

**HEROES**  
**OF THE**  
**BIBLE**  
DEVOTIONAL  
**2**

100 TRUE STORIES OF REAL PEOPLE WITH GODLY FAITH!

JOSHUA COOLEY

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TO ROBERT AND ARLENE HUMMEL  
AND PAUL AND ELIZABETH COOLEY

THOUGH GONE, THEIR FAITH STILL ECHOES.





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# INTRODUCTION

Do you like stories?

Of course! We all do. Stories are fun, entertaining, and instructive. We often learn best by hearing stories.

Whether it's the Chronicles of Narnia, Aesop's fables, or the Dr. Seuss books you might have read when you were younger, stories are an important part of our lives. They leave a powerful impact on us for years to come. We especially love hero stories—stories where some great champion with superpowers shows up in the nick of time to defeat evil and save the day. In ancient Greek mythology, it was fictional characters such as Hercules and Odysseus. In medieval English literature, it was King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. In more modern times, it's SpongeBob SquarePants.

Wait, never mind . . . scratch that last one.

God is the greatest Author in history, and before time began, the Master Storyteller authored a story so amazing . . . so incredible . . . so stupendous that it would take all of human history to unfold.

God's story begins in his Word—the Bible. It's a single book filled with many smaller stories covering thousands of years. But together, these stories tell one *big* story—a story about the greatest hero in history. People began talking about this hero thousands of years before his arrival. And when he appeared, he changed the world forever. Even today, two thousand years later, he's still changing lives.

The Bible's big hero story is not a fable, myth, or legend. It's 100 percent true. It really happened! Do you know who this hero is?

## IT'S JESUS!!!

Two thousand years ago, the eternal Son of God came down from heaven as fully God and fully man. Jesus lived a perfect life—never sinning even once!—and died in our place so that we could be saved from our sins and made right with God. Three days later, he rose from the dead. Now, he is in heaven, preparing to come back to earth once more to destroy all evil, renew his creation, and bring all his followers to live with him forever. As stories go, it doesn't get any better than that!

God created us to love good stories. He gave us hearts that long to be part of a narrative greater than our own individual lives—something bigger and better that stretches beyond our time here on earth. That's what the *Heroes of the Bible Devotional 2* is about—stories of the one true hero of history, the Lord Jesus Christ, and many other ordinary folks (like us!) who did extraordinary things as they trusted in the Lord.

In this book, you'll learn about biblical heroes such as Jacob, Rahab, Deborah, Elisha, Ezra, Elizabeth, Mary Magdalene, Barnabas, Luke, Lydia, James, and many more. God preserved all their true stories in Scripture so we could learn from them and grow in our faith. Toward the end of this book, you'll also find a bonus section of heroes who lived after the Bible was written—faithful Christian men and women whose stories we learn from church history—because God's big story keeps on going!

And guess what? God is inviting you to be part of this epic story as well! Every true follower of Jesus gets to play a part in God's big story. Today, God is calling you to be a hero, just like the believers in this book—through his power and for his glory. So read on and discover how you, too, can be a true hero for God!



GOD THE  
FATHER,  
JESUS, AND  
THE HOLY  
SPIRIT



THE TRIUNE HERO WHO REDEEMS,  
RESTORES, AND RENEWS

# DAY 1

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

BELIEVES THAT GOD  
IS PERFECT IN ALL HIS WAYS.

## A HERO'S TALE

Imagine, for a moment, that you were perfect.

Imagine if you . . .

- always obeyed your parents;
- always showed kindness to everyone (yeah, even that annoying kid at school);
- always got 100 percent on every school assignment;
- swam like a dolphin at every swim meet;
- sank every shot in basketball;
- played every note perfectly on your musical instrument; and
- knew every answer, could fix every problem, and succeeded in everything you did.

That would be something, wouldn't it?

As humans, it's hard to imagine what perfection would be like because, well, we're so *imperfect!* We mess up all the time—sometimes by accident and sometimes on purpose. Sometimes we accidentally drop our dinner plate, sending food and broken porcelain everywhere. (*Oops! Sorry, Mom!*) Other times, we purposefully ignore our parents when they tell us to clean our room, and we get into big trouble!

Even when we try hard to do everything right, what we do, say, and even think can really miss the mark. Perfection slips through our fingers.

But did you know that there is Someone who *is* completely perfect?

## MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

HE IS THE ROCK; HIS DEEDS  
ARE PERFECT. EVERYTHING HE  
DOES IS JUST AND FAIR. HE IS  
A FAITHFUL GOD WHO DOES  
NO WRONG; HOW JUST AND  
UPRIGHT HE IS!

