

# FAITHFUL



*Introduction by* AMY GRANT

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LISA HARPER

RAEHEL MYERS  
RUTH CHOU SIMONS  
SALLY LLOYD-JONES  
SARAH MACINTOSH  
SAVANNAH LOCKE  
TRILLIA NEWBELL



*Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.  
For the LORD is good  
and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

**PSALM 100:4-5**



*The Art House, Nashville*



## THE FAITHFUL PROJECT

*was created to unite the voices of authors, artists, and  
songwriters in telling the story of God's faithfulness, particularly  
toward women in the Bible, to women of today who seek  
assurance of His continued faithfulness toward them.*

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This book is dedicated to the women  
in our lives: *past, present, and future ...*

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those whose stories have, are, and  
will shape our own.

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L to R: Sandra McCracken, Trillia Newbell, Kelly Minter, Sarah Macintosh, Leslie Jordan, Amanda Bible Williams, Sally Lloyd-Jones  
Backs facing L to R: Raechel Meyers, Ruth Chou Simons





Photo by Cameron Powell

# *Introduction*

BY AMY GRANT

In the fall of 2019 I was invited to a two-day creative workshop.

The attendees would be women: songwriters, poets, speakers, and storytellers.

The purpose: to build community with each other while considering the unique experiences of women mentioned in the Bible.

The goal: to create conversation, songs and essays inspired by these women from the past, and possibly see our present lives as each being a part of God's continuing epic story of redemption and love ... which, by the way, is quite a messy story.

If it is true that we are surrounded by a great cloud of unseen witnesses, I imagine several of our female ancestors elbowing their way to the front of the circle shouting, "Girls, you don't know the half of it! But we tried."

Together we read the scant accounts of each woman's situation, acknowledging

historical place and time, imagining all the unaccounted-for details that filled their lives.

We imagined the opportunity and the oppression.

With empathy and compassion we held these women with our creative attention ... in silence, in conversation, over lunch and through dinner, until their stories became our stories, until their voices became our voices.

Isn't that the kind of listening that changes each of us? To listen well enough and long enough to another's life song until we can sing it back to them?

That two-day creative gathering spawned a second and a third gathering, and then more.

Now we've collected some of the songs, stories, and conversations here for you.

Join us in the circle, and in the continuing story.

We are one.





*L to R: Trillia Newbell, Ruth Chou Simons,  
Leslie Jordan, Kelly Minter*



I've always wanted to be known for something.

For the longest time, it was knowledge. I wanted to be an ivy-league-caliber professor in a small college setting, known for caring too deeply about my students and humbly publishing well-received papers at the intersection of religion and literature. I wanted to be known for my love of words and books and learning, and I wanted to inspire that love in others too.

I was one credit and a thesis shy of getting my master's degree when David and I got engaged, and I paused my MA to become a Mrs. It's true that I could have gone back to finish the work at any time, but it's hard to hop back onto a moving train once you've jumped off, especially when you're carrying a twin boy on each hip and chasing a toddler girl who's three going on thirteen.

*“Why couldn't I be  
the kind of together  
mom I imagined I  
should be?”*

I never got back on the grad school train, but my dream—the one the world

told me it was my right to chase—was replaced with something new before I knew it. Next, it was Pinterest-worthy parenting. The kids and I stayed home all day every day, save for the magical six hours a week they were in Mother's Day Out. We read a million books and played silly games, had dance parties in the kitchen, and made forts out of sofa cushions. We went to the park—the nearest one with a fenced-in playground because two toddlers and a five-year-old can be terribly difficult to keep safe when cars are nearby—and the library, friends' houses, and Costco (for the double-seater shopping cart, free food samples, and high, noise-absorbing ceilings). I made homemade learning toys out of paint chips and clothespins, plastic bins and buttons. It looked pretty impressive from a distance. But the reality was that each day was a struggle, and anxiety was taking root in my mind and body. Why couldn't I be the kind of together mom I imagined I should be?

I've held a variety of jobs in my life: middle school youth intern, customer care coordinator, financial aid administrator, proofreader, editor, author, executive. And I've aspired to countless other labels along the way: praiseworthy daughter, all-star employee, inspirational leader, devoted wife, and wise-beyond-her-years friend, to name a handful. As truly good

as these aspirations may be, none of them alone seems to sum up a life. I'm still a wonderfully complicated mess of a human; even the labels I want the most don't always stick.

*“A person’s work  
and identity aren’t  
the same thing,  
are they?”*

Perhaps this is the reason the question “So, what do you do?” lands awkwardly on my ears. A person’s work and identity aren’t the same thing, are they? Even so, it’s become our default, trying to understand one another by first asking which worldly labels fit, which categories claim us. As followers of Jesus, we too are guilty of misplacing our identity, putting so much emphasis on the calling that we forget that the story and glory belong to the God who calls.

