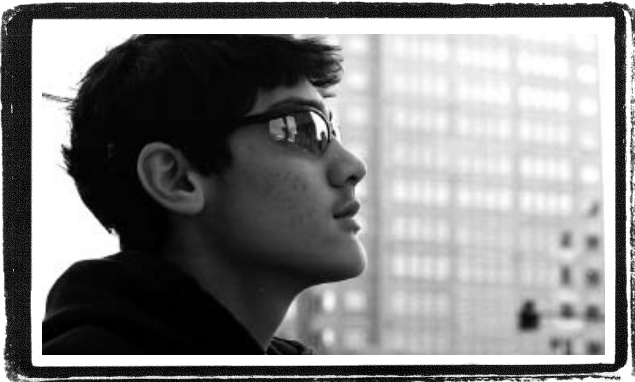


# TRIBE

## A WARRIOR'S CALLING

A CHALLENGE TO REAL FAITH FOR GUYS



Jeremy V. Jones  
Greg Asimakoupoulos

SERIES CREATED BY  
MICHAEL ROSS



*Tribe: A Warrior's Calling*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Discover God's Will For Your Life!

You sit by yourself in youth group—feeling totally clueless.

Tonight's topic: "Knowing God's Will." All evening guys and girls are standing up, testifying about all the cool ways Christ is leading their lives.

"The Lord told me to study medicine after high school," an attractive girl blurts.

"God is calling me to the mission field this summer," says a boy with a surfer dude accent.

Another guy breaks into tears, then says, "Jesus wants me to give up some bad friendships. It's hard, but I know I have to do it."

Everyone applauds. You slump back in your chair and squeeze shut your eyes. *Okay, Lord. I'm missing something here. Every other teen in this room seems so clued in to what You want for their lives. NOT ME. I feel absolutely CLUELESS! Why can't I hear Your voice?*



Figuring out God's will for your life may seem overwhelming at times. It may even feel like some sort of mysterious riddle that's solved by only the holiest youth group saints. (Which completely excludes you, right?!)

Guess what. Getting a clue about God's will isn't as

hard as you think. It all boils down to *where* you look for answers and *whom* you listen to.

This book will help.

During the next few weeks . . .

- You'll gain a deeper understanding of your faith, which impacts your calling in life.
- You'll plug into the truth. You know what the Messiah did nearly 2,000 years ago—He came into the world, died on a cross, then was resurrected into heaven. And you know what that means for all who commit their lives to Him—*salvation* (eternal life), *liberation* (freedom for the captives), and *restoration* (healing of the brokenhearted).
- You'll experience a radical transformation in your heart. You'll realize that you are someone who can't possibly sit still and stay quiet about what you believe and where your life is going.
- You'll accept the mission of living your faith . . . and telling the world what it is that anchors your life.

Before you dive into these pages, let me remind you of two important facts about your faith: (1) Walking the Christian walk is often hard, yet (2) you can make it if you choose to trust Jesus and step out with an iron-willed commitment.

So what's an iron-willed commitment? Read all of Hebrews 11 and the first verses of chapter 12, then focus on the following verses:

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes

on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Jesus overcame death on the cross so that—through His power—each one of us can overcome the obstacles that stand in our way . . . no matter how hopeless the situation may seem.

It's this realization that has made a difference in my own walk with Jesus. Through the years, I've discovered that I'm not alone in my struggles. I've learned that every Christian, at one time or another, wrestles with various hurts and fears . . . even feelings of inadequacy. The truth is, as a Christian—as a young man who is heading down the road to eternal life—life is more often hard than easy.

But pressing on with an iron will is the key. That's what Jesus did as He went to the cross. And He overcame death and the struggles of this world just for you and me. He headed down a road that took Him to His physical death. But He also walked down a spiritual road that led to life.

He wants to take you down that life-giving road, too.

—Michael Ross

*Breakaway Magazine* Editor



Okay. So what exactly is this you're getting into? Is this a devotional? Is it a journal? Is it a *journey*?

Actually, yes to all of the above!

In each daily entry you'll find:

- **A TRIBAL QUEST**—a faith challenge for the day.
- **A TRIBAL TRUTH**—Scripture that defines a Christian's tribal creed.
- **A TRIBAL FACE**—a true account of a teen like you, a time-proven warrior, or a Bible hero who sought after God's heart and earned himself a new identity in God's worldwide tribe.
- **TRIBAL TRAINING**—advice, action points, and thought-provoking questions and strategies for applying God's truth to your life.
- **TRIBAL MARKS**—a place to jot down your own prayers, thoughts, hopes . . . and all the new stuff you've learned.

