



Words

TO LIVE BY

Redeem

DECEMBER 2021

REDEEM

Definition: *to buy back or repurchase, to free from what distresses or harms and to release from blame or debt, or to free from the consequences of sin.*

The word redeem is packed with powerful truth and encompasses the storyline of the entire Bible from beginning to end.

The story of the Bible is the story of your redemption.

Understanding the gift of your redemption thru Jesus helps you see how undeserving you are of God's love, kindness and forgiveness.

The great evangelist, Billy Graham said these words, *"God's holiness demands that sin be punished, but God's love has provided the way of redemption through Christ."*

Not only did Jesus redeem you and buy you back from sin with His death and resurrection, He also wants to take you and all your brokenness to re-use it to build His church and bring glory to Himself.

This month you're going to read and study three redemption stories in the Old Testament that will lead you to the ultimate redemption story found in the New Testament. You will see how those three redemption stories from the Old Testament are tied to the redemption story in the New Testament.

Maybe you're like me and have thought that being redeemed is a one time deal. The more I studied this word, I realized that Jesus is redeeming different areas of my life everyday. I need to choose to live in the freedom of my redemption that was bought for me thru Jesus.

The redemption of Christ is the promise of God to free you from the power and presence of sin in your life.

Charles Spurgeon once said, *"The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ."*

WEEK 1: RAHAB'S REDEMPTION STORY

Hearing redemption stories of God rescuing and freeing people from their sinful lifestyles are powerful. I love that I have not only gotten to hear stories but also witness first hand how God redeems people for His glory.

Have you ever felt like you are too far gone to be redeemed or rescued from your sin? What about someone in your life that you think is too deep in their sin to be redeemed or rescued?

Today you will read the redemption story of a prostitute named, Rahab. She was not too far gone for God to redeem and rescue her from her life of sin.

You find her story in Joshua 2.

"Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. 'Go, look over the land,' he said, 'especially Jericho.' So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

The king of Jericho was told, 'Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.' So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: 'Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.'

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.' (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, '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.

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.'

'Our lives for your lives!' the men assured her. 'If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land.'

So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. She said to them, 'Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way.'

Now the men had said to her, 'This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear.'
'Agreed,' she replied. 'Let it be as you say.'
So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window."
Joshua 2:1-21 NIV

It is just about time for God's chosen people Israel to enter the promised land, but one thing needed to happen first. The destruction of Jericho. Israel's current leader Joshua sends two spies into the land to check it out and report back.

Why these spies entered the house of a prostitute we don't know. It could be that it was a great place to hide from the king of Jericho. Obviously some people saw the men enter Rahab's home and sent a message to the king.

The king asked Rahab to hand over the men because he knew they were spying out the land. Rahab's response to the king is one of boldness and courage. She admits the men came to her at one point but then lies to the king's messengers telling them she doesn't know where they went.

Rahab encourages the men of Jericho to chase after the two spies for they are sure to catch them on the main road. Rahab is so convincing that the men set off in pursuit of the spies and the city gate is shut behind them.

Meanwhile she had hidden the two spies on her roof under some stalks of flax. When she came to the spies she revealed the reason for hiding them and keeping them safe. Rahab knew that God was giving the city of Jericho to the people of Israel. She heard how God went before them always clearing the way for Israel to be victorious over their enemies.

Rahab and the people of Jericho lived in constant fear because they saw how powerful the God of Israel was. The following words of Rahab show that she believed God was not only God in heaven but also God over the whole earth. *"For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."* *Joshua 2:11 NIV*

Friend, don't ever think that you are too far gone in your sin to be rescued and redeemed by Jesus. If he can redeem Rahab, He can redeem you. Recognize like Rahab did who God is. Then come to a place of confession and repentance before Him. Turn from your sinful lifestyle and let Jesus redeem you. Romans 10:9 NIV says, *"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Rahab made a bold requests of the spies. Because she dealt kindly with them and hid them she asked them to spare and save her life and the life of her family when they come to destroy Jericho. The men agreed to make an oath with Rahab and save her and her family if she promised not to speak of what they were doing to anyone.

They told Rahab to leave the scarlet cord in her window that she used to help them escape and that would show the Israelites to not destroy her home.

