



How Should We Choose Our Heroes?

We human beings are entrusted with a very special place in creation; a place that calls us to embrace and live by certain values including kindness, generosity, forgiveness, joy and peace. Heroes help us define, develop and live by those values.

The ancient Greeks said, "Tell me who you admire and I'll tell you who you are." According to this logic, choosing heroes is important because who you choose often determines the character of a person and a people. The greatest conquerors in history understood this truth. Replace the Czar and icons of the Russian Orthodox Church with Lenin and you have Soviet Union. To deprive people of a hero or the opportunity to choose one is the ultimate form of conquest.

We are in need of heroes more than ever. Collectively and individually we continue to be a people in search of sages; anxious and eager to find people worthy of our love and loyalty.

What kind of heroes should we embrace?

Embracing the wrong kind of hero has the potential of fracturing the sacred bonds of society. In the absence of positive heroes, a society will choose others as it did in Nazi Germany and Serbia. Choosing the wrong kind of heroes sets in motion a negative energy more powerful than nuclear fission. It can split the nucleus of the human family and set off a veritable chain reaction of sexism, racism, hate, violence, greed, jealousy, resentment and corruption.

In today's culture we have substituted celebrities for heroes; celebrities from whom we expect little and sometimes get less. So anxious are we as a culture to find someone in whom we can place our love and loyalty that we choose from the riotous parade of the newly famous and already nearly forgotten. And when we lose them, nothing is really lost for their successors have already claimed the next fifteen minutes of fame. Celebrities attract our curiosity while real heroes send us to the source of their vision and dreams. We often look at celebrities to find out what our values should be and when we do, we discover we haven't looked high enough.

What is a hero?

Real heroes strive for the imperishable trophies. Their rules and goals are different. They live and work in the world, but they embrace the eternal values of love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. While fame, fortune, and power may come their way, attaining them is not their goal. Heroes who deserve biography, autobiography or memoir are people who may attract attention, but direct that attention beyond themselves to something greater. They help us aspire and live up to the values they embrace in their daily lives.

Where can we find heroes?

Heroes can be found in the daily stuff of life, from parents to teachers, from counselors to that unexpected angel who helps you change a tire during a dark and rainy night. They can also be found in our religious and historical traditions, and among the unsung activists and brave politicians who have taken a stand against the status quo. As one historian wrote, "No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men." Real heroes take us one step closer to fulfilling our human potential. What we need is an international organization that identifies, spotlights and promotes heroes from around the world who personify values that strengthen the fabric of the global village in which we live.

