

Heroes of Faith

Introduction. If I asked you who your favorite hero, what would you say? Would you go the “comic book” direction or a “real-life person”? Heroes are part of our culture — and, I suppose, most cultures. Heroes meet the moment’s need and inspire countless others to rise up to be better. There are a lot of heroes in the Bible of this type — many of whom have been your heroes since very early in life.

Hebrews 11 is a long chapter with sixteen named individuals and numerous other unnamed heroes of faith — individuals who faced adversity in many forms and yet stayed the course. Having one’s presence recorded in the Scriptures truly makes them seem larger than life (Hebrews 11:30-38).

It’s with the knowledge of these “heroes” that we should be inspired to rise up and count the cost. We live in an age of “easy believism.” People tell us, “Just believe. That’s all that Jesus requires of you.” But it’s not all that He requires, just as the Hebrew writer says as he continues in Hebrews 12:1-2. Let’s open the Scriptures and talk about three ways you can be a hero of faith.

I. You Can Choose Character Over “Cool”

- A. There can be no doubt that today’s America presents a more difficult place to grow up.
 1. There are things that weren’t available for yesterday’s youth. The internet is an “agenda pushing machine,” and young people are particularly targeted.
 2. Immoralities, perversions, injustices, and corruptions are just a click away from their eyes and their hearts — the works of the flesh are the main stars of the internet (Galatians 5:19-21).
- B. The distinction of “public” and “private” has fallen apart; and far too many young people are exposing their private lives to the viewing eyes of the world — chaste (clean, pure, free from sexual intent) behavior seems to be a forgotten life rule (Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:2).
- C. Constant entertainment, with its barrage of inputs, is also a problem. Not many years ago entertainment was something that people enjoyed occasionally; now it’s a constant presence, almost to the point where no one remembers the beauty of silence and meditation. Today’s world presents a major struggle for those who choose character over being cool.
- D. Be a hero ...
 1. Be a hero of faith and prioritize early in your life — keep God first and you’ll be blessed (Ecclesiastes 12:1; Matthew 6:33).
 2. Be a hero of faith and choose your influences very carefully (Proverbs 14:12). Friends are important, but not as important as the salvation of your soul — “Do not be deceived” (1 Corinthians 15:33).
 3. Be a hero of faith and choose the far greater end (1 Peter 4:1-4). The world won’t be accepted in the end; don’t be standing with them (1 Peter 4:5).
 4. Be a hero of faith and commit yourself to the “counsel of God” (Psalm 1:1-6), and choose character over cool.

II. You Can Obey Truth Over Tradition

- A. We live in an area of our country that's steeped in tradition. For the most part, this is a good mindset — considering that so much of American culture has been changed into some “disposable” form of its original. However, there are many whose basis of faith is only family tradition and not proven truth, as it should be.
- B. Souls are required to search out and know truth, like the Bereans who searched (examined, scrutinized) the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). Souls are required to “show themselves approved of God” by “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Tradition often commits souls to men's doctrines and not to Christ's doctrine (2 John 9).
- C. Be a hero ...
 - 1. Be a hero of faith and focus on the importance of being “right” over “upholding family tradition” (cp. Matthew 10:34-39).
 - a) The apostle Paul is a living example of the value of truth over family tradition. When Paul was confronted with the gospel of Jesus, he was religiously a Jew and his family had been Jews since the beginning of Judaism (around 2,000 years since the time of Abram's calling).
 - b) Paul speaks of his long heritage of religion in Philippians 3:4-6 — he was zealous, faithful, and committed. Paul continues his speech to tell us what he did with the truth (Philippians 3:7-11) — to gain salvation, he rejected his family tradition to obey truth.
 - c) If you're a young Christian, and your parents are Christians, you may see them doing things that aren't righteous. You have a choice to make. You can be overwhelmed and discouraged, and possibly give up. Or you can be a hero and hold fast, realizing that they're fallible before God.
 - 2. Be a hero of faith, knowing and teaching the truth (John 8:31-32; Acts 18:26). You may be the one who leads your family away from vain tradition into truth.

III. You Can Stay Faithful to the End

- A. Life is a series of challenges even for the most faithful. Many of life's challenges come from the fact that we're mortal beings and can be tempted (James 1:13-15).
 - 1. We can lose our health or be dealt terrible issues with mental health or congenital issues (Philippians 2:25-27).
 - 2. We can find ourselves on the bad side of “time and chance” (Ecclesiastes 9:11).
 - 3. We can let the “cares of the world” get out of bounds (Luke 15:7, 22).
 - 4. We can confuse our priorities at any time in life (James 4:13-16: cp. Mark 10:17-22).
 - 5. We can allow material elements to become our highest focus (Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:8-9).
 - 6. We can become weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13).

B. Be a hero ...

1. Be a hero of faith and walk the “narrow way” (Matthew 7:13-14). Decide to do God’s will (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Kings 18:21). Follow the “steps” of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-23).
2. Be a hero of faith and “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58), remaining faithful with Christ all of the way (Luke 9:62; Hebrews 10:39).

Conclusion. When I was a child my Scripture hero was Samson — the strongest man ever. As a kid, I wasn’t focusing on his failings; just his incredible strength. However, the older I become, the more my heroes change to those real people whom I call my brethren. Those who make tough choices for the sake of “right.” Those who stay the course, making correction when they stumble; and who demonstrate what it takes to pursue the hope of heaven.

It’s not easy to focus on God over all this world’s distractions, but many have, and Lord willing, many more will too. The moments of this life are few; we need to rise up to meet them. The opportunity for you to meet the need of this moment in obedience to the gospel is yours right now.

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