



Fit 4 Gold: Bible Links Profiles



This links several Bible characters to the overall themes of Fit 4 Gold.

David; Saul; Moses; Joseph; Paul; Mary; Peter; Esther

David

Being Chosen 1 Samuel 16

David was overlooked because he was the youngest. He had probably not yet 'come of age' which was 13 in that culture, so he was perhaps around 10-12 years old. Sport and warfare training overlapped back then. David was probably already good at sports such as archery and slingshot. He was as yet too young for those around him to see what David was going to be like or have a clear idea about what he was going to be really good at.

God chose him as the future king – only he could see the sort of person David was going to become and knew his gifts & character better than David himself or anyone else. At this stage it was a secret and most people in his country had not heard of him.

Being Equipped 1 Samuel 16

Life as a shepherd boy had equipped him with certain skills and experience, alongside his natural gifts.

He received basic military training and appeared to excel in those.

When he was anointed as king he was also anointed with the Holy Spirit and knew God's presence and guidance with him from then on.

David also had great team mates in Jonathan and his 'mighty men'

Being Challenged

1 Samuel 17 especially verses 22-26 and 34-50

David's first big test of faith, certainly in public was of course his famous single combat fight with Goliath. He was possibly around 18 or 19, so he was old enough to do military service, but lacking in experience. He had certainly never done anything noticeable until now. One of the striking things about this incident is that David never doubted for a moment that he would win. This wasn't just youthful testosterone-charged optimism. There are moments in life when God gives us a gift of faith and we 'just know' that something is right or something will happen. That doesn't necessarily mean we don't get nervous but David kept his focus on God. He knew that his God was bigger than anything Goliath believed in and that he was fighting as the representative of a very powerful God.

Being Setback 1 Samuel 18-22:5

He lost his job, his house and his wife all in one day and had to flee for his life from his crazy father-in-law who was trying to kill him for no reason

Being Rewarded

David's prize? Was it

- ◆ that he became king over all Israel age 30 - 2 Samuel 5:1-5
- ◆ the promise that there would be a king in his family line forever 2 Samuel 7:12-16

- ◆ the honour of the title 'a man after God's own heart'

What would David himself say? His psalms show that he would probably say that the best reward is the joy of being in the presence of God. Psalm 16:11; Psalm 21:1-7; Psalm 37:4-5; Psalm 63:1-3;

David and Goliath – a well-known story

Whenever a little team is up against a big team people talk about 'David and Goliath' contests. But David never saw himself as the 'little guy'. He just knew that he was going to kill Goliath, not because he was young and arrogant but because he knew who his back up was. He knew that his God was bigger than anything Goliath believed in and that he was fighting as the representative of a very powerful God. Maybe afterwards when he looked back, did he think 'Oh wow! Did I really do that?!'

I don't usually 'tell Bible stories' to older children or teens because it is important that they come across as authentic. One good way is to absorb the story yourself so that you feel confident about it and then just chat casually about it with the young people. However here is a 'storytelling' format that can sometimes work with this age group. It will depend on how good they are at listening. It may also help you to think about the account in more depth.

Story

When he arrived at the battle ground that day no one took much notice of him at first. They were used to seeing him around. He sometimes served as Saul's armour bearer. However he wasn't from any of the big clubs so no one really knew who he was. He hadn't yet been part of the line-up nor had a crack at any real action on the field.

They soon started to take notice of him though when he began talking about taking on the Philistine National Champion. What was his name again? No, not the Philistine, everyone knew the name of Goliath. He was a monster of a man, the undefeated Middle East Champion and seasoned warrior. He'd been taunting them for days, undermining their team spirit, challenging them to single combat. They were used to being in the full heat of battle but the thought of being out in front on your own, that was another matter.

King Saul, at 62 was getting a bit old to try new techniques. His son Jonathan was a man of great courage and faith. Too bad he had a knee injury. He would have been willing to try anyway but his father wouldn't take the risk of letting him. Saul's relationship with God wasn't what it had been but he still prayed.

When they brought David to him, Saul really wasn't sure at first. He recognized the lad of course. What was his name again? Saul was hesitant but desperate. Did they really have anything to lose? He was sadly too familiar with seeing young men die in battle. So - give the youngster a chance and offer to lend him some decent armour and weapons. It was the least he could do and more than the lad would have had in battle with swords in such short supply.

