



KINGDOM HEROES

FOR KIDS

NOAH, SARAH, MOSES...AND YOU!

TONY EVANS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSHUA TAYLOR

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HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

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Cover and interior illustrations by Cole Roberts

Cover design by Bryce Williamson

Interior design by KUHN Design Group

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Kingdom Heroes for Kids

Copyright © 2022 by Tony Evans

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-8514-7 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-8515-4 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022931408

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Printed in the United States of America

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KINGDOM HEROES

Who They Are, What They Do

Have you ever heard the expression “throwing in the towel”? People say this when they’re just *done* trying to make something work. You can “throw in the towel” on trying to understand your math homework. You can “throw in the towel” on attempting to figure out that really hard song on the piano. You can “throw in the towel” on having the same conversation over and over with the friend you’re always arguing with.

Over it.

Finished.

Not gonna work.

Ever.

Guess what? Sometimes it’s okay to give up. Put that math homework aside until you can ask your teacher or your tutor for help—especially if your mom (who’s trying to help you) says for the forty-seventh time, “Hang on, I

HOW TO BE A HERO

If you want to be someone who keeps going when life gets hard—someone who pushes through instead of giving up or throwing in the towel—keep reading!

In the pages of the Bible, you can meet people who kept going and pushed through the hard times. I like to call these people “kingdom heroes” because that’s exactly who they were—heroes for the kingdom of God. They were also people just like you and me. They sometimes got frustrated. They often felt like quitting. They didn’t always get along with everyone around them.

But they were heroes because they kept their faith in God. They never gave up on Him. Sure, they probably had some intense conversations with Him and asked Him a lot of questions, like “God, what in the world are You *doing*? None of this makes any sense!” Yet they trusted in Him and chose to do things His way.

Those two things are all it takes to be a kingdom hero: Trusting in God and choosing to do things His way.

What it takes to be a kingdom hero:

- 1. Trust in God.*
- 2. Choose to do things His way.*

Hebrews 10:35-39 gives us some helpful hints on what it takes to live as a kingdom hero:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For,

“In just a little while,
he who is coming will come
and will not delay.”

And,

“But my righteous one will live by faith.
And I take no pleasure
in the one who shrinks back.”

But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

Write down Hebrews 10:35-39 in your own words. You can even draw pictures or write it the same way you would send a text. What is God trying to tell *you* through these verses? _____

These verses might be a little hard to understand, but they show us one of the things we need the most to help us live our lives as kingdom heroes—*endurance*. People who have endurance keep going. You need endurance for a lot of things in life. Playing a sport requires endurance. So does being in a play. Or writing a long paper for school. Or knitting a scarf. Or making cinnamon rolls. Being a good friend also requires endurance. And so does following Jesus.

Jesus promises us that if we have faith in Him, He will give us endurance. If you want to be a kingdom hero, you need to ask yourself a very important question:

Am I living by faith?

You need to start here. You need to start with *you* because if living by faith isn't how you roll, learning about the kingdom heroes in the Bible isn't going to help you.

Right now, let's take a little break from reading and pray this prayer together:

*Dear Jesus, please help me to have faith in You—
and help me to get to know You better so I can see all
the amazing ways I can live my life for You! Thank
You for making me one of Your kingdom heroes!*

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A KINGDOM HERO?

Here's a great definition of a kingdom hero. (Hint: It's something you might want to write down so you can come back to it.)

A kingdom hero is a committed Christian (someone who follows Christ all the way) who lives by faith in order to experience spiritual victory and God's approval.

(By the way, both girls and boys can be heroes! Sometimes girls are called “heroines,” but we’ll just make it simple and use the word “hero” for everyone. In the coming pages, you’ll meet both women and men of faith who are kingdom heroes.)

Let's talk a little more about faith, because faith is the key to living the hero life. Faith isn't just a feeling or an idea or something that's impossible to understand.

If you have kingdom faith, it means you are absolutely, completely, 100 percent sure of the things you hope for. You don't know exactly what will happen, but you have *faith* that good things are going to happen. And you know that these things are *good* because they are from *God*. You have *faith* that His plan is the best plan, and so you choose to do what He asks you to do.

