

20 Flawed Bible Characters Who Were Inspirational



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What Are the Stories Behind Bible's Magnificent and Powerful Heroes?



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Who are these Bible characters? Were they all holy and unblemished? How do they influence and inspire modern believers?

There are many questions we may ask about the role Bible characters play in the lives of modern believers.

We hope to answer these questions by highlighting the stories of twenty Bible characters.

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20 Bible Characters That Were Both Flawed and Inspiring



Purdue University researcher, Mykytiuk, estimates there are approximately three thousand Bible characters mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.

Of these, just 53 are considered to have “press mileage” or are described in relevant detail. Mykytiuk’s research has by far received the greatest recognition amongst most theologians.

In this context, we will highlight twenty Bible characters who can help us grow our faith in God.

1 – David, a Man after God’s Own Heart (1 Samuel 13:14)



David is one of the best-loved Bible characters. What was so special about him? God called him a man after His own heart!

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The reign of King David marks the golden era in the united monarchy of Israel and Judah. Professor of theology at the University of Durham, Walter Moberly, describes David as being the envy and fear of all nations.

What went wrong?

The apex of David's immorality was his illicit affair with Bathsheba. His intense desire began when he first saw her naked and bathing.

His subsequent abuse of authority and cunning methods fueled his evil desire to sleep with her. The biblical account in 2 Samuel chapter 11 describes his failed attempts at a cover-up. David then devised a plan to have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed on the battlefield.

How did he inspire?

Upon hearing God's rebuke through the prophet Nathan, David immediately acknowledged his sin. His act of repentance is explicitly set out in 2 Samuel chapter 2.

David's sorrow of losing God's favour is what gave him the deserving title of a man after God's own heart and makes him stand out from most other Bible characters.

2 – Solomon, The Wisest King

Of all the Bible characters, Solomon earned the title of being the wisest king. According to 1 Kings 3:9, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he desired. Solomon requested an understanding mind to enable him to govern the people fairly and to judge the kingdom righteously, with discernment between good and evil.

During his reign, the Bible depicts Israel as being the wealthiest and most powerful kingdom. British historian, Ralph Ellis, estimates Solomon's wealth would be worth around \$3 trillion in today's money! That's a sum equal to the entire economy of Germany or India, and all because of Solomon's wisdom in managing his kingdom.

What went wrong?

Solomon accumulated 700 wives and 300 concubines as recorded in 1 Kings 11:1-3. This was in utter defiance of God's law against polygamy.

In spite of God's warning against intermarriage with the surrounding heathen nations, Solomon adopted the pagan practices of his wives.

His apostasy began an obsession with wealth and power.



A paper published in *Psychological Science* further proves Solomon's extreme obsession. The study states that people who are repeatedly exposed to images of luxury goods become more competitive and selfish.

How did he inspire?

The story of Solomon teaches us a great lesson. When we ask for God's will to be done, He will exponentially bless us. But if we have ulterior motives, this will lead to an eventual downfall of equal magnitude.

Solomon wrote one thousand proverbs to serve as a guide when making important decisions. In the end he realised that his material aspirations were all as nothing. Only when we allow God's wisdom to be applied in our lives can we hope to find true happiness.

3 – Samson, The Strongest Man

No Bible character possessed such superb brute strength as Samson. You can read all about his deeds in the book of Judges chapters 13-16.

God chose Samson to be a Nazarite and to deliver Israel from the Philistines. This privileged position of his was dependent upon remaining true to the vow of consecration to God, purity of character, never cutting his hair and abstinence from wine and anything associated with grapes.

What went wrong?

Samson chose to become infatuated by the physical beauty of heathen women. This infatuation with Delilah proved fatal to his mission as judge and deliverer of Israel.

Some theologians believe that the secret of Samson's weakness lay not in the fact that his hair was cut, but in his irrational, blinded love of Delilah. She exploited Samson's devotion to her in order for her nation to win the victory over Israel.

How did he inspire?

The story of Samson reminds us that the world offers many tempting avenues for us to go down that will ultimately lead us away from God's values.

Like all the best Bible characters, Samson proved to be the man he ought to be in the end.

He realised his mistakes and asked God's forgiveness and restoration of his strength so that he could fulfil his task and deliver Israel, even though it cost him his life.