So, don't hold back! Fulfill what burns in every young man's heart. Dare to trust your Creator and become the warrior He made you to be.

Use this life-changing resource as a way to get connected to God's eternal tribe. Study with a friend or group of guys from church—maybe even your dad (you know, as your own tribal rite-of-passage thing).

Your ultimate journey awaits. Join the adventure of following Christ. And with each quest He gives you, don't be surprised if you find yourself facing—and overcoming—challenges far greater than anything you ever imagined.



# TRIBE

**A WARRIOR'S CALLING**

**KNOW WHO YOU ARE  
WEEK 1**



# SURVIVOR SECRETS

►►►WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* — **GENESIS 1:27**

## TRIBAL QUEST

Learn to see yourself as your Creator views you: a priceless masterpiece made with an important purpose.

EXPLORE THE WORD: **PSALM 139:1-16**

## TRIBAL TRUTH

*For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.* — **PSALM 139:13-14**

## TRIBAL FACE



### Jeremiah—Young Prophet

The young Hebrew man felt the flush of embarrassment. He turned to see who had entered the courtyard and caught him talking to himself.

Puzzled, he looked around seeing no one. *I know I heard my*

DAY 1: GET A CLUE ABOUT YOUR GOD ID

*name*, he thought. *Maybe it's that cruel Eleazar playing pranks again.*

He hoped not. Though he had grown accustomed to the teasing that came from being the son of a priest, the young man still felt the sting of the laughter at his expense. He was smart, certainly, and had always done well in his studies to become a priest like his father, Hilkiah. But he felt shy and awkward around others and was never popular in his village.

“Jeremiah,” came the voice again. This time the young man was certain he heard it, but who—

“Jeremiah!”

Jeremiah's knees buckled and he fell facedown to the ground. There was no mistaking it now: This was the voice of the Lord, and it filled him with terror.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

The young man could scarcely believe his ears. *Me? A prophet? Surely there is some mistake!*

Covering his face, he somehow managed to stammer, “Ah, sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”

The Lord's voice was firm yet compassionate. “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.”

A wave of nausea swept over Jeremiah. The familiar sense of fear and embarrassment rose up within him at the mention of the task.

But God continued, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you.”

A surge of hope shot through Jeremiah's heart. As God spoke, He raised Jeremiah's head from the sand and placed His hand to the young man's mouth. It felt as if

flames were licking Jeremiah's lips, their heat surging deep within his spirit.

"Now, I have put my words in your mouth," God said. "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

With each continuing word, Jeremiah felt a strength he had never known. New confidence rose up within him as he clung to God's command. *Maybe*—

Suddenly, a vision burned in the new prophet's brain. He reached out his hand to touch it but felt empty air.

"What do you see, Jeremiah?" God said.

The man hesitated for a moment. "I . . . I see the branch of an almond tree," he said with uncertainty.

"Very good," came the voice of the Lord. "You have seen correctly."

Again Jeremiah's mind was consumed by another vision. Again, God questioned, "What do you see?"

This time Jeremiah spoke readily. "I see a boiling pot tilting away from the north," he said.

Again God gave His approval. "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land."

Jeremiah's spirit leaped. God was pleased with *him*.

"Get yourself ready!" the Lord said and repeated His command to the man. "Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you."

The young man bowed low to the ground. God's words had seared his soul. He would never be the same.



Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes. He probably wasn't much older than you, and maybe you can identify with his sense of uncertainty and insecurity. He was minding his own business, trying to obey God's laws and become a good priest. Then **BAM!** God revolutionized his life.

Did you catch that mission? Go tell the kings that God doesn't like what they're up to. No wonder the young Jeremiah was a bit intimidated. Who can blame him? That's big responsibility—and danger, especially in a day when the king could do just about anything (like lop off your head) if you didn't make him happy.

But God had big plans, and His call came with everything His young servant needed:

**Significance:** God's opening statements gave meaning to life. The Creator of the universe knew Jeremiah before he existed and had plans for him even then.

**Tools:** God was not concerned with Jeremiah's protests. He provided the words and everything else Jeremiah needed for the task.

**Protection:** "I am with you and will rescue you," the Lord said to Jeremiah. God knew this was a difficult assignment, but He promised His presence. When the Lord calls us, He doesn't leave us by ourselves.

**Practice:** God wasn't playing games when He asked Jeremiah what he saw. He was providing reassurance to the young prophet, sharpening his skills and clarifying His message.

**Identity:** Talk about encouragement! Do you think Jeremiah ever forgot the words God spoke to him that

day? Jeremiah had viewed himself as a child; God declared him to be a fortress of a man who could not be harmed.

