

# Bible Heroes

Simon  
the Zealot

Teachers  
Story notes



Essential Teachers notes:

Children ride the latest fad hard and often being different equals exclusion. But being passionate about something doesn't always go hand in hand with other popular pursuits. Being a Zealot is just that, being zealous, passionate, about your beliefs - it would have made some of Jesus' other companions uncomfortable choices for travelling partners.

Main Passage : Matthew 12

Additional passages : Matthew 10, 1 Samuel 21

---

Have you every looked at two friends and wonder what brought them together. Sometimes friends are so different it seems amazing that they are friends.

Jesus has chosen his 12 apostles, 12 men who were all very different. There were the noisy James and John, the practical Judas who took care of the money, the excitable Peter and the talkative Philip. Everyone was very different. Simon had been chosen to be an apostle too. This Simon was a Zealot.

Now a Zealot is somebody who is seriously committed to what they believe. For Simon that his Jewish faith. Simon wanted to be the best Jew he could be. Many Zealots were known for action, lots of them were arrested for attacking the Romans, they were rebels.

Simon understood not everybody thought the same way as him. He understood that Jesus was popular with lots of kinds of people. Some committed to their beliefs and it changed them, some weren't even sure what they believed. I wonder what Simon's Zealot friends thought when Simon became an apostle. Especially as Jesus also chose Matthew, he had been a tax collector before meeting Jesus, and tax collectors worked for the horrible Romans.

Not long after Jesus had chosen his apostles they went on a Sabbath walk. Now the Sabbath day was special, you couldn't walk too far, you couldn't work, it was designed for rest. As they passed through the grain field a couple of Jesus' followers grabbed a few grains for a snack. Some religious people nearby saw this and told Jesus his followers were breaking the Sabbath rules.

Simon knew the rules about the Sabbath and he took them seriously. He wanted to be a good Jew, but he wanted to follow Jesus too, and Jesus was making that hard. Simon looked over at Jesus and was surprised to see that Jesus looked amused by the question. "Do you remember David?" said Jesus, "the great king... what did he do when he was hungry, he went and ate the holy bread in the temple" the religious people started to look uncomfortable "and the priests, don't they work on the Sabbath, and yet they are not seen as breaking the rules?"

Simon stopped walking and looked at Jesus. He knew the story of David, he knew that David had broken the Jewish law, and suddenly he realised how little he had understood all those rules. As they walked on they came to a synagogue and saw a man with a diseased hand. Simon knew Jesus could heal the hand but the Sabbath rules said he could not heal the hand today.

One of the religious leaders saw Jesus look at the man and shouted "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Jesus looked at the people who had been following them, the religious leaders, the towns people, and then at Simon. Was he asking Simon to make a decision? Simon looked at the man with the diseased hand, his hand looked painful, it was twisted and dry like old fruit. Did God really want this man to wait until tomorrow to be healed? It may not be lawful to heal but it would be the good thing to do, Simon slowly nodded his head.

Jesus smiled as he started to speak "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." and his hand was healed, just like that. And Simon was healed too, he was healed of misunderstanding. Simon had been committed to be the best Jew he could be, and now he would be the best follower of Jesus he could be.

**Today's hero is Simon the Zealot because he show us the gift of Commitment.**