Can you think of a movie or a book where a character faced a lot of challenges and pushed through to the happy ending? That's a good example of living life as a kingdom hero! The character found herself in some

impossible situations, but she refused to throw in the towel, and it all worked out in the end.

FAITH AND THE FIVE SENSES

Can you name the five senses? Write them down here.

What are some things you can do with each of your five senses?
List those things here. _____

You can't really use any of your five senses for faith. That's because while the five senses have to do with the *physical* realm—the things you can see or hear or touch or taste or feel here on earth—faith involves the *spiritual* realm.

Let's look at how we use our five senses during the fun tradition of receiving presents on Christmas morning or Christmas Eve. (And we'll see how this relates to faith!) A lot of things involving the Christmas celebration involve your senses. You can *see* the brightly wrapped presents under the tree. You can *touch* them (and shake them a little to try to guess what's inside!). You can *smell* the fresh scent of evergreen if your family puts up a real tree. (You can also smell winter-scented candles or seasonal treats baking in the oven.) You can *hear* your favorite Christmas carols and songs. You can *taste* the cookies or cinnamon rolls and hot cocoa your family enjoys while opening gifts. But none of these things really guarantee that when you unwrap the present, there will be something in it for you. Opening presents involves *faith* that the person who gave you the gift has put something inside you will like!

You can't see or touch or smell or hear or taste the act of giving. You can use your five senses to *assume* that you'll receive a gift, but you need to have *faith* that something is in the package for you.

When you open a Christmas present, you both *expect* and *hope* that the present is something you will like—and your expectation and hope are based on *faith*. You believe that something will happen even though you can't *see* it happening ahead of time.

PUT YOUR FAITH IN WHAT IS REAL

It's important to have faith, but we need to be careful not to put our faith in things that aren't really *real*. Like believing that wearing what's trendy will make you happy. Or that being in a popular friend group will change your life. Or even that taking a trip to Disneyland will make you the happiest person on earth. These things might make you happy in the moment, but they aren't guaranteed to make your life better forever.

A lot of faith placed in something that doesn't really matter will end up doing nothing. That's because what makes faith work is the thing to which it's attached. So if you want to grow your faith, you need to put your faith in something real and unchanging. And that something is God.

You can't literally see or hear or touch or taste or smell God. But He is always there. And you can always put your faith in Him.

BIG PLANE = BIG FAITH

My wife, Lois, often traveled with me on my speaking trips, but she didn't want to go on this one trip to Iowa because we'd be flying in a small, twin-engine plane.

"You don't have much faith," I said, joking with her.

"That's because you don't have much plane," she responded.

Not until the schedule changed and Lois found out that our

new flight would be on a jumbo jet did she change her mind and come along.

“Your faith grew,” I told her, laughing as we boarded the much larger plane.

“That’s because your plane grew,” she said, smiling in response.

It’s a humorous story, but you get the point. The size of my wife’s faith was directly tied to the size of the plane. Big plane = big faith. That’s because faith is related to whatever it’s attached to. Big God = big faith!

FAITH IN ACTION

Before we start getting to know the kingdom heroes in the Bible, I want to give you a simple definition of faith:

Faith is basing your actions on the belief that what God says is true.

Write down what you think it means to have faith. Then make a list of ways you can put that faith into action. What specific things can you do to show that you have faith in God? Be creative with your answers! _____

WARNING!

Before we meet our first kingdom hero in this book, I want to warn you about something. Some of these heroes are pretty strange people. And some of them did some things that seem downright messed-up!

But that's good news for you and me. It means we don't have to be perfect in order to be a hero. No matter how many times you've messed up or made a mistake, you can start over and keep making the choice to live differently. And you can choose to do it right now! All you need to do is ask God for His help.

If you want to live as a kingdom hero, you need to do two things: Have faith in God. And then act on that faith. Remember Hebrews 11:1:

*Now faith is confidence in what
we hope for and assurance
about what we do not see.*

Faith is all about what we do not see. It's all about believing that what God says is true, and then trusting God enough to do what He asks us to do.

