



■ INFLUENCE / JOSHUA

The book of Joshua is filled with spies, surprise attacks, warfare, leaders and unusual battles. The central hero is Joshua, a creative military mind with great organisational skills. But above all, he is absolutely loyal and dependant on God. The book of Joshua plots the story of how the Israelites conquered land that God promised to their ancestor Abram (Genesis 12:7). Their parents had escaped from Egypt but had not followed God. So the whole generation that had left Egypt had died in the desert leaving the children - under Joshua's leadership - to conquer the land of Canaan.

Canaan consisted of many independent cities, each with its own king and army, and many had strong, high walls for extra protection. So the Israelites had to defeat the cities one by one, beginning with the famous battle of Jericho (Joshua 6). The book shows how God works through people and why obedience matters.

■ INTEGRITY / DANIEL

After moving to a new town, he quickly became popular. People respected him. Then he started getting pressured to do things he knew were wrong. Saying no would have been easier if the people pressuring him weren't so important. It sounds like something that could happen today, right? But it's a story from 2,500 years ago. Daniel had been dragged off to Babylon (modern-day Iraq) when the empire conquered Judah. Because of Daniel's ability to interpret dreams, the king chose him to be an important adviser but Daniel's career took a downward turn when he resisted the pressure to set aside his faith and worship the king. Daniel didn't give in to the king's demands and was sent to die in a den of lions, but God protected him. Through everything, Daniel remained faithful to God.

■ COMMITMENT / RUTH

The story of Ruth would never have made the evening news. There are no wars, no twisted plots, no villains. In fact, much more "important" things were happening at the time. The story took place during the period of the Judges when Israel faced moral decline, foreign attacks and national chaos. But in the midst of other seemingly important events, the Bible tells the simple, beautiful story of Ruth. It's a story of loyalty and faithfulness; a story of how ordinary people kept following God even when the nation of Israel was abandoning God.

The story opens in Moab, a non-Jewish area, where Naomi had gone to live. Her son had married a Moabite woman, Ruth. After only ten years Ruth's husband died. Even though Naomi could have left Ruth, she took her in, and the two became close friends. Then Ruth and Naomi moved to Israel, Naomi's homeland, where Ruth was a foreigner. There Ruth met Boaz, who married her so that Ruth's family name could continue. Years later, one of Ruth's descendants, David became the greatest king of Israel.

■ COMPASSION / PETER

Peter was a fisherman and together with his brother, Andrew, were the first disciples to be chosen by Jesus on the banks of Lake Galilee. Originally named Simon, Jesus changed his name to "Cephas" or more commonly known as "Peter" which means "rock":

"Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." (Matthew 16: 18)

■ WISDOM / SOLOMON

The story of Solomon's rise to greatness begins with King David handing over his reign to his son, Solomon. Inheriting a strong and united nation, through political and economic manoeuvring, Solomon made the country, and himself, rich and powerful.

Solomon seemed destined for greatness. Gifted with incredible wisdom, Solomon began seeing wealth and power as his own and not gifts from God. Though Solomon made Jerusalem one of the wonders of the world, troubles began to appear both within and outside of the nation. The kingdom was ready for a collapse and when Solomon died the kingdom split in two.