This is a beautiful picture of what happened right before the Israelites left their slavery in Egypt. The last plague God sent was the death of the firstborn. Everyone who painted the blood of a lamb over their doorpost would be saved. Here you see a similar picture. Rahab and her family were able to escape death and the destruction of Jericho if they marked her home with a scarlet cord.

Skip ahead a few chapters to Joshua 6 and you will read the outcome of this oath between Rahab and the two spies.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men’...

On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, ‘Shout! For the Lord has given you the city! The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent’...

When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, ‘Go into the prostitute’s house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.’ So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord’s house.

But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.” Joshua 6:2, 15-17, 20-25 NIV

Rahab the prostitute was rescued and redeemed because of her bold, courageous faith. As you wrap up Rahab’s redemption story here are a few things for you to think about.

1. Rahab lived a sinful lifestyle in the immoral city of Jericho that worshipped many false gods.
2. You may wonder why the two spies stayed with a prostitute. You won't ever know the answer to that question, but it could be that God wanted to show He can rescue and redeem all kinds of sinners.
3. Rahab's lie was never affirmed or justified. It was simply recorded in scripture. Remember that she did not yet have a relationship with God, she had only heard of Him.
4. Because of Rahab's bold faith, she and her family became part of a new Israel. Rahab went from being a Caananite prostitute to converting to Judaism and then marrying into the royal family of Judah.

Did you know that Rahab is one of five women who are named among the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1?

Matthew 1:5-6 NIV records, *"Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David."*

James 2:25 NIV reads of how Rahab put her faith into action, *"In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"*

Rahab is also named among the hall of faith in Hebrews 11:31 NIV, *"By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."*

Meditate this week on the fact that Rahab, a former prostitute, was redeemed from her sinful lifestyle and put into the genealogy of Jesus Christ who brought about her ultimate redemption from His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

That is a powerful fact!

Not one person on this earth deserves to be redeemed from their sin, yet God in His grace, love and kindness provided a way through Jesus Christ.

Don't ever doubt the power of God to rescue and redeem even the worst of sinners. Jesus said in Mark 9:23 ESV, *"All things are possible for one who believes."*

Do you *believe* God can redeem your life?

Do you *believe* God can redeem that person in your life that seems impossible?

Jesus said, you must *believe*. How great is your faith?

RESPOND TO THE WORD: If you have already been redeemed by Jesus, take some time today to write out your redemption story and share it with a friend.

WEEK 2: RUTH'S REDEMPTION STORY

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Like you didn't belong, yet you knew there was good reason for you to belong?

It takes courage to step out boldly and pursue God's will for your life even when others may think differently than you.

This month you are choosing to live by the word, redeem. Another redemption story I want to share with you is one that follows closely the story of Rahab.

Today I want to introduce you to a woman named, Ruth. Ruth has an entire book of the Bible dedicated to her story of redemption.

Ruth chapter 1 tells of a married couple, Elimelech and Naomi, who lived in Bethlehem of Judah. Elimelech and Naomi left Judah and moved with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion to Moab because of a famine.

Moab was not part of Israel and the two nations were often in conflict with each other.

While in Moab, Elimelech died. Naomi was left with her two sons who decided to marry Moabite women. The names of Naomi's daughters-in-law were Orpah and Ruth. After living in the land of Moab for ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion (Naomi's sons) die. Now you are left with three widows.

Pick up their story with me in Ruth 1:6-19 NIV.

"When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.'

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, 'We will go back with you to your people.'

But Naomi said, 'Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!'

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

'Look,' said Naomi, 'your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.'

But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.' When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem." Ruth 1:6-19 NIV

Naomi must have felt like an outsider in Moab because once she hears that God has come to the aid of Israel she decides to return to her people in the land of Judah. She tries to convince her daughter in laws to return to their families but is only successful with one of them. After grieving over the loss of leaving Naomi Orpah returns to her family but Ruth insists on staying with Naomi.

Ruth is well known for her famous words from Ruth 1:16 NIV, *"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."*

Ruth not only commits to caring for Naomi, but also to become an Israelite daughter by worshipping the true God of Israel. Ruth was willing to be an outsider in Judah and leave all the comfort of Moab behind.

