

# HEROES OF THE BIBLE

DEVOTIONAL

90 DEVOTIONS TO HELP YOU BECOME A HERO OF GOD!

JOSHUA COOLEY

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# INTRODUCTION

What comes to mind when you hear the word *hero*?

A guy who flies around in a red cape? A superstar athlete who can throw, hit, shoot, or kick a ball better than anyone else? Someone who runs into burning buildings to save lives? A soldier on the front lines fighting for freedom?

Ask 10 different people what a hero is, and you might get 10 different answers. But each definition will almost certainly have to do with human achievement and human glory. That's the way the world works.

The Bible, though, has very different ideas of what a hero is. The list of people who were great in God's eyes might shock you. The Bible's mighty champions didn't wear flashy costumes, possess superpowers, or drive high-powered vehicles. They didn't inspire action figures, bobblehead dolls, or blockbuster summer movies.

Instead, they accomplished amazing things by *God's* power and for *God's* glory. Through faith in their all-powerful Creator, they performed jaw-dropping miracles, conquered mighty armies, and ruled nations. They defeated giants, toppled towering city walls, and raised the dead. They wrote books of the Bible, started churches worldwide, and proclaimed the good news of God's salvation, even in the face of death. These heroes rocked!

Maybe you're thinking, *I'd love to be a hero for God too, but I could never do stuff like that. Those people were way more holy than me.* Not true!

The heroes of the Bible were regular, ordinary people who stubbed their toes, woke up with bed head, and struggled with sin—just like you. They became heroes not because



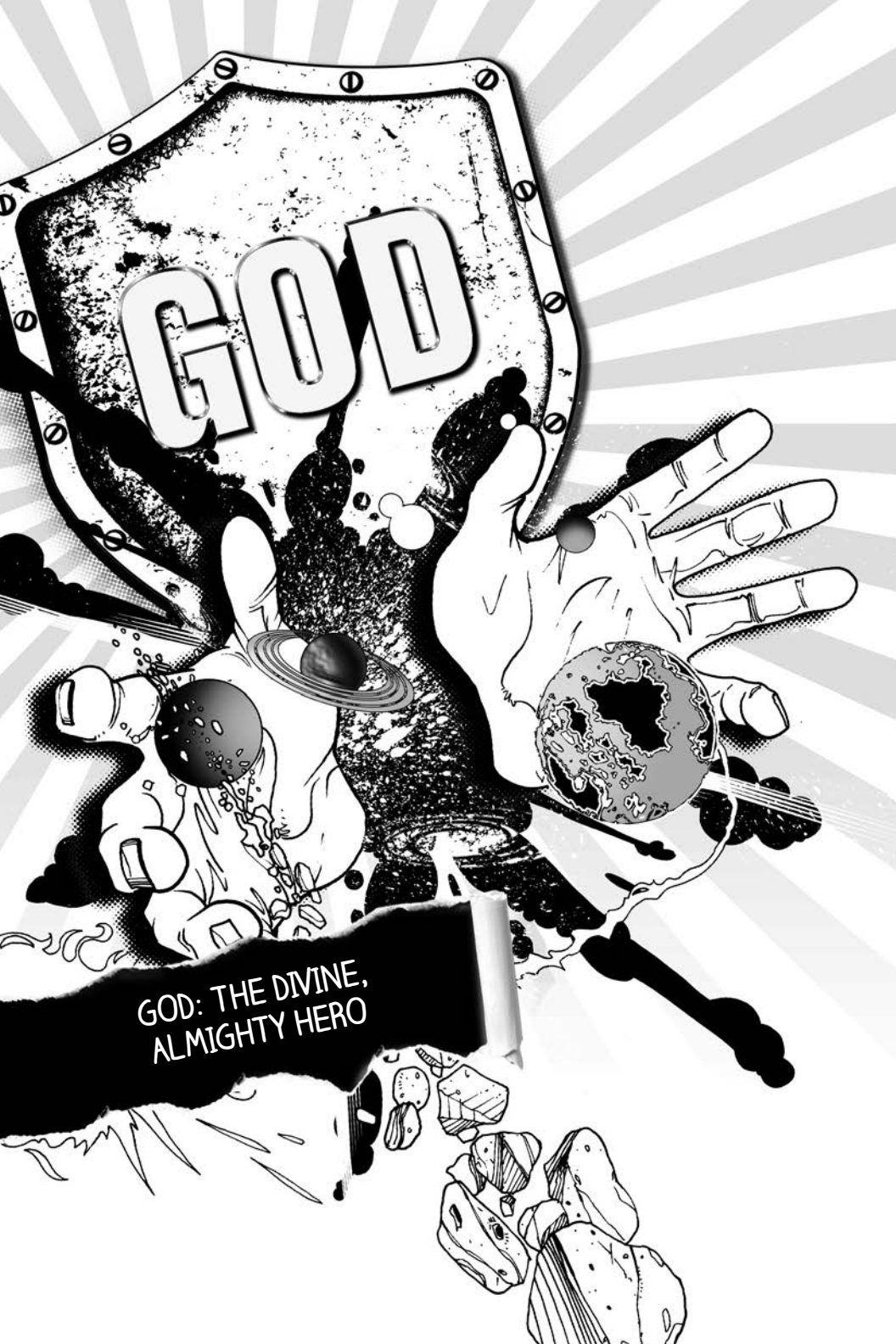
they were superspecial, but because they humbly lived for God. As Matthew 23:11 says, “The greatest among you must be a servant.” These incredible men and women achieved greatness by serving God and others.