What went through David's mind as he walked toward the giant? He had compared this to killing a lion or a bear – but lions and bears don't wear bronze helmets that are designed to protect as much of the forehead as possible. David's aim was usually good but there wasn't much of a gap for him to target. This was way harder than anything he had done before.

But God is God. As long as David did his bit, he could leave it to the Holy Spirit to guide that small missile. He chose the stones carefully. Some soldiers used stones about half the size of a cricket ball. Would that work today? Did the Holy Spirit prompt David as he selected the stones? Too big and it would bounce off the helmet. Too small and would it do the job? A skilled marksman could send a stone whizzing through the air at a speed of 100mph. No wonder the Benjamites had a whole battalion of slingshot soldiers.

David's training had taught him to arm himself with five stones. You always had to think ahead in battle and killing Goliath could well be the start of the fight rather than the end of it. Not far behind Goliath was the Philistine army and David was way nearer than the Israelite front line. He could not be sure how the Philistines would react once their champion was dead.

David was near enough now to start exchanging the usual pre-match banter, designed to undermine the morale of your opponent. A few choice comments about his age and size. No surprises there. At 19, David was still quite skinny even if he was good looking. It would be a few more years before he could boast a six pack.

As the Israelite army strained to watch from a safe distance, many of the soldiers uttered a prayer for David.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by your spirit Lord! Not with the help of swords or spears but the power of God will save the people today.” Just focus on God, David!

It was over so fast it was almost difficult to remember how it all happened. No replay here. No medal either. David's trophy was Goliath's head and his weapons.

What was his name again? Fast track this one to a position of command. He shows real promise and there's a certain charisma about him too.

David had a heart of faith and he believed passionately in the power of God. He acted in the name and power of God and did not rely on his own ability. He knew exactly who his back-up ally was and wasn't deceived by Goliath's show of strength. Someone with the right heart can be used by God in amazing ways.

Spoiler alert: In the film 'GI Joe: the Rise of Cobra', there's a scene towards the end where 2 of the stars confront the top 2 bad guys. When the good guys announce that they are going to stop them, the baddies ask "Oh yeah – you and whose army?" The scene then pans out to show that just lurking in the misty waters behind them, there really is this huge force to be reckoned with.

Saul

Being Chosen 1 Samuel 9 – 10:1, 17-24

Saul being chosen as king is a less familiar but very appealing story. 1 Samuel 10:17-24 shows that Saul didn't feel he was good enough but God chose him anyway.

Being Equipped 1 Samuel 10

God equipped Saul 'with a new heart' 1 Samuel 10:9. He was given loads of signs that this was right, 1 Samuel 10:2-16.

Team mates: 1 Samuel 10:26. God gave him some supporters

Being Challenged 1 Samuel 11.

Saul had had the usual training in warfare but he had mostly worked as a farmer until then. He didn't make too good a 1st impression at his selection when he was found hiding in the baggage. But with God's help, Saul rose to the challenge of saving the people of the town of Jabesh-gilead from certain mutilation at the hands of the Ammonites. He remained their hero until his death when they honoured his memory by rescuing his body from the enemy. No one had expected Saul to win his 1st international competition so decisively. He won many more battles against the Philistines over the next 42 years.

Being Setback 1 Samuel 13: 5-14

At some point in his reign, Saul chose to do things his own way instead of following God's plan and so he got disqualified. He still won some battles but his change of attitude made life much harder for himself and for those around him including his own family. God was no longer with him in the same way as before.

Being Rewarded

Unfortunately Saul missed out here. Some stories just have bad endings.

Joseph Genesis 37; 39 – 47; 50:15-23

Being Chosen Genesis 37

Joseph was chosen by his father Jacob to be his main heir because he was the eldest son of the wife whom he chose first of all.

He was also chosen by God for an important task and he was aware of this from his teens through some dreams that God gave to him.

Being Equipped

Joseph had many natural gifts that he always used and therefore grew in whatever situation he found himself whether it was the family sheep farm, running Potiphar's household or helping out within the prison.

Being Challenged Genesis 39 – 40

Being dragged away from his family and sold as a slave to strangers was a challenge to his faith and his way of living. He also had to prove himself to a foreign boss rather than just his devoting Dad.

