

MKs in the Bible

Another term for a missionary kid is a “third culture kid” or TCK. (ISMK also uses the term TCK for MKs living in sensitive countries.) Dave Pollock, in his book *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, defines a third-culture kid in the following way:

“A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.”

(David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, pg. 13.)

The Bible has many stories of individuals who fit the third culture kid definition. Use these Bible stories to help your MKs better understand their own MK experiences and struggles. By hearing about TCKs in the Bible, MKs will identify with others who have faced the same challenges and responded in a godly way.

Here are some ideas for creative storytelling:

- Read the stories from different versions of the Bible (available in the MK Office).
- Have the MKs act out the Bible stories.
- Prepare ahead of time and allow chiefs to act out the Bible story.
- Tell the story, but add sound effects at critical moments.
- Use props to tell the story. Pull items from a “story bag,” at the appropriate moment in the story. (For example, tell the story of Moses and the burning bush. Fill your story bag with a pair of shoes, a branch, a match, some sand in a baggie, etc.)

Talking about MKs in the Bible and how they felt about their experiences will help your MKs identify with others who have faced the same struggles. As you read the Bible stories with the MKs in your program, encourage them to connect with the story and relate it to their own lives. Chiefs should direct Tribe Time conversation, asking MKs how they feel about their own MK experiences.

These Bible characters lived in two or more cultures. Listed below are eight TCKs in the Bible and some thoughts on how MKs can identify with them.

ABRAHAM: The First MK, The First Call

MK Identity: Abraham grew up in one culture and later moved to two other cultures. MKs must deal with two or more cultures and learn how to respond to God through their adjustments.

Read Abraham’s story in Genesis 11:31, 12:1.

JOSEPH: Anger, Making the Most of a Situation

MK Identity: Joseph grew up in one culture. Against his own will, he was sold into another culture. He adapted and continued to obey God, and was successful. MKs sometimes feel they are in situations against their own will. Some get angry. In order to successfully adjust to new cultures, MKs must control their anger and make the most of their situation.

Joseph's brothers plotted to murder him, but sold him into slavery instead. As a servant he was framed and sent to prison. In prison he was forgotten. His brothers had set in motion a very difficult life for Joseph. Joseph was probably angry with his brothers, but Joseph did not let his anger overwhelm him. In Joseph's most difficult times, we read that "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2,3,21,23). He trusted God, worked hard, God blessed him, and Pharaoh put him in charge of the country. Joseph sums up his life with these words spoken to his brothers, "Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:19-20). Through his obedience, Joseph helped to save a nation from starvation. Since Joseph was a human being, we can assume he struggled with anger at his brothers, but Joseph faced his anger and gave it to the Lord—in the end he was reconciled to his family.

MOSES: Fear, Insecurity

MK Identity: Moses grew up in the foreign Egyptian culture, yet his mother raised him with the values of his original Israelite culture. When he was getting ready to reenter the Egyptian culture, he became fearful and insecure. Moses overcame his fears and was able to deliver his people. MKs sometimes feel inadequate when entering a culture. With God's assurances and help, MKs can successfully adjust and accomplish amazing things.

When God told Moses that He wanted him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses was very reluctant. Moses' fears and insecurities are revealed in the following excerpts from his conversation with God:

- "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh...?" (Exodus 3:11).
- "Suppose...they ask me who sent me?" (Exodus 3:13-15).
- "What if they do not believe me or listen to me...?" (Exodus 4:1).
- "I have never been eloquent...I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10).
- "Please send someone else to do it" (Exodus 4:13).

JOSHUA: Courage

MK Identity: Joshua grew up in his original culture, which at that time was a subculture in Egypt. Later, he led the Israelites to a third culture and conquered it by obeying God's word and displaying courage. MKs need to face their cross-cultural challenges with courage and dependency on God.

God's first words to Joshua were those of encouragement. "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go...Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7-9). Joshua needed courage in facing all his challenges in conquering Canaan (Joshua 1-24).

ESTHER: Meaning and Purpose

MK Identity: Esther grew up as an Israelite living in a foreign country, Persia. She was successful in the Persian culture, and with her success came responsibility, which gave purpose to her success. Although MKs don't always see meaning and purpose in being an MK, God can use their MK experience for a specific purpose. In many cases it is up to the MK to decide how to use their MK experience, as it was with Esther's choice.

Mordecai's words to Esther when she was considering whether or not to take action to save the Jews in Persia were, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from

another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).

DAVID: Loneliness

MK Identity: David grew up in an area where the Israelite culture existed alongside the Philistine culture, so he dealt with two cultures. As a boy and teenager he tended his father's sheep herd. It was lonely work. David turned his lonely times into "alone times with God." During those times he learned to play the harp and shoot a slingshot, and he killed at least one lion and one bear. These experiences equipped him for his future. If MKs can learn to turn their lonely times into "alone times" with God, they can prepare for the future.

Read David's story in 1 Samuel 16-17.

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO: Commitment

MK Identity: These three young men grew up in their home culture. Then they were taken against their will to a foreign culture—the Babylonian culture. They faced execution by the fiery furnace because of their commitment to God. Their commitment was so strong that even if God did not meet their expectation to deliver them, they still would not betray Him. This is the highest level of commitment. If MKs can develop this kind of commitment, they can continue to serve God even when their expectations about the mission field are not realized.

Just before King Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego spoke these words, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18).

DANIEL: Trust

MK Identity: Daniel was raised in his home culture, then taken to the Babylonian culture. The king was forced to throw Daniel into the lions’ den because of a conspiracy by his advisors. Because Daniel did not compromise his relationship with God, but instead maintained his trust in Him, God delivered him from the lions. Sometimes MKs may find themselves in compromising positions, but if they will maintain their trust in God, He will deliver them.

The following are Daniel’s words from the lions’ den to King Darius, “Daniel answered, ‘O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.’ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God” (Daniel 6:21-23).