In this devotional, you’ll read about poor heroes, rich heroes, kid heroes, and even a slave hero. You’ll learn about bold prophets, powerful kings, and a courageous queen. And you’ll see that every single one of them was a normal person, just like you.

Because it’s not who you are that matters to God; it’s what you allow him to do through you. As the Bible says, by faith you can move mountains (see Matthew 17:20)!

Most important, as you read this book, you’ll learn about the greatest hero in history—God’s perfect Son, Jesus Christ, who loved you so much that he died for your sins, then rose from the dead so you can live with him forever. Talk about superpowers!

So go ahead . . . turn the page and get started. Through faith and obedience, you can be a true hero for God too!



GOD: THE DIVINE,  
ALMIGHTY HERO



# DAY 1

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

BELIEVES THAT GOD CREATED AND  
RULES EVERYTHING.

## A HERO'S TALE

Let's try an experiment. First, stand up and do a few jumping jacks to limber up. Maybe some sit-ups and push-ups, too. Go ahead. Take your time.

Done? Good. Now, close your eyes, take a deep breath . . . and create an ocean.

Now open your eyes. Did it work? No? Okay, maybe try something smaller, like a mountain. Ready, go!

No mountain either? Hmmm, probably still too big for starters. Better try something even smaller, like a hippo or a walrus. Come back when you're done.

What's that? You couldn't do that either? Well, let's go supersmall. Try creating an acorn or a tadpole or even a gnat. Perhaps you should wave a magic wand and say "Hocus-pocus" or "Abracadabra."

It didn't work, did it? Well, good try anyway. But it's not surprising. After all, you're only human, and humans don't possess the power to create something out of nothing.

But there is someone who can: God.

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED  
THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

— GENESIS 1:1

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That's the Bible's way of saying that before time or life began, God existed, and he created everything. He created the sun, moon, stars, planets, and galaxies. He created the earth and everything in it—the oceans, rivers, land, mountains, trees, plants, animals, and humans.

He created *everything*!

Remember how you couldn't create even the tiniest creature? Now consider God's incredible power and limitless creative abilities. He created the entire universe simply by speaking. And if he created everything, that means he rules everything too. He can tell his creation what to do because nothing would exist if it weren't for him. He is an indescribably awesome and powerful God!

This is so important to believe. What we believe about the universe's beginning affects everything else in our lives. If you believe that you were created by a random act of nature and not by God, then you'll probably live as if God didn't exist, so you don't have to obey a higher authority. You'll think you can do whatever you want because there are no rules. That's a scary thought.

But if you believe in an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator, that means you *were* created for a reason and you *do* answer to a higher authority. You understand that life isn't all about you. It's about serving the God who created you and learning more about him. It's a wonderful life with meaning and purpose.

And that's no hocus-pocus.

## BATTLE PLAN

Memorize what God made on each of the six days of Creation. You can read about it in Genesis 1:1–2:3.





## DAY 2

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

BELIEVES THAT GOD CREATED US TO  
WORSHIP HIM.

### A HERO'S TALE

Yesterday's devotional talked about God creating everything, including you. But have you ever wondered *why* God created you? In other words, what's your purpose in life?

Lots of people have wrong ideas about this. Some people think life is one big party. Their purpose in life is nothing more than enjoying themselves. Other people live for money and material stuff. Others think they're supposed to work, work, work—from sunrise to sunset every day. Still others think their main purpose is to be as good as possible—go to church, show kindness to others, etc.

These things are all good, to a degree. It's important to have fun, to work, to earn money, and to do good deeds. But none of those things, by themselves, are truly why you are here.

The answer is so simple it might surprise you: God created you to worship him.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

I WILL SAY TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH, "BRING MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS BACK TO ISRAEL FROM THE DISTANT CORNERS OF THE EARTH. BRING ALL WHO CLAIM ME AS THEIR GOD, FOR I HAVE MADE THEM FOR MY GLORY. IT WAS I WHO CREATED THEM."

