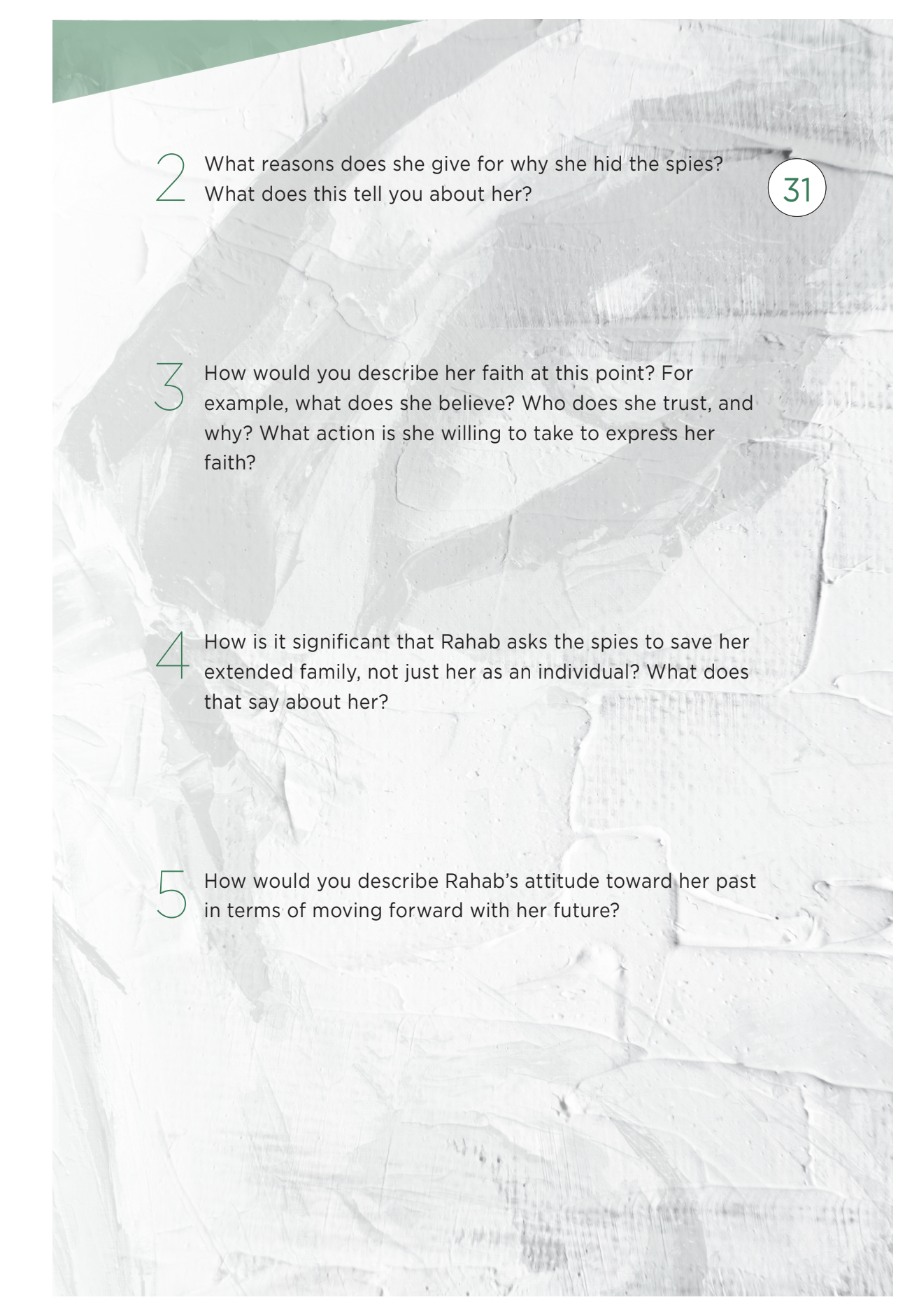
Look up Joshua 2:1-21 in your Bible and read it.

The Old Testament tells the story of how God chose the family of Abraham to be his means of restoring the whole world to a love relationship with himself. The family became known as the Israelites, and God promised to give them the land of Canaan as their homeland. He told them to drive out the Canaanites, whose culture was riddled with injustices like child sacrifice and ritual prostitution.