Jeremiah believed God's words and acted on them. He answered his Creator's calling, rose up, and fulfilled his mission. Thousands of years later, he is considered one of the greatest Old Testament prophets—a far cry from the timid, insecure young man he once was.

How do you see yourself? Where is your identity rooted? What is God's calling to you?

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### TRIBAL TRAINING

- **Get God's eyes.** Just like Jeremiah, God created you with unique and special gifts. He knew just who you would be and what purposes He had for you. In other words, you matter! Read Psalm 139:1-16. Compare your view of yourself to what God says in these verses. This is where true identity begins. Do you believe it, or, like Jeremiah, are you stuck with a warped perception of yourself? Memorize these verses and repeat them to yourself when you feel insignificant.

- **Answer the call.** God probably hasn't spoken audibly to you like He did to Jeremiah. But just because you haven't received a specific assignment from the Lord doesn't mean you won't. If God has a particular task He wants you to accomplish, rest assured He will leave no doubt about it. Even more important, God's call to each of us is first to Himself. He wants us to know Him, serve Him, represent Him, and obey His Word with everything

we've got. How can you do that today? Do you sense God calling you to do something or go somewhere?

- **□□ it.** Whether you've identified a specific or general calling, it's time to stand up and trust God, not yourself. Make a plan today. Take a specific action. Want to share Christ with a friend? Call and invite him to hang out. Feel like you should pursue a career as a graphic designer? Sign up for an art class at your school or a local community college. God told Jeremiah, "Get yourself ready!" (Jeremiah 1:17). You don't have to fulfill your entire calling today, but get started by taking that first step.

- **PRAY IT OUT:** *"Lord, thank You for creating and loving me. Please help me to see myself as You do and be all You desire me to be."* Thank God that He knew you before you were born. Praise Him for His creativity and wisdom in making you just the way you are. Ask Him to help you hear and follow His call for your life.

# TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY: \_\_\_\_\_

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HOW I WANT TO GROW: \_\_\_\_\_

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MY PRAYER LIST: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SURVIVOR SECRETS

▶▶▶ **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* — **GENESIS 1:27**

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## TRIBAL QUEST

When faced with the temptation to fit in, you don't need to become a hostage to fear and compromise.

**EXPLORE THE WORD: GALATIANS 3:26-4:7**

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## TRIBAL TRUTH

*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

— **GALATIANS 4:6-7**

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## TRIBAL FACE



**A Teen Guy Overcomes Peer Fear**  
FICTION BY **GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**

Manny's most memorable ceremony was the day he was baptized at his grandma's church. But tonight, something else would come close to equaling its status.

When he was 10 years old, Manny

had understood how much God loved him and publicly professed faith in Jesus. His parents and his brother, Victor, were not believers, but his dad's mom was. She had told him Bible stories since he was a toddler. And every time he spent the weekend with her, he went to church with her. It was on one such weekend when he told the pastor he wanted to be baptized.

Manny thought about that day a lot. A snapshot he kept in his Bible reminded him of it. It was a photo his grandma took of him standing next to her pastor in the middle of the river that flowed by the rural church. His dark-skinned face stood out against the bright white baptismal robe. He could still feel the warm sun and the cold water.

He also could feel an awesome sense of acceptance that day. As he came up out of the water and struggled to catch his breath, the congregation smiled and clapped enthusiastically. A few women his grandma's age even shouted "Hallelujah!"

That was five years ago. Although Manny was still taking his young faith seriously, he was about to experience something he anticipated would be almost as awesome. Ever since his older brother, Victor, joined the Stallions, he knew he wanted to be part of this gang, because unlike most of the gangs in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Stallions were known as a nonviolent organization. Manny had no interest in crime or hurting people.

Those who belonged to the Stallions were proud of being Mexican-American. They wore black leather jackets with an insignia of a galloping steed on the back. The

gang hung together every Friday and Saturday night. They were like family. And for most of those in the Stallions, a sense of belonging was important. Almost all of the boys were from homes without fathers.

In order to join the gang you had to be sponsored by a Stallion and you had to be 15 years old. Victor, who was four years older than Manny, told him he would be his sponsor once he turned the minimum age. And that day had arrived.

At school that day, Manny could hardly concentrate as he envisioned the initiation ceremony that night. He would soon cross the threshold of masculinity. Tonight he would be accepted by the Stallions as a Stallion.

Victor picked up his brother in his sleek, black, low-riding Prelude. Manny greeted him with a high five and a big smile. Together they drove 20 miles out of town to an abandoned gas station on a dirt road. Thirty gang members were already there wearing black jackets and blue jeans.