Think about a weather forecast. If the weather experts predict a rainstorm, your actions show that you believe it's going to rain. You might wear a raincoat. Your family might reschedule an outdoor party. You might skip watering the garden because you know the rain is coming. And you know what? The weather experts are sometimes wrong, but we listen to them anyway. How much more should we listen to and trust God, who is always right?

Believe what God says is true.

Act on what you believe.

That's what kingdom heroes do!



ABEL

Giving God Your Best

Have you ever been to a family camp? My family used to love to go to a family camp in New York during the winter where I was the guest speaker. The camp sits on a large lake with the grown-up facilities on one side of the water and the kids' buildings on the other side.

On one of our visits to the camp, the lake was frozen, and nearly all camp activities were happening inside, where it was warm. But when it came time for me to speak to the youth, instead of suggesting we circle the lake to get to our destination, the person hosting me said we could just walk across it.

“It’s shorter this way,” he said.

I said nothing and just looked out at the lake, a bunch of potentially scary events playing out in my mind. I wasn’t thrilled about trying to walk across any lake, even a frozen one. The thought of ice cracking beneath my feet was enough for me to stay firmly planted right where I was—on solid pavement.

My host, noticing my hesitation, pointed to a truck starting to cross the lake. And as I saw the truck being driven across the lake, my faith suddenly grew stronger. I realized that if a heavy truck could safely cross the frozen lake, surely I could walk across it.

So after a long pause and a deep breath, I set out, making the expression *walk by faith* way more personal to me than it had ever been before!

Seeing something bigger and heavier than me do something I'd been afraid to do increased my belief that I could do the same thing. That's kind of what happens when you learn about the kingdom heroes in the Bible. You read about them following God in faith and doing amazing things, and that increases your belief that you can do the same thing (especially when you realize that they weren't perfect!).

WORSHIP

When you hear the term *hero*, what words come to mind? Write them down here. (You can draw a picture of a hero too.) _____

You might have written down words like *strong* or *power* or *talent* or *brave*. But I'm guessing you probably didn't write down this word:

Worship.

Worship? What does *that* have to do with being a hero?

I'm not talking about the kind of worship most of us think of, though. I'm not talking about listening to your favorite Christian musician, or admiring God's creation when you see a pretty sunset or some cool clouds, or writing down everything you're thankful for in your prayer journal. The kind of worship I'm talking about is *honoring God through the choices you make in your life*.

*Worship (n.): honoring God through
the choices you make in your life*

This is God's definition of worship, which we can find in Romans 12:1: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."

According to the Bible, you worship God when you use the time, talents, and treasures He's given you for His glory. This could be something big and public like a basketball player who wins a national championship

giving God the glory during a postgame interview. Or something small and private like spending an extra 15 minutes of your day playing with your little brother. God doesn't say one thing is better than the other—*both* actions show that a person is following Him.

KNOW THE STANDARD

To live by a kingdom standard—which is like a rule or a guideline—you need to know what that standard is. You can find the kingdom standards in God's Word, the Bible. God says that staying close to Him helps us live by kingdom standards. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, He gives us directions for learning His standards and passing them on to others.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

God gave us clear instructions on how to stay close to Him and live the way He wants us to live. God's Word should be a routine

part of your everyday life, whether you are walking, sitting, coming in, or going out. In every part of your life, you should consider God and His incredible love for you. And in every part of your life, you should do your best to stay close to Him.

A SHEPHERD WHO WORSHIPPED RIGHT

You've heard the story of Cain and Abel, right? Most of us know it this way: Cain killed his brother, Abel.

Boom.

End of story.

But there's a lot more to it than that.

Abel is the first kingdom hero we're going to meet. Don't worry, though. You don't have to be killed by your brother in order to achieve hero status.

The reason Abel was killed might surprise you. He wasn't killed over an argument. He wasn't even killed over something he did to offend Cain. Nope. Abel was killed because of the way he *worshipped*.