— ISAIAH 43:6-7

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

As simple as that truth sounds, it's also pretty deep. When we truly understand our purpose in life, it will answer a lot of questions and affect everything we do. It will shift our focus from our selfish desires and put it where it's supposed to be—on God. Life is not about us. It's about God—because we wouldn't be here without him.

Just like a soldier needs to understand the mission in order to be effective in battle, we must understand that we live to worship God. Worship is simply giving God the glory he deserves as the eternal, almighty, all-knowing Creator of the universe.

Many people associate worship with singing praise music to God. That's one form of worship, but certainly not the only one. We should glorify God in *everything* we do, because that's why God made us, as today's verse says. Whatever you're good at—sports, music, math, science, art—you can worship God in it by giving him the glory for your success.

Need more ideas on how to worship God? Obeying your parents is worship toward God. So is praying, reading the Bible, memorizing Scripture, listening in church, helping others, and telling a friend about Jesus.

There are countless ways to worship our Creator. Time to pick some and get started!

## BATTLE PLAN

Make a list of three ways you can worship God this week (ask your parents to help, if needed) and do them!







## DAY 3

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

UNDERSTANDS HE IS A SINFUL REBEL  
WHO NEEDS A SAVIOR.

### A HERO'S TALE

Think about the most beautiful places on earth: Maui. Tahiti. The Bahamas. The French Riviera. Now imagine a place a thousand times better, where the natural beauty was surpassed only by the fact that God himself walked there.

That was the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve had it made. As the Garden's only residents, humanity's first man and woman lived in a literal paradise on earth—a perfect, sinless home where God personally interacted with them (see Genesis 3:8). What a life!

But Adam and Eve chose to forfeit this amazing experience. When Satan tempted them to disobey God by eating the Garden's forbidden fruit, they decided to rebel against their Creator. They chose their way instead of God's. (You can read about this catastrophe, also known as the Fall, in Genesis 3.)

So sin and death entered the world. Man was separated from God, and God's perfect creation fell into disorder.

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

Adam and Eve really blew it. But we can't be too hard on them, because we eventually would've messed up too.

Ever since Adam and Eve's original sin, we've all sinned. Sin is breaking God's laws, and the Bible says that we are all sinners (see Romans 3:23). In fact, we're born into

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

GOD SHOWED HIS GREAT LOVE  
FOR US BY SENDING CHRIST TO  
DIE FOR US WHILE WE WERE  
STILL SINNERS.

— ROMANS 5:8

sin (see Psalm 51:5). We've inherited a sinful nature from Adam. From the moment we come into the world, our natural tendency is to shake our fists at our Creator and say, "I don't want to follow your rules. I know best!"

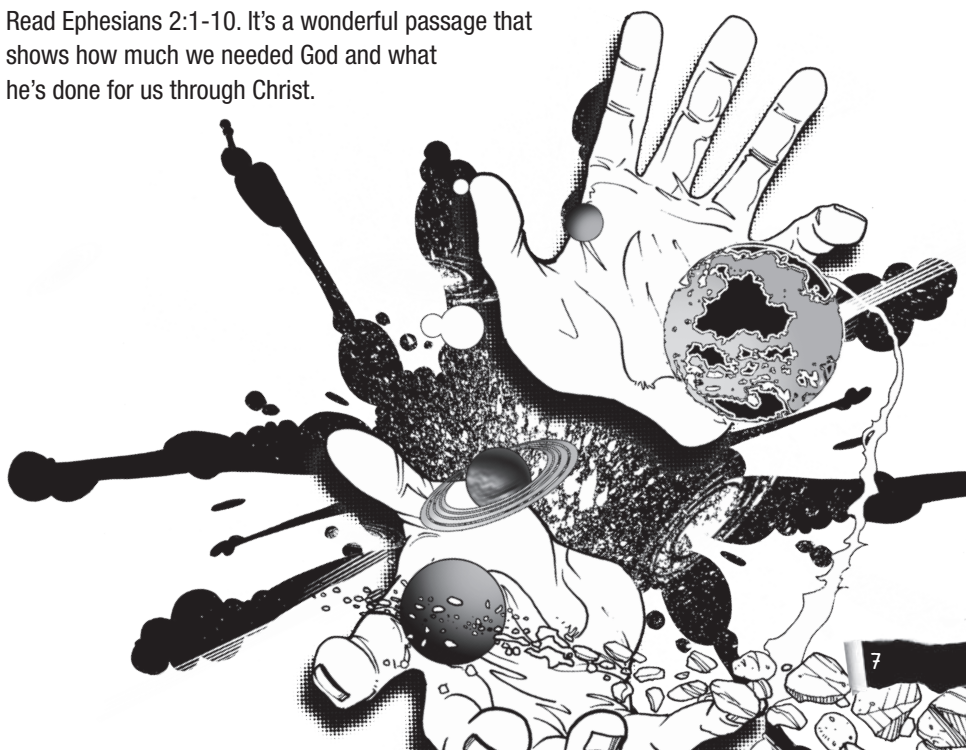
That's not only foolish; it's downright wicked. Being just and holy, God could have chosen to destroy us. He could've thought, *You know what? These people aren't worth my time. I made them and gave them everything they need, and now they're rebelling against me. Time to wipe them out.*

