

PENTECOSTAL LIFE

SMALL GROUP Facilitator's Guide

God's Amazing *Grace*

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Rahab,
the Willing

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Ruth: Grace in
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Bathsheba:
A Story of Grace

MAY 2019

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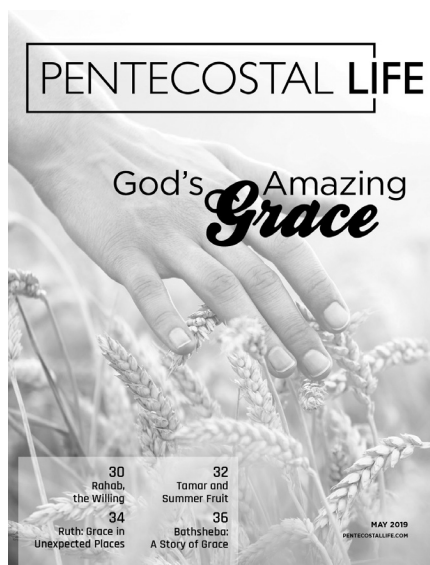
SMALL GROUP

Facilitator's Guide

Welcome to *Pentecostal Life's* small group study, *God's Amazing Grace*. Thank you for providing leadership for this four-session study. Your enthusiasm for the study will help to inspire and educate your group members to learn about and appreciate God's amazing grace through studying the lives of four biblical women.

God's Amazing Grace —Small Group Overview

Authors: Rachel Coltharp, Lanette Kinsey, Ashley LaBoube, Claudette Walker



Session: Session Name / *Pentecostal Life* article:

Session One	Rahab, the Willing
Session Two	Tamar and Summer Fruit
Session Three	Ruth: Grace in Unexpected Places
Session Four	Bathsheba: A Story of Grace

HOW TO REACH US

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OUR VISION

The *Pentecostal Life* in every Pentecostal home

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To publish a Pentecostal magazine that strengthens the hands of Pentecostal pastors, encourages and challenges Pentecostal believers, and reaches beyond the doors of Pentecostal churches

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Small Group Facilitator's Guide

Launching the Study

This study focuses on God's amazing grace. It comes from the four ENGAGE articles in the May 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life*. Every member of your group will need a copy of the magazine. As a leader, you will need the magazine and the downloadables from pentecostallife.com.

Before the Study

- Pray that you and the members of the group will be ready to receive what God wants to reveal to them through this study.
- Make sure your group size is small enough to encourage interaction by all participants; if it is too large, consider breaking up into several study groups.
- Set up a circular area where all participants have a seat that allows them to see each other.
- Place an extra chair in the circle to remind the group of the evangelistic nature of the study group. The group members can be encouraged to bring visitors and to pray for their salvation.
- As the facilitator, you should read the four ENGAGE articles to become familiar with the scope of the study.
- Each week, read the discussion questions and think through the answers you anticipate will be given. Prepare to lead the conversation and make notes on the direction you will take.
- Make certain each member of the study group purchases or has access to the May 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life* magazine. *Pentecostal Life* is available in single or bundle subscriptions at pentecostallife.com.
- Each week, instruct your study group members to read the appropriate ENGAGE article for the following week's discussion.
- Make a copy of the Study Guide for each student. They, as well as this Facilitator's Guide, are available as a download at pentecostallife.com in both Word document and PDF formats.

During the Study

- **Focus.** It is easy for small group discussions to veer away from the goal of the study. Gently encourage group members back to the question at hand if this happens.
- **Include.** Ask specific questions of those who are more hesitant to participate to encourage them to join the discussion.
- **Pray.** As appropriate, pray for the members of the group who are struggling.

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SESSION ONE

Rahab, the Willing By Lanette Kinsey

More than forty years ago, I committed to reading the Bible every year, and each year I love it when I get to the Book of Joshua. Don't get me wrong; there

are many interesting stories in the books of the law of Moses, but there also are dry genealogies, detailed descriptions of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, prescribed sacrifices and feasts, along with a dizzying array of regulations and procedures for dealing with diseases and conditions arising from a massive group of people living in close proximity.

And then comes the Book of Joshua, which reads like a plot to an exciting novel, replete with spies, a wily prostitute, war strategies, battles fought, and cities conquered. Central to the successful mission of the spies sent into the city of Jericho was a woman called Rahab, the harlot. "Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there" (Joshua 2:1, NKJV).