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. Ruth begs Naomi to let her go and gather the grain among the reapers who were also in the fields. Naomi agreed and it just so happened that Ruth ended up in field of Boaz who was of the family of Naomi's husband, Elimelech.

Boaz noticed Ruth right away because she was not one of the regular reapers who came to his field. He specifically asked who Ruth belonged to. This was a very important question because Boaz wanted to get to know Ruth. He wanted to hear her story. Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field because he wanted to provide for her.

Naomi then encouraged Ruth to take further action at the threshing floor where Boaz was winnowing the barley. Once Boaz laid down for the night, Naomi told Ruth to lay at his feet and ask him to redeem her and Naomi by bringing them into His family.

Pick up the story again in Ruth 3:8-13 NIV.

"In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

'Who are you?' he asked.

'I am your servant Ruth,' she said. 'Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.'

'The Lord bless you, my daughter,' he replied. 'This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.'" Ruth 3:8-13 NIV

Ruth boldly does what Naomi tells her to. Boaz is willing to redeem them, however there is a problem. There is a closer relative that has first claim to the redemption of Naomi and Ruth. Boaz consults with this relative only to find that he is not able to redeem them.

Finish out Ruth's story by jumping ahead to Ruth 4:7-22 NIV.

"(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)

So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, 'Buy it yourself.' And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, 'Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!'

Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, 'We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.'

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'

Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David." Ruth 4:7-22 NIV

This is another beautiful story of the redemption of Naomi and Ruth. Boaz bought them back by taking Ruth to be his wife and caring for both of them as his own.

Not only did Boaz's kind act of redemption result in the blessing of marriage and the birth of a child, it also brought blessing to the entire nation of Israel as well as you today.

The elders and witnesses stated in those verses that this family would become famous in Bethlehem and they did thru the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Ruth may have felt like she didn't belong at first, but she knew there was good reason for her to belong. Because of Ruth's bold courage and trust in God's perfect plan, she became the great grandmother to King David.

This means that Ruth is also one of those five woman who are named among the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:5-6 NIV reads, *"Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David..."*

Boaz redeemed Ruth and provided hope for a family and a nation. Ruth went from being an outsider to an insider along with being in the lineage of her ultimate redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Your redeemer Jesus sees you and wants to redeem you. Jesus wants to take you from being outside His family to coming inside His family. But you must come before Him and humbly but boldly ask, like Ruth, to be redeemed from your sin. Romans 10:13 NIV says, *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

If you already are a part of God's family remember the encouraging words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:19 NIV, *"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."*

The words redemption and redeemer are written 23 times in the book of Ruth. Set aside some time this week to read thru the entire book. It won't take you long as it's only 4 chapters.

Reflect on how her story of redemption in the Old Testament is a picture of what was to come in the New Testament...your ultimate redemption bought for you by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 43:1 NIV says, *"But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"*

WEEK 3: ZERUBBABEL'S REDEMPTION STORY

Have you ever thought that your plans or ways were better than God's? Most of you would probably say, no. But reality is you say yes to it more than you realize every time you choose to go your own way because you believe it is better than God's.

Even though it is hard to admit, I struggle with that myself and often fall into the lie, deception and faulty thinking that my way would be better.

The nation of Israel fell into the trap of thinking their ways were better. They thought that by having to obey all the commands and laws of God that He was withholding something good from them. God always had their best interest in mind and that was why He gave them those laws to live by because He knew it would bring about their best life.

Over and over God's people turned away from Him believing their way was better and because of it God handed them over to the Babylonians to live in captivity for 70 years. They had constantly chosen to worship false gods and lived in disobedience to God's commands.

When king Jehoiachin was taken captive during the Babylonian invasion they did not kill him. (2 Kings 24-25). They put Jehoiachin in prison for 37 years and then a new king of Babylon randomly let him go free.

This was all part of God's redemptive plan for His people. Jehoiachin went on to have a son named, Shealtiel who then had a son named, Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel is a man I have never studied before but when you get to the end of this devotional you will see the important role that he played in the story of redemption through the Bible.