4 – Moses, The Lawgiver

Moses was the leading Bible character in the deliverance of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt.

He rose to become a prince of Egypt from his basket of refuge in the Nile River. A true rags to riches story. Although Moses made a grave error, he remained faithful to God and was chosen to lead the great exodus.

Of all the Bible characters, Moses was most privileged to witness the power of God firsthand. Read all about the plagues that were sent upon Egypt and how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, in the book of Exodus. Be inspired by God's provision for His people in



Moses' frustration with the Israelites reached its limit when they complained about a water shortage.

In his frustration, Moses struck the rock—blatantly disregarding God's instruction to speak to it.

From a human standpoint, Moses' anger was understandable, even reasonable.

It might have been dangerous to Moses' health if he had suppressed his emotions. According to a study carried out in 2013 by psychologists from the Harvard School of Public Health and University of Rochester, it could have proved fatal.

When God commands, however, we must set aside our human frailties and obey! God takes care of the risks.

Moses' rationality was suppressed by allowing his anger to rise up and take over in a moment of weakness. He also claimed that the water gushing from the rock was of his own doing, thus usurping God's power.

Because of his disobedience and display of arrogance, Moses was forbidden access to the promised land.

How did he inspire?

Ellen G White once wrote that, although Moses failed God and rightfully deserved his punishment, God ultimately proved His omnipotence.

God gave Moses access to the most glorious promised land—in heaven. Moses may have failed God on many occasions but God never failed Moses.

Moses reminds us that we should not blame God if things don't go according to our desires. Like Moses, if we stay faithful and obedient to Him, He will bring us to a better place better than we could ever aspire to.

5 – Noah, Godly Man In A Sinful World

Out of all the Bible characters, Noah ranks high amongst the most patient in as far as measurements are concerned. He spent 120 years building the ark and preaching about God's promise of deliverance to the most wicked people who ever lived. Other Bible heroes pale in comparison.

No other Bible character remained as faithful to God as Noah, who lived through the world's most sinful period in history.

What went wrong?



Noah got drunk!

Whether intentional or not, a single shot should have been enough for him to realise and refuse another.

On alcohol, Robert H. Shmerling, MD said that whilst "mild consumption is accepted, the

How did he inspire?

Building a large boat to withstand a flood in a place that had never seen rain sounds like a fool's errand and downright farcical. The famous scientist, engineer and TV personality, Bill Nye, doesn't believe in the existence of such a large vessel.

And yet, in humility and obedience, Noah's faith in God never wavered and he did everything God commanded.

He is a prime example of one who lived a Godly life in the middle of a sinful world.

6 – Peter, The Church Leader

The Bible describes Peter as a very humble man. In his first encounter with Jesus, he obeyed Jesus' instruction on casting the net on the other side of the boat. He intellectually followed despite Jesus being a stranger to him.

From then on, Peter stayed by Jesus' side, absorbing all His teaching.

He went on to become a de facto leader among the disciples in their ministry. He became a pillar of the work of evangelism.

What went wrong?

Peter's great mistake was overconfidence and this led him to compromise on who he really was. Peter fell into the Dunning-Kruger effect, a phenomenon where someone's overconfidence can blind them to foresee risks, leading to failure.

Ellen G White also wrote that had Peter prayed instead of sleeping, he would not have denied Christ.

How did he inspire?

Peter confessed as soon as he realised the consequence of his denial. Unlike Judas, Peter clung to his faith. Jesus made Peter the primary steward of His people.

Peter evangelised the message of Christ's gift of salvation with boldness, as described in Acts chapter 5. He remained a faithful church leader right up to his martyrdom.

7 – Jonah

Jonah was the Lord's prophet, tasked with taking the message of salvation to the inhabitants of Nineveh.

His story is famous because he was swallowed by a "big fish" and remained in its stomach for three days and nights.

There have been numerous cases reported of people being swallowed by large fish,



Jonah lived to tell the tale, found in the book of Jonah, and he did eventually spread the good news of God's endless compassion to the Ninevites.

What went wrong?

Jonah ran away from God's appointed task of prophesying to the people of Nineveh.

Eventually, Jonah preached God's message to the people of Nineveh. He became frustrated, however, when God did not destroy the city as planned, because the people repented of their wicked ways.

How did he inspire?

