

“Polar Opposites”

In film and television, a common stock element is to pair two characters who are completely opposite of each other. Examples include the “Odd Couple” “Buzz and Woody” and Buddy cop theme fare. Viewers are drawn to these presentations because the difference between them are so stark (different ethnicities, difference in size, difference in intelligence etc.). Sometimes the opposite characters serve as foils. Biblical authors do the equivalent by placing characters close together (not always physically intersecting) so that you the reader see the major differences between them and then draw valuable insights.

Biblical Examples:

1. **Easy recognizable ones** – David and Goliath, Mordechai and Haman
2. **Rahab and Achan (book of Joshua)**

Rahab	Achan
Woman	Man
Canaanite	Hebrew (tribe of Judah, the best)
Prostitute (disrespectable)	Respectable
Should have died, but survived and prospered	Should have prospered, but died
Her family and all she owned survived	His family and all he owned perished
Nation perishes	Nation prospers
<i>Hides the spies</i> from the king	<i>Hides the loot</i> from God and Joshua
Hides the spies <i>on the roof</i>	Hides the loot <i>under his tent</i>
Fears the God of Israel	Does not fear the God of Israel
Has only <i>heard</i> of God, yet believes	Has <i>seen</i> the acts of God, but disobeys
Her house survives, while the city is burned	His tent is burned
Cattle, sheep, and donkeys of Jericho perish	Cattle, sheep, and donkeys of Achan perish
She becomes like an Israelite and lives	He becomes like a Canaanite and dies

3. **Eli's sons and Samuel (1 Samuel)**

Eli's Sons	Samuel
Disrespects Eli (2:25)	Respects Eli (3:1)
Rebuked by Eli 2:25	Affirmed by Eli
Ignore the Lord 2:12	Listens to the Lord
Defeated by Philistines 4:10	Defeats Philistines 7:2-14)

4. **Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman John 3-4**

Nicodemus	Samaritan Woman
Meets Jesus at night	Meets Jesus at noon
Pharisee	Admits a sinful woman
Acknowledges Jesus as teacher	Acknowledges Jesus as prophet
Thinks Jesus is speaking of physical birth	Thinks Jesus is speaking of physical water
Is told can have eternal life	Is told can have eternal life
Does not believe in Jesus immediately	believes in Jesus immediately

5. **Ezra and Nehemiah**

Two Very Different Leaders	
Ezra	Nehemiah
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priest • Prayerful • Devout, studious, cautious • Ashamed to ask for escort • 'the hand of the Lord was on him' (10:4) • Reads and interprets law/ Prostrated himself • 'Rise up! It's in your hands' • Pulls out his own hair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cup bearer • Prayerful • Emotional, aggressive, man of action, 'type A' • Arranges for escort • Pray hard and post guard (4:9) • Arranges for reading of Scripture (8:1-11) • 'The joy of the Lord is your strength!' • Pulls out the people's hair!

So what's:

- give readers points to ponder mainly to draw comparisons and contrasts and ask why?
- Oftentimes it the “underdog” or “outsider” that is the role model rather than the one people or readers expect.