DEUTERONOMY 32:4

## HERO HIGHLIGHT

Because he's perfect, God can't become *un*-perfect. He is eternally good, fair, loving, all-wise, and all-powerful. More great news!

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

Deuteronomy 32:4 tells us that God is perfect in all his ways. What a wonderful truth!

God is holy, meaning he is sinless and highly exalted above everything in his creation. Because of human sin, everything in creation is flawed. But not God. While he deeply loves and cares for his creation, he is outside it. He is not like anything in creation. He is *other*.

What does God's perfection mean for us in our everyday lives?

- When we go to sleep at night, God is there.
- When we wake up in the morning, God is still there.
- When we pray, God is listening.
- When we fall, God is there to pick us up.
- When we are sick, God heals us.
- When we lie, God brings truth.
- When we fail, God shows us mercy.
- When we are unfaithful to God, he remains faithful to us.
- When we turn from our sins, God will forgive us.
- When we are weak, God is strong.

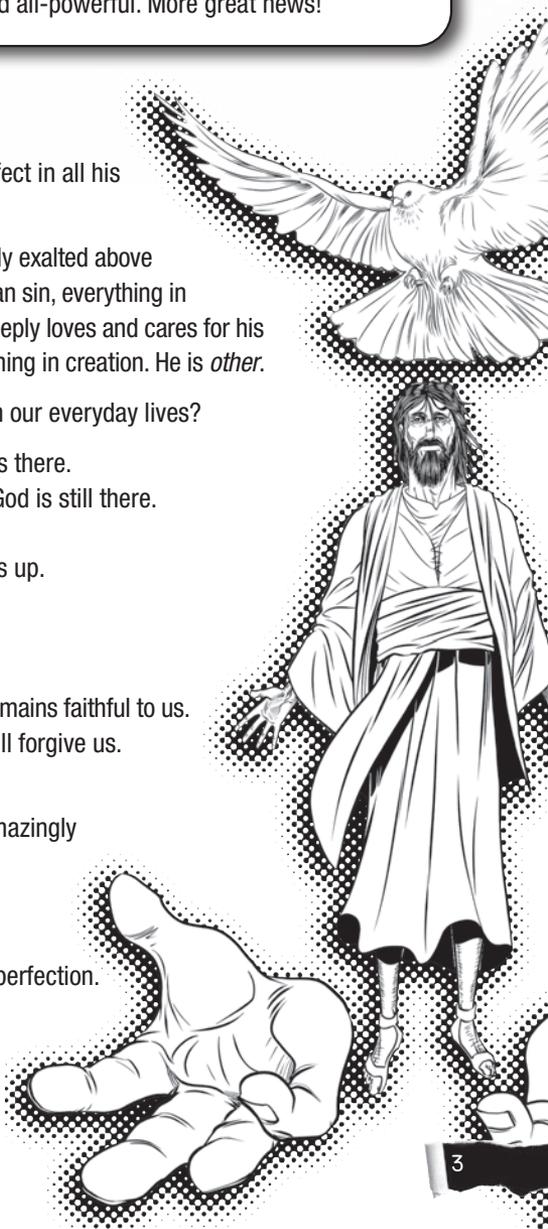
All of this is great news for us! What an amazingly perfect God we serve!

## BATTLE PLAN

Take a few moments to thank God for his perfection.

*Related Reading:*

2 Samuel 22:31; Hebrews 7:28





## DAY 2

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

BELIEVES THAT ONLY JESUS  
CAN MAKE US RIGHT WITH GOD.

### A HERO'S TALE

Have you ever seen a road sign that says One Way? These are very helpful signs! If the One Way sign is pointing right, your car should turn right only, because that's the direction all the other cars are going on that road. If your car were to turn left, you'd be driving straight into oncoming traffic. And that would be bad. Very, very bad.

*CRASH! BOOM! BANG!*

John 14:6 tells us about another One Way sign that we would be wise to follow. But this one way has nothing to do with cars or traffic. It's the one way we should travel in our spiritual lives. In fact, our eternal destiny depends on it!

### DECODING THE MESSAGE

There is only one way to have your sins forgiven, make peace with a holy God, and spend eternity with him. That way is Jesus! He tells us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

Every human is lost in their sins. We all need to find our way back to God. But many people take bad paths—like turning the wrong direction down a one-way street. Some people choose false religions. Some try to impress God with doing good things. Others simply reject God and choose to live for themselves, chasing stuff that won't last, such as money, jewelry, fancy cars, and big houses. But those ways will lead to a head-on collision with sin—and eternal separation from God.

#### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

JESUS TOLD HIM, "I AM THE  
WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.  
NO ONE CAN COME TO THE  
FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME."

JOHN 14:6



Jesus explained how to begin following him in Mark 1:15: “Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”

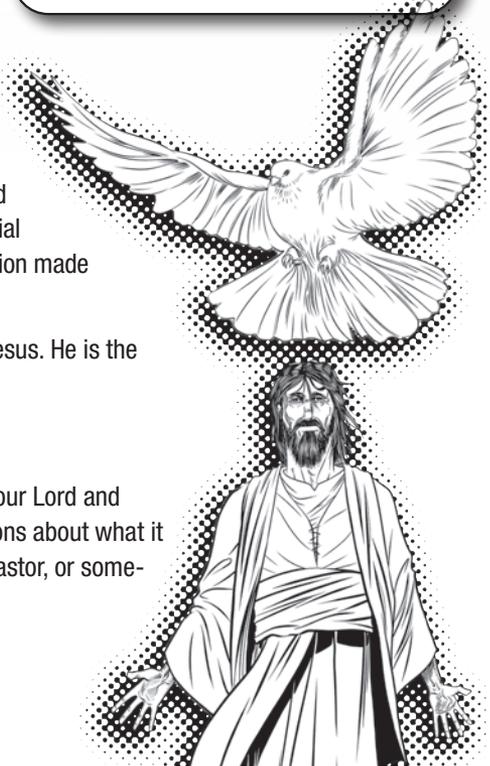
Jesus is the only way to God. No other person, power, belief, religion, or number of good deeds can save us. Only Jesus, who never sinned, can forgive our sins and make us right with a holy God. His sacrificial death on the cross and powerful resurrection made all this possible!

Don't make a wrong turn in life. Turn to Jesus. He is the one way to God!

### BATTLE PLAN

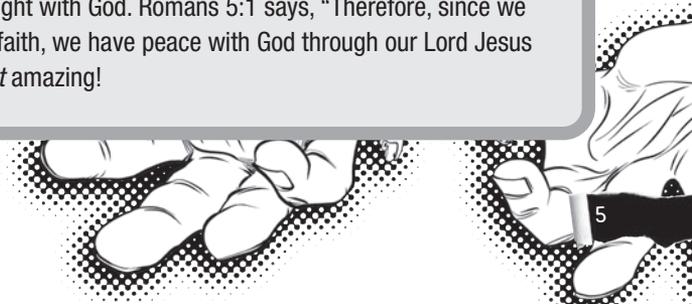
If you haven't put your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, do it today! If you still have questions about what it means to follow Jesus, talk to a parent, pastor, or someone else you trust.

*Related Reading:*  
Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5



### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Want to wow your friends? *Justification* is a big, fancy theological term to describe being made right with God. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (ESV). That's *just* amazing!



# DAY 3

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

BELIEVES THE HOLY SPIRIT  
MAKES US MORE LIKE JESUS.

## A HERO'S TALE

Have you ever wanted to be like someone else?

If you like sports, you might want to be like your favorite professional athlete. If you like music, perhaps you want to be like Beethoven or Mozart. And if you've ever dreamed of living inside a trash can, you probably want to be like Oscar the Grouch. (Okay, maybe not.)

The point is, most of us want to be like someone else—someone we look up to. If you're a Christian, above all else, you should want to be like Jesus. But that's a pretty high standard! Is it even possible to be like him?

Yes, it is! We become like Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

Becoming like Jesus isn't easy. Jesus is perfect, and we're not. We are sinners who have fallen far from God in our actions, words, and thoughts. We can't do it on our own. But that's okay—God doesn't expect us to!

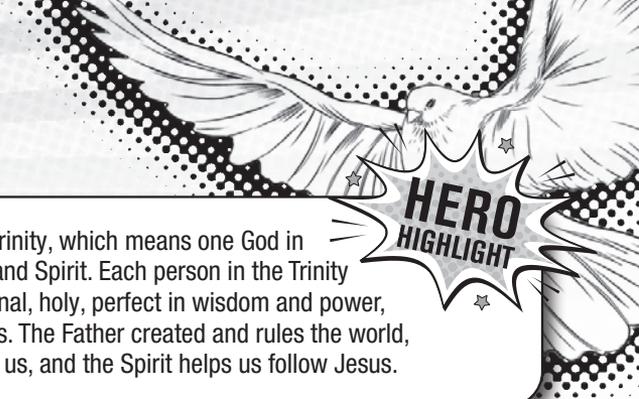
God knows we're sinners, and he still loves us dearly. So he helps us become like Jesus by putting his Spirit inside each of us when we commit to following him.

