

# Young Lions!!!

By Gail Keffer

A study of the people in the Bible shows that God is able to use people of all ages, and all degrees of faith. He can use the small child, the old widow or widower. He can use the young man on the street, the girl on a basketball team, the young mother who is struggling, and the grandfather who steps in and is there for a grandchild. Many of the people who chose to follow Christ were young and served for many years as they sought to carry out the will of God. Some were in the Old Testament, and some were in the New Testament. Wherever they were, they had a strong faith that would not be daunted. They are still in the world today. They may have different names, and different colors of skin, but they are the same – people with enough faith to move mountains, to show the way for those struggling in life.

Today God calls us to serve as these people did. We aren't asked to go to the extremes of endangering our lives, but we are called to stand up for our beliefs, to minister to and care for others.

Some of these young lions and lioness in the Bible were Timothy, Jonah, David, Miriam, Esther, Paul, and Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego.

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# Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

“Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.” Daniel 2:20.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king." Daniel 3:16-17 paraphrased.

Daniel was among the Jews who were carried off into captivity in Babylon about 2600 years ago. He worked hard and God blessed him. Although he is the best known, we also know his friends whom he did not forget.

After a three-year training period in Babylon, Daniel was found to be smarter than all of the skilled magicians and wise astrologers in Babylon, and was appointed as a counselor to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel stayed true to God and God gave him the power to interpret dreams, see into the future, and God gave him a long life. When he asked Daniel for some other good workers, Daniel suggested Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar built an idol and required all the people to worship that idol, but Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused.

Some of the people, who were jealous of the men, told Nebuchadnezzar they were not worshipping as he had required. He called them, and they told him that they would not worship the idol. He told them that if they did not they would be pitched into a roaring furnace.

They answered in defense of their God and told Nebuchadnezzar that if he chose to throw them into a roaring furnace they would be rescued by their God, and even if they weren't they still would not worship his idol.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered the fire to be seven times hotter than usual, had the men tied and thrown into the furnace. But the flames from the furnace reached out and killed the men who had put the Jews in the furnace. When Nebuchadnezzar saw the men still alive walking around in the fire, he ordered that anyone who said anything against their God would be punished and their homes torn down.

We are not called to this kind of service, but we are called to defend our Lord and his teachings many times. Do we do it, or do we side step the question or comment? These men were strong.

Prayer: Dear God, we know that you are with us, but we sometimes are not as strong as we should be in defense of all that you have given us. You have not asked us to put our lives on the line, but you do ask us to seek out your will, so that others may know of your love and protection. Help us to follow wherever you lead and say what you want us to say. Amen.

1. How can we be called to defend our God today?
2. Does it depend on the company we are in? Should it?
3. Have you ever felt challenged not to go along with the crowd? To stand alone and be shunned?
4. Are we as strong as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
5. Have we ever been called to sacrifice our life if we did not bow down to someone or some principle which we did not believe?

# David

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” I Samuel 16:13 KJV

David was like so many of us. He would do two things right and then did one thing wrong. But, he was chosen by God; and that's all that matters. Christ was born into the lineage of David through His parents, Mary and Joseph. According to the writing in 1st Samuel, he was a handsome lad with red hair and was short in stature. He was a shepherd, and like many shepherds, he had some musical skills. This background and musical skill is shown in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, perhaps the best known of the Psalms which he wrote.

David is remembered as a young lad for using a small stone to kill a giant named Goliath. This heroic act caused the Philistines to flee and enabled the Israelites to win a great victory. David had done a wonderful thing according to the people, but King Saul was jealous and sought to kill David. These attempted killings caused David to flee from area to area. Sometimes the people who protected David were killed by Saul's men, but God protected David from Saul's wrath.

How are we like David? We are chosen by God to inherit eternal life. All we have to do is ask. That is too simple. We, like David, backslide and do things we know we should not do. We sin daily, but through the grace of God we like David can be forgiven and try again to do what we know is right. We may not slay a giant or ever be in line to be king of a country or even a governor of a state, but we are just as important as David was, and as those people who hold those offices are. They may not know our Lord and Savior. We know that God cares for us even as we are.