Everyone Has a Choice to Make

It is thought that Rahab owned an inn that was located on or inside the massive wall surrounding Jericho, which put her in a prime position to hear the news of the advancing multitude and all that the Lord had done for them. By the time the two spies landed on her doorstep, she had heard many tales of the mighty works of the Lord.

I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants

of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (Joshua 2:9–11, NKJV)

Rahab chose to believe the reports, and because she did, she acted upon that belief. She understood that the people of the God who had dried up the Red Sea was more than a match for even the mightiest army. Her belief in that God gave her the strength to stand against the culture of her people and help the spies escape the city.

Our Choices Affect Our Families

Though it may sound old fashioned to our present culture, women are the guardians of the home in many ways. Our choices in the home influence our children and those who are looking to us as a role model. We must take a stand against the destructive influences of the world that are seeking to establish new paradigms for the way we live our lives. Like Rahab, we must stand as guardians of the gates. It won't make us popular, but it can save us a great deal of heartache.

Believing Is Not Enough

Though Rahab had heard and believed the reports of the God of Israel, belief alone would not have saved her household. She had to act on that belief. When the king of Jericho sent men to capture the spies, she hid them and facilitated their escape, but not before asking for

SESSION ONE (CONT.)

mercy from the conquering people on behalf of herself and her family. If she had remained passive and allowed the capture of the spies, her name probably would not have been mentioned in Scripture, and she would not have become part of the lineage of Jesus Christ.

The spies instructed Rahab to hang a scarlet cord in her window as a sign to the invading troops that she and her household were to be spared when the onslaught came. It was reminiscent of the blood placed on the doorposts to spare the Israelites from the death angel when they escaped Egypt, and prescient of the blood of Jesus Christ that would redeem us. It is not enough to simply believe the reports; the blood must be applied in order for us to be saved.

Your Status Does Not Qualify You

There is no attempt to whitewash Rahab's lifestyle in Scripture. The Bible plainly states she was a harlot. Ironically, this is good news for all of us. We can be guilty of placing expectations on people's behavior and then are surprised when God uses them in an extraordinary way. It is often the "good" people who have the most trouble submitting to the will of God, while those we think of as "bad" often have great faith. Because Rahab submitted herself to the will of God, she was transformed. Submission matters; status does not. Whoever submits to God's will, obeys Scripture in baptism, and receives the Holy Ghost will be changed, cleaned up, and given a place in His bride. He will save any and all who will ask.

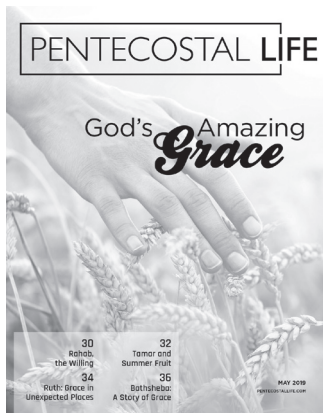
Not only was Rahab and her entire family spared, she also became part of the lineage of David and Jesus Christ, one of only four foreign women listed. "Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king" (Matthew 1:5-6, NKJV). Rahab even is mentioned as a hero of faith in Hebrews 11:31.

What started out as possibly nothing more than an act of self-preservation developed into a beautiful story of redemption. It matters whom you choose to follow. It matters to you personally and to all those who follow after you. At the end of Joshua's life, Rahab would have been among the company who heard his challenge: "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15, NIV).

Rahab could not have known that her name would become immortalized by her choice, but she experienced the immediate blessing of knowing her family was safe and of becoming a part of the family of God. We don't serve the Lord for glamour or glory, but for the saving of ourselves and our loved ones. We never know where His grace might lead. **PL**

LANETTE KINSEY

Pastor's wife | First Pentecostal Church | Pensacola, Florida



SESSION ONE

Rahab, the Willing

Objective

To understand that any willing person can be used to advance God's kingdom

Opening

1. Open by asking members of the group to tell about someone they know who willingly followed the Lord's direction in their life.
2. Ask members of the group to name some people in the Bible who willingly followed God's leading.

Key Scriptures

Joshua 2:1, 9–11; 24:15; Matthew 1:5–6;
Hebrews 11:31

“We don’t serve the Lord for glamour or glory, but for the saving of ourselves and our loved ones. We never know where His grace might lead.”

SESSION ONE (CONT.)