Zerubbabel's family before him did not follow in the ways of God but God used Zerubbabel to break that cycle and showed that He would not let the Davidic line go extinct.

The prophet Haggai recorded this prophecy of how God would use Zerubbabel in Haggai 2:21-23 NIV.

"Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. 'On that day,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the Lord Almighty." Haggai 2:21-23 NIV

God specifically said He was going to make Zerubbabel His chosen servant. You read in Ezra 2:1-2 NIV of Zerubbabel leading God's people out of the Babylonian exile and back to Jerusalem.

"Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to their own town, in company with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah)." Ezra 2:1-2 NIV

Once back in the promised land there was much work to be done. Zerubbabel along with the priests started by rebuilding the altar of God (Ezra 3:1-7).

The work didn't stop with the altar. It continued on to the rebuilding of the temple led again by Zerubbabel in Ezra 3 NIV.

"In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years old and older to supervise the building of the house of the Lord. Joshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers—all Levites—joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:

'He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.'

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, 'Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.'

But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, 'You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.'

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans

*during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.”
Ezra 3:8-4:5 NIV*

The completion of the temple led the people to have a mix of emotions. There was great rejoicing but also weeping as the older people remembered the former temple that had been destroyed. I imagine there was probably much regret and repentance happening in that moment as they thought back to how they had turned away from the Lord.

In the Old Testament the temple was where God would meet His people. As you look into the New Testament you see that Jesus referred to His body as a temple. Just as the temple had been destroyed and then rebuilt so the same would happen for Jesus body.

John 2:19-22 NIV, “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ They replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”

The destruction and rebuilding of the temple was another picture of what was to come.

When the enemies of God’s people heard they were rebuilding the temple they offered their help. God gave much wisdom to Zerubbabel and the other leaders when they refused the help. They knew if they let these people join the work more than likely they would steer God’s people away from Him again to worship their false gods.

Under his leadership, Zerubbabel helped God’s people stay focused and return to God’s commands and laws. The people needed to be reminded that God’s ways were best and always for their good and for His glory.

God was ready and waiting to redeem His people and He used Zerubbabel to make it happen.

This ordinary man, Zerubbabel who didn’t have the best family history, God used in the storyline of redemption. You find his name written among the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:12-13 NIV, *“After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihud...”*

Just like God redeemed and bought back His people Judah, God is ready and waiting to redeem you. He wants to buy you back from your slavery to sin. He provided the only way for you to be saved from your sins punishment when He sent His only Son, Jesus here to this earth to die as a sacrifice on the cross, giving His perfect blood for you. Hebrews 9:11-12 tell how Jesus obtained your redemption.

“But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:11-12 NIV

The only way God’s people in the Old Testament could be forgiven for their sin was to offer spotless lambs as a blood sacrifice on the altar inside the temple. This was what Jesus did for you with His own body.

Jesus bought your redemption. He’s just waiting for you to come to Him and humbly ask for it.

If you have already been redeemed by Jesus, find encouragement from His words of truth in Romans 6 NIV.

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” Romans 6:6-13 NIV

Remember, God’s ways are better than yours and He always has your best interest in mind. Don’t let yourself be mastered by sins temptations. Let Jesus be your Master and Redeemer.

RESPOND TO THE WORD:

What current sin struggle do you need Jesus to redeem you from?

Are you letting it master you?

Do you believe God’s ways are best?

Are you willing to live in obedience to His word?

WEEK 4: YOUR REDEMPTION STORY

Do you ever feel too ordinary for God to use in a special way? I have felt that way often in life, but I read over and over in scripture how God chose to use the most ordinary people to do His extraordinary work.

This month you have read and studied the redemption stories of the prostitute, Rahab, the lowly outsider who was poor in her society, Ruth, and a man most of you have never heard of before, Zerubbabel. These were ordinary people that God used to bring about His extraordinary plan of redemption. All three of them are named in the genealogy of Jesus Christ found in Matthew 1.

Read through that chapter and find their names.