The Israelite army's first task was to conquer the walled city of Jericho. The general sent two spies into Jericho to assess the city's defenses. But no matter how well they dressed as Canaanites and spoke the language, their accents would give them away as foreigners. So they went to a house that served as brothel, a likely place for travelers, that happened to be built on top of the extremely wide city wall. This was the house of Rahab.

- 1 Did Rahab make a deal with the spies before or after she hid them and lied to the king's men? Why is this significant? What does it tell you about her?

(NOTE: Many people dispute whether or not Rahab's lie was justified. Yet this imperfect part of her was still used by God for his plan. When your good intentions fall short of God's perfection, he'll still use you for his purpose.)



2 What reasons does she give for why she hid the spies?
What does this tell you about her?

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3 How would you describe her faith at this point? For example, what does she believe? Who does she trust, and why? What action is she willing to take to express her faith?

4 How is it significant that Rahab asks the spies to save her extended family, not just her as an individual? What does that say about her?

5 How would you describe Rahab's attitude toward her past in terms of moving forward with her future?

Personal Time Line

0 Birth
▼

10
▼

Pre-Teen/Adolescence

15
▼

Teens

TEACHING ACTIVITY

Instructions:

1. Complete a timeline of your life from childhood to age 25 (or to your current age if you're under 25). Note the key people and experiences.
2. Now take some time to write. How did those people and experiences help to shape the person you grew up to be? Use extra paper if necessary.
3. On the timeline, circle any season, choice, or experience that you think disqualifies you from being part of God's people and his mission to the world. Then take some time to pray for God's perspective on your past.

20

Early Twenties

25

Late Twenties

Journal Time

Choose *one* of the following topics to journal about:

- ➔ God met Rahab exactly where she was, using the most broken and messed up parts of her to get her attention. He does the same for you. What are the most broken and messed up parts of you? Maybe they're hidden so nobody sees them. Maybe you don't look at them yourself. But take some time now to look at your past and your present, and the things you do to survive. Write the truth of these things here. Then write about how God has used or is using or can use these things to get your attention.
- ➔ Pressure points tell us things can no longer be the way they have been. What pressure point in your life is pushing you to make a change? What needs to change? How are you responding? What do you think would be the best possible response you could make? What is the hardest part about doing that?
- ➔ Which specific memories from your past tempt you to disbelieve God in your present? Which memories encourage you to believe him more than you have before?

Whichever topic you choose, finish up by writing about this question: What will you do differently in your day-to-day life as a result of this reflection? Again, use extra paper if necessary.

Listening

PRAYER ACTIVITY

God speaks to the heart—the core of you, where your thoughts, emotions, desires, motives, and choices come from. Take some time now to let him speak to you. Find a quiet place where you can be alone. Turn off your phone—or better still, leave it somewhere else so it doesn't draw your eye and your thoughts. Lay before God your thoughts about your past and any doubts you have about whether he can work through you. Then let the busyness of your thoughts go. If you find your mind drifting, just bring it gently back with a calm thought like “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.”

If you find your mind drifting, easily distracted, or struggle to find downtime in your life, try reading Psalm 139, and listen to what God is saying to you there. God speaks to us in his Spirit. The Spirit is activated through the stimulus of truth. Don't be discouraged if you don't hear an audible message from God. He is always speaking to you through his Holy Word.

Sometimes it helps to read aloud or change up your surroundings. Take a walk, sit on the porch, head to the nearest park bench, or simply sit in your car alone for a few minutes if necessary.

KNOWN BY Name

The women in the Bible asked the same three questions we all still ask today:

How does everyone else see me?

How do I see myself?

How does God see me?

The Known by Name series explores complex women in the Bible and their struggles with tough questions through the lenses of a counselor, a Bible teacher, and a dramatist.



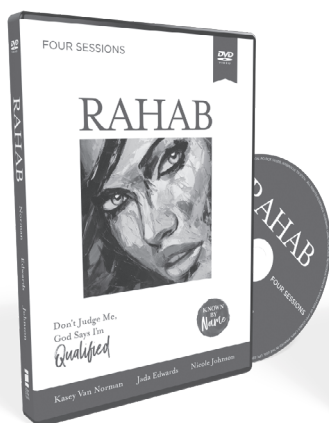
Kasey Van Norman is a bestselling author, licensed counselor, and Bible teacher living in Texas with her husband and their two children. Kasey teaches and writes about the love that redeemed her life from the shame of past abuse, addiction, infidelity, and the fear of a life-threatening cancer diagnosis.



