

A *different* BIBLE STUDY EXPERIENCE

A
different
KIND OF
hero

A GUIDED
JOURNEY
THROUGH
THE BIBLE'S
MISFITS

SALLY CLARKSON
JOEL CLARKSON

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A Different Kind of Hero: A Guided Journey through the Bible's Misfits

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CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	vii
1. Created outside the Box	1
2. Different, Not Disabled	9
3. Train, Don't Change	19
4. How to Love the Difficult Person	27
5. The Invisible Battles of the Mysterious Mind	35
6. Why Me, God?	43
7. Owning the Song Inside You	53
8. It Might Get Better, but It Isn't Going Away	63
9. It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint	71
10. Give Yourself a Break	81
11. Don't Beat Yourself Up	91
12. Misfits for the Kingdom.	101
<i>About the Authors</i>	109

INTRODUCTION

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9, ESV

Scripture is full of imperfect, fearful warriors and champions—men and women who didn’t quite fit in or immediately stand out. In other words, it is chock-full of stories about people who aren’t so very different from us. Like them, we often want to hide our differences—those tender places that set us apart from others. At other times, we wonder how we can love a family member or a friend whose struggles demand more patience or wisdom than we can drum up on our own. God’s response? His strength is most available to us—and most evident—in our weakness.

This guide was written as a companion to *Different*, the book I (Sally) wrote with my son Nathan to detail our journey to understand and ultimately embrace both his strengths and his struggles. And now, rather than leaning heavily on our

own story in this guided study, we invite you to journey with us into some incredible stories in the Bible. It's possible you first learned about people like Samson and Ruth from Bible stories you were told as a child, but have you ever stopped to consider just what unlikely heroes they are? You or someone you love may have been called offbeat, odd, or a little outside the box. Everyone you'll meet in *A Different Kind of Hero* was called that—or worse!

Depending on whether you want to engage with God about your struggles one on one, or whether you prefer to wrestle with difficult questions alongside others, you can complete this twelve-chapter study on your own, with a spouse or other family member, or in a small group setting. In each chapter, you'll read the story of a different hero from Scripture. Each contains

- *A brief definition* of a word that describes that person—and that could characterize anyone.* Our hope is that you'll spend a few moments considering whether you or someone you love also fits that description.
- *A passage from Scripture* that will introduce you to one of the “different” heroes God worked through, whether in ancient Israel or the early church.
- *A retelling of a key scene from that hero's life.* We've written these in a way we hope will make you feel

* Most of the definitions come from OxfordDictionaries.com. Some definitions at the start of chapters 5, 6, and 11 come from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition, or merriam-webster.com.

as if you are walking alongside these people as God asks them to take a risk or to do the impossible. We are storytellers and not formal theologians, so any imaginative elements in these stories are not meant to be a statement of how each story *actually* unfolded, but rather one notion of how it *might* have played out. Though we have attempted to be painstakingly attentive to the accuracy of Scripture, we have also carefully and respectfully used imagery and dialogue that aren't explicitly stated in Scripture. Though we hope you enjoy our take on these stories, we encourage you to go back and get familiar with the source material yourself, and learn the stories straight from Scripture, as well.

- *Outside the Lines.* Each chapter ends with some additional Scripture passages and practical questions to help you contemplate what each hero has to teach you about living in the joy and strength that God offers. Notice that there's space in this section to jot down your thoughts and ideas. You can use a separate notebook or journal if you prefer.

As you take this guided journey alongside twelve biblical misfits, our prayer is that you will find new hope and direction as they point you to the One who sustained them, guided them, and never stopped loving them. After all, even today His grace and strength are unmistakable to others in the places you and I feel most vulnerable.

CHAPTER 1

Created outside the Box

Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes. . . . They push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do.

STEVE JOBS

Originality (noun):

1. the ability to think independently and creatively
2. the quality of being novel or unusual

As the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she was filled with contempt for him. . . .

When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said in disgust, "How distinguished the king of Israel

looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!"

David retorted to Michal, "I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am distinguished!" So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her entire life. 2 SAMUEL 6:16, 20-23

DAVID: THE MAVERICK KING

From the beginning, David was out of the norm. As the youngest of eight brothers, some of whom were distinguished and well-respected in the family's social circles, he faced a major upward climb to be noticed. When God commanded Samuel to go to the home of Jesse to anoint one of his sons as the next king, even the aged and venerated prophet assumed God would choose Eliab, David's impressive-looking oldest brother, to represent the nation of Israel. When God looked with favor upon David, suffice it to say, his family viewed the choice with a healthy dose of skepticism.