While the Stallions circled Manny, one gang member handed the young recruit a pistol and told him to shoot a rattlesnake that another member let loose from a burlap sack. The snake coiled and made its signature sound. But Manny took aim and shot the slithering target through the head, leaving it lifeless in the desert sand. The 15-year-old felt a rush of excitement as the gang cheered its approval.

“Before we present you with your black jacket, you still have another task to perform to prove you are worthy of being a Stallion,” the leader of the gang said.

“Please remove your clothes except for your underpants.”

As Manny complied with their odd request, he was led by two gang members to the rusted-out old-fashioned gas pump. A third Stallion blindfolded him. A fourth tied him with rope. With that, the group got into their cars and began to peel out. He heard his brother's voice above the sound of the modified exhaust systems. "We'll be back to get you for breakfast."

Manny couldn't really sleep in a standing position tied to the pumps. To make matters worse, he nearly froze. His feet and hands were numb with the poor circulation caused from the rope and with the desert cold. He tried to convince himself he wasn't afraid as he heard distant coyotes and the eerie sound of desert owls. He was nervous; sweat beaded over his entire body, generating even worse chills as it cooled. Wearing a blindfold, he couldn't tell when the sun had come up, yet he could feel warm rays on his unclothed chest. His eyes teared up, but with joy not fear. When he heard the sound of cars and voices, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"We'll present your black jacket at breakfast," the gang leader said as he removed the rope and black fabric that had covered his face. "Get dressed and let's go get some food."

Victor drove Manny while the other cars followed in caravan style.

"Where do we have breakfast?" Manny asked his brother.

"We'll stop to get the food and meet the gang down the road at a park," Victor explained.

Just then Victor pulled into a convenience store. "Here's a list of what we need. Bread, cold cuts, sodas,

chips. And you'll need this since we don't have any money."

Victor handed his brother the pistol he'd used to kill the snake.

"This is your last test, little brother," Victor said with a twinkle in his eye. "I know you won't let us down."

Manny felt sick inside. The Stallions were just like the rest of the local gangs after all. Violent. Cruel.

He also felt something else. It was the Holy Spirit prompting him to not give in to peer pressure. Throwing the gun on the floorboard of his brother's car, he opened the door and started to run.

"I won't do it," he yelled. "I'm not turning my back on what is right just to be a Stallion."

As you might guess, there are all kinds of reasons why guys like Manny want to be accepted and belong. And when we long for love, we can find ourselves vulnerable to joining the wrong crowd.

Even Christians are tempted to close their eyes to compromising situations in order to fit in. But the Lord never turns His back on those who belong to Him. He puts a desire in their hearts to take a stand and turn away when necessary.

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## TRIBAL TRAINING

▪ **Expect temptations when you track with the pack.** The battle with peer pressure is not unique to the teenage years. It's a battle we fight all our lives. When we anticipate it, it becomes less scary, especially

if we begin our day thanking God we are part of a forever family.

- **Remind yourself of your position in Christ.**

When you feel ostracized, thank God you're not alone. As a Christian you have been adopted into the family of God. When you accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord you were given rights and privileges of a son of God. Whenever you start a prayer with "Father," stop and think how cool it is that you can call Him that.

- **Prioritize time with other Christians.** Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." In other words, be intentional about who you spend the most time with. You are less likely to cave in to those who don't take God seriously if you are hanging with those who do.

- **PRAY IT OUT:** *"Lord, I need Your help to resist the crowd and do what is right."* Confess to the Lord what you are tempted to do in order to be accepted by your friends. Ask Him for the courage to say no when you need to.

# TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY: \_\_\_\_\_

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HOW I WANT TO GROW: \_\_\_\_\_

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MY PRAYER LIST: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SURVIVOR SECRETS

►►► **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* — **GENESIS 1:27**

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## TRIBAL QUEST

When you take stock in the unique abilities and interests God has given you, celebrate the fact they're for a purpose.

**EXPLORE THE WORD: EPHESIANS 2:1-10**

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## TRIBAL TRUTH

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* — **EPHESIANS 2:10**

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## TRIBAL FACE



### **Matthew—A Jewish Tax Collector**

Pardon the pun, but Matthew's occupation was a taxing career.

Sitting in an open-air booth could be very draining during the summer months for Matthew. But enduring the intense heat wasn't the half of it. Enduring the sarcastic



(and even cruel) comments of his fellow citizens was even more stifling.