Rahab, the Willing

Discuss the following questions:

1. Identify some way in which God is calling you to take a stand for Him.
2. What encouragement do you find in the story of Rahab that might provide the courage needed to stand for God for your family?
3. How is willingness to follow the Lord manifested in your life?
4. Do you know someone who has been used by God in ways you find personally surprising?
5. Identify the catalyst in that person's life.
6. Who is following your example?

Assignment

Read “Tamar and Summer Fruit” before next session.

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SESSION TWO

Tamar and Summer Fruit

By Claudette Walker

Have you ever heard a message on Tamar? Neither have I. Often when I read her story in Genesis 38, I hurry through the disturbing details to get back to the

story of beloved Joseph in chapter 39. However, a review of Tamar's story might give us some insight as to why, in spite of her sins, she is one of the few women included in Jesus' genealogy.

After Judah and his brothers deceived their father Jacob concerning Joseph being sold into Egypt, Judah made a grave mistake. Judah knew the story of how his grandfather Isaac had told his father Jacob not to marry a wife of Canaan (Genesis 28:1). Yet Judah saw, took, and married a Canaanite woman named Shuah, and their union produced three sons: Er, Oman, and Shelah. Judah repeated his first mistake when he found a Canaanite wife named Tamar for his son Er. Judah paid a severe price by choosing to live among the Canaanites.

The Bible does not tell us Er's particular sin, but it does reveal he was so wicked that God killed him. The custom of their culture was to give a widow to her brother-in-law in marriage so the dead brother's bloodline would not be cut off. Thus Judah gave Tamar in marriage to Onan, his second son. Through his own selfishness, Onan refused to assure that his brother Er's bloodline was not cut off, so Tamar remained childless. Genesis 38:10 tells us this displeased the Lord, so He also slew Onan. At this point, only Judah's third son, Shelah, remained alive. Judah sent Tamar back to her father's home, presumably until Shelah was grown. Verse 11 reveals that Judah's true motive for denying Tamar's marriage to Shelah was the fear that his third son would die as his two brothers had died. Thus

Tamar remained a widow in her father's house, yet under Judah's authority, which denied her the right to marry anyone else.

Years passed, and Judah's wife died. Tamar was still a widow, abandoned and childless, with no right to remarry. Tamar was tired of waiting on Judah to give her to the grown man Shelah in marriage. She heard that Judah was going to Timnath to shear sheep. Tamar's all-consuming desire was to have a child through Judah's family so that her dead husband Er's bloodline would not be cut off. She decided to deceive Judah. She removed her identifying widow's garments, covered herself with a veil, and sat in the direct path of Judah's journey to Timnath. Judah could not see her face, and, thinking she was a prostitute, asked Tamar for her services. Judah had sown deception when he and his brothers had killed a goat and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood. They had shown it to Jacob, making him believe a wild beast had killed Joseph. Now Judah was reaping through Tamar the deception he had sown. Tamar asked Judah what he would pay her. Judah promised her a goat. She then snared him in her trap by asking for collateral. Foolishly, Judah gave her his signet, cord, and staff. In our day, these items would be like a Mastercard, driver's license, and Social Security card. This signet was used to sign documents in hot wax, identifying Judah as the one who authorized the agreement. The top of his staff had a unique emblem identifying Judah's name. His staff represented his power as the head of his family. Living too close to the world always leads to compromising biblical mandates.

Three months later, Judah was told that Tamar had posed as a harlot and was pregnant. Judah's angry, indignant, yet hypocritical reaction was to "bring her forth, and

SESSION TWO (CONT.)

let her be burnt" (Genesis 38:24). His quick judgment revealed his own guilt. We often are quick to find fault in others when we are guilty of the same sin: "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1). Tamar had her agenda carefully mapped out. She sent Judah's signet, cord, and staff to him asking him to say to whom they belonged. Tamar declared that man was the father of her child.

The key to Judah's contrition is found in his confession: "She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son" (Genesis 38:26). Tamar gave birth to twin boys, Pharez and Zarah. Both Tamar and Phares are listed in Matthew 1:3 in the genealogy of Jesus. Such unexpected grace we find in the life of Tamar, who deceived Judah and played a harlot to conceive her desired child.