Jonah reminds us that God is always willing to forgive us, even if we run away from Him.

While Jonah preached God's plea for the people of Nineveh to repent, God also taught him a lesson about His boundless mercy and forgiveness.

This story reminds us that God withdraws His judgment on the sinner who repents and asks for His forgiveness.

8 – Abraham

Abraham was highly acclaimed as the father of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. This stemmed from God's promise that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky or sands on the shore.

The book of Isaiah records that God called Abraham the "father of all faithful" and a "friend of God".

Abraham's faith enabled him to endure an almost five-thousand mile journey according to the estimate by Malahi Martin in *Footsteps of Abraham*. This incredible journey has never been replicated by anyone on the merits of religious conviction in modern times.

What went wrong?

Like many Bible characters called to holiness, Abraham also committed terrible blunders. He travelled to Egypt because of his anxiety about a looming famine. He then went to the extreme and denied his marriage to Sara before Pharaoh, out of fear for his life. These acts fly in the face of this otherwise faithful character.

How did he inspire?



Genesis chapter 22 narrates the ultimate test of Abraham's faith. He was willing to offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering in accordance with God's instruction. God saw that it was Abraham's desire to obey Him, no matter the cost.

Abraham's action set the standard of how faithful we should be to God. When we offer our

9 – Paul

Paul was one of the main pillars in spreading the gospel. The highlight of his life came when he was blinded by God while on his way to persecute God's people. This was the defining moment at the start of his commitment to God's sacred work of evangelism.

What went wrong?

Paul was a nightmare to the early church. Originally called Saul, he had an equal footing with those Bible characters with an infamous reputation for going against God's people.

He affiliated with the hypocritical, tradition-centred doctrines of the Pharisees. His anti-Christ stance fueled greater enmity towards the Christians.

How did he inspire?

The story of Paul's conversion is a testament to how God can turn a notorious murderer into a charismatic evangelist.

Now, with firm resolve anchored to his faith in God, Paul's ministry took him further into the Gentile and pagan nations.

Paul's letters and writings served as an inspiration for the early church. Today, Paul's message has been a source of resilience and undying faith to the 260 million persecuted Christians worldwide, according to the statistics of Open Doors.

10 – Mary Magdalene

Out of all the female characters in the Bible, Mary Magdalene was the most fortunate, being the first person to see the risen Saviour.

She stood beside Jesus during His trial and right up to His death on the cross. She became the first witness to the completion of Christ's ministry on earth.

What went wrong?

Mary Magdalene was possessed by seven demons as recorded in Luke 8:1-2.

Influential evangelist Doug Bachelor expounds this case in one of his sermons. Demons cannot enter human beings, despite a person's sinful state, unless the devil is invited to dwell within them.



How did she inspire?

The story of Mary Magdalene brings a powerful message of endless hope in God. No demons or evil spirits can withstand the presence of God.

11 – Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus was one of the most hated Bible characters prior to his conversion. He belonged to the infamous group of tax collectors.

When he heard Jesus was coming to his town, Zacchaeus wasted no time in going to see Him. In spite of his dubious character, it must have been more than mere curiosity that instigated this desire. A process of repentance and conversion was already taking place deep within his heart.

What went wrong?

Zacchaeus may have been short in stature, but he was brave enough to rob the people of their income by means of his corrupt taxation computations.

Tax collectors in those days were corrupt to the core. Jesus even referred to them in a metaphor for anyone who refused to accept His teachings.

How did he inspire?

Zacchaeus took the risk of falling by climbing a tree to see Jesus and listen to His teachings. Because the words Jesus spoke touched Zacchaeus' heart, he not only agreed to return the money to those he had robbed, but he quadrupled it!

Zacchaeus reminds us that God's words are powerful enough to transform us from our sinful state, if only we choose not to harden our hearts.

12 – Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve were the first parents of all humankind. They were literally formed by God's hands and utterly perfect in every way. Their direct conversation with God gave them unrivalled knowledge of the universe.

They are the only Bible characters to have seen God face to face in all His full glory.

What went wrong?

Adam and Eve blatantly disobeyed God! Eve's first mistake was to wander away from her husband and approach the tree that God had forbidden them to go near. In so doing, Eve exposed herself to temptation. She allowed her curiosity to take the better of her as she listened to the words of the tempter. This caused her to cast doubts on her allegiance to God.



