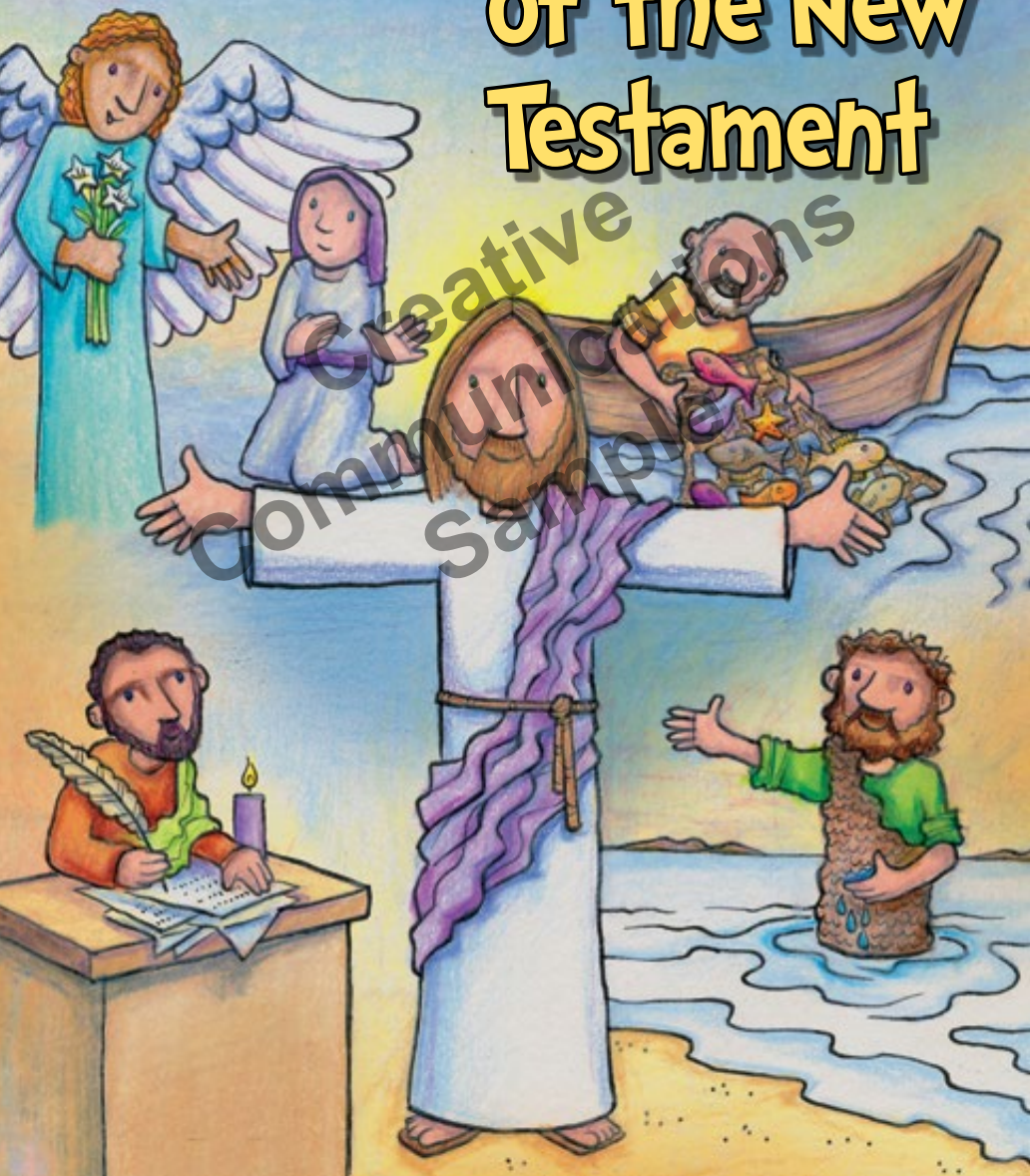


Heroes of the New Testament



Did you know that you are a hero?