Yes, Matthew was Jewish, but he worked for the Roman government. His job required him to collect taxes from other Jews in order to fund Caesar's rather elaborate lifestyle. If you think the government takes more than its share when your parents fill out their tax return for the Internal Revenue Service, you wouldn't believe what Rome required the citizens of Israel to cough up. It was no wonder the Jews hated people like Matthew. He was considered a traitor. And since he was a Jew, he was hated by his Roman employers, too.

But in addition to being hated, Matthew was also pretty well-off. Scratch that. He was quite well-off. The dude was rich. Many years earlier he'd made peace with the fact that he wasn't going to have friends (except other tax collectors), so he decided he'd have a comfy life.

Based on what the Bible tells us, Matthew's base of operation was near the Sea of Galilee. It's likely it was right on the main highway that connected Persia with Egypt. That's where he was when Jesus encountered him.

"Hey, Mr. Tax Man!" Jesus probably probed. "What's your name?"

At first Matthew ignored the question. Nobody ever asked him a question expecting an answer, except maybe one like, "Do you know how much people hate you?"

"Matthew, my name is Matthew," the wealthy untouchable replied.

Matthew knew what his name in Hebrew meant. "Gift of the Lord." What a joke. The name his mother gave him as a baby wasn't anything close to how he felt about

himself. He wasn't a gift of the Lord. As far as his Jewish associates felt, he was a jerk. Perhaps Matthew was rolling in the bucks, but he was lonely as heck. He struggled with guilt. And for good reason. He'd gouged people every day of his life for as long as he could remember in order to feather his comfortable nest.

But Jesus wasn't going to let Matthew off the hook that easily. He was convinced that this spiritually poor rich man could reach a point in his life where he would really see his life as a gift.

"Matthew?" the carpenter-turned-rabbi said. "Come with Me. Leave your table of injustice and let Me teach you a new career."

Matthew must have been ready for that kind of invitation. It's obvious he wasn't happy with his life. Even without asking what Jesus had in mind, Matthew dropped the canvas flap on his tentlike booth, closed up shop, and made tracks in the hot sand to catch up with the Teacher. Heck, he didn't even take the velvet bags of coins that were left heaped under his table.

Whatever Jesus saw in Matthew, his invitation to join the other disciples was something Matthew found irresistible. The well-dressed tax man in the expensive threads and manicured beard left his livelihood behind. He started hanging with fishermen whose robes smelled like trout.

Before the week was out, Matthew planned a party for his friends. You guessed it. They were tax collectors just like him. He spread the word. "YOU'RE INVITED! Bring anyone you can think of. My new friend Jesus is going to be there. I want you to meet Him."

Of course, Jesus showed up. When Jesus approached Matthew at his place of employment, He was genuinely interested in a tax-taker who had no sense of significance in his life. The Nazarene rabbi had His heat sensors on anyone who was hungry for a fresh start at life.

So, when Matthew offered to show his guest of honor his well-appointed pad, Jesus most willingly took the VIP tour. He didn't put Matthew down for having such an over-the-top mansion, but he didn't ooh and aah over it either. Matthew could tell that Jesus was more interested in him than in his home.

And Jesus wasn't the only one who showed up. Matthew's down-and-dirty buddies were there too. They wanted to meet the man responsible for causing Matthew to give up his lucrative occupation. Even though Matthew's profession wasn't the most respectable way to make a living, it provided him with a circle of friends he was able to introduce to Jesus.

In other words, Matthew's past experience was part of what he brought to the table. His friendships, his personality, his confidence in working with money, his ability to mingle with the public—all these aspects of the former tax collector's life were abilities he was now able to use to introduce people to Jesus. In fact, as Matthew grew in his faith, he wrote the first book of the New Testament. It's the one that bears his name. It also bears witness to all Matthew had seen and heard growing up in a Jewish community. Of the four accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, Matthew's Gospel best explains the good news of God's love in a way that Jewish people could understand.

Isn't that fascinating? Not only does God call people

to be part of His plan to change the world, He makes use of what they have to offer. You could probably even make a case for believing that the talents and abilities we are born with were given to us in anticipation of the day we would accept Jesus and start serving Him.

Go ahead and look at what you enjoy doing. Sports? Skateboarding? Writing? Hiking through nature? Spending time with friends? Now look inside at how you relate to others. Are you outgoing? Introverted? Are you the class clown? Are you more studious? All these uniquenesses are God's fingerprints in your life. They point to the special ways He wants to use you. Now it's up to you to accept the fact you've been called to serve Him.

