

HOW TO BE A HERO

Psalm 16:3

Good morning, Happy Father's Day to all our good-looking fathers. Who are good-looking here? Ok, this message is for you. It starts with an H. How to Be Humble. Actually, "How to Be a Hero".

Today, I want to talk about how God wants to use you as a hero in the lives of people around you. Now, you probably have never considered yourself a hero, or that God even might want you to be a hero, because your idea of a hero has been skewed by Hollywood. You think of people with special powers and super-strength. Like Ant-Man, and Batman, and Superman, and the Avengers, and the Justice League, and Spiderman and the Incredibles, and on, and on, and on. But this message about heroes is really about everyday heroes. The heroic acts that you can do every day for the people around you, in your home or with your family, or at work, or school, or throughout the neighborhood, and actually even all around the world.

You know, in a recent Gallup poll, 51 percent of kids ages 13 to 17 said they could not name a single adult that they would consider a hero. In fact, many of them said, and I quote, "I don't know any adult that I'd like to model my life after." Friends, that's tragic. Now, the fact is, no matter how old you are, you're always going to need heroes in your life. And you need to be a hero to other people too. We all need heroes. We need models and mentors in our lives. Why? Because they shape our lives. They build our character. Heroes inspire us to be more than we are. Heroes challenge us to grow. And that's why, by the way, you need to choose your heroes carefully. You need to be a hero and you need to choose your heroes carefully for your entire life.

Let me read you this verse, Psalm 16:3 (NLT), "*The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!*" Tell me who your heroes are, and I'll tell you what you're becoming. I'll also say this, if you don't have any heroes, it means you've never really clarified your values. You don't know what's important.

Now, today, the word hero is overused and misused, kind of like the word love and nice. We apply it to everything. Hero is overused and misused. Most people who are called heroes today in our society, are not really heroes. They're celebrities. And most people don't know the difference between a hero and a celebrity. Celebrities make a big splash, heroes make a big difference. Celebrities are all about image and fame, heroes are all about character and service. Celebrities are famous for what they sacrifice for themselves, whereas heroes are those who sacrifice for others. Celebrities want everybody to serve them, heroes focus on serving others.

So today, what I want us to do is simply look at three qualities that are found in every hero. This message is not only for dads but for everyone who wants to make a big difference in other people's lives.

The first quality of a true hero is this.

1. Real heroes stand alone for what's right.

Real heroes stand alone for what's right. You don't become a hero by doing what everybody else does. You become a hero by not doing what everybody else does. Real heroes go against the crowd. Real heroes are willing to swim against the flow. So, you're never going to find a real hero doing what everybody else is doing.

Now, in 2 Samuel 23:11b-12, it says this, "*One time the Philistines gathered at Lehi and attacked the Israelites in a field full of lentils. The Israelite army fled, but Shammah held his ground in the middle of the field and beat back the Philistines. So the Lord brought about a great victory.*"

Did you see that, the whole Israelite army fled. Shammah was left alone fighting. He was the original Rambo. Now, it's doubtful that you're going to have to fight in a war this week, but you're going to face all kinds of moral battles. And you have to be willing to do the right thing, even if it means standing alone.

Exodus 23:2 says this, "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong."

Now every week you get an opportunity to demonstrate character and to be a hero by not following the crowd in doing wrong. When everybody else is stealing from the company, or maybe they're all fudging their timesheets, and you don't do that, that makes you a hero. When everybody at school is doing drugs, or they're getting drunk at parties and bragging about it on Monday morning, or cheating among friends, or they're gossiping or making fun of somebody, and you don't do those things, you stand alone. Then you're a hero.

By the way, did you know, since I mentioned drinking, the Bible says there's one thing you don't want to be hero of? It's getting drunk. **Isaiah 5:22 says this, "Woe to those who are champions at drinking wine and heroes at mixing drinks!"** Getting drunk may make you boisterous or feel bold, but it doesn't make you a hero. Some people when they get drunk, suddenly become talkative and even belt out a song. You may think you're Superman when you're drunk, but you're not. And it's nothing to brag about or be proud of.

Now we live in a culture today that values tolerance over truth. So let's just talk about this for a minute, because God wants you to be a hero in our society. Suppose you're in a conversation and somebody says, "Well, you know, I don't believe there are any absolutes. There are no absolutes. There's no right or wrong. Every lifestyle is okay, acceptable. It may be right for you, but it doesn't matter for me." Would you have the courage to speak up in that situation? Even if you had to stand alone?

