

WHO GOD USED



Is your son a little on the stubborn side? Prone to sibling rivalries? Too smart for his own good? He's in great company. God used all types of men in the Bible to accomplish amazing things.

BY GARRICK D. CONNER

If you have a teenage son, how would you describe him? No matter his strengths, weaknesses, interests, or aptitudes, one thing is certain: we're all works in progress. God, however, loves works in progress. He used all different types of men throughout the Bible in significant ways. And he can use your son, too.

Here are four men in the Bible who provide great examples of how God can use anyone, anywhere, at any age, to accomplish His purposes.

JONAH

I just love the story of Jonah—perhaps because I came to trust Christ following a message about his life. I was only 9, but even then, I saw a whole lot of Jonah in me.

Jonah reminds me of so many teens today. He was incredibly strong-willed. Not only did he essentially tell God *no* when he was instructed to go to Ninevah, but he also tried to hide from God. This is something not seen in the pages of Scripture since Adam and Eve hid from God in Genesis.

Jonah was opposed to preaching to the Ninevites because he wanted God to destroy them for their wickedness. At no point did it occur to Jonah that his self-righteous and judgmental spirit was just as wicked in the eyes of God.

When the large fish finally vomited him onto dry land, Jonah begrudgingly obeyed God and told the Ninevites to repent. And boy, was he furious when they actually did! Jonah is a textbook example of an obstinate guy with a bad attitude who God used in spite of himself.

Parents, sometimes your teens may remind you a lot of Jonah. Love them anyway, and trust God to work out His purpose in their lives.

JOSIAH

Josiah is another Bible guy who was a little different. He became king of Judah when he was just 8 years old. He succeeded his father, who was sinful and corrupt to the core. Josiah had a way about him that was unusually wise and discerning, especially given his young age.

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STUBBORNNESS, REBELLION, APATHY—GOD CAN USE ALL OF THEM FOR HIS GLORY.

Understanding the pervasive wickedness and idolatry that had come to define Judah, when Josiah was only 16 he earnestly sought God. And not long after that, Josiah began clearing all the traces of such evil from the places over which he reigned.

What most defines the character of Josiah was his intentional pursuit of God and his faithful obedience to Him. The idols in today's culture don't necessarily look like Baal, but they are idols nonetheless. When your kids tell you "But everybody's doing it," tell them to read up on Josiah. The same God that empowered him to remain faithful will give them the ability to stand firm and live holy.

Let's not forget, though, that Josiah became wise in his own eyes, which led to his untimely death. We must always be careful to seek God and not lean on our own understanding.

JAMES

James was the half-brother of Jesus. I've always wondered what it must have been like to be one of Jesus' siblings. Talk about sibling rivalry!

Jesus' family didn't treat him like he was exceptional. They were a typical Jewish family, so each member had his own chores and traditions—just like other Jewish families, and perhaps like your own as well. I can just hear Mary saying to the other kids, "But Jesus cleaned His room the first time He was told and didn't talk back."

How do we know that Jesus wasn't really treated special? He himself stated in Mark 6:4, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household." I picture James as a pretty apathetic guy, especially when it came to recognizing the role of Jesus.

When Jesus was about to be crucified, He asked His good friend and disciple John—not his half-brothers—to look after His mother. But James' attitude and perspective shifted 180 degrees when Jesus appeared to him after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). That was when James knew that Jesus truly was the promised Messiah.

Following that literal revelation, James became a believer, identifying himself in his writings as Jesus' servant rather than merely a sibling.

James became a man whose life was characterized by humility, prayer, and wisdom. James' contributions to Scripture provide much wisdom and truth for daily living.

JOSHUA

The last guy we'll look at is Joshua, whom you probably know as the man hand-picked by Moses to finish the task and lead the Israelites to the promised land. When Joshua chose a man from each tribe to go ahead into the land of Canaan, the spies returned with mixed reports.

They told about a land flowing with milk and honey, but they also told of great walled cities and large numbers of powerful people. It was Joshua and Caleb who rose up against these "glass half-empty" people and spoke harshly to them for their rebellion. How did the people respond? They proceeded to stone Joshua and Caleb—until God Himself intervened.

We know how the story ends. But it's worth noting that Joshua lived his life in a way that left a legacy, not the least of which is courage. He stood up for what he knew was right. On my office desk is a paperweight that features Joshua 1:9: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Remind your teens of this truth often. This world can be a scary place, and not all teens can be described as faithful, wise, obedient, and courageous. But be encouraged. Stubbornness, rebellion, apathy—God can use all of them for His glory. Just keep praying, and trust Him.

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