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### TRIBAL TRAINING

- **Document how you became a disciple of Jesus.** Your testimony may not be as dramatic as some you've heard. But it's your story and it's worth getting down on paper. Don't worry about punctuation or grammar. Just describe what was going on in your life before you decided to take Jesus seriously. Then make note of who influenced you spiritually and why you were open to what they shared. Finally, document how Jesus has impacted your life since. You never know who might want to hear how God's been active in your life.

- **Document what you enjoy doing or are good at.** The way God wired you is part of His calling on your life. You are one of a kind. Write down what people tend to say you're good at. Make note of your achievements,

honors, projects you've tackled. Make a list of what you would enjoy doing if you didn't have homework or a job. What are you capable of doing that gives you a sense of pride? In Romans 12:3-8 the apostle Paul reminds us to have an accurate estimation of our abilities.

- **Document those people you've earned the right to share Jesus with.** In your life so far you've had a chance to get to know a lot of people. Some of them are interested in what interests you. Just as Matthew invited his non-Christian friends to meet Jesus, so you have a network of family and friends whom God is interested in reaching through you. That's part of your call.

- **PRAY IT OUT:** *"Lord, help me understand what it means to belong to You."* Thank Jesus that He called you to be part of His team to reach the world. Ask Him for courage to keep from caving in to what others think is important.

# TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SURVIVOR SECRETS

▶▶▶ **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* — **GENESIS 1:27**

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## TRIBAL QUEST

Tap into the power of serving God through the unique abilities He has given to you.

**EXPLORE THE WORD: 1 CORINTHIANS 12**

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## TRIBAL TRUTH

*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. . . . But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?* — **1 CORINTHIANS 12:12, 18-19**

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## TRIBAL FACE

### Dave Downing—Spiritually Stoked Snowboarder

Everything goes silent when you drop off a hundred-foot cliff. Time slows down, and you feel like you're flying. Oh, and it's better to exhale. Holding your breath makes you tense and then you flap your arms and lose your balance and . . . ouch, you don't want to go there.

That's what pro snowboarder Dave Downing says anyway, and I'm gonna take his word for it.

Dave talks casually about dropping off cliffs like you might discuss popping off a two-foot jump. Watching him in numerous snowboarding videos, it's easy to start thinking those skyscraper-sized cliffs are really no big deal. Don't get me wrong; it's awe inspiring. But the cliffs actually look like a fairly small part of the thousands of sheer mountain feet that Dave flies down, jumping a rock face here, cutting a huge, sweeping arc into fresh powder there, making it all look so smooth and effortless. The guy's got style.

He's also got a whole lot of respect in the snowboarding industry and a solid walk with Christ. "Dave is the perfect example of how a professional rider should interact with his company, promote himself, promote snowboarding, and at the same time help [those] around him achieve their goals," says Rene Hansen, director of Team Marketing for Burton Snowboards. "Dave is basically *the man!*"

That seems to be a consistent sentiment about Dave both inside and out of the snowboarding world. "He's the real deal. Everybody loves him," says Bob Mackenzie, Dave's friend and pastor at North Coast Calvary Chapel in Carlsbad, California. "He loves God and loves people."

Dave also obviously loves snowboarding. And in a sport often known for its darkness, he recognizes that it's the arena where God has placed him to be a light. "I'm trying to be an example through my life and through what I do. It's hard to be a good example in a sport like



snowboarding. But I think that's what God wants me to do," Dave says.

"You don't have to party to be a snowboarder. If you love to snowboard and are a Christian, then be that," Dave says. "Don't try to be somebody else. Just because you see snowboarders or skaters acting a certain way doesn't mean that you have to act that way. You don't have to listen to that kind of music. You don't have to do all that negative stuff. You can be yourself. You can be a Christian and a snowboarder at the same time. You can love God and love life."

There's a warmth and graciousness that comes across when talking with Dave. *Transworld Snowboarding* magazine states, "Dave has influenced everyone he's met for the better; as a person and as a snowboarder he's touched them with his familiarity. . . . Dave makes you feel as if he has always been there in this mad world of snowboarding, and been there as a friend."

Rene describes his friend as "a great, down-to-earth, honest, passionate, and real person."

What great descriptions of a follower of Jesus. Fans and industry insiders obviously notice—and respect—a difference in Dave. "Everybody knows [my wife and I] are Christians," he says. "A lot of people are intrigued by it. I think they see me and the way I live my life and think, *He's living a life he believes in.*"

Dave is living proof that you can walk closely with Christ and excel in whatever area He's gifted you, snowboarding included. He stands out on the mountain because of his riding and his faith. You can too.<sup>1</sup>



What about you? What are you into? What are you good at? When God handcrafted you as a unique individual, He included special gifts and skills for you to use as part of His body. Like Dave Downing, you can use your talents to represent Christ to the world around you, as well as to worship Him and encourage fellow believers.