Being Setback

Psalm 105:19 Until the time came to fulfil his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph's character NLT Betrayed by his brothers; sold as a slave; unjustly imprisoned; Joseph had a really hard time for many years. He said "but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." Genesis 50:20

Being Rewarded Genesis 41; 50:15-23

He became Pharaoh's right hand man ruling the powerful land of Egypt for many years. He had a wife and 2 sons and was the clan chief of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh

Gutter to Gold – Story

Joseph gets his long awaited medal

It seemed like everyone forgot about Joseph.

His brothers wanted to forget about him and get on with their lives. Except they got a guilty conscience every time they saw their grief stricken father who believed him to be dead. They couldn't exactly confess as to what they had done to him, selling him to some traffickers. It was true that he had been a right pain but perhaps they had allowed themselves to get too wound up about it and had over reacted, not foreseeing the consequences to those they cared about. Judah couldn't stand it. He moved out. Right out of the area in fact, about 80 miles south, married, had 3 sons. By the time he comes back into the story he has discovered what it's like to lose a son because two of his own had died.

His master, Captain Potiphar whose extensive household he had run so effectively for several years, had chosen to forget about him. He had lost his temper, raged a bit and thrown him in prison before realising that his wayward wife was probably lying. He officially still owned Joseph, but it was rather awkward really. He couldn't be seen to take the side of a slave in preference to his wife so he couldn't reinstate him. He wasn't ruthless enough to have him executed for something he hadn't done. Selling him would be the best option, but it was easier just to put him out of his mind and forget he was there.

Potiphar's wife gloated for only a short while over the way she had got her own back on this young slave who had dared to refuse her. 'Hell has no fury like a woman scorned.' She was soon chasing a new crush.

Even that guy he had so encouraged, the one with royal connections, Pharaoh's head butler he was. Joseph had helped him build his hopes when he dreamed that Pharaoh would pardon him and give him his job back. Joseph just had that God given gift for knowing whether a dream was really from God or not. He'd been right about the baker too, poor guy. Bad job that. They'd all become so friendly, stuck in prison together for so long.

"Put in a good word for me" said Joe.

"Sure thing" replied his friend. But no! Out of sight, out of mind!

How much longer was he going to be stuck in prison doing the warden's job for him, caring for other people but getting nothing in return? No weekends off, evenings out with the lads, anyone to remember his birthday. He couldn't even chat over the internet, he was so cut off. All he had was some basic work. It was pretty mundane but it stopped him climbing the walls with boredom.

He'd had such high hopes when he was young. Dreams of glory and power! He was older and wiser now. The one thing that had kept him going was that he knew that his God had been with him, blessing him, helping him, giving him the strength to go on.

Then suddenly out of the blue it all changed. He received a royal summons. Pharaoh was desperately worried over some strange dreams and Joseph's royal contact had suddenly realised that he might be going himself a favour by mentioning Joseph to Pharaoh.

There was just enough time for the 3 s's – shave, shower and...! A quick lesson in protocol and if in doubt keep bowing.

Joseph walked into that palace a slave. He walked out a free man, a gold medal winner – chain around his neck, the most powerful man in the world second only to Pharaoh. Surely that only happens in stories.

The dreams sounded simple enough and the explanation seemed to be just common sense so why all the fuss? Seven fat cows eating up seven skinny cows! Though I had always thought that cows were vegetarian! The one about healthy heads/ears of grain eating shrivelled ears of grain sounded more odd but still kind of obvious in its' meaning. Wouldn't it have made more sense to have given Joseph a junior post first to see how he got on? That's how it happens in real life.

The problem was that part of a pharaoh's job description was that he was supposed to be a god and one of his responsibilities was to control the River Nile. If the harvest failed too often, he was not doing his job properly and the ruling classes might decide they could find a better god. Having nightmares about the harvest failing was not unusual for Pharaoh, especially if he'd eaten too much just before bedtime. He needed to know if these dreams were a revelation from one of the gods (he believed in many) or whether it was just him getting



evermore paranoid. That was something his existing advisers couldn't tell him and they didn't dare just guess. If they got it wrong it could mean execution.

Pharaoh needed someone with insight and a cool head. Here finally, in front of him was someone who not only had the courage to tell him that his worst fears were about to become real, but to offer a solution to the problem. Not only that, the plan had the kind of business potential that would have impressed Lord Alan Sugar. And he had a certain presence about him, this 30 year old. Who could have imagined that he was straight out of prison?

And so Joseph was given a gold reward. Along with the job went a company chariot, plenty of travel, good salary; a house, a lovely wife and eventually 2 sons.

