

Heroes

What do you think of when you define a hero? The Encarta Dictionary provides these definitions: 1-remarkably brave person, 2-somebody admired, 3-main character in a fictional plot, 4-man with superhuman powers, 5” long sandwich.

Many in society today define a hero as those in the public safety field or military, and rightly so. No one would argue that the firefighter who rescues a victim from the flames of a house fire, or the police officer who defended the public from a deranged subject with a gun, or the soldier who sacrificed his own life for his brothers and our freedom was not a hero. And, more recently you might have heard about Dr. David Benke the math teacher who tackled the school shooter in Colorado. These are all heroes under anyone’s definition, but their names soon fade from memory.

I submit there are other heroes whose names are still remembered today not because of great feats of bravery but because of what they accomplished in history, even through great personal pain. Consider George Washington, our country’s first president, or Benjamin Franklin, scholar and inventor who is still quoted today. Or how about Wilberforce who was elected to parliament in 1780 and fought for 27 years to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire while struggling with great personal illness. In 1807, slavery was finally abolished.

There are others who might be referred to as “hidden heroes” whose lives made an impact on those around them to influence history. These heroes help define what we believe and why. How about John Eggen. Never heard of him? He was just a deacon in his church in Colchester, England in 1850.

On a snowy Sunday morning, he walked six miles to church. When he arrived, he found no pastor, 12 parishioners and one visitor, a 13 year old boy. Someone suggested they all go home but Eggen said “no”. He was the only deacon present so the task fell to him. Eggen preached a 10-minute sermon that drifted, wandered, and made no point in an effort to make several. Finally, he looked at the visitor and challenged the young man to “look to Jesus. Look. Look”. The challenge made a difference in the young boy who grew to be the man known as Charles Haddon Spurgeon, England’s prince of preachers.¹

An ordinary “Joe” doing what he believed God was calling him to do and through that obedience, many lives were changed. You are all heroes by profession, but what about that “hidden hero” who will never be known this side of heaven. That guy at the car wash who prays for the officer who’s car he is now drying or that girl at the drycleaners who lifts up the firefighter or soldier who wears the uniform she is cleaning.

¹¹ 1041 Sermon Illustrations, Ideas, and Expositions, Comp. and ed. A. Gordon Nasby (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 180-181

What kind of hero will you be today? We can't all be heroes by profession but we can be "hidden heroes" who may encourage and challenge the next Spurgeon.