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### TRIBAL TRAINING

- **Explore your interests.** Ask yourself: *What am I good at? What really gets me going?* Skating, sports, math, music, writing, drawing? It could be anything. Make a list of your skills and accomplishments, and highlight the ones you're most passionate about. Discovering our identity in Christ and who He has made us to be helps uncover His will in our lives.

- **Put it into practice.** Dave Downing didn't become a pro snowboarder overnight. God gives us natural abilities, but we must work to develop them. That can take time. Be patient if you're struggling to find your unique strengths. Try different activities. See what resonates deep inside you. And put in the necessary practice to improve. Most importantly, seek God's guidance and follow Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

▪ **Step up and serve.** There's a bigger picture than just you. It's great that God gives us joy in practicing the gifts He's given, but it's part of His will for us all to use those gifts to serve others. How? Get creative. What can you create to point to the greatness of God? What can you say to reflect Christ's love to others who share your passion? First Corinthians 12:24-25 says, "But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." Because you are a unique creation, you can uniquely reflect and serve the Creator.

▪ **Worship before the world.** "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1). Whatever your passion, give it your all, and give your all to God. Surrender your skills and ask the Lord how He wants to use them. Stay humble in your triumphs and thankful in your failures. Keeping Christ at the center of your activities and abilities brings glory to Him. Offering Him the best of what you have and do is a natural way to give Him praise.

• **PRAY IT OUT:** *"Lord, take my talents and use them for Your glory."* Thank God for making you just the way you are. Ask Him for guidance in improving and using your gifts and representing Him in all you do.

# TRIBAL MARKS

A KEY POINT I LEARNED TODAY: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SURVIVOR SECRETS

➤➤➤ **WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE:** *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* — **GENESIS 1:27**

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## TRIBAL QUEST

When God presents you with an assignment that you think is beyond your abilities, don't be quick to turn it down.

**EXPLORE THE WORD: JUDGES 6:11-16**

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## TRIBAL TRUTH

*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* — **PHILIPPIANS 4:13**

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## TRIBAL FACE

### Gideon—A Reluctant Warrior

If anyone had an inferiority complex, Gideon did. He was strong and well built, but his physique was dwarfed by his inner fears.



Gideon had grown up in a region of Israel that was routinely ransacked by nomadic warlords from the East. Since surprise attacks were common, people were always on

their guard. As a kid Gideon never knew what it was like to play at any distance from home. Even at that, he constantly had to be looking over his shoulder for clouds of dust in the distance that would signal a camel caravan of bloodthirsty Midianites.

As he became a young adult and childhood play gave way to work, Gideon continued to be cautious. Instead of threshing his father's wheat harvest in the open field, he tackled his tasks in a sunken winepress so not to arouse the curiosity of possible looters.

One day an angel of God confronted Gideon and insisted he had no reason to feel insignificant. "God thinks you're a mighty warrior, kid!" Gideon had never thought of "mighty" or "warrior" in relationship to himself. That's not the person he saw looking back at himself in the mirror. He was shy and battled low self-esteem.

The angel went on to say that the Lord was on Israel's side. Gideon balked. "God's on our side? You gotta be kidding. If He's on our side, why do we keep getting our butts kicked by the Midianites?"

Before Gideon could counter the angel's string of ego-boosting statements, he continued. "The Lord has selected you to deliver your family and the rest of Israel from the marauding Midianites."

Gideon slunk back. "You must have the wrong address. I'm no mighty warrior. What's more, there's no way I can deliver my people. My clan's branch of the family tree is the spindliest, and I'm the weakest one of the lot."

In spite of the fact that the leaders of Israel had backed off from their allegiance to Him, the Lord wanted

to deliver His people from Midian. He wanted to use Gideon to accomplish His purpose. First things first, though. The altars the leaders of Israel (including Gideon's father) had erected to the pagan gods of Baal and Ashtoreth had to be destroyed.

As a way of demonstrating his allegiance to the One who'd sent an angel to get his attention, Gideon built an altar to the Lord. He was beginning to gain some confidence to break out of his comfort zone. Still he asked the angel to prove that his offering was acceptable. *POOF!* The angel ignited the sacrifice with supernatural fire.

Yet years of squashing his sense of worth had taken its toll. Gideon asked some friends to help him tear down the pagan artifacts in town. But to keep anyone from seeing what they were doing, he insisted they topple them at night while people were asleep.