After Saul's death, David became king of Israel, but life was never easy. He had many wives; his children would fight with each other. His beloved son, Absalom, died in a rebellion against David in an attempt to seize the throne for himself. Through all this turmoil, David was always a dedicated and repentant man of God, and God continued to bless him during his reign as king. Much of David's success as king resulted in lavish material gains which helped to corrupt him. Lust for Bathsheba caused David to commit adultery. David would go forth doing as the Lord wanted him to do and then his sins would cause him to backslide again!

Many of us are like David; we sin and backslide and then ask for forgiveness and do well until human temptations creep in again. How could the Lord forgive us time and time again as he forgave David? Fortunately, God can see past our faults and focus in on our better side as well as our potential to do good. We can ask for forgiveness. In David's defense, he never lost touch with God throughout his life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we have so much to be thankful for – not only the daily bread and breath you give us, but especially the love of you and Jesus Christ that sustains and strengthen us each day. We like David, often falter in our steps, but through Your grace, we are forgiven. This we can never fully comprehend. Help us to seek in every day life to be more like you would want us to be, knowing that you will never forsake us. Amen

1. Many of us are like David. Can you acquaint with David in any way?
2. Some one told me that faith is like the mercury in a thermometer. Sometimes it is very high and we are doing very well. Then it falls and we sin, but the faith is always there. Do you agree or disagree with that thought?

# Esther

“The king fell in love with Esther far more than with any of his other women or any of the other virgins—he was totally smitten by her. He placed a royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.” Esther 2:17 The Message

The Jewish people had been in bondage and now was the time for God to free them. The person chosen to do that was a young orphan girl named Esther. King Ahasuerus had told his queen, Vashti, to entertain his banquet by removing her clothes. When she refused the order, he banished her from his site and set out to find new young virgins for his court.

Mordecai wanted Esther to be a part of the court so he suggested that she try for the position. The young maids spent months in preparation before the King was ready to choose his Queen.

The Bible tells us that Esther was fair and beautiful. Esther was chosen and God was working his plan through Esther and her uncle to free the Jews from their bondage. She did not reveal that she was a Jewess.

Because Esther was willing to listen and be used by God she was able to free her people. Her uncle was probably a gatekeeper, but in some way he was still able to talk with Esther and told her what was happening. Haman, the prime minister, was upset with the Jews and asked King Ahasuerus to have them all killed. The king agreed not knowing that his favorite, Esther, was a Jewess. When Mordecai heard this he began to pray to God and also told Esther what was happening. For days she and all the other Jewish people wore sack cloth and clothed themselves with ashes while they prayed to God for help. Then she went into the court to see the King. Although this could have meant her death because she was not permitted to enter the court without permission, the king allowed her to go in.

She asked the king to come to a banquet in her quarters and bring Haman along. Everything went well, and she invited them to a second banquet. Haman was feeling pretty smug. Then Esther revealed to the king the fact that she was a Jewess, and she pleaded for the life of her people.

When the king heard this he left the banquet in anger. After he had some time to think he returned to the banquet hall only to find Haman at the feet of his queen. The king was so mad that he ordered Haman and his sons hanged at the gallows that had been built for the Jews. Esther helped to deliver her people from bondage as the king allowed the Jews to arm and defend themselves. They killed their enemies, and thus were saved by God.

Prayer: Dear God, you can use all of us to do your work and spread your gospel here on earth. Help us to pray and know what you want us to do and help us to know that you will always be with us as you have promised.

1. Can God use other people to encourage us to do God’s will?
2. Has God put some duty on you to help accomplish his work?
3. Remembering that Esther was an orphan, do you ever feel unworthy of God’s love and work?

# Jonah

And Jonah cried to the Lord “Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” But the Lord said “Doest thou well to be angry? Jonah 4:3-4

We have all heard the song with the lyrics that go something like this: “To illustrate his last remark, Jonah in the whale, Noah in the ark. What did they do just when everything looked so dark? ‘Man,’ they said ‘we better Accentuate the positive, Eliminate the negative, Latch on to the affirmative.’” These lyrics are from “Accentuate the Positive” by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen.

People in the Bible were real and had real problems like we do today. Whether you believe Jonah was swallowed by a whale or a great fish sent by God is immaterial. The truth is that Jonah learned he better listen to God.