Or how about this. If you're at work, or you're with some friends, or you're out on a golf course, or you're out to lunch with some girlfriends, somebody starts making fun of a Christian you know. Would you stand up for them? Or would you think, "Oh, it's none of my business."

To be a hero often means going against the crowd. **Romans 12:2 says this,** *"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."* Let me repeat that. *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world.*

And here's another verse, Psalm 40:4 from the MSG version, *"Blessed are you who give yourselves over to God, turn your backs on the world's 'sure thing,' ignore what the world worships."* Wow, that's standing alone.

When you think about all the heroes in the Bible, every one of them had to stand alone. Abraham, he had to stand alone against an immoral culture called Sodom and Gomorrah. Noah had to stand alone in obedience and is ridiculed for 120 years. Daniel had to stand alone for integrity in the lion's den. Esther had to stand alone to save her people at the risk of her own life. Moses had to stand alone to challenge the most powerful man in the world, Pharaoh.

What about you? It's not the only characteristic, but it's a fundamental characteristic of heroes: you're willing to do what's right even when nobody else agrees with you.

Are you willing to stand alone for what's right in the face of criticism, or ridicule, or rejection? And if you're a parent, are you willing to train your children in how to stand alone, rather than just to go along? God is looking for heroes that he can use.

Now let's look at the second quality of a real hero, and it's this.

2. Real heroes make sacrifices for others.

Now notice I say "for others". Real heroes make sacrifices for others. A lot of people will make sacrifices for themselves. People will sacrifice their health in order to make more money. People will sacrifice relationships in order to achieve certain goals or awards or winnings for themselves. High achievers can do a lot of sacrificing for self-centered motivation. Even some actors can sacrifice to become famous and some athletes will sacrifice because they want to be the best at their sport or they want to be the highest paid.

But real heroes put the needs of others ahead of their own, in fact, sometimes they put the needs of strangers ahead of their own. Just this week I heard about two or three people who saved other people from all kinds of crises and even a terrorist threat, because they were heroes.

As a child, you probably had a lot of heroes and they may have looked like superheroes – Batman and Superman and Wonder Woman all these other guys. But, in the end, they turned out to be less than heroes.

I read about this guy who bought one of the early electric cars that became famous in 2008 and a few years later, he bought two more electric cars when the company came out with a new model and he confessed he admired the guy who owned the company. But several years later the owner of the company, let's call him Noel, who is famous for his intelligence and wealth, started to act like a child and gained some enemies and so the guy who had been buying the electric cars stopped buying the cars because he didn't want anything associated with Noel. Noel wasn't his hero anymore.

How do you become truly great as a hero? Jesus says in **Matthew 20:26**, **"Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant."** Not a celebrity, a servant. God's values are the exact opposite of this world.

There are not many people who actually say, "My goal in life is to see how many people I can serve, rather than how many people I can get to serve me" because today in our society, the more people you have waiting on you, supposedly the more important you are. Now the world says this, "Think of yourself, because you deserve it. Get others to serve you" but that's not what Jesus said, he said we are to serve others.

By the way, if somebody died for you, would you want to tell other people that that person died for you? Well, somebody did. He was the greatest hero of all, Jesus Christ, because he made the greatest sacrifice of all. **Hebrews 7:27 says this: "Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people's sins."** You see the ultimate hero of course, is Jesus, because he made the ultimate sacrifice.

I want you to know, to be Christlike doesn't mean you have to do the spectacular. You don't have to do the spectacular to be a hero, you just have to be a servant to be a hero. Jesus says it like this in **Matthew 10:42, "And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."** We have a lot of heroes in this church. You know who they are and you know who you are. If you're serving others, you're a hero. If you're sacrificing your time, your money, even your health, to serve others, you're a hero. And I salute you and appreciate you.

Now Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT) mentions a special category where you need to be a hero. It says this: **"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice."** The purpose of influence is not so you can be famous. The purpose of influence is so you can help other people who have no influence. You say, "How do I do that?" How do you speak up for those who can't speak up for themselves? Well first you've got to be aware of them. They're all around you.

You say, "I don't even know who can't speak up for themselves." Well, let me just give you a partial list. How about children? They can't speak up for themselves. Who's going to be an advocate for them? How about for those who are too sick to speak up for themselves? Who's going to advocate for those who are terminally ill or chronically ill? What about those who are too old to speak for themselves, the elderly? Who's going to speak for them? What about the orphans? Orphans cannot speak up for themselves. What about people who struggle with mental health or mental disabilities? They often can't speak up for themselves. Think about the people around you where you could be a hero this week.