Yes, you. You're a hero because that's how God made you. God created you in his own image. God is good. God is holy. God is love. God created you to be all these things. Whenever you do something that is good, holy or loving, you're living the heroic life God wants for you.

Wondering how you can do all that?

Actually, that's a good thing to think about. You can start by learning about the greatest of all heroes: Jesus. Jesus was born to show us how to live the adventure God has planned for us. Jesus showed us how to love God with all of our hearts, minds and souls. He showed us how to love others as we love ourselves. Jesus loved God and us so much that he gave up his own life so that we could have life forever with God. Jesus did this because his Father asked him to. He said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Now, God probably won't ask you to give up your life. But he does ask you to be a hero in your own way by following Jesus. You can also learn about the people who knew and followed Jesus—they were some pretty amazing heroes! We read about them in the New Testament of the Bible. A few of their incredible stories are right here. Let's get started!

Jesus is the true superhero. But he doesn't wear a costume or mask. Jesus is the Son of God. He is God, but he is also a human person!

After Jesus, the greatest hero in the whole world is a fourteen-year-old girl.

That's right. Mary wasn't much older than you when God asked her to take on the heroic job of being Jesus' mom. Mary's whole life was heroic, starting with her response to God. Now before you start thinking that Mary was some super-being with special powers, remember that Mary was "troubled," confused and maybe even a little scared by what the angel said to her. But it was Mary's deep faith and trust in God that gave her the power to say yes to God. We even have a word for Mary's "yes." We call it her *fiat*. (That's a Latin word that means, "let it be done.") Mary said: "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Mary's *fiat* is holy and heroic because it shows us how to be open to the adventure God has in mind for us. We might not understand God's plan. We might be troubled by what God asks of us. But as long as we have faith and trust in God, he will guide us to do great things for his kingdom.

God had an adventure in mind for Mary that she could never have dreamed was possible. Yes, there would be pain and suffering ahead for Mary, but she accepted it all. Mary teaches us how to be heroes by trusting in God's love and goodness.

When Mary said yes, she didn't shrug and say, "Okay, whatever." Mary actively accepted God's will and joyfully praised God. She said, "My spirit rejoices in God my savior." How can you rejoice in God today?



Ahhh, Joseph was probably looking forward to a good night's sleep.

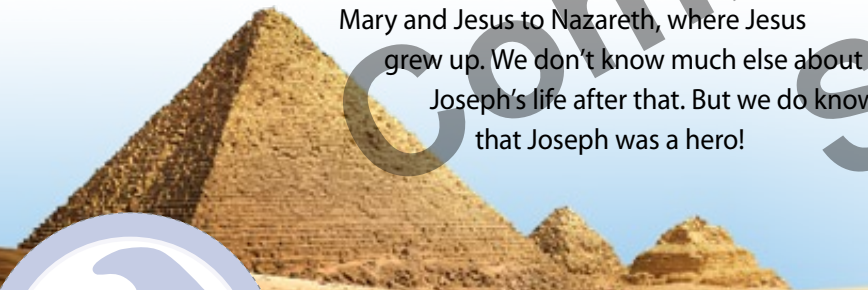

As he settled in, he might have said a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all of his blessings: Baby Jesus was healthy and happy. Joseph had a good job as a carpenter to support his family. Wise men called magi had visited, bringing gifts for Jesus. But after Joseph fell asleep, an angel

of God appeared to him in a dream. "Rise," the angel said. "Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:13).

Egypt! That was a long way from Palestine where Joseph lived. Did Joseph speak the language? Did he know anyone there? How would he find work? Couldn't he at least wait until morning? But Joseph didn't think of those things. "Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt" (Matthew 2:14).

Sure, the trip would be dangerous. Joseph didn't know what was ahead. Plus, he had the responsibility of protecting Mary and baby Jesus. But like Mary, Joseph trusted completely in God. He did exactly what God asked. The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about the trip, but after Herod died, Joseph brought

Mary and Jesus to Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. We don't know much else about Joseph's life after that. But we do know that Joseph was a hero!

The Bible doesn't record anything Joseph said, but actions often say more than words. Do you know anyone who gets things done without talking about it? How can you thank them today?