Before this all gets way too confusing, let's look at Hebrews 11:4 to see how it all went down:

By faith Abel brought a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

Did you know that Abel was the first person ever who had the chance to live by faith? His parents, Adam and Eve, got to live in a perfect environment.

And in a perfect environment, you don't need faith! It's like if you already have a bowl of ice cream sitting in front of you, you don't need to have faith that there's some ice cream left in the freezer.

You probably remember that Abel had a brother, Cain. The two brothers had different jobs. As it says in Genesis 4:2, "Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil." Abel raised animals and Cain grew stuff.

Cain and Abel were raised by parents who believed in God. Their parents had even experienced walking with God face to face "in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). Because their parents loved God, Cain and Abel learned it was important to worship and honor Him.

LEARNING VERSUS DOING

I'm sure you know that learning something and doing it are two very different things. You can watch an Olympic gymnast do a floor exercise routine or see a construction crew put up a really cool building, but does that mean you can do the same gymnastics routine or create a building on your own? Of course not!

You can also be told it's really important to do something—like study for your science test or brush your teeth after every meal. But sometimes you just don't want to do it. You're too sleepy. Or you're having too much fun doing something else. But there are consequences for not doing what you were told to do. Like getting a bad grade on the test. Or having the dentist tell you that you have a mouthful of cavities. Genesis 4:3-5 shows us what happens when you make the wrong choice:

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat

Cain and Abel both knew what God wanted and how He wanted it done. But Cain chose to test the limits. He wanted to do things his own way. God said that the offering needed to be a slain animal. But Cain wanted to take the easy route. So he quickly gathered up some tomatoes, cabbage, and whatever fruit he had and brought it to God. Then he tossed it on the altar and said, “Here You go, God!”

Abel, on the other hand, did what God wanted. He brought “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock”—the very best he had available. He brought a *sacrifice*. He gave God what He had asked for. And that’s true worship.

God accepted Abel’s offering. But not Cain’s. God said, “I’m not doing anything with that, Cain. It’s unacceptable.”

KINGDOM HERO SPOTLIGHT

Samson (Judges 13:24–16:31)

Samson was a complicated man who made some really bad choices. He constantly messed up. Yet even though he failed in many areas, whenever he was willing to operate by faith, he was able to do great things to accomplish God’s will.

The Bible tells us that Samson killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. He was a beast on the battlefield. What’s more, he killed more of his enemies on the day of his death than he’d defeated in all his years. Samson went out

in a blaze even though he'd struggled with a lot of issues throughout his life. Yes, there were consequences to Samson's bad actions. But when he was willing to be useful to God, his actions allowed God to show up when the Israelites needed Him the most.

WORSHIP IS ABOUT JESUS

I'm happy to report that today, we don't need to bring God animal sacrifices to show Him that we worship and honor Him.

Today, our worship is about Jesus, who died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sins. When you worship Jesus, you admit that you have sinned and that sin has affected your life. Then you ask God to forgive you for the sinful things you've done. You don't have to remember every single sin. That would be impossible! But you can probably remember a few things—like cheating on your math test or yelling at your dad—and ask God to forgive you for those things and anything else you've done wrong. Then you can worship with a clean heart.

What have you done in the past day or week that you need to ask forgiveness for? Write it down here. Then write down a prayer about it and (this part is the best!) cross it off because God has forgiven you!

GIVE GOD YOUR BEST

Not only did Cain and Abel bring God different offerings—one according to the way God wanted it done and the other by taking a shortcut—but their offerings differed in another way. Abel brought the *best* of his flock. He didn't give God junk and leftovers. Cain, though, just brought "an offering." He rounded up some random fruits and veggies and called it a day.

God wants you to give Him your best. You can start doing this by making time for Him. Don't just give Him your leftovers. Talk to Him throughout the day. Don't just say a quick prayer at bedtime. Do something to remind yourself that God comes first in your life. Write a favorite verse on your school notebook. Put a sticky note on your dresser. Keep your Bible in a place where you'll notice it.

