



*THE
ULTIMATE*

**BIBLE
CHARACTER**

DEVOTIONAL

GINA DETWILER



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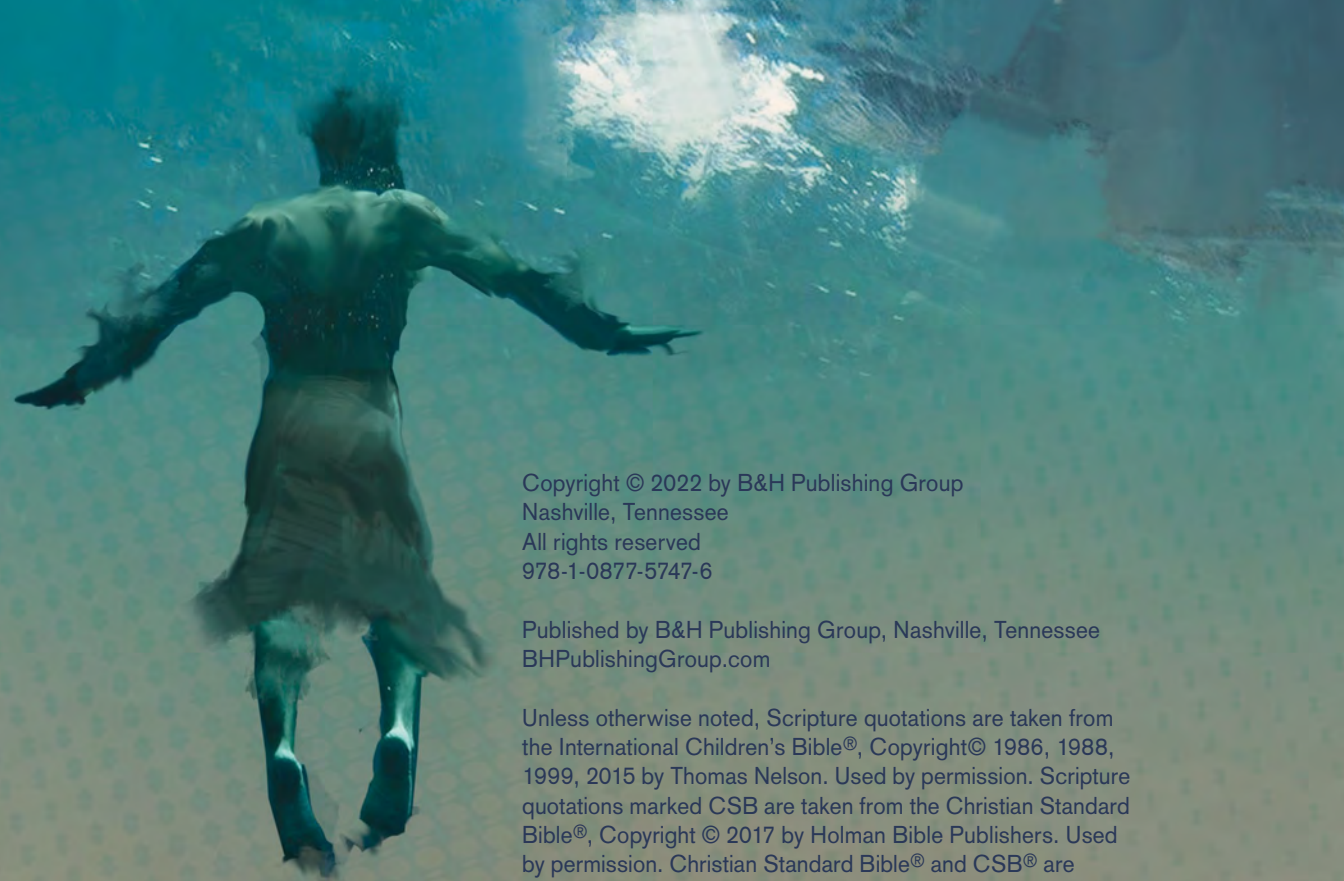
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DEVOTIONAL

WRITTEN BY GINA DETWILER

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Introduction

Noah. Jonah. Adam and Eve. You can probably name dozens of characters from the Bible and tell some of their amazing stories. But did you ever think about the character of those characters? What kind of people were they? How do their thoughts and actions help us be better followers of Jesus?