Adam prioritised Eve over God by making the same mistake. For their actions, God expelled them from paradise. The result of sin became evident in all the imperfections and tragedies that exist in the world to this day.

God's providence to Adam and Eve following their fall never wavered. They continued to serve and obey God, even though they could no longer enjoy face-to-face contact with Him, nor the comforts of the paradise in which they had once lived.

Their story reminds us that we should never question God in order to satisfy our curiosity. Sure, they may have been "perfect Bible characters" with an excellent physique, but only absolute faith in God and trust in His Word can deliver us from any temptation.

13 – Elijah

Elijah, Moses and Enoch are the only Bible characters who are currently enjoying the pure joy and luxury of heaven!

Elijah and Enoch are the only recorded Bible characters who never suffered death. Elijah rode a chariot that took him straight up to heaven!

The prophet Elijah made a bold stand by preaching against idolatry, not to mention the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Elijah served God faithfully, even though his actions could have cost him his life.

What went wrong?

Elijah feared for his life and ran away from the queen's threat!

He was shortsighted concerning God's protection and this caused him to fall into deep isolation when he was in hiding. He took refuge by himself, rather than in God who had sent him on a mission.

How did he inspire?

At the height of Elijah's fears God remained close, providing his food and comfort for rest.

God even used ravens to bring Elijah his meals!

The story of Elijah reminds us that when we serve God we can stand before anyone. And if we become distressed, God's promises are absolute and will provide the strength and encouragement we need.

14 – Gideon

Gideon is widely known for his victory over Israel's enemies with only 300 men.

Biblical history ranks him first among the judges of Israel.

God saw Gideon's faithfulness when he destroyed the idols of Baal that his father and the nation worshipped. This action earned him favour in God's eyes.



What went wrong?

How did he inspire?

Gideon's life is a model for everyone who chooses to serve God despite family or peer pressure. His faith stood firm in the end.

Gideon reminded the people to direct all their exaltation to God alone. His humility was outstanding when he acknowledged God to be the real victor. His actions are in stark contrast to other Bible characters such as Hezekiah or Solomon. They usurped the credit that was entirely due to God alone.

15 – The repentant thief on the cross

This Bible character may have died shamefully. His repentance on the brink of his death earned him a sure place in heaven, even though we don't even know his name.

He is best known for rebuking his fellow thief in saying that the justice meted out to them was fair, but not so for the undeserving Jesus.

He heeded the call to repentance and submission, just as Jesus' disciples fled the scene.

What went wrong?

His life had been one of endless criminality and qualified him to be sentenced to death in the most brutal and shameful manner—by hanging on a cross.

How did he inspire?

The penitent thief teaches us all that, in the end, we need a Saviour to rescue us from our sins. It is never too late to repent and accept Christ's saving grace.

He realised, in his humility, that he was "undeserving" of pardon. He only longed that somehow Jesus might remember him. Because of his sincerity, Jesus assured the thief that he would be remembered and reserved a place in heaven!

16 – Jacob

Jacob was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God renewed the promise He had made to Abraham, that Jacob would have children and land aplenty. Jacob was renamed Israel by God and he became the father of the children of Israel.

Amongst all the Bible characters who took "argument" with and doubted God, only Jacob dared to wrestle with Him. This encounter transformed Jacob's life and supported his faith in God.



What went wrong?

This action caused him to flee for his life from the wrath of Esau.

How did he inspire?

Jacob's arrogance no longer prospered once he had "received" the birthright from Isaac. He acknowledged his sin and when God appeared and wrestled with him, Jacob no longer felt alone. With renewed confidence he was able to move on, knowing that God's blessing and protection was with him.

God's promise never faltered and Jacob remained faithful to Him throughout all his journeyings.

17 – Isaac

Isaac is best known as the Bible character destined to become the burnt offering of his father, Abraham. When God saw that Abraham's faith was sure, Isaac was spared.

Isaac patiently obeyed his father even after he realized his fate.

What went wrong?

Isaac favoured his eldest son, Esau but this proved fatal within the family relationship. His bias almost cost the lives of both sons, Esau and Jacob.

According to the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, the practice of favouring one child over another still exists today in seven out of ten mothers.

How did he inspire?