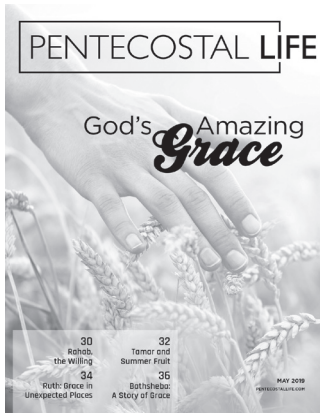
One day as I prayed for a key to this grace that was shown to Tamar, I heard two words in my spirit: summer fruit. Immediately I recalled a sermon preached by Harry Haygood at The Calvary Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1976. During his sermon, Evangelist Haygood began to prophesy about summer fruit. He said the final harvest before the coming of the Lord would be like summer

fruit—very overripe, almost rotten. Harry Haygood prophesied that Satan would go through the orchard, beating the final fruit until it would be bruised almost beyond saving. A peach that is barely ripe can be thrown into the basket with no damage. However, an overripe peach must be carefully handled or it will be destroyed by careless treatment. The Lord then spoke that those who gather the final harvest before the Rapture must be willing to get their hands stained. He instructed that we would need to have utmost patience with this final harvest that had been so greatly bruised by Satan.

Compared to praying Hannah or virtuous Mary, Tamar is like summer fruit. Yet the Lord covered her sins with His wondrous grace, and we read her name in the genealogy of Jesus. This harvest we are gathering now is the summer fruit Evangelist Haygood prophesied about forty-three years ago. We must never despair concerning the people's sins or twisted and perverted lives, because the same grace that covered Tamar's sins will cover their sins as well. The greatest evangelist or pastor the world has ever seen may be a part of the summer fruit of this final harvest. **PL**

CLAUDETTE WALKER

Pastor's wife | Faith Apostolic Church | Troy, Michigan



SESSION TWO

Tamar and Summer Fruit

Objective

To discern how the disturbing story of Tamar is a type of the summer fruit of the end-time harvest

Opening

1. At the start of the session, ask the class members what they know about Tamar.
2. In their reading of the lesson material, they may have some understanding of Tamar. What lessons did they learn in the reading of the material?

Key Scriptures

Genesis 28:1; 38:10–11, 26; Matthew 1:3;
Romans 2:1; II Corinthians 6 :14

“We must never despair concerning the people’s sins or twisted and perverted lives, because the same grace that covered Tamar’s sons can cover their sins as well.”

SESSION TWO (CONT.)

Tamar and Summer Fruit

Discuss the following questions:

1. How is Tamar's deception of Judah a result of Judah's sins?
2. Name the four sins of Judah in Genesis 38:1–2, 11, 18, 24.
3. How did Judah's withdrawal from his brothers affect his future?
4. In verse 11, how did Judah's fear lead to Tamar's childless state?
5. Discuss the consequences of Judah's choice to live among the Canaanites.
6. How do you think Tamar felt when she was sent childless back to her father's house?
7. Contrast Judah's saying yes to Tamar, who posed as a prostitute, to his brother Joseph's refusal to commit fornication with Potiphar's wife.
8. How does the law of sowing and reaping apply in Genesis 37:31–32 and Genesis 38:14–15?
9. What do you think Judah meant when he declared that Tamar had been more righteous than he himself had been (Genesis 38:26)?
10. Compare the grace shown to Tamar to the grace God will show to the summer fruit of the final harvest.

Assignment

Read "Ruth: Grace in Unexpected Places" before next session.

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SESSION THREE

Ruth: Grace in Unexpected Places

By Ashley Laboube

None of us deserve grace. It comes by the unmerited favor of God, given because He loved us enough to die for us. Boaz gave grace to Ruth despite the fact she was

a stranger. This same action should inspire us all to walk with grace toward others, as it just might be the one thing that changes the course of their life.

We all hope for and expect a Savior. Whether a knight in shining armor or someone to save us from ourselves, in the end, we all long for someone who will offer us grace. Grace is the favor—the undeserved help—that comes to us as a spontaneous, generous, and life-changing gift. As Christians, we have been saved by grace, and we live by grace. Perhaps one of the greatest stories of grace is portrayed by the life of Ruth. As a Gentile, Ruth showed grace to her mother-in-law, Naomi, as she became a friend in the darkest of days, pledging “whither thou goest, I will go . . . thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth stood by Naomi as they entered Bethlehem, a place unknown and foreign to Ruth, but it was there that Ruth hoped to find grace by the hand of Boaz (Ruth 2:2). Her humility attracted the grace of Boaz, who reciprocated her request because of “all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law” (Ruth 2:11). Boaz showed kindness to Ruth even though she was a stranger, and further, he respected her for the sacrifices she had made to help Naomi. The provision God gave to Ruth as she approached the field of Boaz portrays that God had His hand on her future. F.B. Meyer said it well: “Our God . . . can summon unexpected reinforcements at any moment to aid His people. Believe that He is there between you and your difficulty, and what baffles you will flee before Him, as clouds before the gale.”