As Christians, we should want to love like Jesus loves and forgive as Jesus forgives. We should want to act, speak, and think like Jesus in every way. God's Spirit helps us with this.

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

YOU WERE CLEANSED; YOU  
WERE MADE HOLY; YOU WERE  
MADE RIGHT WITH GOD BY  
CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE  
LORD JESUS CHRIST AND BY  
THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:11



The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, which means one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person in the Trinity is equal in nature (all are eternal, holy, perfect in wisdom and power, etc.) but different in their roles. The Father created and rules the world, the Son (Jesus) came to save us, and the Spirit helps us follow Jesus.

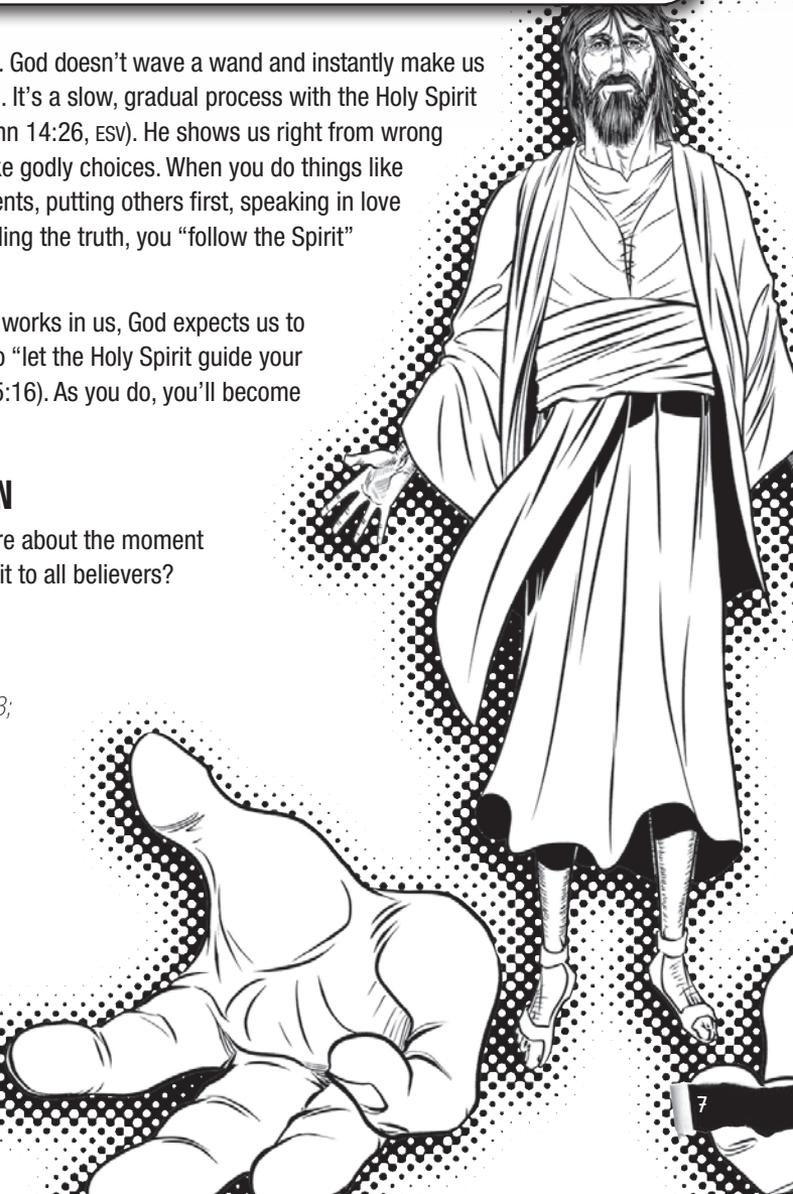
But it's not magic. God doesn't wave a wand and instantly make us perfect like Jesus. It's a slow, gradual process with the Holy Spirit as our Helper (John 14:26, esv). He shows us right from wrong and helps us make godly choices. When you do things like obeying your parents, putting others first, speaking in love not anger, and telling the truth, you "follow the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

As the Holy Spirit works in us, God expects us to participate too. So "let the Holy Spirit guide your lives" (Galatians 5:16). As you do, you'll become more like Jesus!