Isaac remained in the land, just as God commanded, despite the impending famine. Like his father Abraham, Isaac would only be guided by his faith in God.

Isaac's unwavering faith in God continues to influence Israel to this day and its people still pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob.

18 – The Prodigal

The parable of the prodigal son is the second most popular of all Jesus' parables. According to the magazine *America* magazine and the *HuffPost*, it only ranks behind the story of the good Samaritan. This story's appeal of riches to rags and back again appears to stem from its message of forgiveness and acceptance.



The twists and turns in the life of the prodigal son help us to understand the full extent of sinfulness, forgiveness and hope.

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living a sinful life of lavish extravagance until all his fortune and hope was spent.

How did he inspire?

The story of the prodigal son reminds us that worldly happiness is only temporary.

Some people may only appear to care for us when we are successful, but desert us when we are lost.

Like a repentant sinner, the prodigal chose to return to his father and beg for his forgiveness, rather than continue to live in misery. The father not only accepted and forgave, but also restored him to his former position as son.

19 – The Samaritan Woman

Jesus' encounter with the woman by the well in Samaria proves the far-reaching hand of God to everyone who longs for a Saviour.

Jesus intentionally met her in the heat of the midday, when there were no townspeople around, in order to have a private conversation. Away from the discriminating Jews and incriminating church leaders, Jesus was able to speak freely to her, without either of them facing criticism.

This woman is best known as the Bible character whose determination to spread the gospel equalled that of the disciples.

What went wrong?

The woman was living with five husbands! Her infidelity prevented her repentance.

Had the Jews of the day had their way, the woman would have been stoned!

How did she inspire?

The pivotal moment of their conversation came when Jesus revealed her sins. The woman humbled herself in recognition of her sinful ways and immediately accepted the Messiah. She acknowledged Christ's message of salvation was the living water she needed and desired.

She turned away from her sins and went on to share the gospel with everyone she met.

20 – Hezekiah



Hezekiah was the son of the idolatrous and wicked king Ahaz. He was well known as the man who obeyed the counsels of God through the prophet Isaiah. In contrast to his predecessors, Hezekiah made a royal decree that the people should only worship Yahweh. He cleansed the house of God, removing all traces of paganism and idolatry.

Hezekiah fell seriously ill. On the brink of death Hezekiah pleaded with God to extend his life and God healed this faithful king.

Unfortunately, Hezekiah soon forgot God's miraculous healing. It would have been a perfect opportunity to become a witness to God's power. Instead, in pride and arrogance, he chose to flaunt his possessions before foreign dignitaries.

This careless act earned him a sweeping rebuke and curse from God.

How did he inspire?

For most of his life, Hezekiah was a faithful servant of God. He was instrumental in reconnecting Israel to God by his cleansing of the temple.

Hezekiah's life reminds us that, just like any Bible character, there is no situation that cannot be dealt with through prayer. His prayer is still widely used in sermons as an example of how earnest we should be.

What do all these Bible characters teach us?



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Their struggles and mistakes are prevalent in every generation.

God-given honorary titles are no guarantee of immunity from sin.

The good news is that they always returned to God for forgiveness.


God never forsakes His people if they are sincere in their repentance.

Which Bible characters inspire you the most? Feel free to share in the comment section.

Do you like what you read? Tune in to Chasing hope podcasts and blogs for more inspiring messages and exclusive contents.




5 responses to “20 Flawed Bible Characters Who Were Inspirational”

1.  **Midhunusha Peter** says:
March 18, 2021 at 3:49 pm

Its amazing...i was loking for such a page...love it...would love to join u..

Reply

2.  **Eva** says:
June 16, 2022 at 6:47 am

Abraham for his patient waiting on God. Moses for his courage and humility for leading God's people when he felt so unworthy. Mary Magdelene for sticking with Jesus no matter what.

Reply

3.  **G.DeGroat** says:
June 24, 2022 at 4:22 pm

Thank You. I encourage you to continue spreading the truth of the gospel of Christ. What an informative, succinct synopsis of Bible heroes. I love it! God bless us all.

Reply

4.  **Kirui Peter** says:
July 10, 2022 at 2:49 pm

So inspiring

Reply

5.  **John Klepzig** says:
July 15, 2022 at 3:29 am

Awesome

Reply



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