But God didn't do that. Rather than react in angry justice (which he had every right to do), God chose to show us undeserved love and mercy by providing a path of salvation. He did that by sending his perfect Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins.

We are all born as sinful rebels who desperately need a Savior. Praise God that he gave us exactly what we needed, not what we deserved!

## BATTLE PLAN

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. It's a wonderful passage that shows how much we needed God and what he's done for us through Christ.







ABEL: THE HERO WHOSE  
WORSHIP PLEASED GOD





## DAY 4

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

OFFERS PROPER SACRIFICES TO GOD.

### A HERO'S TALE

After reading that statement above, you might be thinking, *Whoa, hold on. I'm supposed to offer sacrifices—like killing sheep and burning them on an altar?*

Not exactly. We'll explain in a moment. But first, a little background . . .

After Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, the world became a very different place. Sin made everything difficult. Still, God lovingly watched over Adam and Eve, and he blessed them with lots of children. Their first two were Cain and Abel. You can read their story in Genesis 4.

Cain was a farmer, and Abel was a shepherd. One day, both brothers brought sacrifices to God. Cain offered his fruits and vegetables, and Abel gave the best of his flocks.

God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's. Filled with jealousy and rage, Cain killed Abel and then tried to hide his sin. As punishment, God forced Cain to become a wanderer for the rest of his life.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

YOU DO NOT DESIRE A SACRIFICE, OR I WOULD OFFER ONE. YOU DO NOT WANT A BURNT OFFERING. THE SACRIFICE YOU DESIRE IS A BROKEN SPIRIT. YOU WILL NOT REJECT A BROKEN AND REPENTANT HEART, O GOD.

— PSALM 51:16-17

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

This tragic story teaches us a lot about worshiping God, even though we don't have to sacrifice animals anymore. Why was God pleased with Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's? It seems that Abel brought his offering with a heart that wanted to please God, while

Cain did not. Abel was a hero because he gave his best to God—“the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock” (Genesis 4:4).

Are you giving your best to God? Are you diligently seeking him through his Word and prayer? Do you obey your parents? Do you listen attentively in church? Are you using the gifts and abilities God has given to you (in music, sports, art, academics, etc.) for his glory?

These are sacrifices we can offer to God today. Like our verse says, God wants our hearts more than anything. He doesn't *need* anything from us, as if he were lacking it without us. (As almighty God, he already owns everything!) But by our sacrifices, we can show him a “broken and repentant” (humble) heart that seeks to follow him, as today's verse says. He wants our desires, thoughts, and actions to all be focused on worshiping him.



## BATTLE PLAN

List 5 to 10 ways you can give your best to God, and put your list somewhere you'll see it every day.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

Don't throw any sheep on an altar! Because Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, sacrificed himself on the cross, no more sacrifices for sins are needed. To receive God's forgiveness, we just need to trust in what Jesus has already done.





## DAY 5

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

HUMBLY TURNS FROM HIS SINFUL  
NATURE THROUGH FAITH.

### A HERO'S TALE

Quick pop quiz: Who were history's first babies? If you guessed Cain and Abel, you're correct!

God created Adam as a grown man (from the dust of the ground), and he created Eve as an adult woman (from one of Adam's ribs). But Cain and Abel—and the rest of mankind—came into being through a mother giving birth.

Even as babies, Cain and Abel had a sin problem. Because of their parents' disobedience in the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel inherited a sinful nature. In other words, they were born with hearts that naturally opposed God. This separated them from God, just like their parents had to leave God's presence in the Garden.

Life wasn't easy for Cain and Abel. Suffering, pain, and death—all of which had never been part of God's original creation—were now a reality for them.

But God still loved Cain and Abel. As the brothers grew up, Cain struggled greatly with his sinful nature even though God lovingly warned him, "If you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master" (Genesis 4:7).

You know the rest of the story. Cain gave in to his evil desires and committed a horrible crime, killing his own brother. He never seemed to truly repent or turn to God in faith.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

WHEN ADAM SINNED, SIN  
ENTERED THE WORLD. ADAM'S  
SIN BROUGHT DEATH, SO DEATH  
SPREAD TO EVERYONE, FOR  
EVERYONE SINNED.

