

Life Group Notes 1/14/2024

Chaplain Caroline Brown: When God's Reputation Precedes Him

[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Chaplain Caroline Brown has raised this week, 1/14/24. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On Rahab the harlot](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Sureya spoke during worship of what happens when we worship God. She says, "Worship changes the brain. It changes the atmosphere of the room, as if God has entered the room." Have you ever had such an experience? Do you have a testimony?

Have you participated in Financial Peace University? Do you have a testimony?

Chaplain Caroline Brown, who serves in the women's prison and is a member with us at Grace, brought the message this week. What struck you?

She begins with Proverbs 10:22 [The blessing of the LORD enriches, and He adds no sorrow to it.](#) What strikes you immediately with this verse? Why does that strike you? Have you ever been taught this? What is the purpose of riches?

Look how John prays for those who read his epistle: 3John 1:2 *Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers.* Have you prayed this prayer for yourself? For your family?

Have you ever prayed the prayer of Jabez? Look up 1 Chronicles 4: 9 *Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain."* 10 *And Jabez called out to the God of Israel, "If only You would bless me and enlarge my territory! May Your hand be with me and keep me from harm, so that I will be free from pain." And God granted the request of Jabez.*

1. Why is this a shocking prayer?
2. Pray this prayer now, together.
3. Why have we not generally been taught to pray this way?

4. Why did God hear Jabez, and answer his prayer?
5. What would have happened had Jabez not prayed this prayer?
6. What do we hear of Jabez after this singular verse? Why is that important?

Caroline stated the theme of the message: When God's Reputation Precedes Him. What does that bring to mind? What does a good reputation bring? Look up Proverbs 22: [1A good name is more desirable than great riches; favor is better than silver and gold.](#)

1. How do you explain this?
2. So which do you seek? Riches or a good name?
3. How does that change the search?
4. Compare this verse to Ecclesiastes 7: [1A good name is better than fine perfume, and one's day of death is better than his day of birth.](#) How do you explain this?
5. Look up Matthew 6: [33But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.](#) How is the kingdom of God and His righteousness entwined with your own reputation?
6. How is a reputation, good or bad, made?
7. How is God's reputation made?
8. How is Jesus Christ's reputation made?
9. Does Jesus have a good reputation today? In the news? In the nations? In the church? Explain.

Look at Acts 6: [2So the Twelve summoned all the disciples and said, "It is unacceptable for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint this responsibility to them 4and will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."](#)

1. What were the apostles looking for?
2. According to the apostles' criteria, what makes a good reputation in and for the church?
3. What are the consequences of a bad reputation?
4. What happens when a leader fails?

Look up Joshua 2 and review the chapter. What happens?

1. Who is Rahab?
2. What is her profession? (Also read [the footnote](#) below.)

Now examine closely Joshua 2: [8Before the spies lay down for the night, Rahab went up on the roof 9and said to them, "I know that the LORD has given you this land and that the fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who dwell in the land are melting in fear of you. 10For we have heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites across the Jordan, whom you devoted to destruction. 11When we heard this, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth below. 12Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD that you will indeed show kindness to my family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will deliver us from death."](#)

1. Talk about God's reputation. How did He acquire it?
2. How did Rahab hear of Him? Again, How did God acquire His reputation?
3. To what degree was the reputation of the Israelites and the reputation of God related? Explain.
4. Who in Rahab's world has been impacted by God's reputation? How far did God's reputation extend?
5. How will the two spies' swearing by the LORD assure Rahab? Why should she trust them?
6. Look at Rahab's request. What does she acquire by that prayer?
7. How selfish is that prayer? Could you pray a prayer like that?
8. Look again. Was Rachel only thinking about herself? Who was included in her prayer? Is her prayer selfish after all?

Look up Exodus 32: [9](#)*The LORD also said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. [10](#)Now leave Me alone, so that My anger may burn against them and consume them. Then I will make you into a great nation." [11](#)But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God, saying, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? [12](#)Why should the Egyptians declare, 'He brought them out with evil intent, to kill them in the mountains and wipe them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce anger and relent from doing harm to Your people. [13](#)Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom You swore by Your very self when You declared, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land that I have promised, and it shall be their inheritance forever.'" [14](#)So the LORD relented from the calamity He had threatened to bring on His people.*

1. What is Moses protecting?
2. What does Moses do?
3. What is God's response?
4. Can you even think this way? Does prayer change God's mind?
5. To what degree was Moses a co-laborer with God? In other words, to what degree is Moses taken into God's counsel?
6. How important was God's reputation to Moses? How important is the church's reputation to us? Why?