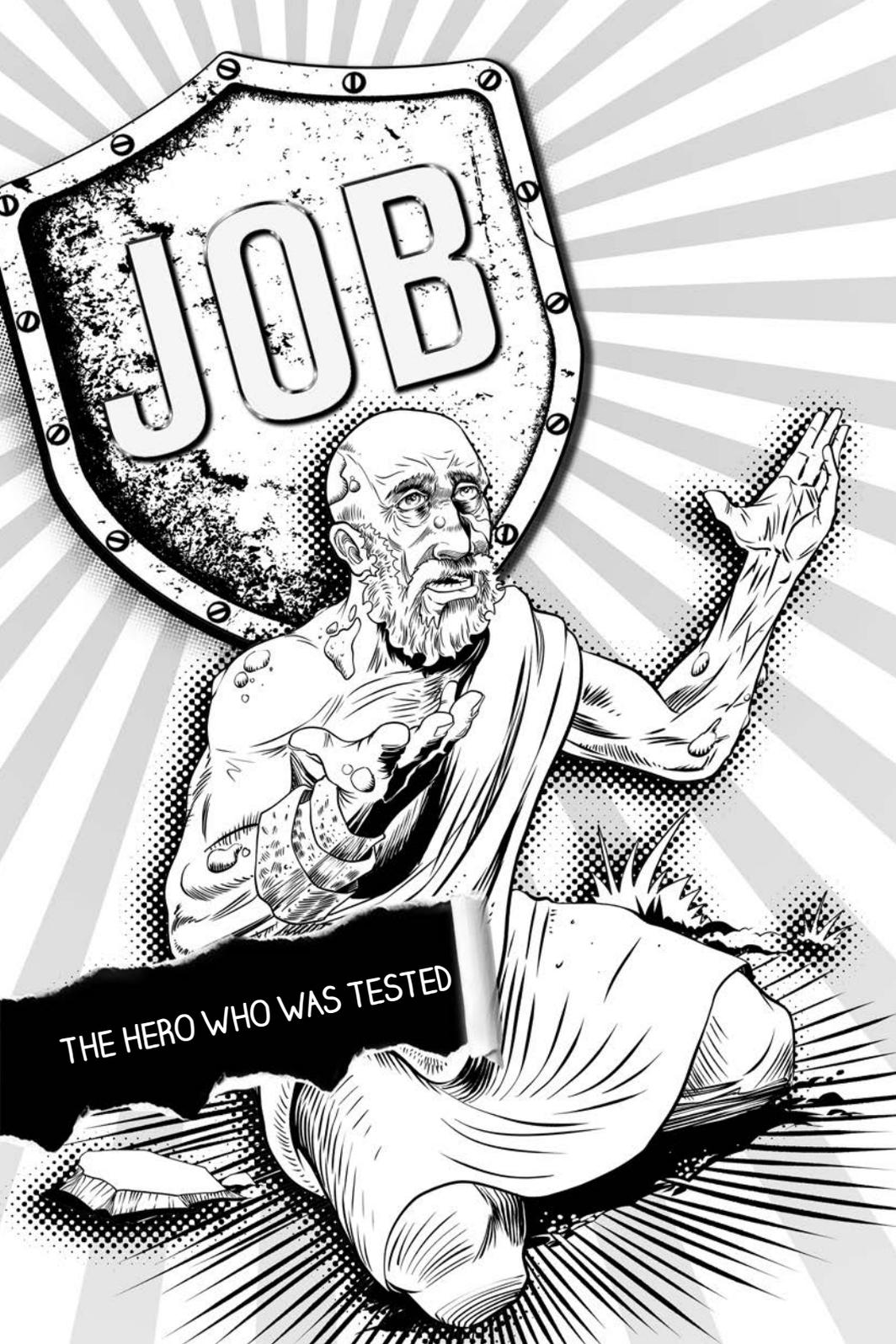
## BATTLE PLAN

Want to learn more about the moment God gave his Spirit to all believers? Read Acts 2!

*Related Reading:*  
*John 14:26; 16:13;*  
*Ephesians 1:13;*  
*Titus 3:5*







**JOB**

THE HERO WHO WAS TESTED

# DAY 4

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

PRAISES GOD IN  
GOOD TIMES AND BAD.

## A HERO'S TALE

Job was one rich dude. He had everything that anybody could want in ancient times. Job was so rich, in fact, that when he opened his wallet and turned it over, seven thousand sheep fell out.

Okay, not really. But when the Bible describes Job's wealth, it talks about animals, not dollars and cents. In Job's day, a person's wealth was counted in livestock.