Ruth found grace in an unexpected place, but the grace may not have been fully unexpected; rather, it exceeded her expectation. She went into the field that day knowing she could glean, but never expecting to receive bundles as Boaz had instructed his workman to leave for her. She hoped Boaz would notice her, but I’m certain she never anticipated to have her entire life changed by his hand. Her status was elevated to being counted among the greats like Rachel and Leah (Ruth 4:11). Not only Ruth, but Naomi also, reaped the grace Boaz offered, as she was “restored” and “nourished” in her old age (Ruth 4:14–15).

There is a definite similarity to how Boaz treated Ruth and how our Savior treats us. I believe we all hoped for and somewhat expected a Savior. However, none of us could have imagined the lengths to which Jesus would go to do that saving. We all searched for grace and found it exceedingly at the Cross. God shows His great love for us in this way, for He chose to die for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:6–8). He looks beyond our sin and offers us mercy—consistent mercy that is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22–23).

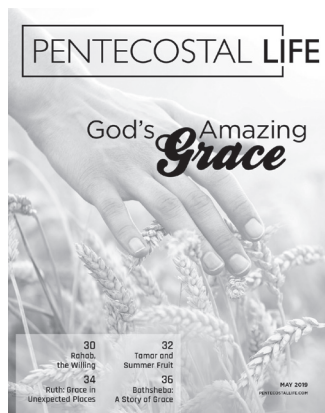
Ruth was not of the same heritage as Boaz, yet he still offered grace. The law didn’t triumph; grace did. For us it is no different: “My grace is sufficient for thee” (II Corinthians 12:9). Jesus promised that no matter the circumstance, grace would be there. In his book *In the Grip of Grace*, Max Lucado writes, “The longer we walk in the garden, the more likely we are to smell the flowers. The more we immerse ourselves in grace, the more likely we are to give grace.” Boaz immersed himself in grace and gratitude as Jehovah was his provider. This made it easy for him to offer Ruth the same. What unexpected blessings might God send our way if we daily immerse ourselves in His grace? How will the world know unless we show them? Let us not fail to offer grace in a world where grace is so

SESSION THREE (CONT.)

often forgotten, for it just might be grace that will change
not only our whole story but theirs as well. **PL**

ASHLEY LABOUBE

Hyphen Co-Leader | Apostolic Worship Center
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Single Adult Ministry Co-Director | Oklahoma District



SESSION THREE

Ruth: Grace in Unexpected Places

Objective

To understand that giving grace is a choice

Opening

1. Ask members of the group to give their definition of grace. Discuss.
2. Ask members of the group to tell how they received grace into their lives. Discuss.

Key Scriptures

Ruth 1:16; 2:2; 11; 4:11, 14–15;
Lamentations 3:22–23; Romans 5:6–8;
II Corinthians 12:9

**“Let us offer grace in a world where
grace is so often forgotten, for it just
might be grace that will change not only
our whole story but other’s as well.”**

SESSION THREE (CONT.)

Ruth: Grace in Unexpected Places

Discuss the following questions: _____

1. What is grace to you?
2. In what ways have you received grace in your life?
3. Has the grace you've received affected the way you offer grace to others?
4. How does humility attract grace?
5. Boaz mentioned he wanted to help Ruth because of her commitment to Naomi. Do you feel our actions have the ability to attract grace, even though grace can be defined as a spontaneous gift?
6. It was stated, "The more we immerse ourselves in grace, the more likely we are to give grace." What do you think this means?
7. In what ways can we better show grace to those around us?
8. Why do you feel Ruth chose to follow Naomi into a strange land and let Jehovah be her God?
9. Has grace ever come to you in an unexpected place? How so?
10. It has been said, "No man will ever be called to give more grace than he himself has received." Do you feel this is true? Why or why not?

Assignment

Read “Bathsheba: A Story of Grace” before the next session.

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SESSION FOUR

Bathsheba: A Story of Grace By Rachel Coltharp

UNLIKELY PLAYERS IN THE story of grace would definitely include the ancestry line-up listed in Matthew. But II Samuel 11 records the life of Bathsheba, and in her story we find

one of the hardest-to-comprehend gifts of God: grace.