"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,

Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram,

Ram the father of Amminadab,

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

*Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**,*

*Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**,*

Obed the father of Jesse,

and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

Solomon the father of Rehoboam,

Rehoboam the father of Abijah,

Abijah the father of Asa,

Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,

Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,

Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

Uzziah the father of Jotham,

Jotham the father of Ahaz,

Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,

Manasseh the father of Amon,

Amon the father of Josiah,

and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah." Matthew 1:1-17 NIV

I only covered three ordinary people that God used to bring about His ultimate redemption plan thru Jesus, but there are many more mentioned in those verses.

Out of the three; Rahab, Ruth and Zerrubabel, think about which one you most identify with.

Let me encourage you that if God chose to use ordinary people like them then He can use you. You just have to be willing and surrendered to Him and His perfect plan for your life.

As you close out this last week of the year living by the word redeem, I want to take you to the last part of Matthew 1 to read how your redemption thru Jesus came to be.

"This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us'). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus." Matthew 1:18-25 NIV

These verses show the faith and obedience Joseph and Mary displayed in God's plan for their redemption. Joseph had Mary's best interest in mind when he heard she was pregnant. He decided to quietly dissolve his relationship with her until the angel of God appeared to him in a dream.

Notice a few specific things the angel said.

First, he addressed Joseph by name and reminds him he is the, *Son of David*, which was very significant. Being in the line of David reminded Joseph that God chose the youngest of the family, a simple shepherd boy named David to be what many consider the greatest king in Israel and the line through which Jesus would be born.

Joseph was just a simple carpenter, but God chose him to be the father of the King of the universe, Jesus Christ.

Second, he tells Joseph, *don't be afraid*. I'm sure Joseph was struggling with fear of what could happen to Mary and himself. Not only could their family names be disgraced, according to that culture if people found out Mary was pregnant and Joseph was not the father, Mary could be killed.

The angel spoke against any fear Joseph had by revealing God's perfect plan of redemption. This baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph is told to give him the name Jesus.

Jesus means, Savior. This word closely aligns with the name Redeemer. Often Christians today will refer to Jesus as their Redeemer because He saved and rescued them from their punishment for sin.

Everything the angel told Joseph was the fulfillment of a prophecy given by Isaiah in the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14).

When Joseph awoke from his dream, he could have thought this was all crazy nonsense but he didn't. He believed every word the angel told him and did exactly as he was told.

Joseph and Mary's faith and obedience brought about the birth of their Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

It didn't stop there. That was only the beginning. After Jesus was born and raised by Joseph & Mary at the age of 12 he was found teaching in the temple, His Father's house. He started His earthly ministry by calling 12 disciples to follow Him when He was 30 years old. At the age of 33, the time came for Him to bring about your ultimate redemption thru His death and resurrection.

Why was Jesus the only One who could redeem you from sin? Because He is holy. Jesus is God's perfect Son and His holiness sets Him apart from this world. Jesus was the perfect, spotless lamb of God who took all your sin on Himself when He died on the cross. He bore your punishment to rescue you from hell and separation from God forever. Galatians 3:13-14 NIV tell of Jesus becoming a curse for you in order to redeem you.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.' He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." Galatians 3:13-14 NIV

Jesus did this because He loved you. 1 Peter 1:18-21 NIV tell that redemption was bought for you thru the blood of Jesus.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." 1 Peter 1:18-21 NIV

That last verse tells you what your response should be...*believe in God*. God raised Jesus from the dead and glorified Him. Now that you know this, let it lead you before Jesus with a heart of repentance and confession over your sin. Put your faith and hope in Jesus Christ to be redeemed (*set free, rescued, bought back*) from your sin.

Your redemption thru Jesus brings your greatest reward of eternity with God.

God used ordinary people to bring about His extraordinary plan. Charles Spurgeon in Enduring Word Commentary said, *"Jesus is heir of a line in which flows the blood of the harlot Rahab, and of the rustic Ruth; he is akin to the fallen and to the lowly, and he will show his love even to the poorest and most obscure."*

Follower of Jesus, don't ever think you are too ordinary for God to use. Ordinary people are the ones God is looking for to do His extraordinary work. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NIV says,

"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'"

Start off your new year boasting always of your Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

"You came near when I called you, and you said, 'Do not fear.' You, Lord, took up my case; you redeemed my life." Lamentations 3:57-58 NIV