– ROMANS 5:12

However, Abel seemed to get it right before his untimely death. He loved God and offered pleasing sacrifices. By God's grace, Abel overcame his sinful nature with a humble heart that wanted to obey God through faith (see Hebrews 11:4).

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

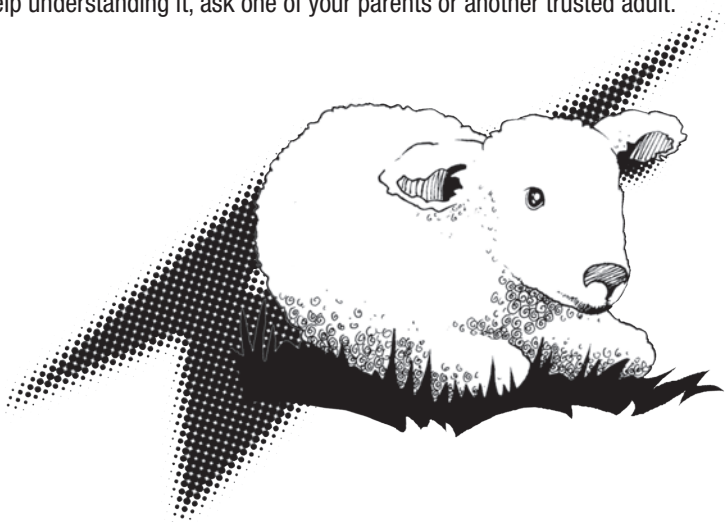
Like Cain and Abel, we are all born with a sin problem. Thousands of years have passed since the Garden of Eden, but every human still starts life with a sinful nature. And if our sin is not forgiven, we'll be eternally separated from God. The Bible is very clear about this. But God loved us so much that he offered his own Son, Jesus, on the cross as a sacrifice for sins so that we could be forgiven.

We have a choice. We can choose to be like Cain, who ignored God's warning. Or we can be like Abel, who trusted in God's plan of salvation and turned from his sin.

The choice seems obvious. Which will you choose?

## BATTLE PLAN

To learn more about our sinful natures and God's plan of salvation, read Romans 5. If you need help understanding it, ask one of your parents or another trusted adult.





## DAY 6

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

VALUES ALL HUMAN LIFE.

### A HERO'S TALE

The story of Cain and Abel is a tragic tale.

Abel had so much promise, so much to live for. Sin was changing the world around him for the worse, but he took a stand for righteousness. Having trusted in his Creator, he chose to follow God rather than live as he pleased. Then, in one swift act of fury, Cain took his brother Abel's life.

It took only two generations of human existence for the first murder to be committed. That might seem shocking at first. But if you know anything about sin, it's actually not surprising at all. Sin is wickedly deceitful. Anger and unkind thoughts, for instance, can quickly turn into something much worse if left unchecked. Just ask Cain.

Abel's murder was a horrible act in so many ways. But the worst part about it? Cain's terrible deed was an attack on God's image.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

GOD CREATED HUMAN BEINGS  
IN HIS OWN IMAGE. IN THE  
IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED  
THEM; MALE AND FEMALE HE  
CREATED THEM.

— GENESIS 1:27

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

The Bible says all humans are created in God's image. This makes us different from anything else God created. Other mammals, birds, and fish weren't created in God's image. Neither were trees or mountains or planets. Only people.

To be made in God's image means to be like God. That doesn't mean we're identical to God. He is holy, all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere. We are not. But we do share certain characteristics. Like God, we can speak, reason, love, and show

creativity. We are spiritual in nature. As God's image bearers, we represent God and are more special to him than anything else he created.

Can you see now why Cain's murder of Abel was so terrible? Abel, like every person, was God's image bearer, and Cain destroyed him.