Caroline prophesied, "This year we have to consider our households more than ever before." Why, do you think? What makes 2024 more important than most years?

Caroline says Rahab feared like all the people of the land feared, "...but she took her fear to another level. She stopped fearing man, and she started fearing God." Explain. What was the fruit of her fear? How did she act in response to her fear?

Caroline says, "The fear of man is crippling. But the fear of God, when you get ahold of it, leads you to a whole other place." Explain. What place?

She continues, "We have come into this year with a lot of uncertainties."

1. List them.
2. What do uncertainties breed?
3. What should our response to uncertainties then breed?
4. State the uncertainties Rahab faced. When her own dwelling was on the wall with a window facing out, what could she see out her window?

Caroline says of Rahab, "She had heard. She believed and now she was going to act on what she knew. I understand that faith without works is dead."

1. First of all, why would the Israelites come to the house of a prostitute?
2. What type of men usually enter the house of a prostitute? Does anyone take notice of them? Why not?
3. How do we know that Rahab believed?
4. Look again above at [Rahab's prayer](#). What was the first thing Rahab did, before she asked for anything?
5. Describe the courage that her first act took. What were the dangers she faced in hiding the spies?

She points us to Jeremiah 29: *11*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope. *12*Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. *13*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. *14*I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore you from captivity..."

1. How important is this promise to Israel? What was happening to Israel in the days this promise was made? Why was Israel in exile?
2. How would a promise like this impact people who are oppressed and enslaved?
3. How important is this promise to us today?
4. According to Jeremiah, what is the requirement necessary if we want to find God?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Seek and you shall find?"
6. Now think, what was on Rahab's mind when she hid the Israelite spies? What was she seeking?

Caroline points out, "Rahab's heart was seeking an encounter with this God. She had never encountered...never met Him, never known anyone who knew this God. But she already had an opinion of this God."

1. Where did that opinion come from? How was her opinion formed?
2. Did Rachel have any uncertainties in her opinion of God?
3. Look at your opinion of God. How does it compare to Rachel's?
4. Are there any uncertainties in your view of God?

She relates the story of a mom with whom she prayed whose 15-year-old son had run away to Arizona and refused to return home, and of another whose brother was passing away. She asks, "What do we do? How are we going to face 2024 with faith and praise?" Answer her. She says, "God is merciful, and when we call on Him, He will answer. When we call on him, He is listening. God wants to change the circumstances of your life. He will change them. I promise you."

1. How do we know that?
2. Think of Rahab. How did God change the circumstances of her life?
3. From the moment she let the spies down from her window, did her circumstances become better? Or more perilous?
4. How long did it take until her circumstances changed for the better?
5. Can you explain why we are better off, because of Rahab? Whose mother did she become?

Caroline took a moment to speak words into the life of folks watching online, who might be struggling, who have been away from God for a while. She says, "I know what

it is like to have been away from God. Fifteen years of my life I walked away. I was brought up in church from when I was little, then backslid away for fifteen years. Then one day, a friend called and said, 'I went to church, and I cried.' And when she said, 'I cried,' I knew what that meant, because that was my experience when I first met Jesus as Lord, and I wanted to cry again. So I went to church, and I came back to Him. Since that day, I've stumbled forward, but I've never looked back. And I want to say to you, 'If you are struggling take a look at Rahab's life.'"

1. Do you relate to Caroline's testimony?
2. Why was Rahab so bold? How did she know?
3. Describe how the Holy Spirit was working in Rahab.

Look up 1 Peter 5: *6Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you. 7Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you. 8Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

1. How does this apply to Rahab? Did she know what would happen before she offered to help?
2. How does humility contribute to success?
3. What does "...in due time..." mean? Can you expect immediate satisfaction?
4. What does "all" mean in verse seven? How many cares should you keep?
5. What are the characteristics of a sober mind? How are you doing?
6. Why is a roaring lion safer for us than a silent lion?
7. Have you ever cast all your cares on him? Do you have a testimony?
8. What does worrying accomplish?
9. Look again at the promise we saw from [Jeremiah 29](#). How does it help to review this promise in times of trouble?
10. What changes when your mind is focused on a promise like this?
11. How does it help to know God's reputation before you pray?