In addition to seven thousand sheep, Job owned three thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and five hundred donkeys. In other words, he was loaded!

Job also had a wife, ten children, and many servants. He loved the Lord wholeheartedly, and God honored him for it.

But one day, through a series of terrible disasters, all Job's children died and all his four-legged wealth was destroyed. Shortly after, Job himself was stricken with a horrible skin disease from head to toe.

How tragic! Job's life went from amazing to awful almost overnight. But do you know what Job said to all this? "The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!"

Wow.

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

THE LORD GAVE ME WHAT I HAD,  
AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN IT  
AWAY. PRAISE THE NAME OF  
THE LORD!

JOB 1:21



God eventually healed Job, gave him more children, and restored his fortune!

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

It's easy to praise God when things are going well. And we should! It's important to give God thanks and recognize his blessings when good things happen to you.

But it's often harder to praise God when life gets hard. And let's be honest—life is filled with challenges. A good friend suddenly rejects you. Your family has to move—again. A loved one gets sick and dies. How do you praise God during those times?

First, remember his great love for you. Life's troubles don't change who God is. He is always good, loving, and wise, and he always does what's right. He is faithful (Psalm 89:14).

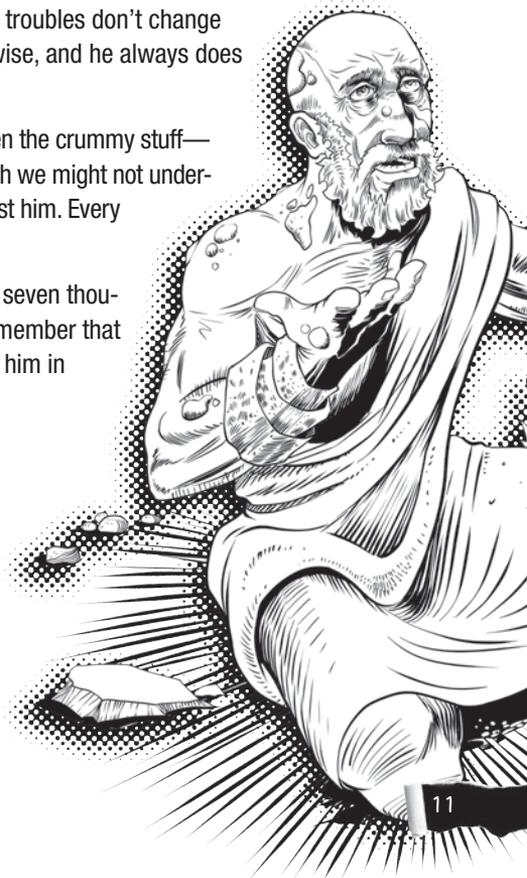
Also, remember that God uses all things—even the crummy stuff—for your ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Although we might not understand how God will do this, we can always trust him. Every single time.

So whether you have a great day or you lose seven thousand sheep—or something even worse—remember that God is in control and loves you dearly. Praise him in good times and bad.

## BATTLE PLAN

Read Romans 8:28 and say a prayer to God, thanking him that he brings good even out of bad circumstances.

*Related Reading:*  
*Ecclesiastes 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:18;*  
*James 1:17; Genesis 50:20*



# DAY 5

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

LOOKS FORWARD TO  
THE REDEEMER'S COMING.

## A HERO'S TALE

Job was miserable.

No, he didn't step on a LEGO, lose his TV privileges, or remember that he had to clean the toilets. It was much, much worse.

All ten of Job's children were dead. His enormous wealth had disappeared like a puff of smoke. And he was suffering from a painful skin disease all over his body. What's more, neither his wife nor his friends were being helpful or encouraging to him.

He scraped at his skin with broken pottery pieces. He pleaded with his friends to stop badgering him. He cried out to God for help. And yet his suffering continued.

You might think Job would be furious with God! But as he sat in the ashes while enduring great pain, Job looked toward heaven and exclaimed, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last."

The only thing that brought him any comfort was reminding himself about God's nature and the hope he had in the Lord's coming.

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

In ancient times, the word *redeem* described the process of someone buying a slave's freedom. To redeem something means to gain (or regain) possession of something at a cost.

This is exactly what God has done for us. We were once slaves to sin and death, with no hope of freeing ourselves from a miserable fate (Romans 6). But as our great Redeemer, God bought us back from the power of sin and death at a very great cost: the death of his Son, Jesus Christ.

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

AS FOR ME, I KNOW THAT MY  
REDEEMER LIVES, AND HE WILL  
STAND UPON THE EARTH AT  
LAST.

