

A Great Man

by Bryan Gibson

For the last two months, it's been my pleasure to teach a very fine group of junior high and high school boys, all of whom have become Christians. We're studying great men of the Bible, in an effort to identify the characteristics of a great man (in God's eyes, of course). So far, we've studied Job, John the Baptist, Joseph, Timothy, Joshua, Boaz, and David. Here are the characteristics we've identified so far.

He demonstrates humility by exalting the Lord, not himself. See John the Baptist (Matthew 3:14; John 1:15, 19-27, 29-30; 3:26-30) and David (1 Samuel 18:23; 2 Samuel 7:18; 2 Samuel 22) for two very fine examples.

He exercises "genuine faith" in the Lord, like Timothy did (2 Timothy 1:3-5), enabling him to conquer or overcome any obstacle standing between him and the Lord's will (don't tell Joshua they can't take the land of Canaan—Numbers 14:6-9).

He fears the Lord, which influences every aspect of his life. It influenced the way Boaz treated his workers (Ruth 2:4-5), the way he treated Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2:8-12; 3:15-17), and the respect he had for God's law (Ruth 3:11-12; 4:1-12).

He has no idols—he puts nothing or no one before God. Trusting in someone or something other than God would mean denying God, and Job wasn't about to do that (Job 31:24-28).

He obeys God, like Joshua did—even when the task presents a great challenge (Exodus 17:8-13), and even when it *seems* like there might be a better way (Joshua 6—a rather unusual battle strategy, don't you think?).

He knows the Scriptures, like Timothy did (2 Timothy 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 4:6), but he's always hungry to know more (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16).

He teaches the Scriptures accurately, as Timothy was admonished to do (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:15), and boldly, as John the Baptist did (Matthew 3:7-8; Mark 6:18; Luke 3:10-14, 18-20).

He takes full advantage of his opportunities to speak for God. Joseph stood up and spoke up for God, and as a result, everyone around him learned a little bit more about God—Potiphar and his wife, the jailer, the other prisoners, the butler and the baker, and even Pharaoh himself (Genesis 39-50).

He guards his mind from impure thoughts (Job 31:1-4). Hard to imagine anyone more committed to this than Job, who said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes." Don't we all wish David had done the same?

He keeps himself from sexual immorality, with the same resolve that both Job and Joseph had (Job 31:9-12; Genesis 39:7-12).

He not only guards *himself* from sexual immorality; he also guards his *reputation*, something Boaz was obviously concerned about—for himself and for Ruth (Ruth 3:14).

He shows honesty and integrity in all his dealings, both with God and man—something to which Job had fully committed himself (Job 31:5-8).

He shows genuine concern for his brethren, like Timothy did (Philippians 2:19-24), and like Joshua did, when he implored his brethren to serve the Lord (Joshua 23:1-24:24).

He shows no respect of persons, because he recognizes that the same One who made him in the womb made them (Job 31:13-15).

He uses his home and his other resources to care for those in need (Job 31:16-23, 31-32; Ruth 2:8-9, 14-16; 3:17). You can't help but be impressed by the measures Boaz took to take care of Ruth and Naomi.

He even loves his enemies (Job 31:29-30), a quality David demonstrated toward Saul (1 Samuel 24; 2 Samuel 1), and two of his chief rivals, Abner and Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 3:31-39; 4:9-12).

He recognizes and appreciates godly characteristics in others, in much the same way that Boaz saw these things in Ruth (Ruth 2:11-12; 3:11-12).

He perseveres in the face of adversity, just like Joseph did through all his trials, and just like Timothy did, when he endured the hardships of those preaching journeys. Adversity is a good test of character, and they both passed with flying colors (“you know his proven character”—Philippians 2:22).

He does not give in to bitterness, no matter how poorly he may be treated. If anyone could be excused for being bitter, it would be Joseph, but you won't find a trace of it (Genesis 45:5-8; 50:15-21).

He attends to his work, and all the responsibilities that go with it, just like Joseph did—as overseer of Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:6), as overseer of the other prisoners (Genesis 39:22-23), and as Pharaoh's right hand man (Genesis 41:40-41, 55).

He exerts a great influence on other people—consider the impact Joshua had on an entire generation of Israelites (Joshua 24:31).

No man is sinless (1 John 1:8, 10), even a great man, but when he does sin, he honestly confesses his sins and seeks forgiveness (Job 31:33-34; 2 Samuel 12:13; 24:10); and he does so with a humble and contrite heart (Psalms 38:8; 51:17).