In this devotional, you will read about specific characteristics of fifty-two Bible characters and learn to apply the lessons from their lives into your own life. There are good guys, like Moses and Esther, and not-so-good guys, like Jezebel and Judas. Sometimes the good guys made terrible mistakes (like David), and sometimes the bad guys were sorry for what they did (like King Ahab).

Although the people in this book lived a very long time ago, you might find that many of their challenges are similar to those you face today. Adam struggled with making wise decisions. Eve was fooled by nice words. Moses felt so guilty for something he did that he ran away from God. The prophet Elijah was lonely and tired. Esther was afraid of speaking out for what was right. Ruth had to move to a new place where she might have felt lonely and rejected. Abraham had to wait many years for God to answer his prayer. Hannah was sad because another woman had what she wanted. Joseph was punished even when he didn't do anything wrong.

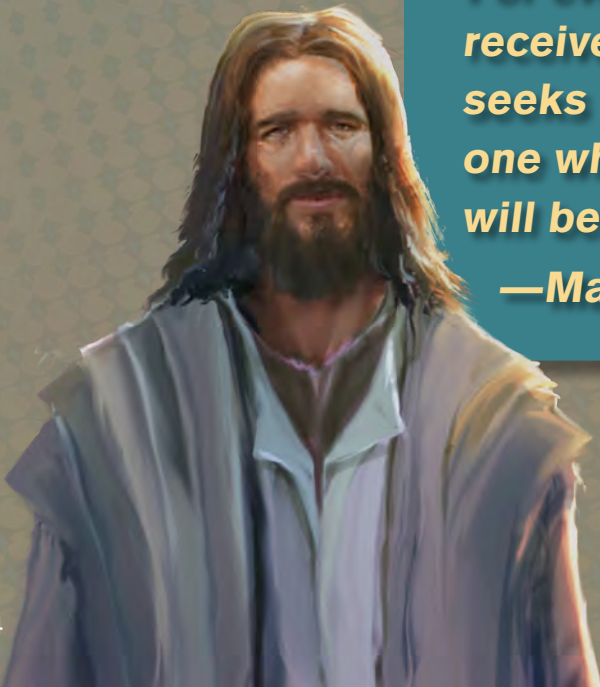
Each week, you'll read one character's story and apply it to your own story. Then additional Scripture reading, discussion questions, and Bible verses will encourage you to think more deeply. You might even want to keep a journal as you go to write down your thoughts and feelings and other Bible verses and stories that come to mind.

The characters you will meet are roughly in the order they appear in the Bible. Once you've completed this book, you will not only know these people better, but you'll also know yourself better. You will have learned how to make choices that honor Jesus, and you will have discovered how Jesus helps you build good character in yourself.

Following Jesus is a lifelong journey, but He is always there to lead you and guide you, no matter how challenging the situation. When you walk with Jesus, His story becomes a part of your story. If you get stuck along the way, if you struggle or fail or need a helping hand, remember Jesus' promise to all who follow Him:

“Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

—Matthew 7:7–8 CSB



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ADAM



Then the Lord God took dust from the ground and formed man from it. The Lord breathed the breath of life into the man's nose. And the man became a living person. Then the Lord God planted a garden in the East, in a place called Eden. He put the man he had formed in that garden.

—Genesis 2:7–8

FOOLISH

My Story

My name is Adam. I was the first man on earth. For a while, I was the only man. I didn't have any friends, unless you count the animals. And God. He was my friend. He created the incredible garden where I lived. I spent time caring for the garden and naming all the animals, and every evening the Lord and I walked together and talked over the day.