JOB 19:25



Job's three unhelpful friends were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Wouldn't these be great potential names for your next family pet? *Roll over, Eliphaz! Fetch the ball, Bildad! Good boy, Zophar!*

Jesus redeemed us with his blood. By dying on the cross for us and rising again, the innocent Son of God paid the ultimate redemption price for our rebellion against God. Now, through faith in Jesus, we can be free forever!

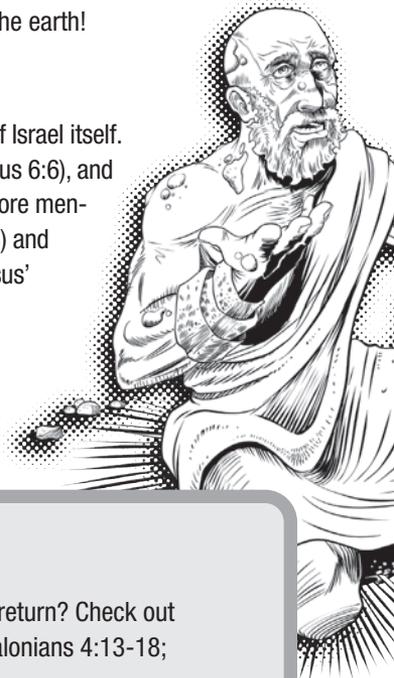
Job's hope was that this redeeming God would one day come down from heaven, stand upon the earth, and renew this broken, painful world to a glorious new creation. This is our hope too! One day, Jesus will return to redeem all his followers and bring them into his perfect heavenly Kingdom forever.

Yes, our Redeemer lives, and one day he will stand upon the earth!

## BATTLE PLAN

The ancient practice of redemption is as old as the nation of Israel itself. God promised to redeem Israel from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 6:6), and later he fulfilled that promise (Deuteronomy 7:8)! We see more mentions of redemption in Moses' song of praise (Exodus 15:13) and the Old Testament law (Exodus 13:11-16). All this led to Jesus' final redemption on the cross (Hebrews 9:11-15)! To learn more about redemption, read the verses above.

*Related Reading:*  
*Psalm 49:15; Isaiah 54:5; Luke 1:68; Romans 6*



**GOSPEL CONNECTION**

Want a fascinating preview of our great Redeemer's return? Check out the following passages: Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; and 2 Peter 3:10.

# DAY 6

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ONLY GOD  
HAS ALL POWER AND WISDOM.

## A HERO'S TALE

Life is often unpredictable. It has ups, downs, and lots of uncertainties in between. But here are five rock-solid truths you can count on:

1. Ice cream always tastes better than broccoli.
2. Swimming with sharks in a fish costume is a terrible idea.
3. Hanging out with lions in an antelope costume is also a terrible idea.
4. Inviting sharks and lions to your house for an ice cream and broccoli party is the worst idea of all.
5. You will experience many troubles in life.

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

THE LORD MADE THE EARTH BY HIS POWER, AND HE PRESERVES IT BY HIS WISDOM. WITH HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING HE STRETCHED OUT THE HEAVENS.  
JEREMIAH 10:12

While Job didn't have any experience with the first four items, he knew plenty about number five! In his suffering, Job cried out to the Lord many times for help. But God didn't immediately answer. Over time, Job grew increasingly frustrated and began to question God. He accused God of ignoring his cries for help (Job 30:20), being "cruel" (verse 21), and even destroying him (verse 22).

Finally, God's voice boomed out of a great storm:

Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much.

Job 38:2-4



Despite Job's struggles and doubts, God praised his overall faithfulness (Job 42:7).

With many other questions, God made it quite clear: he is God and Job was not. Job wisely changed course. "I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me," he admitted (Job 42:3).

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

When life gets hard, it's easy to question God and doubt his goodness. But we must learn, like Job did, that God is in control and we are not. We must acknowledge that only he has all power and wisdom.

