

Mark: An Unlikely Overcomer

Acts

“Underdogs believe that money, pedigree, and status don’t determine success or significance. Rather, it is heart, desire, and the will to overcome that do.”

“Underdogs are driven by doing what is right, regardless of the odds against them, or the lack of expectations that others have for their success.”

Here are a few things that Underdogs have in common:

1. They appear to be void of the skills or talent needed to win
2. They have often earned their reputation through past poor performance
3. They are unlikely overcomers

But they also...

1. Show a willingness to practice, grow, and take advice
2. They are humble in their determination
3. They possess unrecognized potential

1. This Underdog had a firm foundation to build upon.

Acts 12:5-12

“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. Then the angel said to him, ‘Put on your clothes and sandals.’ And Peter did so. ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,’ the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was having a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, ‘Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.’ When this dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.”

Colossians 4:10

“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.”

2. This Underdog faltered at the start.

Acts 12:25-13:5 *“When Barnabas and Saul (Paul) had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. In the church at Antioch there were prophets and*

teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Acts 13:6-7

"They, (Barnabas and Paul) traveled throughout the island (Cyprus), until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus."

Acts 13:9-13

"Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas (the sorcerer) and said, 'You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right way of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.' Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga and Pamphylia, where John left and returned to Jerusalem."

3. This Underdog failed to inspire confidence.

Acts 15:36-40

"Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back to visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing. Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord."

At this point in the story of Mark, what do we know?

- He grew up in a Christian home
- He had a great mentor and encourager, in his cousin Barnabas
- He had good intentions when he joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey
- His departure left an unpleasant taste in Paul's mouth
- Barnabas didn't give up on him, and apparently Mark kept learning and growing

4. This Underdog found a way to overcome his past failures.

2 Timothy 4:9-11

“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in the ministry.”

How Mark compares with what we know about underdogs:

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