



*ADAPTED FROM: "How to Choose Your Hero" by Charles Harper

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.

We are in need of heroes more than ever. Collectively and individually, we continue to be a people in search of **sages** (*people who are wise, mature, or who possess good judgment*); 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 the wrong kind of heroes, setting 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. This has, unfortunately, happened many times in history.

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. **(Who do you know that has gotten famous for doing things that are not actually admirable?)** 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*. **(Who do you know that fits this definition of a hero?)** We often look at celebrities to find out what our values should be, and when we do, we discover that those values are often very shallow.

What is a hero?

Real heroes strive for the **imperishable trophies** (*rewards that endure forever, such as love, personal growth, a sense of accomplishment, knowledge that they have changed their world for the better*). 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. (*Why does Superman save people? Is he trying to be famous, or does he just want to help? Does the fact that his true identity is hidden help you answer those questions?)* True heroes 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** (*the existing state of affairs, especially regarding social or political issues*).

As one historian wrote, "No great man lives **in vain** (*without success or result*). The history of the world is but the biography of great men [and women]."

Real heroes take us one step closer to fulfilling our human potential. Identifying, spotlighting, and promoting heroes from around the world who personify values that strengthen the fabric of the global village in which we live would be a step toward a better future for all of us.