Looking back Joseph could see that every problem he had faced had helped him on his way. What can feel like a setback can in fact be a step up the ladder towards a better life.

And possibly one of his best rewards was yet to come?

Moses

Being Chosen:

Moses was chosen before he was even born which had a big impact on both him and his family. As he grew up he may have had high hopes of being able to save his people.

Being Equipped: Exodus 2:1-10

God arranged for him to be adopted into Pharaoh's family so that he could receive the best education/training of the day but he kept strong ties to his birth family.

Being Challenged: Exodus 3

His burning bush moment showed him that God was no longer a distant belief or hope but a here and now reality. Then there was a series of disappointments until the Hebrews finally crossed the Sea of Reeds and escaped from superpower Egypt. He experienced an incredible number of 'oh wow God' moments

Being Setback: Exodus 2:11-15

Moses first big setback was before his burning bush moment. He lost his temper and killed an Egyptian slave master for mistreating a Hebrew and had to flee the country. He spent the next part of his life in Midian. God did not plan that he should murder this man but he was able to take Moses' big mistake and use it in a positive way. He spent many years living and working in the very area he would later have to lead the Israelites across. He also learnt humility and that despite his gifts and training, he could only help Israel in God's strength, not his own. He later regained confidence without regaining his pride because it was now based on God.

Other setbacks and tests of faith came through the stubbornness of Pharaoh but it meant they could all see just how amazing God can be.

Being Rewarded Exodus 33:11-14; 34:29-35

Moses was used to rescue his people from slavery which could have been one of his boyhood dreams.

He also became the all-time hero of the Israelites. However this did not go to his head and Numbers 12:3 describes him as a very humble man.

He had the closest relationship with God of anyone in the Old Testament and this is surely what he saw as his greatest reward, especially as the Israelites were always complaining to him!



Esther

The book of Esther has 10 chapters and is easy to read

Being Chosen Esther 2

Esther was chosen to be Queen of Persia. She may have had no choice in the matter herself.

Being Equipped

She had beauty, humility, wisdom and diplomacy. She also had a supportive cousin who looked out for her and one of her eunuchs was also very supportive.

Being Challenged Esther 4-5

She had to risk her life by visiting the king without a royal summons in order to petition him concerning the order to slay all the Jews.

Setbacks/hardships Esther 2 & 4

She was separated from her family and her people when she went to live in the king's harem. Her husband hardly knew her really and he did not know her family at all.

Being Rewarded Esther 8-9

Discovering God's faithfulness to her and knowing that he had used her to save her people. They set up the annual festival of Purim which celebrates their deliverance. Esther was an ordinary girl who was able to do something that made a difference.

Mary

Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-38; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-15

Being Chosen

Mary was just a young village girl, living a very ordinary life and looking forward to marrying her fiancé in a couple of years' time when she was told that she had been chosen to bear a really special child.

Being Equipped

She already had the right character and was a suitable age, but she needed people to support her. Elizabeth was a great encouragement to her and she was engaged to a dependable guy.

Were the wise men's gifts of practical value? That gift of gold may have been needed to pay for basic essentials when they went to Egypt. Joseph was a carpenter and not wealthy. John was given the role of supporting her from Easter onwards. She had other sons by this time but maybe there was something about John that reminded her of Jesus.

Being Challenged

Facing reality: It had been an 'oh wow' moment when she was told that God had a specific role for her on the team. But then came that 1st experience of knowing that God was backing her up all the way. He reassured her fiancé, steered her away from danger and made sure she always had someone special to help her through. It became a reality, not just a promise.

Being Setback

Having to travel to Bethlehem when she was 9 months pregnant wasn't something that she would have chosen for herself. And was there really a donkey or did she have to walk? Probably neither she nor Joseph would have realised that this baby really was the saviour that the scriptures said would be born in Bethlehem. It certainly hadn't been part of their own plan to go there in order to fulfil a prophecy.

Fleeing to Egypt to escape from a paranoid neurotic psychopath hadn't been in their plans either. But it had been prophesied (Hosea 11:1) and God had provided some financial support for them even before they knew they would need it.

Being Rewarded

Having such a close relationship with Jesus for so many years was Mary's greatest reward.

Paul

Being Chosen Acts 7:55-8:3; Acts 9:1-16; Acts 22:14-15

Saul/Paul became a very unexpected new team member for the Christian squad. He was chosen by God despite being a rebel who was fighting the Christians as hard as he could.