You get grace only when you have not earned it. And truthfully, no one can earn grace, because that is the very definition of the word: it is un-earnable favor, a gift only God can give.

Grace steps in to build a bridge over the difficult terrain we face along life's journey. Sometimes we stand on the precipice of the cliff of despair and peer into the darkness below. Between the ragged cliff edge and the safety on the other side lies a chasm so deep we cannot see the bottom. Faulty feet teetering on the edge convey the truth that we are unable to stay here, and our lack of wings determines that flight is impossible. That is where grace builds a bridge, a bridge that spans the uncrossable divide between loss and redemption. Grace built that bridge for Bathsheba.

There are many things we do not know about Bathsheba's life. We do not know anything about her childhood, courtship, or marriage. What we do know is that her grandfather, father, and husband were all part of King David's inner circle. Her grandfather was a trusted advisor, and her father and husband were part of the band of thirty mighty men, elite soldiers in David's army. We do not find any reference that indicates she had ever met the king before he summoned her to the palace; in fact, he had to ask who she was when he spied her on the rooftop performing a scripturally-mandated ritual cleansing. The king, who was not supposed even to be in town, saw her, asked about her, and even after being told she was the wife of his well-known soldier, demanded that she be brought to him. And according to Scripture, he committed the sin of adultery against her. The prophet confronted David about his sin by telling the story of an innocent person whose only sheep, a beloved lamb, was killed for dinner by a rich man who had many sheep. The sin was clearly laid at the feet of the rich man who had many sheep, not as a shared sin by either the ewe lamb or its owner.

Without taking liberties with the text and without superimposing a twenty-first century cultural view, we see that the bare facts paint a painful story. A woman who was called before the most powerful man in her world, a man who held in his hands the fate of not only herself,

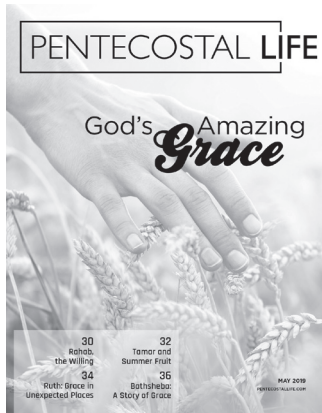
but her grandfather, father, and husband, was impregnated by him. Nowhere in Scripture is Bathsheba labeled as sinful or wicked, nor is she indicted with tempting David. What she is called in both the Old and New Testaments is "the wife of Uriah." To understand the scope of the king's power, we see what he did with the potential of exposure: he ordered that her husband be strategically placed in a location where he would be killed.

Imagine if it were your daughter, your sister, or your mother. The horror and outrageous unfairness are bone chilling. What lies between Bathsheba and being stoned for adultery? Absolutely nothing. But this is where grace stepped in. Into the crisis. Into the injustice. Into the despair. Grace stepped in and built a bridge. That bridge did not keep her from the agony of losing a newborn. Nor the knowledge that her grandfather (trusted advisor to the king) took his own life after advising the king's son to do publicly to David's concubines what had been done to her privately. Sin seeds grow, as does the pain they cause. But the bridge of grace linked her story to hope. Not just any hope, the hope. The hope for all of mankind. Her story did not end with the dead child, nor with the child who would become king, but with the child who is King of kings.

That is what grace does. It bridges the gulf between what is and what can be. Only grace, the unearned favor of God, can do that. So the next time you are faced with the unthinkable, when pain or loss or disappointment opens an un-crossable chasm in front of you, remember that God tells long stories . . . and grace is the bridge between this chapter and the ones to come. There is no chasm over which grace cannot build a bridge. **PL**

RACHEL COLTHARP

Pastor's wife | First Apostolic Church | Aurora, Illinois



SESSION FOUR

Bathsheba: A Story of Grace

Objective

To understand one of the hardest-to-comprehend gifts of God: grace

Opening

1. Ask the group to discuss the meaning of grace.
2. Invite any member of the group who wishes to tell of a time when God's grace was extended to him or her.

Key Scriptures

II Samuel 11; Matthew 1

“This is what grace does. It bridges the gulf between what is and what can be. Only grace, the unearned favor of God, can do that.”

SESSION FOUR (CONT.)

Bathsheba: A Story of Grace

Discuss the following questions:

1. Why do we need grace?
2. Where have you seen God's grace in your past?
3. In what areas of your life is grace needed now?

[illegible]