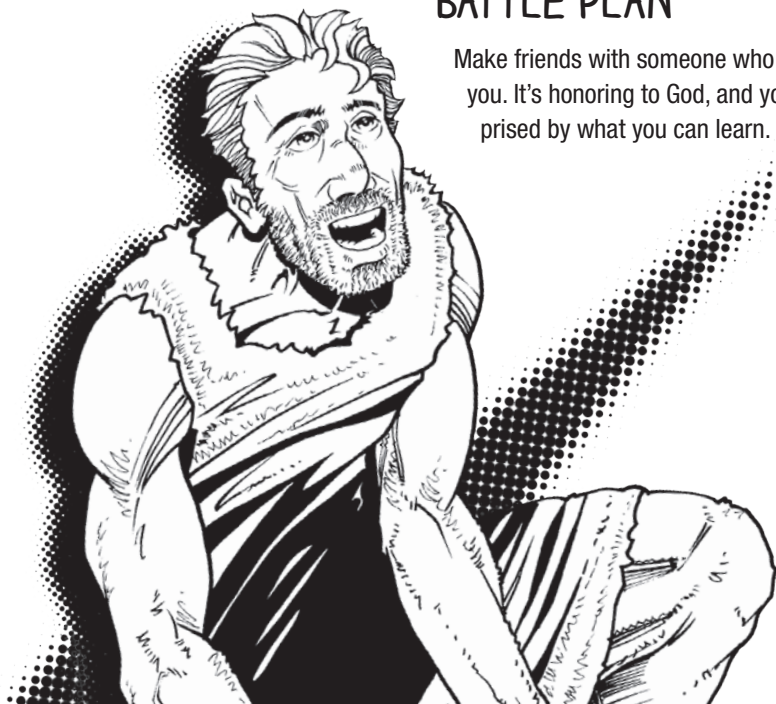
Knowing that we are made in God's image should affect how we treat others. A true hero for God values all human life because humans are God's representatives. It doesn't matter if you're white, black, brown, or polka-dot! All people are made in God's image, and he loves everyone equally.

If you tease people for the way they look, you are attacking God's image. If you treat someone badly because his or her skin color is different from yours, you are attacking God's image. If you make fun of someone with a disability, you are attacking God's image.

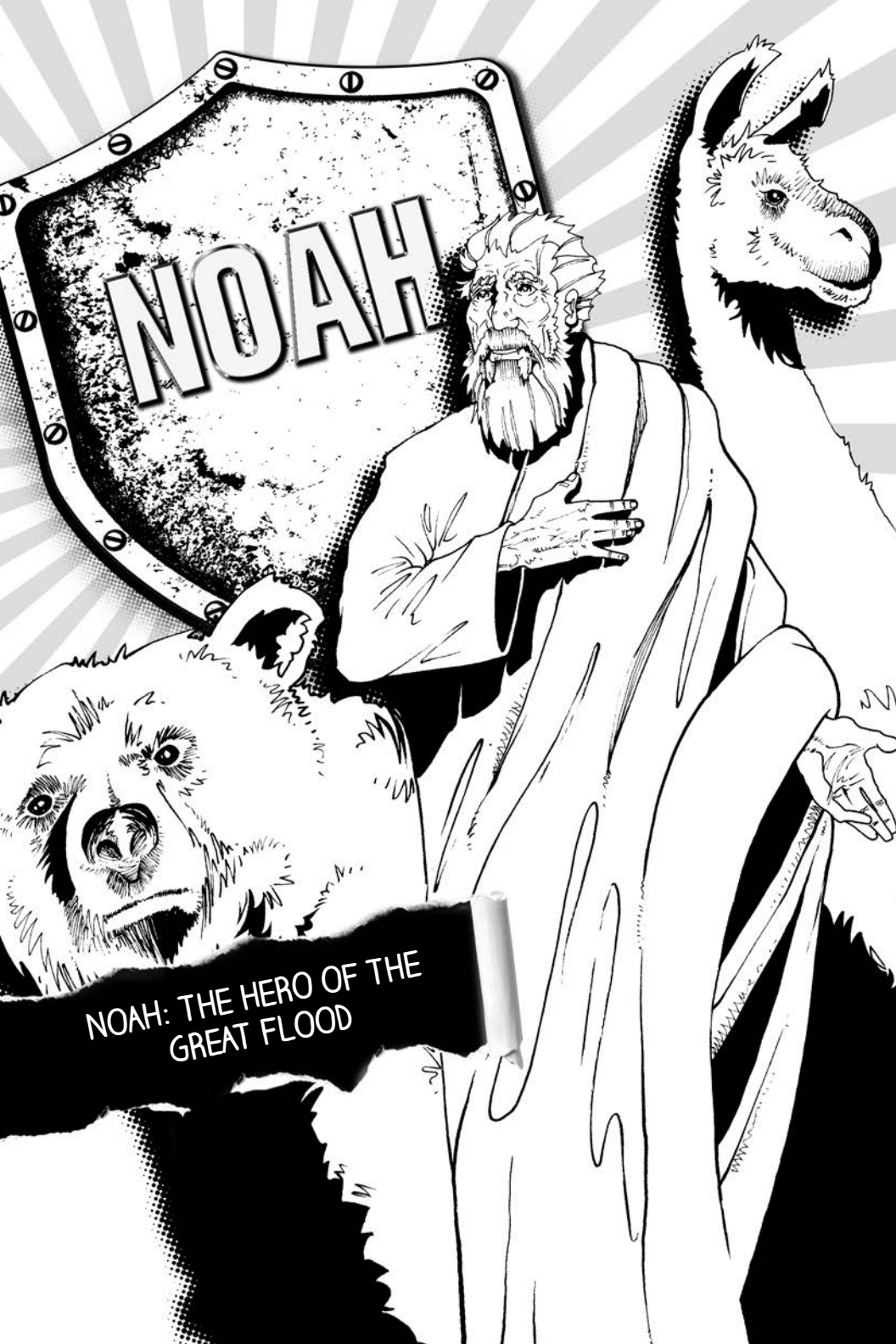
God doesn't make mistakes. He made you just the way he wanted to. Same with everybody else. So value all human life.