Jada Edwards is an experienced Bible teacher committed to equipping women of all ages with practical, biblical truth. She currently serves as the Women's Pastor and Director of Creative Services for One Community Church in Plano, Texas. She and her husband have two children.



Nicole Johnson, bestselling author, performer, and motivational speaker, is one of the most sought-after creative communicators in America today. She uniquely blends humor with compassion, creating a sense of community for women of all ages. She makes California home with her husband and children.



RAHAB

Don't Judge Me,
God Says I'm
Qualified

Rahab's story, found in the book of Joshua, is a story of a girl boss, an assertive, confident woman who did what she had to do to provide for her family. Her identity was shaped by her upbringing. With no Bible study to join or podcast to download, Rahab learned her behaviors in a culture that believed in gods, not God. But when opportunity knocked, she boldly trusted in God, and became a woman who brought freedom to generations.

This four-session video Bible study will take you through the story of Rahab, our sister in Scripture who trusted God's final word about her worth above society's. Through her story, you will learn how to shed unhelpful labels and fears, and instead revel in God's unconditional love and acceptance of you—just as you are.

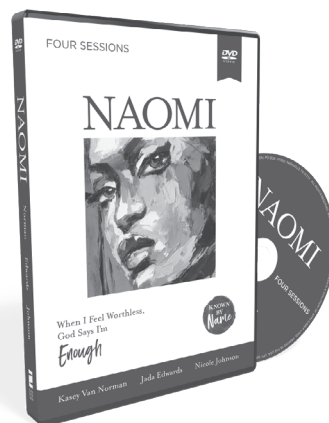


HAGAR

In the Face of Rejection,
God Says I'm
Significant

Hagar's story, found in Genesis 16, is a story of cultural victimization. She was betrayed, abandoned, and scorned. Her response? She did what most of us would do when deeply hurt by someone we trust—she ran away. She got defensive. She retreated to a place where she felt safe. She felt justified in her anger and hurt. But deep in her core was a woman who longed to be seen and hoped for redemption.

This four-session video Bible study will take you through the story of Hagar, our sister in Scripture who learns through hurt and rejection that what is unresolved is not unseen by God. Through her story, you will learn how to respond when life doesn't affirm you, but God does.



NAOMI

When I Feel Worthless,
God Says I'm
Enough

Naomi's story, found in the book of Ruth, is a story of lost identity. She lost her husband and her sons, which in her culture left her completely without a home or a means to support herself. She was a Hebrew woman in Moabite territory, alone among strangers. She reacted by letting her circumstances define her. But even in her angry, fearful, rather dramatic season of feeling like the victim, God kept showing his faithfulness.

This four-session video Bible study will take you through the story of Naomi, our sister in Scripture who traveled from comfort and security to despair and bitterness; from hopeless drifting to faithful obedience; from loss to redemption in one short lifetime.

Available now at your favorite bookstore.





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Find the right study for your women's group
by answering four easy questions:

1. WHAT TYPE OF STUDY DO YOU WANT TO DO?

- **Book of the Bible:** Dive deep into the study of a Bible character, or go through a complete book of the Bible systematically, or add tools to your Bible study methods toolkit.
- **Topical Issues:** Have a need in a specific area of life? Study the Scriptures that pertain to that need. Topics include prayer, joy, purpose, balance, identity in Christ, and more.

2. WHAT LEVEL OF TIME COMMITMENT BETWEEN SESSIONS WOULD YOU LIKE?

- **None:** No personal homework
- **Minimal:** Less than 30 minutes of homework
- **Moderate:** 30 minutes to one hour of homework
- **Substantial:** An hour or more of homework

3. WHAT IS YOUR GROUP'S BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?

- **Beginner:** Group is comprised mostly of women who are new to the Bible or who don't feel confident in their Bible knowledge.
- **Intermediate:** Group has some experience with studying the Bible, and they have some familiarity with the stories in the Bible.
- **Advanced:** Group is comfortable with the Bible, and can handle the challenge of searching the Scriptures for themselves.

4. WHAT FORMAT DO YOU PREFER?

- **Print and Video:** Watch a Bible teacher on video, followed by a facilitated discussion.
- **Print Only:** Have the group leader give a short talk and lead a discussion of a study guide or a book.

Get Started!

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