But God knew I was lonely, so He gave me a companion and helper. A woman I named Eve. Then my life was complete. Eve helped me tend the garden and clean up after the animals, and we were very happy together.

God gave us only one rule: don't eat the fruit from one tree in the garden. One rule. That's it. You think I could have followed it.

One day Eve took a bite of fruit from the forbidden tree. I was standing right there and I should have stopped her. But instead, I took a bite too. I knew it was wrong, but I was foolish. Right away, I knew I had made a terrible mistake. Then, instead of telling my sin to God, I tried to hide it. (Foolish choice number two.) I should have known you can't hide from God.

When God asked us what we had done, I tried to blame Eve. She blamed the serpent who had tempted her. After that, we had to leave the garden

and go into the outside world, where the ground was full of rocks and weeds. Our lives got much harder. Despite my foolish choice, the Lord promised that one day He would return us to our perfect world through one of our children. I hope I am around to see that happen.

Read Adam's story in Genesis 3.

Your Story

Adam loved and honored God, and they had a very close relationship. But Adam was foolish and chose to take a bite of the forbidden fruit, even though he knew God had told him not to. That choice cost him, Eve, and all of mankind very dearly. Sin and its consequences were now part of human life.

When it comes to a choice between God's ways and other people's ways, which would you choose?

Sometimes we foolishly want to do things to please others, even though it might not be pleasing to God. A friend might ask you to help him cheat on a test so he won't fail the class. You want to help your friend, even though you know cheating is wrong. Or maybe your sister broke an expensive vase in the house and wants you to lie to keep it from your parents. What would you do in those situations?

We all make bad, sinful choices, so it's important to remember that if we repent of our sin, Jesus always offers forgiveness. That's why He came to earth and died for us in the first place, so we could be forgiven and live with Him forever. And Adam, the first foolish sinner, was also the first in the line of ancestors that would lead to the birth of Jesus.

What do you relate to most in Adam's story?

FOOLISH

Read Jesus' parable of the lost son in Luke 15:11–32. What does this story tell you about God's forgiveness, even when we make really bad choices? Which character do you connect with the most? The father? The older son? The younger son?

So one sin of Adam brought the punishment of death to all people. But in the same way, one good act that Christ did makes all people right with God. And that brings true life for all.

—Romans 5:18

Some people think they are doing what's right. But what they are doing will really kill them.

—Proverbs 14:12

Read about Adam's wife, Eve, who also had trouble making the right choice, on page 10.



MOSES

**Now Moses was very
humble. He was the least
proud person on earth.**

—Numbers 12:3

HUMBLE

My Story

My name is Moses. I was born a Hebrew slave in Egypt, but I escaped death and slavery and grew up in the palace of Pharaoh. That's kind of amazing, right? I was well educated and treated like a prince. Obviously, God had special plans for me. I was certain I was destined for great things—maybe I could even save my people from slavery!

I tried to do that my own way. One day, I saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew slave. I was so angry that I killed the man and hid his body. I didn't want anyone to know what I had done. Unfortunately, Pharaoh found out and wanted to kill me! I was forced to flee Egypt and go to the land of Midian.

I thought I'd ruined any chance I had of saving my people. For forty years, I lived a simple life as a shepherd. My pride at being a prince of Egypt was gone.

One day, as I was tending my sheep, I saw a bush on fire. But it wasn't burning up! I went to investigate, and a voice spoke from the bush. It was the Lord! I was so shocked I couldn't think straight. The Lord told me to go tell Pharaoh to let God's people go.

Me? I thought He had the wrong guy. I had murdered someone and run away. I was no longer a prince. Besides, I was a terrible speaker! I could hardly talk without stuttering.

But God was firm. He had chosen me to set His people free from slavery.

So I obeyed. It didn't go well at first. Instead of granting my request, Pharaoh made the people work even harder! Even the Israelites were mad at me. I begged God to let me off the hook. I was clearly not cut out for this job.