"If my dad ever finds out, he's really going to be mad!" Gideon told his friends. And he was right. The next day the rubble was discovered, and Gideon was fingered. But amazingly, he didn't get into trouble. The leaders (including Gideon's father) determined that if Baal was upset by what had happened, the god would defend himself.

*Maybe God really is going to use me to do great things,* Gideon thought to himself, surprised at what he'd gotten away with. Within a matter of days he'd have even more reason to believe God's plans for him were greater than he'd dreamed.

The marauders from the East crossed the Jordan River ready to attack. But the Spirit of the Lord entered Gideon

and he found the inner courage to take action. Picking up his rusty trumpet, the would-be warrior blew a long, piercing note that rallied the troops.

As Israel's forces began to gather, Gideon had a momentary lapse of faith. His deep-seated insecurity flared up. He asked the Lord for some kind of proof that he was really the person for this job. He asked for one sign and then another. And both times God answered loud and clear.

With an amazing 32,000 troops at his disposal, Gideon prepared to do battle with the Midianites and their coalition forces.

“Not so fast,” the Lord said, calling a time-out. “There are too many Israeli troops. I don't want you to think when this skirmish is over that you pulled this off because of military overload. I want you to realize I'm the One who is giving you the ability to pull off the plans I told you about.”

With that, the Lord told Gideon to let all the troops who were battling fear go home. When that option was presented, some 20,000 took off.

*Oh my gosh, Gideon thought to himself. Now I'm the one who's scared. There's no way I can fight the Midianites with such a measly army.*

But even the 10,000 remaining were too many as far as God was concerned. So, He helped His mighty warrior weed out a whole lot more until Gideon was left with only 300. And then against unbelievable odds, the once-insecure Gideon pulled off an amazing victory with fewer soldiers than anyone would have thought possible.

God loves to give people tasks that are way beyond



their ability. He does it on purpose. When they don't rely on their own strength and wisdom, He gets the credit. But that's not all. When God pulls off a victory they weren't capable of, the faith of His warriors grows.

Do you identify with Gideon? Do you struggle with low self-esteem? Does the thought of doing something significant for God leave you weak in the knees? Well, don't be in such a big hurry to disqualify yourself. God may be preparing you to do something really great.

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### TRIBAL TRAINING

- **Take time to listen to what God wants to do through you.** It's not likely you'll have an angel show up with a message direct from the Lord. But God does have His way of getting our attention. Psalm 32:8 says He takes responsibility for showing us where to go and what to do. Even more, He guides us with His eye on us. The key to figuring out what He's got in mind is to be quiet before Him and consider what He tells us in His Word, through the circumstances around us, and through promptings in our head.

- **Don't be afraid to question God when you doubt what He asks.** It's important to know that God used His man Gideon even though this young guy kept asking God to prove Himself. Hey, the Lord knows we're human and need convincing. When we demonstrate faith it warms His heart, but when we admit we're having a hard time believing what we can't see, His love for us doesn't cool. In the case of Gideon, the Lord met him at the point of

his lack of trust and pulled him along.

- **Don't trust in your own ability and dreams.** Our culture values independence and self-sufficiency. Admitting weakness is equated with failure. But in the kingdom of God, admitting you need help is a sign of maturity. Be quick to tell God you feel inadequate. Don't limit your future plans to what you've dreamed up on your own. Be open to opportunities the Lord brings about out of the blue. And remember, God doesn't always call the qualified. More often He qualifies the called . . . after the fact.

- **PRAY IT OUT:** *"Lord, help me be open to Your assignments for which I feel underqualified."* Ask Jesus to clarify His plans for you through the counsel of godly people you trust. Admit your tendency to play it safe instead of stretching your faith muscles.

# TRIBAL MARKS

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MY PRAYER LIST: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Notes

## Day 4

1. Jeremy V. Jones, "Spiritually Stoked," *Breakaway*, January 2004, p. 18.

## Day 6

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2. Smith, p. 150.
3. Rich Mullins, "Remember to Forget Yourself," *Campus Life*, January 1991.
4. Rich Mullins, "My One Thing." *Never Picture Perfect*, Reunion, 1986.

## Day 8

1. C. S. Lewis, *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), p. 135.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, 1955), p. 172.
3. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 226.
4. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 228.
5. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 229.
6. Lewis, *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves*, p. 425.

## Day 10

1. James Montgomery Boice, *The Sovereign God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1978), pp. 141-142.

## Day 11

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## Day 12

1. Walter Wangerin, Jr., *The Book of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), p. 623.
2. Ted Miller, *The Story* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1986), p. 316.
3. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2003), p. 1770.