Caroline asks us to reflect on Rahab's mindset. If she was a harlot, she was in a slavery unimaginably worse than anything the Israelites had suffered in Egypt.

1. What is the impact on her thoughts of the knowledge a nation miraculously freed from bondage that was coming her way?
2. Imagine her own slavery. What would freedom bring for her?
3. What did her freedom end up bringing?
4. How significant is it that a Canaanite harlot was the great-great grandmother of David?

She reviews Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and says, "Now that you've heard it. What you do with the Word you have heard depends on you." Jeremiah 1:11 says, God "...watch(es) over His Word to perform it." She says, "God is calling His church to be a believing church. We are not to be hearers only, but doers of His Word, watchers over and performers of His Word as He is." She says, "Be a church. Be a people who believe. On your job and in the street, the people you see, the people you work with must know that there is something different about you, not because you're preaching to them. It will be because you carry God's presence with you."

1. What does a believer look like?
2. What does a believing church look like?

3. What is different in a believing church?
4. What is different at Grace Capital?

Caroline points out that Rahab's reputation was changed. "She was brought out so that she could be brought in."

1. To what extent was Rahab "brought in?" Did she have limited or unlimited access to the promises of God through Abraham?
2. What happened to her past life and her former reputation?
3. How did Rahab "the harlot" become a hero and her name a badge of honor? (Read Hebrews 11 again!)
4. How is that encouraging to those who have a shady past?

Look up Philippians 2: [5](#) *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: [6](#) Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, [7](#) but emptied Himself (making Himself of no reputation), taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. [8](#) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.* Caroline points out, "Jesus put His reputation aside and came to earth to meet us where our reputation is, and to swallow that up, and then we could have a new reputation. Now you can say to your neighbor, 'You have a new reputation. And do you know why? Because your reputation is in Christ.'"

1. What do you think?
2. Again, how does Rahab's story fit this?
3. Look at Colossians 1:13 *Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.* What is Paul saying?
4. What does this mean for our reputation?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Pray the prayer of Jabez every day over you and your family.
3. Look at your household this week. Pray Rahab's prayer over them.
4. Write down the directions you got from this sermon, and make the plan required to carry them out.
5. Think of someone you will invite to church this week.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On Rahab the harlot**—Rahab, called "the harlot," is one of the greatest heroes of the faith in the Bible, male or female. Historically, we know that she was a resident of the city of Jericho, doomed to utter destruction of all that lived and breathed there. Her story is found in Joshua 2, and subsequently her name is found throughout the rest of the Bible, because David's lineage passed through her. The significance of this is stunning and should not be overlooked. The entire land of Canaan was doomed to destruction because the iniquity of the people, though not yet meriting

judgment four hundred years earlier with Abraham, had now reached a peak resembling the evil of Sodom. Not one life was to be spared. Israel was commissioned with the rod of God's judgment against a people whose contagious evil is known today to be almost unrivaled in the annals of recorded history, and Israel was not to leave a single inhabitant alive, lest Israel itself follow their pernicious ways. It was a decree of utter and absolute judgment. It is ironic, then, that the first thing the spies who were sent to Jericho do is to make a pact with a prostitute to save her life and that of her family. This mercy hearkens to the discussion Abraham had with God over the fate of Sodom, where God said, "If I even find ten righteous, I will spare the city." How can righteousness be found in the heart of a harlot? Some interesting facets are uncovered in this article concerning both Rahab and her home in the wall of Jericho:

<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/was-rahab-really-a-harlot/>

Briefly, there is with the Hebrew word for "harlot" a homonym that allows for Rahab to be an innkeeper, one who feeds and offers provision, not a sex worker. One can question if that would "save" Rahab's reputation, until two things are considered: First she's a resident of Jericho, doomed for its iniquity to destruction, knowing that God does not destroy the innocent. And second, she is called Rahab the prostitute in no uncertain terms in Hebrews 11. A prostitute, then, in Canaan in that day would fit the description of a sex slave exactly as Chaplain Caroline described her in today's message, and the restoration of her reputation by grace is at the heart of the gospel we preach.

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Proverbs 10:22
Tuesday: 3 John 1:2
Wednesday: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10
Thursday: 1 Peter 5:6-8
Friday: Matthew 6:32-34
Saturday: Exodus 32:11-14
Sunday: Jeremiah 29:11-14

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.