Do you think this has always been true? I wonder if we were to ask, “So, what do you do?” to the men and women in Scripture, would they answer with their profession? Nehemiah’s role was cupbearer to the king. Some

of the disciples made their living as fishermen. Paul made tents. Jesus was a carpenter, Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and David was a shepherd before he was a king. Lydia was a retailer of purple cloth. Is this who they were?

Rahab was a woman in the Old Testament whose profession seemed synonymous with her identity. “Rahab the prostitute” she is called in the text, the label indelibly linked to her name. Even in the original Hebrew language, the word here meant what you’d assume it means: harlot, prostitute, or perhaps keeper of an inn where this type of transaction took place. Commentaries have not exactly been kind to Rahab over the years, calling her names like “shady lady,” “lady of the night,” and the like. But is Rahab’s profession the truest thing there is to know about her? More importantly, is it the way God knows her?

When we read Rahab’s story, starting in *Joshua 2*, we find that the centerpiece of Rahab’s story is a different kind of profession—not her line of work but her profession of faith: *“The LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below,”* the harlot proclaimed, thus identifying herself with Yahweh, the God of Israel (*v. 11*). As with the turning point of any good story, we have to widen our lens to understand its impact.

Rahab was a Canaanite woman living in Jericho. Her home was in the wall of the city, a common place for the scandalized and marginalized to dwell. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Jordan River, the Israelite leader Joshua, successor to Moses, was preparing to lead God’s people across the river and into the city to lay claim to the land God promised their ancestors. The land of Canaan was enemy territory, but not for long. The Israelites believed the centuries-old promise that it would soon belong to them.

*“She was acting on  
what she professed  
to believe.”*

As a woman living in this enemy territory, Rahab’s loyalty was to Jericho’s king. But when two Israelite spies came to scout the land, she hid them in her home and facilitated their daring escape, saving them from sure death at the hand of her people’s king. Why would Rahab do this? Why risk her life for the sake of these two men?

Rahab had heard the stories of Israel’s God—how He dried the waters of the Red Sea so that His people could

walk free from hundreds of years of slavery, how His justice destroyed the wicked. She’d heard how this God had given His people the land of Canaan—Rahab’s home—before they’d even lifted a finger to seize it. And she believed it. She believed it all. With conviction, Rahab professed her faith in Yahweh to the Israelite spies:

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*I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 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 Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. (vv. 9–11)*

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Rahab’s profession of faith declared her belief in who God is—God of heaven and earth. It declared her belief in what God had done—miraculously delivered His people from slavery and to the Promised Land. And

it declared her belief in what He had the power to do—save her and her family. She followed her profession with a plea:

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*Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.*  
(vv. 12–13)

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By risking her life to save the spies, Rahab put her life in Yahweh's hands, thereby surrendering her life to Him, the one true God.

This is a stunning act of faith by any measure. And the Scripture writers recognize it as such. The harlot turned hero, Rahab, appears in the “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11, listed with the likes of Noah, Sarah, Jacob, and Moses as one “*approved through their faith*” (v. 39 CSB).

But here's what gets me: Rahab wasn't trying to be a hero. She was just trying to be obedient. She was living out her newly found faith.

Rahab's faith didn't end with her knowledge or stop at her words. It manifested itself in action. Faith for Rahab looked like taking in two spying

strangers who came to her home at the edge of the city. It looked like moving some stalks of flax to cover them as they lay still on the rooftop, knowing that if they were discovered, they'd all three be killed by the king. We look back now and see these as big, bold acts of faith, and they were. But to Rahab, they were the next right thing. She was acting on what she professed to believe.

Could this Canaanite have dreamed she'd be in the very lineage of the Messiah? Could she have known that she would be one of two examples of living faith given by James in his now-famous treatise on faith and works? Faith in theory alone is not faith at all, James explains (*chapter 2*). Even the demons believe in the one true God. Faith in practice is the thing. And what does real faith—dynamic faith—look like? According to James, it looks like Abraham laying his son on the altar and Rahab risking everything to hide the spies. Rahab, one of the most unexpected examples of faith in the Bible, appears alongside Abraham, an ancient father of the faith. Did Rahab know this was her calling, or was she simply following the lead of the God who calls?

To have a faith without works didn't seem to occur to Rahab. She proclaimed that Yahweh was God, and if a person proclaims something that

huge, doesn't it make sense to act on it? If I profess faith in the one true God, shouldn't I shape my life around that faith? Like Abraham before her, Rahab was an ordinary person who believed in God and acted like it.

