

Who had red hair in the Bible?

Redheads often get a bad rap, shackled by stereotypes that link them to fiery tempers, aggressiveness, or soullessness. But hair color is not an indication of a person's worth or temperament. The Bible tells us of at least two redheads, and they could not have been more different from each other.

The first person with red hair we read about in Scripture is Esau, son of Isaac and Rebekah. Genesis 25:25 says that, when Rebekah's twin sons were born, Esau came out "red, covered with hair like a fur coat." Although technically the firstborn, redheaded Esau forfeited his birthright when he traded it for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:29-33). Although his red hair had nothing to do with it, Esau had an impulsive, careless nature and a hot temper when he later set out to kill his conniving brother (Genesis 27:41). But he mellowed with age and appears to have developed a nobler character when he forgave his brother and sought to live in peace (Genesis 33:4). Redheads, like everyone else, have no excuse for giving in to sinful tendencies and resisting the Lord's attempts to build character.

The most famous redhead in the Bible is David. He was "ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome" (1 Samuel 16:12, ESV). The word translated "ruddy" could refer to David's complexion, but some commentators believe it refers to his hair. David could have been redheaded. His character was opposite that of Esau's. David was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), while Esau was a "profane person" (Hebrews 12:16, NKJV). David was a man of strong passions. When those passions were surrendered to the Lord, they served him well. He fought God's battles, was a leader of men, and penned most of the psalms. But when those passions were allowed to control him, they led David to deep sin and deception (2 Samuel 11).

Natural redheads can be proud of the color God gave them and refuse to allow hair color to define their character. Blondes don't have to be dumb, brunettes don't have to be boring, and redheads don't have to be hot-tempered (Proverbs 22:24). Regardless of our hair color, God requires all of us to submit our natural tendencies to His lordship and allow His Spirit to transform us (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are all works in progress, and God delights in the variety He has created (Psalm 37:23). Our job is to celebrate the way He made us and use all we have for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).