Jonah did not like the people of Assyria. God called him to go to Nineveh and preach to the people of Assyria so they could be saved from destruction. Typical of the way any of us would feel, Jonah rebelled and decided not to go. He did go for a ride on a ship, but he went to hide and fall asleep. While on the boat trip, the waters got so choppy that the people on board were afraid of a ship wreck and drew lots to see why this was happening. They decided that the problem was Jonah. Jonah told them to throw him overboard because he would rather die than go to Nineveh. So they did!

However, God had sent a great fish or whale to swallow him up and save him. Finally, against his wishes, he boarded a ship, went to Nineveh and many thousands of people were saved from destruction. Jonah had done what the Lord commanded, but he wasn't happy about it and so he sulked. He still didn't like the Assyrians!!! God sent a tree to protect him from the hot sun. He was happy for a short time but then God destroyed the tree and he was left in the blistering sun again.

Is there a message for us in the story of Jonah's rebellion? There are many times when we know what we want to do. We know it is not God's will for us, but there are so many other people in the world that God won't even notice what we are doing!!! Wrong!!! God lets us get away with doing things our way sometimes, and sometimes he decides that it is time for us to realize that we have great potential to do good if we will only use it.

We don't get swallowed up by a great fish or given the task of building an ark that everyone thinks is a joke, but we are given little jobs that will not only bless us, but those around us.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, we don't see the picture the same way that you see it. We see our own world, our own weaknesses. Help us to see the potential for each one of us that you see, and help us to more importantly seek to use that potential. Amen

1. Jonah must have wondered if there wasn't someone else that could go see the Assyrians, someone who cared more than he did about them. Why did God choose him?
2. Do you ever want to run and hide? Do you get caught as Jonah did? By God's push, Jonah realized a potential he had that he had not seen as a gift. Do we have any gifts that we have not realized?
3. There is a saying that goes something like this. “A teacher took a student to the edge and told him to jump. He was afraid and would not do it. Again the teacher took the student to the edge and told him to jump. Again he refused. The third time the teacher took him to the edge and told him to jump. Then the teacher pushed him and he flew.” Often we have potential that we don't see until someone pushes us. Are you like that in any way? Or are you the one that can give someone else a push to realize his potential?

# Miriam

“And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” Exodus 15:20-21.

We don't know much about Miriam, but some people regard her as the First Woman of Israel. Maybe we should study her a little more closely! The Israelite women of that time were allowed to speak to men, travel alone, and go without a veil. We know she was bold and intelligent. But we also know that she was daring as a young woman in helping to save the life of her brother, Moses.

The Pharaoh had ordered all Hebrew babies to be slaughtered. Miriam placed Moses in a basket made of papyrus and placed him in the river where the Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe. When the Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby her heart was moved. Miriam went from her hiding place, and asked the daughter if she wanted a Hebrew mother to nurse the baby. When the Pharaoh's daughter said she did, Miriam went to get her mother who nursed Moses until he was able to be taken to the palace where he was raised. He always had the influence of his Hebrew mother.

Time passed. Moses and Miriam both grew up. Moses was called by God to lead his people out of slavery with help from Aaron, his brother, and Miriam, his sister. When Moses led his people across the divided sea Miriam and Aaron were with him. After the Israelites had crossed the sea and the Pharaoh's horses and chariots along with their riders perished in the sea, Miriam took a tambourine, and all the women followed her with tambourines, dancing and singing. She led them in a song that said: “Sing to God what a victory! He pitched horse and rider into the sea!” This was not the same Miriam that went to the bulrushes when her brother was in danger, or was it?

God called Moses, Aaron and Miriam together and God descended in a pillar of cloud and told them that Moses was his servant and that only he could speak intimately with him. He also told them that they needed to respect Moses. Aaron and Miriam were ashamed that they had been caught and also upset that they weren't as good as Moses in God's eyes. Then God left. When the cloud moved, Miriam had turned leprous and her skin was white. She had to be banished from their camp. Moses prayed to God to forgive her foolish thoughtlessness and to heal her. God did heal her; but he made her be quarantined outside the camp for seven days. The camp could not journey for seven days.

When she was healed and able to travel again, they continued on their trip to the Promised Land. Miriam traveled with them for approximately forty years; she never entered the Promised Land. But she was a strong woman who believed. She just got a little over zealous at times.