*“By risking her life  
to save the spies,  
Rahab put her  
life in Yahweh’s  
hands, thereby  
surrendering her life  
to Him, the one  
true God.”*

But there is something about Rahab's story that I find even more compelling than her unabashed faith in action. I love how her story points me straight to Jesus.

When Rahab asked the spies to return her kindness and *“save alive”* her

family (*Joshua. 2:13 ESV*), the men gave her some very specific instructions:

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*Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head.*  
(*v. 18-19 ESV*)

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The scarlet cord was a symbol to the Israelites that Rahab and her family were inside, and their lives were spared the destruction that fell on the rest of the city. Like the blood-marked doorposts of the first Passover, the scarlet cord meant salvation, pointing forward to the blood of Jesus Christ, the ultimate and last Passover lamb. *“Our life for yours even to death!”* the spies had said to Rahab (*v. 2:14 ESV*). In their cry we hear echoes of Jesus Himself: *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends”* (*John 15:13*). And so a short time after the Israelites celebrated Passover

on the plains outside Jericho, Joshua led God's people to march around the city. On day seven, the walls fell and Israel destroyed the inhabitants of Jericho. But they passed over the home of Rahab, the scarlet cord gleaming in her window. Because of Rahab's faith and because of Yahweh's mercy, she and her family were "saved alive," a profound foreshadowing of the blood of Jesus, by which we too are saved.



This is why Rahab's profession of faith inspires me so: When we know who's writing the story, we can see evidence of Him at every turn. We don't have to manufacture our own plotline or chase after our significance. When we know who's writing the story—the God of heaven above and earth below—we begin to understand that all parts of the narrative—large and small, seen and unseen—are powerful and purposeful.

Rahab's part in the grand story of redemption was not a product of her planning or striving. She did not determine to work her way into the history book of God's people. She simply made a statement of faith and then acted on it. The power of Rahab's profession of faith was not found in herself but in the God whose power she proclaimed and to whose sovereign will she surrendered her life.

I don't want a useless faith. I want a dynamic faith—the kind of living, active faith that speaks loudest without words. I want to be less concerned with being known for doing something great for God and more concerned with making God's greatness known. I want my primary profession—my life's work—to be living out the faith I profess with my lips.

I'm learning that a life of faithfulness does not look the way we dream it might. It's richer, fuller, more surprising than that. Rarely do I feel I'm given one big assignment from the Lord, one shining opportunity to show myself faithful. Instead, I find a million little moments—endless chances to proclaim with my actions what I profess with my words.

It happens in that moment when my children—who now number four instead of three—barrel into the room without warning, pushing my thought train off its track and frustrating my efforts to focus. Will I push them away with my body language, refusing to be interrupted? Or will I imitate the humility of Jesus, who refused to see children as interruptions?

It happens on days when my heart is heavy and I want to believe the worst of the world. Will I give myself over to indifference, sitting passively in despair while claiming I'm waiting for the kingdom to come? Or will I embrace

the truth I say I believe, asking and expecting God to work in my community, my country, and my world, starting with my own heart? Will I model my posture after Jesus, humbling myself to listen when I would rather speak, serve when I would rather be served?

When the alarm goes off too early tomorrow and I slink to the kitchen to crush pills and draw up medicines in colorful syringes for my beloved youngest child, will I wish our life had led me somewhere other than this ordained, ordinary moment? Or will I see it for the lavish gift of grace that it is?

No one calls me Professor, and I'm still not a model parent. But I'm coming to understand that a life of great faith is not so easily labeled anyway.

Like Rahab, our title is not our identity. Our dreams do not define us. The God of heaven above and earth below is the author of our story and the giver of our worth. He has created us in His image and commissioned us to carry that image into the world,

proclaiming the goodness, mercy, and power of the one true King.

I like to imagine the rest of Rahab's story, how her faith must have deepened over time and how her knowledge of and affection for Yahweh grew as she continued to live her one wild, precious life for Him. What stories did she tell her baby boy, Boaz (*Matt. 1:5*), and how did they shape him into a man of faith? Was she still alive to see how he would welcome a foreigner named Ruth into the family of God, the same way she had been welcomed a generation before? Did she know how her faith would come to inspire the hearts of God's daughters for lifetimes to come, teaching them that their past does not define their future?

I like to imagine her as an old woman, smiling to see some of the divine ruckus she had caused: Rahab the prostitute. Smuggler of spies. Mother of the faith. Beloved child of God. If she ever wanted to be known for something, I think she got her wish.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Amanda Bible Williams*



Amanda Bible Williams is cofounder and chief content officer of She Reads Truth. A lover of words and the Word, Amanda spends her days reading and leading, writing and editing, and explaining that her maiden name really is Bible. She lives with her husband and their four children in a chaotic farmhouse just south of Nashville, Tennessee.





*L to R: Ruth Chou Simons, Raechel Myers*