## BATTLE PLAN

Make friends with someone who is different from you. It's honoring to God, and you'll be surprised by what you can learn.







NOAH

NOAH: THE HERO OF THE  
GREAT FLOOD





## DAY 7

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

LIVES FOR GOD IN A SINFUL WORLD.

### A HERO'S TALE

Things weren't just bad. They were downright awful.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, sin didn't quietly tiptoe into the world like a thief sneaking into a house; it charged in like an Old West cattle stampede. Nine generations later, mankind had become so wicked, Genesis 6 describes it this way:

- “Everything [humans] thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil” (v. 5).
- “The LORD was sorry he had ever made [humans] and put them on the earth. It broke his heart” (v. 6).
- “God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence” (v. 11).

Humans were failing the test of life. But one man was different. Genesis 6:9 says, “Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.” While everyone else was choosing wrong, Noah chose right. As humanity fell apart all around him, he stood strong for God.

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

It's hard to be different. Our natural desire is to fit in with others. Nobody likes to be the oddball.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD'S WILL IS – HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.

– ROMANS 12:2, NIV

But if you're a Christian, God calls you to be different from the sinful world around you. Today's verse, Romans 12:2, says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NIV).

The word *conform* means to fit into a mold. Do you remember playing with Play-Doh? If you press a lump of Play-Doh into a mold, the Play-Doh comes out shaped like the mold.

As humans, we are kind of like Play-Doh. We're very moldable. But God doesn't want the wicked world we live in to shape us. *He* wants to shape us!

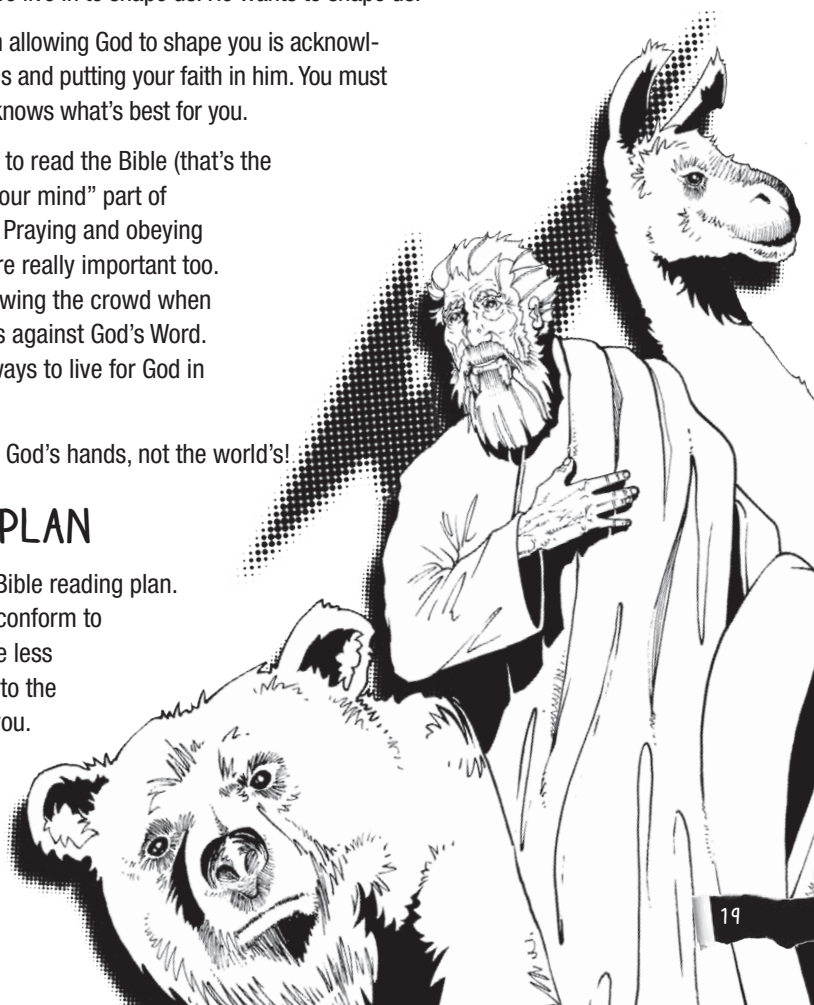
The first step in allowing God to shape you is acknowledging your sins and putting your faith in him. You must trust that God knows what's best for you.