Prayer: Dear God, we know that you can hear every word we speak, every thought we have. Help us to rely on your goodness and not try to take things into our own hands. Help us to pray for guidance and yield to your knowledge. Amen

1. Miriam's life was one of service and leadership, courage and ingenuity. Are we ever called to use these virtues for our Lord? Can we sometimes become over ambitious?
2. Why did God punish her for speaking against Moses?
3. Does God ever punish us? How?
4. Is it better to err on the side of trying, or sit back, relax and assume that someone else will do God's work?

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# Paul

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.” Acts 19:11

One Sunday several years ago, we were studying Paul in our Bible study. One of the women said “Just who did Paul think he was anyway?” She knew about Paul, but she was also re-emphasizing his determined behavior in talking with other people. He didn’t seem to care if he offended people as long as he told them about Jesus. He often was so strong that we notice in the Scriptures that he often had different people traveling with him and the reason is supposedly because he was difficult to be around for a long period of time. One time he was stoned and left for dead. Acts 14:19 But that seemed to be the Paul that would reach hundreds of people in his life time, and always be the one that someone was ready to stone or hang!

In Paul’s early years, he was an advocate for keeping the Jewish laws to a fault. He was in on stoning and reprimanding of people that he didn’t know and didn’t care to know. Then on his trip to Damascus to continue his persecution of the people that seemed to be following a God other than his, he was blinded and after being helped to Damascus went three days blinded and without food. In his early years he was known as Saul, but when his conversion experience took place his name was changed to Paul. We may not need to be physically blinded, but we are blinded by the wealth of the world and then realize that it is all temporary. Only one thing matters. Paul felt strongly that his mission was to tell the truth of God’s word.

Paul was a man of his word and fought just as hard after he was filled with the Holy Spirit as he had worked to destroy the church. We have people today that have a conversion experience and many times people do not believe them. We want to think that this cannot happen. After all, how can one change so completely? Perhaps one of the modern men that had his life changed is Chuck Colson. He was linked with the Watergate scandal, but then he became a Christian and has worked very hard to help others know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. But many people did not want to believe him at first. They thought it was a ploy to set himself apart from the Watergate scandal. Time has shown that he was sincere.

We learn from this story about Paul that God will use us in His own time according to His own will to further His word. We don’t all have to go out and preach like Paul and Chuck Colson. Some of us can be teachers or just angels of mercy who help the unlovely, the homeless, the poor, the stranger, and the forgotten people. We also learn from Paul that regardless how “bad” we are, God will forgive us. God wants us to have care and compassion. Paul was a miracle worker in many ways. We have that same opportunity to witness by our actions rather than our words. The book of Romans was supposedly written by Paul. It is considered one of the strongest books of the Bible. It contains many of the facts upon which we all base our faith.

Prayer: “You are an amazing God. You continue to love us even though we will never deserve that love. Please help us to seek to serve you and know that no matter how bad things get, we can depend on Your being there with us. Amen

1. Have you ever had a conversion experience? Was it anything like the one that Paul had? Please remember that not everyone has had a definite conversion like Paul had.
2. Are you skeptical of people that come on too strong? Why?
3. Could it be that we are embarrassed that we are not zealots in our words and actions?
4. What is our purpose here? Should we be preaching, teaching, showing by our actions?
5. Paul was willing to go to prison for his Lord and he offended many people. Are we ready to make that same commitment?

# Timothy

“I’m passing this work on to you, my son Timothy. The prophetic word that was directed to you prepared us for this. All those prayers are coming together now so you will do this well, fearless in your struggle, keeping a firm grip on your faith and on yourself.” I Timothy 1:18+ THE MESSAGE

Many times we disregard the effect of our childhood on us as adults. We tend to dismiss the beliefs of a young person when he/she doesn’t agree with us and chalk our knowledge up to experience. After all, we’ve been around the block a few times! I have said on many occasions that I am so thankful for my home church. They made the youth feel like they were running the place!!! We weren’t. They allowed us to be involved, and we felt important. That has been strength to me throughout my adult life.

By ignoring youth, we can miss out on a lot. Their enthusiasm is contagious. They can lead little children. They can light up the day for a senior citizen, and they can lead in ways that we had disregarded because they did not work for us, and so we assume they will not work for anyone else.