Have you ever been hanging out with a friend who just spends the whole time looking at his phone? While you're talking, he's scrolling. Or playing

a game. Or texting. Then when you ask him a question, he looks up at you with a confused expression and says, “What?”

That’s how a lot of us act when God is trying to tell us something important. We barely pay attention to Him, but we expect Him to always give us what we want—exactly when we want it.

Let’s say you went to a restaurant with your family and the server brought out the menus and said, “Hey, we’re serving whatever we couldn’t sell last week! You can order any of these leftovers. We could even mix them all together in a soup!”

What would you do? Would you order something from that restaurant? Or would you walk out and find a better place to eat?

I know what I would do! I’d walk out and find a restaurant that served something better. You don’t go out to eat looking for last week’s leftovers. You expect better than that!

We should give God the very best we have. No leftovers when we’re worshipping Him!

DON'T GIVE GOD JUNK FOOD

You know what’s worse than leftovers? Junk food.

While you might like the taste of junk food, it’s not good for your body. It can make you feel tired and grumpy. And too much junk food can eventually cause a whole bunch of health problems.

Make a list of foods you *love*. Then think of how you feel when you eat those foods. Do they give you more energy, or do you feel yucky after you eat them? Cross everything off the list that could

hours on your phone or play video games, you have time for God! And you know what's really awesome? The more time you spend with God, the more time you will *want* to spend with Him as you get to know Him better and better!

Have you ever taken a back-lot tour at Universal Studios and seen the facade of buildings where films are made? They're just makeshift little towns showing only fronts. If you were to peek behind them, you'd see nothing there.

Some people might say they follow Christ, but when you look at their lives, there's nothing there. They don't pray much. They don't read their Bible. They don't tell others about Jesus. They don't *do* anything.

Heroes aren't heroes because they say they're heroes. Heroes are heroes because of what they *do*.

Worship God the way heroes worship—with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind. And worship Him in faith. This means taking God seriously. And believing that what He says in His Word is 100 percent true.

Here's one more definition of faith:

*Faith is simply acting
like God is telling the truth.*

The choices and decisions you make should reflect a heart that believes what God says is true. If we believe what God says is true, our actions will show it. But some of us live like Cain. We test the limits. We want to do things our way, not God's way. We want to take the easy path, but not following God actually puts us on the more difficult path.

ALWAYS FOR THE BEST

Does it ever seem like you're the only one in your friend group who's trying to do the right thing? As you follow God and get excited about what He's teaching you, you try to share all those great things with others. But nobody seems to be listening. Your friends continue to make fun of other kids. Or complain a ton. Or even lie to someone or cheat on a test. The more you care about doing the right thing, the less they seem to care.

Don't give up! God is always teaching you, and God is always guiding you. You don't know exactly how things will turn out, but He promises that everything will be okay. Maybe He will send some new friends your way—friends who follow God and want to do the right thing. Maybe your current friends will see that their way isn't working, and they will turn to God. Maybe a little of both will happen.

What God ends up doing is usually not quite what we think He will do. But it's always for the best.

Which of your friends aren't making good choices? Pray for these friends every day, and think of things you can do together to show them that it's fun to do the right thing!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T OBEY

I'm sure you've personally experienced what happens when you don't obey. Your mom tells you and your sister to stop fighting, but you keep right on going at each other. Until suddenly both of you have "earned" extra chores. Or your teacher warns you and your best friend to stop talking in class. But you two have so much important stuff to say to each other! Before you know it, your BFF has been moved to the other side of the classroom.

When you don't obey, things happen.

And they're usually not good things.

Because Cain didn't obey God when it came to the right way to worship, there were consequences. Cain became angry and discouraged when God rejected his offering. You know what happens when you get upset. You feel all the bad emotions, and you react by screaming or stomping off or crying.

Cain's mistake—not worshipping God the right way—affected his emotions. His cheap worship produced cheap results, and bad stuff happened as a result.

BE A HERO, NOT A VILLAIN

Do you remember what the opposite of a hero is? A villain. The bad guy. The one who never wins in the end.