Then you need to read the Bible (that's the "renewing of your mind" part of Romans 12:2). Praying and obeying your parents are really important too. And avoid following the crowd when the crowd goes against God's Word. These are all ways to live for God in a sinful world.

Be Play-Doh in God's hands, not the world's!

## BATTLE PLAN

Set up a daily Bible reading plan. The more you conform to God's Word, the less you'll conform to the world around you.





## DAY 8

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

LIVES BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.

### A HERO'S TALE

Like a fast-spreading plague, sin had completely infested the earth. Mankind's wickedness and rebellion grieved God. So God told Noah, the only righteous man alive, that he was going to cleanse the earth with a worldwide flood. Then God commanded Noah to build an ark so he and his family would be saved.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

WE LIVE BY BELIEVING AND NOT  
BY SEEING.

— 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

Noah probably wondered, *Flood? Ark? What are those?* After all, the story of Noah is the first time the Bible ever mentions a rainstorm. Noah certainly had never seen a flood or an ark before.

What's more, God was asking Noah to perform an *enormous* construction task, never before done. The ark was longer than a football field and about four stories tall! Noah and his three sons had to build it by themselves, without power tools or machines.

As Noah worked, people passing by must have given him strange looks and maybe even taunted him: "There's that crazy Noah. What on earth is he building?"

Despite all this, "Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). Noah was living by faith, not by sight.

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

Human sight is an amazing thing. Our eyes are information collectors. When they see something, they send that information to our brains through the optic nerve. Then our brains process the information, make decisions, and send our bodies into action by telling our nerves and muscles how to respond.

Without sight, it's hard to believe or do things. But God often asks us to believe and obey without seeing. It's called faith (see Hebrews 11:1), and we can't please God without it (see Hebrews 11:6).

When God told Noah about the ark and the flood, Noah couldn't see what God was planning. He had no idea what a flood was or how to build an ark. He just had to believe and obey. This made Noah a hero of faith!

What is God calling you to do by faith and not by sight? Whatever it is, trust God. If he can miraculously save Noah from a worldwide flood, he is worthy of your faith too!

## BATTLE PLAN

Read Hebrews 11, which is often called the "Hall of Faith." It's all about biblical heroes, including Noah, who lived by faith and not by sight.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

The greatest way we can live by faith and not by sight today is to believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead more than 2,000 years ago. We didn't see it happen, but the Bible says we must believe these truths to be saved.





## DAY 9

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

IS GRATEFUL FOR GOD'S MERCY.

### A HERO'S TALE

Here's a pop quiz: What is a rainbow?

- A. A multicolored arc in the earth's atmosphere that is caused by the reflection of light in water droplets.
- B. A sign of God's promise to never destroy the earth again by flood.
- C. Something that leprechauns keep their pots of gold at the end of.
- D. Answers A and B.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

THE LORD OUR GOD IS  
MERCIFUL AND FORGIVING,  
EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE  
REBELLED AGAINST HIM.

— DANIEL 9:9

If you answered choice D, you're correct! Rainbows are amazing meteorological phenomena that occur when the sun comes back out during or after rainstorms. But rainbows are also a reminder—a thousands-of-years-old reminder—of God's love and mercy.

God showed both to Noah during the Great Flood of Genesis 7–8. When the rain stopped and the floodwaters receded, Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Ararat. Finally, after more than a year inside the ark, Noah and his family stepped on dry ground again. There, Noah worshiped God by offering a sacrifice.

God put a rainbow in the sky and made a promise to Noah: "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things" (Genesis 8:21).

And ever since then, God has stayed true to his word.

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

In the story of Noah's ark, Noah's faith is remarkable. So is the God-ordained miracle of everything in the ark surviving the Flood. But the greatest part of the story is the mercy of God.

You see, God would have been completely justified if he had washed away Noah and his family in the Flood, along with everyone else. As great as Noah was, he didn't deserve to be saved. Noah was a sinner just like us, and the Bible is very clear that sin deserves death (see Romans 6:23).

God doesn't owe us anything. Our hearts are naturally rebellious toward him. Whatever good we receive from him is a gift, not a right. We deserve punishment and death. But God gives us mercy anyway (and a lot of rainbows!) because he loves us so deeply.

Noah understood this and worshiped God. That should be our response to God's mercy too!

## BATTLE PLAN

Memorize today's Bible verse. It's a great reminder of God's mercy toward us.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

God's greatest act of mercy was sending Jesus to die for us. He could've easily let us die in our sins—that's what we deserved. But in his mercy, God gave us what we *didn't* deserve—a chance for salvation through his perfect Son!