Timothy was one of those people. He had been taught the word of God as a child. Yet, he was not a “Christian” as we know it today. He was taught by his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois. They were Jews, but they taught Timothy the Holy Word, and they became strong followers of Jesus.

On one of Paul’s trips, he noticed this energetic youth and asked him to travel with him. Timothy helped preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, started young churches, and wrote letters to the new churches. He was young. He may have been timid due to his youth, and we don’t have a lot of quotes from him, but we do know of his work and his love of Jesus Christ.

Timothy’s life points out two major aims for adults. They need to teach their children the Bible because that word will not fall on deaf ears as it might if they try to teach the older people who already have their mind set in concrete! And, those words will always be with that youth to guide and strengthen him through life and all the trials. We have read many times how the Scripture verses memorized by youth, and the songs sung by youth have been an inspiration in prison camp, and in many other areas of temptation or peril.

Timothy was not sent out alone. Paul was with him much of the time. He also had the fellowship and company of other believers. Most of all, he had his faith in a God that would always be with him. We know that our youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but we often dismiss their ideas.

Prayer: Abundant God, you have given us so much. Yet, in our worldly knowledge, we sometimes forget that you have given those same gifts to all ages. We tend to think our way is right. Help us to lead the little children, support the youth. Help the young person to know that each person, regardless of age is important in the world both today, tomorrow, and always. Amen

1. As a youth, did you have the good fortune to have someone listen to your ideas? Were you fortunate enough, as a youth, to have someone take you under his wing?
2. How can we show youth that we think they are important? How can we learn from youth?
3. As a youth, what obligations do we have to tell others what we know?
4. Consider the accomplishments of Timothy, David, and Miriam, just to name a few of the young people who have helped to spread the word of the Lord.

**Notes:** These references are given to help continuance of study for a particular person, and although the verse is given with the particular name, the reader will find a need to read some verses on either side of the reference to put the name into context. Many books have been written on the people in the Bible and many sources are quoted every day. Some of them are based on the Bible, and some are not. Some people are mentioned very briefly, but they had a tremendous impact. I have tried to just list the Scripture references.

**Timothy:** Timothy is not mentioned much, but we think he was a right hand for Paul. Specific references to him include II Corinthians 1:11; I Timothy 1:2 & 18; I Timothy 6:20; II Timothy 1:2; Philemon 1:1 and Hebrews 13:23.

**Jonah:** To study the life of Jonah, you will need to read the book of Jonah. It is only four chapters, but tells of his plight and his accomplishments. He is also referred to in II Kings 14:25.

**David:** The references for David are many. Basically his life work is in I & II Samuel, I & II Kings. His death is told in I Kings, chapter 2. References are made to his work in the New Testament in all four of the Gospels, Acts, Romans, and Hebrews. Sometimes his name is just listed in the lineage of Christ, and sometimes the reference is to his Godliness.

**Miriam:** The references to Miriam are not many, but she is interwoven in the work of Moses and Aaron, her brothers. She is a strong woman as noted in Exodus 15:20 and 21. Most of the information about her is found in Numbers 12: 1-5, and then her death in Number 20:1. She is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:9, and I Chronicles 4:17.

**Esther:** The story of Ester is basically told in the book of Esther where she is introduced in 2:7-22. Then her work continues through the ninth chapter of Esther.

**Paul:** Before his conversion, Paul, then known as Saul, was a strong figure against Christ. This story is told in Acts 7:58 and Acts 8:1-3. Then in Acts 9:1-26, we have his conversion. Other references to his work in Acts include 11:25-30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13: 1-9; Acts 22:7-13; and Acts 26:14. Some of these are also when he had become known as Paul. Numerous references are made of Paul in Acts, chapters 15-28. Also in the first verse of each book that he is known to have written, he introduces himself along with the others with him at that time. Check I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

**Daniel:** Daniel's life is mostly told in the book of Daniel. He is really introduced in Chapter One, verses 6-21 and his story continues throughout the book of Daniel. He is also mentioned twice in the New Testament – in Matthew 24:5; and Mark 13:14.

**Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego.** These other men of Judah are in the book of Daniel and their part in the life of Daniel is mostly confined to the first three chapters of the book of Daniel – namely Daniel 1:7 – Daniel 3:30.

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