

A FEW GOOD MEN

Inspiring Biblical
heroes for today's
Christian men

by Richard Coekin

For my Dad, my brother and my sons, Rupert and Jonny.
'Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage;
be strong. Do everything in love' 1 Corinthians 16 v 13.

A few Good Men

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Tel: 0845-225-0899

Fax: 0845-225-0898

email: admin@christianconventions.co.uk

www.christianconventions.co.uk

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Tel: 0845-225-0880

Fax: 0845-225-0990

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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	9
1. Obedient Noah	13
2. Sacrificial Abraham	35
3. Self-disciplined Joseph	53
4. Unworldly Moses	73
5. Wholehearted Caleb	95
6. Humble Isaiah	111
7. Distinctive Daniel	127
8. Missionary Paul	141
9. Prayerful Epaphras	161
10. Loyal Onesiphorus	179
<i>Conclusion: Jesus – the perfect man</i>	193



PREFACE

This book was written for men, particularly the men who attend the London Men's Convention, and their sons. By God's grace, this annual convention was begun in 2002. It now fills the Royal Albert Hall with men from evangelical churches all over the London region. It is quite an experience to be with such a great crowd of Christian men, listening intently to the Word of God and passionately singing His praise in such a prestigious venue. This book is intended to further the aims of the convention:

We are Christ-centred

The strapline to the convention name reads: *'Encouraging men to live for Christ'*. The aim has been primarily to proclaim Christ from the Scriptures rather than address gender issues. We are finding, however, that men greatly benefit from teaching that specifically applies the Bible to the challenges men face today.

Likewise, *A Few Good Men* aims to proclaim Christ as the ultimate hero for men to trust, admire and emulate.

We are Bible-based

At our conventions we try to model careful exposition of a text, in its wider biblical context, applied with appropriate compassion and challenge to the practical realities men face. As the Bible is taught, we hear God's Spirit addressing our souls. He examines our hearts, sometimes approving, sometimes challenging. With the precision of a skillful surgeon using a scalpel, He lovingly performs His open-heart surgery upon us, healing our lives with His Word.

Our Convention titles reveal biblical priorities: *'Be Men of God'*, *'Be Men of the Future'*, *'Be Men of the Cross'*, *'Biblical Answers to*

Tough Questions, *'Be Men of the Spirit'*, *'Be Men of Godliness'* and *'Be Men of Mission'*. We have welcomed faithful Bible-teachers from different denominations of the calibre of John Stott, Dick Lucas, Rupert Bentley-Taylor, Jonathan Stephen, William Taylor, Bill Bygroves, Phillip Jensen, Vaughan Roberts, Rico Tice and Hugh Palmer. We have generally preferred local teachers to international stars in order to emphasise our commitment to obeying the voice of God, rather than being entertained by a celebrity. We are actually more interested in hearing about God than about ourselves.

Likewise, *A Few Good Men* is not really about men, but about what God has done in the lives of a few men in Scripture.

We are church-focused

Our conventions aim to support local churches in their ministry to men. We want to resource and supplement rather than weaken or replace local ministry to men. We are thrilled to regularly hear of local church ministries started with the encouragement of the convention or resourced with talks and materials from it.

Likewise, *A Few Good Men* aims to strengthen ordinary men and their local church groups.

We are men-positive

At a time when western culture seems to scorn the special dignity given by God to men in lovingly leading at home, at church and in society, we want to equip Christian men from the Scriptures for their ministry. We pray that our generation of Christian men will become committed to the kind of courageous and sacrificial leadership shown by our hero, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Likewise, *A Few Good Men* aims to inspire Christian men to fulfil their potential for Jesus.

We are God-dependent

When we started the London Men's Convention, we had no idea that God was giving us something special. Before our first Convention, we worried about recruiting even a few hundred men. As it turned out, God answered our prayers beyond our imagination and our first venue, holding 2,200, was sold out in two weeks. Now we are in London's premier venue – plush boxes, glitzy dressing rooms, grand history – for one day publicly dedicated to the glory of God. As the work has multiplied into London Women's Conventions and Northern Conventions, we are very aware that as we have prayed, planted and watered, it is God alone who has given the growth. These have been marvellous days. Pray with us that He might continue to be glorified in this ministry, and praise Him alone.

Likewise, *A Few Good Men* aims to glorify God for what He has done with a few weak and wicked men like us. We pray that their stories might draw us to their God and that, dependent upon Him, we might be inspired and challenged to become 'a few good men', loyal to the only ideal man, Jesus Christ our Lord. For only He ...

... humbled himself
and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. **Philippians 2 v 8-11**

Richard Coekin
Convention Chairman



INTRODUCTION

What kind of men do we want to be? Rugged sportsmen, smooth film stars and wild rock musicians all compete for our admiration. But are Wayne Rooney or Freddie Flintoff good role models for Christian men? Are Vin Diesel or Daniel Craig appropriate examples of Christian lifestyle? Should believers be trying to emulate Robbie Williams and Noel Gallagher, even if they are celebrity icons?

In the Bible, God has included dramatic accounts of how he transformed the lives of ordinary men like us to become good men, worthy of our admiration. These challenging stories both inspire us with their heroic examples and help us better understand the perfect man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In this book I've selected 'a few good men'. Inevitably, my choice is rather subjective. I've chosen men who faced the same sorts of struggles that we often face today: immoral culture, costly decisions, sexual temptation, wealth and status, powerful opposition, sin and guilt, peer pressure, pluralistic unbelief, worry and fear.

In each case I've included both the biblical account and a dramatised version of events to try to capture the historical realities which these men faced. This certainly doesn't dare to supplement God's Word (which is entirely sufficient as it is). It is just to help us in our distracted weakness to take the biblical accounts more seriously as real events. I have also included some *Questions for Group Discussion* to help church groups engage with the implications of each chapter for our lives.

The title *A Few Good Men* comes from the Broadway play by Aaron Sorkin, which was released as a popular film in 1992 star-

ring Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson and Demi Moore. The film concerns a conspiracy in the US Marines that emerges from a court martial for murder, and reveals a few good men. The title seems especially appropriate for this book of biblical heroes. Of course, only God is perfectly good, but the Bible does provide us with these stirring examples of men who climbed above being average to challenge us to do something heroic for God with our own lives. The film's most famous line, 'You can't handle the truth!' is perhaps an appropriate challenge for Christian men reading their stories today.

But after considering 'a few good men' from Bible history, it is vital to end with a chapter on Jesus Christ, the only perfect Man. It is very striking that all the best qualities that we find developed by God in the other men are most impressively perfected and combined in Jesus, to whom all the other men point. *A Few Good Men* aims to drive us to better appreciate and worship Jesus. He is the hero of this book. May *A Few Good Men* inspire and challenge us to follow Him.