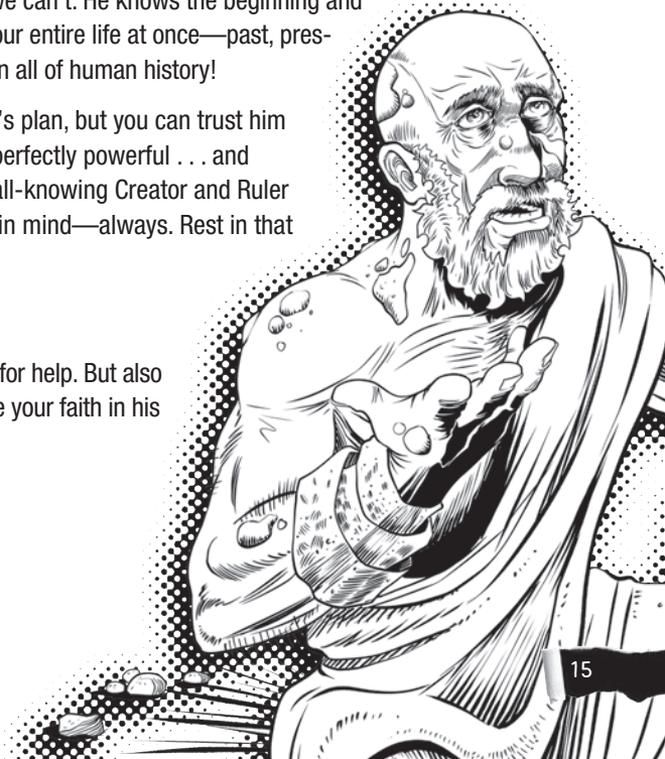
We may not ever fully understand why things happen the way they do. But those moments are opportunities for us to trust the God who is all-wise and all-powerful! He can see the big picture when we can't. He knows the beginning and end of all things. He can see your entire life at once—past, present, and future—not to mention all of human history!

You might not understand God's plan, but you can trust him because he is perfectly wise, perfectly powerful . . . and perfectly good! The almighty, all-knowing Creator and Ruler of the universe has your good in mind—always. Rest in that truth!

## BATTLE PLAN

During trials, certainly ask God for help. But also consider asking him to increase your faith in his wise plan through the process.

*Related Reading:*  
2 Corinthians 12:1-10







THE HERO WHO LEARNED TO  
TRUST GOD'S PROMISES



## DAY 7

A TRUE HERO FOR GOD . . .

UNDERSTANDS THAT FAITH  
IS A JOURNEY.

### A HERO'S TALE

Ready for a good laugh? Read the following out loud:

HA HA HA HA!

HE HE HE HE!

HO HO HO HO!

HAR HAR HAR HAR!

That's right—just belt out a good laugh for all to hear! Chances are, anyone nearby will start giggling too.

We all love to laugh. But laughter is only good at the proper times. Here are some times when it's *not* good to laugh:

- when your schoolteacher is teaching a lesson
- when your parent is correcting you for disobeying
- when the pastor is preaching at church
- when you're at a funeral
- when your mouth is full of pudding

Poorly timed laughter is definitely not good!

One day, Sarah, Abraham's wife, experienced a moment of poorly timed laughter. Years earlier, God had told Abraham he would make Abraham's descendants into a great nation (Genesis 12:2). It was an amazing promise. But it meant Abraham and Sarah needed to have a son to start the family line. One small problem: Abraham and Sarah were really old!

### MESSAGE FROM HEADQUARTERS

THE LORD SAID TO ABRAHAM, "WHY DID SARAH LAUGH? WHY DID SHE SAY, 'CAN AN OLD WOMAN LIKE ME HAVE A BABY?' IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?"

GENESIS 18:13-14



God told Abraham and Sarah to call their son Isaac, which means “he laughs.” That’s a pretty appropriate name, don’t you think?!

Years later, God repeated his promise. At that point, Abraham was ninety-nine and Sarah was almost ninety—way past the childbearing years! So Sarah started laughing. She was struggling to believe.

“Why did Sarah laugh?” God asked Abraham. “Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD?”

Wrong time to laugh, Sarah!

## DECODING THE MESSAGE

Interestingly, Hebrews 11:11 actually praises Sarah for believing God’s promise. This helps us understand an important lesson about faith. While Sarah struggled at first to trust God’s promise, over time she eventually believed. Sarah’s faith was a journey. It grew stronger over time.

It’s the same with us. God requires us to have faith in him (Hebrews 11:6), but he also understands we’re human. We need his help to grow in our faith, just like Sarah did. When Sarah’s son, Isaac, was born, she laughed again (Genesis 21:6-7), but this time it was appropriate happiness at God’s miraculous blessing.

Your faith will be an imperfect, lifelong journey with lots of zigs and zags along the way! But God is perfectly faithful, and he always keeps his word. The more you trust him as he fulfills all his promises, the more your faith will grow!

## BATTLE PLAN

Write your prayer requests to God in a journal. Then mark down when and how God answers them.

*Related Reading:*  
*Genesis 12:1-3; 18:9-15; Hebrews 11:8-12*