You've probably heard about John the Baptist, living in the desert, eating locusts and wild honey. But that isn't what makes John a hero. Here are some reasons Jesus said that no one was greater than John the Baptist:

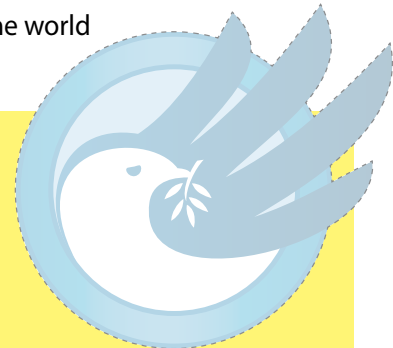
John told the truth. In the gospels, we read that "the word of God came to John" in the desert. Like Mary and Joseph, John did not wait around. He boldly went out and proclaimed that the time had come for everyone to turn away from sin. People heard the truth of John's preaching and came from miles away to hear him.

John did as God asked. God chose John to prepare everyone for the Savior. John responded by dedicating his life to this job. John baptized people with water as a sign they had turned from sin. But when Jesus asked John to baptize him, John was confused. (Where have we heard that before?) John said, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said it would "fulfill all righteousness." So John baptized Jesus. Here's what happened:

"[Jesus] came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16-17).

What a moment! God was revealing Jesus to the world as his Son. And it all happened through John!

John lived—and died—for the truth. He went to prison and later lost his life for speaking out against Herod's sinful ways. Did you ever pay a price for telling the truth?



Heroes of the New Testament

God has a heroic life planned for you. So get started learning how to live it by reading about other heroes—the people who followed Jesus. Here you can read about brave adventures, uncertain heroes and much more. Plus, there are stickers, puzzles and games to keep the adventures going. Have fun!

Want to know more about these heroes? Here's where you can find their stories:

Mary: Luke 1:26-56 • **Joseph:** Matthew 1:18—2:15 • **John the Baptist:** Matthew 3:1-17
Peter: Matthew 14:22-33; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:1-17 • **The Good Samaritan:** Luke 10:25-37
Mary Magdalene: Mark 14:40, 47; John 20:1-18 • **Simon of Cyrene:** Luke 23:26
The Good Thief: Luke 23:39-43 • **The Evangelists:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Stephen: Acts 6:1—7:60 • **Paul:** Acts 9:1-30 • **The Early Christians:** Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-35

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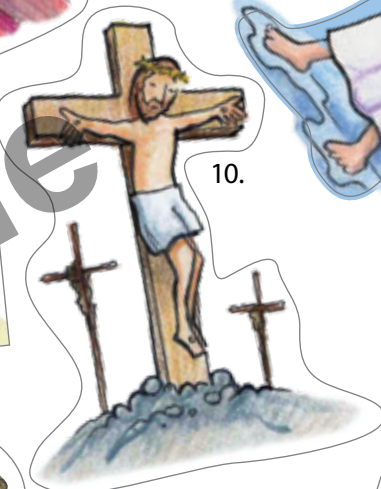
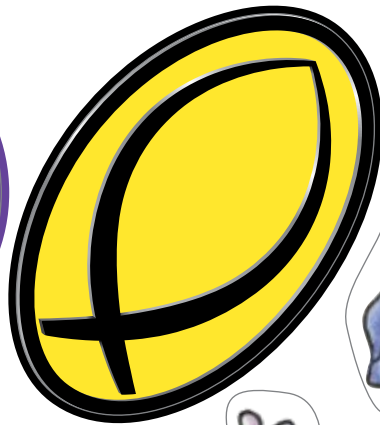
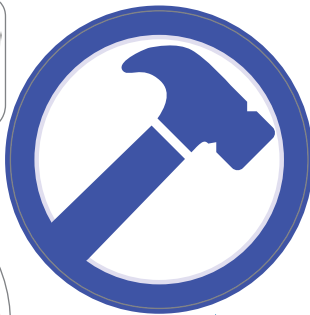
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Place the hero insignias
on their pages in the book.