But He didn't, so I continued to speak to Pharaoh until—after ten nasty plagues—he finally let my people go free.

God could have called me to speak to Pharaoh when I was a prince living in the palace. But I was too full of pride then. I had to be humble to understand God was the one who truly delivered my people.

Read how Moses led the people through their first major crisis in Exodus 14.

Your Story

Do you hope to become something great—the best scholar or athlete or tuba player or whatever it is you like to do? Nothing is wrong with aspiring to greatness. But if you only think about what you want, you become self-absorbed and prideful.

Jesus taught something completely different. He was the king of the universe, yet He came to earth as a humble, poor little baby. He even said, “If one of you wants to become great, then he must serve the rest of you like a servant” (Matthew 20:26).

Being humble does not mean being down on yourself. God made you unique and wonderful! You just have to recognize God is always greater. He’s the one who always deserves the glory.

What are some ways you think God is teaching you to be a humble servant? It could be through failure. Moses certainly learned humility that way. Going through struggles can mold you into the person God wants you to be too.

Think about your own struggles and ask God to use them to shape you into a humbler person, someone God can use to do great things for Him.

What’s your “Moses” story? Write down a short story or even a play with you cast in the role of Moses, using events from your own life.

What do you relate to most in Moses’ story?

HUMBLE

**“God is against the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.” (Proverbs 3:34)
So be humble under God’s powerful hand. Then he will lift you up when the right time comes.**

—1 Peter 5:5–6

Read John 13:1–20, in which Jesus washes His disciples’ feet. How does Jesus demonstrate the kind of humility He wants us to have toward each other?

“Everyone who makes himself great will be made humble. But the person who makes himself humble will be made great.”

—Luke 14:11

Read about Pontius Pilate, a leader whose pride kept him from doing the right thing, on page 202.

There was a prophetess named Deborah. She was the wife of Lappidoth. She was judge of Israel at that time. Deborah would sit under the Palm Tree of Deborah. This was between the cities of Ramah and Bethel, in the mountains of Ephraim. And the people of Israel would come to her to settle their arguments.

—Judges 4:4–5

DEBORAH



DECISIVE

My Story

I am Deborah. I was a wife, a poet, a prophetess, and a judge of Israel. I was the only woman to ever be a judge. Most days I sat under my palm tree and listened to people argue. Then I decided what they should do, based on the wisdom the Lord gave me.

One day, God told me to tell Barak, leader of the Naphtali tribe, to go to war against the Canaanite general Sisera. Barak didn't want to go. He was scared! The Canaanites had *iron chariots*. I told him to get moving and do what the Lord commanded. Then he said—get this—he would only go if I went with him.

Me? Go to war? Well, I've been called a lot of things, but no one ever called me chicken. I didn't hesitate. I told Barak I would go to war with him, but he wasn't going to get any honor for the victory. The Lord would deliver Sisera to a woman. (Spoiler alert: it wouldn't be me!)

So off we went to Mount Tabor. Sisera showed up with his nine hundred fancy iron chariots, and Barak quaked in his boots. But I gave him a shove and said, "Go! The Lord has gone before you!"

Well, as soon as Barak started his attack, the Lord sent a huge rainstorm. It threw Sisera's army into confusion—and those beautiful iron chariots got stuck in the mud!

It was a mighty short war, which is how I like it. I even wrote a song. It told the whole story and praised God for winning the battle. After that, I went back to my palm tree. The people kept having arguments that needed my wise judgment, but other than that, the whole land was blessed with peace for forty years.

Read about Deborah and her song in Judges 4–5.

Your Story

When you were little, making decisions was easier. You chose what to wear or what toy to play with. But as you get older, making good and godly decisions can be more challenging. It might be hard to obey your parents' rules, even if you don't agree with them. It's hard to avoid cheating on that math test when you can easily see your smart friend's answers from your seat. And it's hard to stick up for the substitute teacher when other students are joking about her.