Their incredulity deepened when David, still only a shepherd guarding his father's flocks, volunteered to face off against the Philistine giant, Goliath. Everyone around him thought he was crazy; how could an adolescent possibly ac-

compish what a legion of soldiers had failed to do? It wasn't that David couldn't see their reasoning; through human effort and understanding, there was no way that David could ever slay the oppressive and indomitable Goliath. Yet David knew it was not by his own understanding that such feats were accomplished. God had favored him in the wilderness as he faced down lions and bears. David heard the beat of a different drummer, and that drummer was the Spirit of God.

No one could ever quite contain David; he laughed, cried, danced, expressed righteous rage, and praised God with his whole heart. He was passionate, rash, and unruly, and his impulsiveness got him into trouble many times. And yet David sought God again and again, even when he'd made major mistakes, knowing that only in God could true repentance and contentment be known.

Michal, one of David's wives, learned this the hard way. After David became king, he reclaimed the Ark of the Covenant, the joy and treasure of God's presence among the Israelites, from the pagan Philistines. He then led a celebratory procession that brought it to Jerusalem. Michal watched from a window as David returned with his army and the recaptured Ark. Bubbling over with excitement, David couldn't contain his exuberance, dancing and leaping about with unbounded joy. If that wasn't embarrassing enough, he wore a simple linen ephod that may have slipped as he was dancing. He was simply immersed in the joy of his Lord, and the happiness of God's favor on him.

When David returned home and Michal came out to see him, he was blissfully unaware of her humiliation until her fuming embarrassment spilled over in an angry rant. It wasn't fair that David should make her feel so exposed; her father, Saul, wouldn't have done such an unseemly thing. David was the king, and kings don't embarrass themselves in public, especially not in front of their subjects.

How little could she have known the hypocrisy of her own scorn; she was so blind to the presence of God that all she could see was what she was willing to see—a shameful, impolite expression by a man who just couldn't control himself.

What if, by exposing Michal to her husband's exhilaration and "improper" behavior, God was calling Michal beyond herself? What if He was giving her a chance to put aside her own sense of prudence and propriety, and instead enter in, perhaps for the first time in her life, to the foolish, crazy, unbounded joy of the presence of God? Her inability to look beyond her own expectations—the poverty of her perspective—resulted in her barrenness for the rest of her life. The unwillingness of her own soul to recognize the life of God's Spirit resulted in the void of her womb to produce human life.

Perhaps God is calling us to be more like David, and to love the Davids in our lives. It is not for us to decide whom God will use and what preconditions are necessary for His will to be done. Maybe God gives us misfits and outside-the-box family members and friends to draw us outside the

safety of ourselves and into the joyous whirlwind of His glorious and beautiful plan. They may be the best models of being true to the way God designed us—with all our quirks and limitations—and the clearest examples of bringing Him honor by relying on His power in our weaknesses. Kings like David come from unlikely places and show up when we least expect it—sometimes even in our own families!

OUTSIDE THE LINES

1. *“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’”* (1 Samuel 16:7).
 - a. Who are the misfits in your life? Are you tempted to look at them according to how others see them? What can you do to draw them out and listen to their hearts so that you don’t judge them based on their outward behavior?

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HERO

- b. Are you a misfit yourself? In what ways do you feel people misunderstand or label you? What desires of your heart do you wish people understood better?

2. *“Now your kingdom must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart. The LORD has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command” (1 Samuel 13:14).*

- a. King Saul practiced keeping up appearances and wanted to impress God, but he never sought to know God’s heart. In what ways do you try to impress God? How might you, like David, offer him your heart and soul instead?

- b. Sometimes what God calls us into can seem beyond our understanding or capability. Sometimes it might embarrass us or make us feel foolish. Name one or two difficult things to which you feel God may be calling you. Write a brief prayer, asking God to give you a heart for Him, as well as peace and contentment as you seek His Spirit.
3. *“David retorted to Michal, ‘I was dancing before the LORD. . . . He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! . . .’ So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her entire life” (2 Samuel 6:21-23).*
- a. David was bigger than life, and his dedication to the Lord embarrassed Michal, his wife. Could it be that some of the ways the misfits in your life seem out of control might be their way of genuinely expressing a love of life or of God’s fingerprints in their design?

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HERO

How can you practice looking past the odd behavior and seeing the exuberant heart inside?

- b. Sometimes the people or situations we think violate our sovereignty are God's way of helping us grow and let go of the things that don't matter. If you had the choice of keeping your reputation intact or of allowing God to do something special with your life, which would you choose? Explain.