Being Equipped Acts 22:3; Acts 9:17-19

Paul was already highly trained in God stuff and quite a clever guy. God had to change some of his thinking though. When he had his vision just outside Damascus, he not only knew he had been chosen he also went 'Oh wow, I have got it so wrong, so incredibly wrong! This God stuff is so different to how I thought.'

Shortly afterwards he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He spent a few years re-examining his beliefs before his main ministry started.

His team mates were Barnabas, Luke, Silas and Timothy amongst others.

Being Challenged Acts 9:22-25

He found that his preaching became more and more powerful and he also had to escape from assassins with help from God and Christian friends. His 'oh wow' God was certainly livening up his life!

Setbacks & hardships: down but not defeated

He had some really tough times including imprisonment, shipwrecks, etc

Acts 16:16-40 is probably the best single story to show how difficult life could be for Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:23b – 33 – outlines everything that has happened to him as does

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

Being Rewarded:

For Paul, seeing people get to know God and grow in their faith was a reward in itself but he also had an amazing insight into what the next life was going to be like.

Paul wrote

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (also Isaiah 64:4)

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." NTL

Philippians 3:8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ. NLT

Galatians 4:4-7 You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child?
Message

You'll become the sort of person you want to be.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Peter**Being Chosen**

He was just a working class fisherman with a basic education but Jesus chose him to be his lead disciple, responsible for setting up the early church

Equipped

He spent 3 years following Jesus around the country as his apprentice. He was filled with the Holy Spirit at the festival of Pentecost after Jesus died and given some supernatural gifts to help him with his mission.

Being Challenged Luke 10

Jesus often challenged his disciples and we can expect him to do the same to us. He sometimes sent them out on their own to heal and preach such as in Luke 10. When he fed the 5000, he gave Peter and the others a tiny portion of food each and sent them to feed many. He left Peter to preach to several thousand people at the Pentecost festival even though he had never been to college. He also left him in charge of leading the early church.

Being Setback John 18:15-18; 25-27; John 21

Although Pete tended to suffer from 'foot and mouth disease', his biggest setback was after having tried to defend Jesus with a sword at his arrest, he was then overcome with fear and made out that he didn't even know Jesus a couple of hours later. He didn't just deny that he knew him once, but 3 times. He was gutted to find that he wasn't the man that he thought he was, but Jesus enabled him to recover from this. Perhaps it stopped him from getting big-headed when he started his important role a short time later.

Word 4U 2Day

He can be quite hurtful at times. I can't believe he said I would let him down. Not just once, but three times! After all we've been through. I mean come on, aren't I one of his closest friends? If he can't rely on me, then he is well and truly scuppered. Well, you'll see, Jesus: tonight. I've got my sword at the ready. Anyone so much as looks at you the wrong way and I'll have their ear off with this thing. I won't let you down, Jesus, my good friend.

Word 4U 2Day

It was as if the words just flooded into his mind at the right time... He'd open his mouth and verses of scripture he never realised he knew so well spilled out. And as he spoke (well, shouted really) he could feel the ears of the crowd hanging on to every syllable; he could see the penny drop in each of their minds. Now was the time to ask if anyone would like to give their lives to Christ.

To everyone's amazement three thousand hands rise into the air. Not a bad preaching debut for Peter. And he wasn't even using notes!

Acts 2 is a real high point for Peter, a far cry from only a month or so ago when he'd disgracefully disowned Jesus in His hour of need. Thankfully for us, God is brimming over with second chances. Here's a man who has slipped up big time and yet God uses him as the groundwork for His church.



You see when you slip up, all God requires is a dose of honesty and a dollop of apology to get you in line with His will again. After denying Jesus, Peter is quick with the tears and quick to correct his mistake when given the chance.

So you blew it and everyone is only too keen to remind you? Well the Psalmist has been there too: 'Many are saying ... "God will not deliver him." But ... To the Lord I cry aloud, and He answers me' (Psalm 3:2-4 NIV).

Rewards

- ◆ Having a close relationship with Jesus for 3 years when he was on the earth.
- ◆ Seeing many people come to know God when he preached to them and healed sick people.
- ◆ Being able to leave a 'lasting legacy' as he recorded some of his experiences to help others (books of Peter and he co-wrote Mark)
- ◆ Having a close relationship with Jesus forever