Sin makes you a villain. When sin takes over your life, you make bad choices. Like arguing with your parents. Or yelling at your siblings. Or being mean to a friend. Or putting off doing your homework. Or eating too much sugar. Or never cleaning your messy room. These bad choices can become bad habits, and pretty soon you've forgotten how to get along with others or do your homework right away or eat healthy snacks.

Messed-up emotions can lead to messed-up actions, which can lead to a messed-up life. Which is why it's so important to stay plugged in to God.

If you stay close to God—by praying and reading your Bible and hanging out with other people who follow Him—you can avoid being controlled by sin. When you let God help you control your emotions, He will also help you control your actions. (That's because actions usually follow emotions!)

Now we come to the really bad part of the Cain and Abel story—the part where Cain kills Abel. Because Cain was mad at God, he killed his brother, who had earned God's favor and pleasure by doing the right thing. Jealousy led to first-degree murder (Genesis 4:8). Cain may have thought he would get away with it, but he was wrong. God called him out on his actions.

The LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don't know,” he replied. “Am I my brother's keeper?”

The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth” (Genesis 4:9-12).

This story is very sad, but it's a reminder that God judges the sins that destroy the lives of others. God is good, and He will look out for His children. And in the end, God's side always, always wins.

Living by faith as a kingdom hero means totally trusting God. It means doing what He says you should do, not doing what you feel like doing. (Sometimes this can be hard to figure out. When that happens, ask a parent

or grandparent or someone else you trust! You can also ask that person to pray with you.) It means basing your whole life on what God says is true.

THE THREE T'S

Time. Talents. Treasures. Let's call these the three *T*'s.

Write down what you think your time, talents, and treasures are. (When you consider time, think about things you spend too much time on—like watching shows or looking at stuff on your phone. You probably have more time than you think you do!) _____

Time involves what you do and when you do it. Do you play video games or watch shows every day but forget to read your Bible? Do you text your friends a lot but never pray for them? Do you spend tons of time working on your own stuff—even good stuff like doing artwork or making

crafts—instead of helping out around the house? God wants you to spend your time connecting with Him and also doing things for others. Love God, love people. Those are the two main commandments Jesus gave us! Spend your *time* doing these things.

Talents are the things you're good at, the things that are fun and come fairly easily to you. We tend to think of a talent as something that can be *performed*—like being good at music or sports or art. But so many things can be considered a talent! Being a good listener is a talent. Taking care of animals is a talent. Encouraging others with kind words and a big smile is a talent. Making friends easily is a talent. Use the talents you have to do good things, and keep trying new things and developing other talents. You never know what God will use in your life!

Treasures can be a little hard to define, but think about these creatively. When you hear the word *treasures*, you might think of things like a big house, a lot of money, or a closet full of expensive clothes and shoes. And God *can* use these things. You can invite others over to your big house for a Bible study. You can give your money to people and groups who need it. You can even share your clothes and shoes with others. But treasures don't always have to do with being wealthy. Maybe you live in a small house, but your dad bakes the best cookies. Those cookies are treasures you can share with your friends. Or you live with your grandparents, and they tell the best stories. Those stories are treasures, for sure! Hunt for the treasures in your life. God has placed them there, and they might not be as hidden as you think.

Are you giving God the time, talents, and treasures He seeks from you? Are you giving Him the first fruits—the very best—of your energy, thoughts, heart, and soul? Or are you just tossing Him some Froot Loops here and there?

You know, the interesting thing about Froot Loops is that even though they come in a bunch of different colors, they all taste the same. No matter what color it is, every piece has the same flavor because they're all made from the same stuff.

It doesn't matter what kind of worship you toss to God or what fancy "color" it is. If it's not what He requires, it all tastes the same to Him. But if you give Him the proper kind of worship, you'll have what it takes to be a kingdom hero. You'll be able to control your emotions. You'll know how to make good decisions. You'll understand what God wants you to say and do.

Who do you want to be? It's up to you. You get to choose whether you'll live as a kingdom hero, a villain, or an extra in this drama called life.

I'm assuming you chose the role of *hero*, so let's get to know some more of those!