Let me ask you a personal question. Is there any area in your life where you're sacrificing to serve other people on a regular basis? Nobody pays you to do it. There's not any big reward in it, but you're just doing it out of the goodness of your heart to serve other people in Jesus' name.

Now there's one more quality I want us to look at today, and it is this:

3. Real heroes take risks for God.

Real heroes take risks for God. Do you know that God put in you a natural desire to take risks? That's why people like to gamble. It's why people like to play games of chance. That's why people like sports. It's why people like to do mountain climbing. You were wired to take risks in your life. Now you may have tamped it down out of fear, you may have tamped it down out of anxiety, but by nature you have an ability to take risks. It's part of being a human being.

Real heroes are not afraid to go out on a limb, they know that's where the fruit is. Real heroes defy the odds. Real heroes risk failure and they even risk rejection, and they even risk criticism in order to go after the dream, in order to serve others, in order to be who God calls them to be.

But why are we afraid to take risks? Well, I can think of a couple of reasons.

Number one, we want to be comfortable, okay, and it's uncomfortable stretching yourself. Have you ever stretched a muscle? Have you ever worked out and stretched a muscle? It's uncomfortable stretching that muscle. So that's one reason, we just want to be comfortable.

The other reason is, we're just afraid of being hurt. We're afraid of failing. Let me tell you something. Failure is not fatal. Failure is not final. You're never a failure until you give up. Failure is not as bad as the fear of failure. The fear of failure is far worse than failure itself, because when you have the fear of failure, you think about it over and over and over and over and over. If you fail, you just fail. Proverbs 24:16 says this, *"Though the righteous falls seven times, he rises again."* What I love about that verse is it says even good people mess up, even good people fall. Nobody goes through life with an unbroken string of successes. You risk and sometimes it pays off, and you risk and sometimes it doesn't. But even in the times that it doesn't, God will use that.

You see, every part of your story can be used for God's glory. Even the parts that you don't want to share or talk about. Every part of your story can be used for God's glory. That is the power of the cross. That is the power, that we're all trophies of God's grace.

Now, what risks have you known God wanted you to take? Maybe to go to a person you needed to ask forgiveness from, or maybe go to a person you need to offer forgiveness to? Or whatever, but a safe life is a wasted life.

Here at Fil-Am Church we've done more things that didn't work than did, but we're not afraid to fail. Why? We take risks, because risking is another word for faith. One of the greatest heroes in the Bible is the Apostle Paul because almost single-handedly he spread Christianity across the entire Roman Empire.

He took enormous risks, not for his own personal benefit, but for the benefit of other people. He's constantly taking risks to spread the good news and literally nothing could stop him.

Let me read you this verse from 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. It's Paul's testimony and he says this: *"I've worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again and again. Five different times I was given thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned with rocks. Three times I was shipwrecked! Once I drifted in the open sea all night and the whole next day. I've lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food; and often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm."*

(TLB)

That's an enormous list of risks. He lived multiple lifetimes in one life. What in the world motivated Paul to take all those risks and put up with all that pain? Well, he tells us.

1 Corinthians 15: 30-32 (MSG), he says this: *"And why do you think I keep risking my neck in this dangerous work? I look death in the face practically every day I live. Do you think I'd do this if I wasn't convinced of your resurrection and mine as guaranteed by the resurrected Messiah Jesus? Do you think I was just trying to act heroic when I fought the wild beasts at Ephesus, hoping it wouldn't be the end of me? Not on your life! It's resurrection, resurrection, always resurrection, that undergirds what I do and say, the way I live."*

Here's the secret of being willing to take risks. Serve people. Paul says in **Phil. 2:3-4**, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."* You'll never go wrong when you put others' interests before your own. And God rewards that. **Heb. 6:10** says, *"God is not unjust; he*

will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.” It is saying, “He will bless your life if you serve others”.

You know, this life is a test. In this life God is testing you to see whether you will sacrifice for others. Will you take risks for God's glory, for your own growth and for the benefit of other people?

Since it's Father's Day, let me say a word to you dads. Are you modeling these character qualities for your children? Taking risks for other people? Sacrificing for other people? Standing for what's right for other people and for God? Don't make the fatal mistake of living for your comfort. You were not put on this planet to live for your comfort. This life is a test, and there's more to life than just here and now, and what you do with your life now will determine the rewards you have in eternity.

In Mark 8:35, Jesus says: *"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."* And I would add on to that, you will be a true hero.