Have you ever found it difficult to make the right decision, based on what God would want you to do? When you made the right choice, even if it was tough at the time, how did you feel afterward? What about when you made the wrong choice? How do those experiences help you to know what choices to make in the future?

Judges often make big decisions about *big* things, like choosing between life and death. Your decisions may not seem as important, but every choice you make, even the smallest, leads you down a certain path. Remember to ask God to guide you in making the right decisions in your life.

What do you relate to most in Deborah's story?

DECISIVE

Trust the Lord with all your heart. Don't depend on your own understanding. Remember the Lord in everything you do. And he will give you success.

—Proverbs 3:5–6

Read about Lot and his wife, whose indecisiveness cost them dearly, in Genesis 19:15–26.

But if any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. God is generous. He enjoys giving to all people, so God will give you wisdom.

—James 1:5

Want to know who Deborah was talking about, when she said Sisera would be delivered into the hands of a woman? Read about Jael on page 70.

Jesse sent and had his youngest son brought in. He was a fine boy, tanned and handsome. The Lord said to Samuel, “Go! Appoint him. He is the one.” So Samuel took the container of olive oil. Then he poured oil on Jesse’s youngest son to appoint him in front of his brothers. From that day on, the Lord’s Spirit entered David with power.

—1 Samuel 16:12–13



DAVID

COURAGEOUS

My Story

I am David. I was a shepherd boy from the little town of Bethlehem. I was the youngest of eight boys, and my older brothers treated me like dirt. Well, I was pretty dirty, being a shepherd and all. I had to guide my sheep and protect them from the wild animals that wanted to eat them. I got to be a good shot with my sling while on the job. But that didn't stop my brothers from teasing me all the time.

Everything changed the day the prophet Samuel came to my father Jesse's house and anointed me king of Israel. You should have seen the look on my brothers' faces. They almost fell over! And then I was summoned to the palace to become King Saul's armor-bearer and personal musician. I was pretty good on the harp, in addition to my sling skills, and my music kept the king calm—most of the time.

One day my father sent me to bring food to my brothers, who were camped with the army during a war with our enemies, the Philistines. While my brothers were calling me names, I heard a gigantic Philistine warrior named Goliath shout at the Israelite soldiers. He yelled for us to send someone out to fight him. No one took the challenge. They were too scared.

So I raised my hand and said, "I'll do it!"

Everyone—my brothers, the soldiers, even the king—thought I was crazy. Goliath was nine feet tall! I was a kid. Goliath had tons of armor and weapons.

I had no armor and only my sling for a weapon. Goliath had years of training. My only training was fighting off lions and bears with my sling and staff.

But I had something Goliath didn't. I had the Lord. So I wasn't afraid. I knew the Lord would win.

I was right.

Read about David's battle with Goliath in 1 Samuel 17.

Your Story

We tend to think people are just born courageous. But that isn't true. Courage has to come from somewhere.

Where do you think David got his courage? It didn't come from being big and strong or having lots of training and weapons. It came from knowing the Lord was on his side and would fight for him, because David was going to fight for the Lord.

Has God asked you to fight a battle for Him? Maybe there's someone He wants you to tell about Him, or somewhere He wants you to go to learn more about Him. Maybe there's a ministry at your church or in your town that's calling for volunteers and no one has stepped up. What do you think God is calling you to do? What scares you the most about that?

When David went to the battlefield that day, he wasn't looking for a battle. He was just delivering food to his brothers. But when he saw the problem, he didn't hesitate. He found courage from his faith in God, and he stepped up and volunteered. If God asked you to step up today, would you do it?

What do you relate to most in David's story?

COURAGEOUS

For many years, David had to be very courageous as he fled from King Saul. Read about one of those times in 1 Samuel 24. How does this story show both David's courage and his self-control?

“Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.”

—Joshua 1:9

Stand strong. Do not let anything move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. You know that your work in the Lord is never wasted.

—1 Corinthians 15:58

Read about Esther, a young queen who faced danger with great courage, on page 162.