

God's Truth About Heroes

by Russell Kelfer

The sermon highlights the difference between the world's heroes, who are often flawed and morally compromised, and God's heroes, who are characterized by qualities such as courage, meekness, and faithfulness.

Duration: 42:30

Topics: "Heroes"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses several ways in which the enemy tries to deceive and corrupt society. Firstly, he highlights the lie that man can achieve supernatural things without relying on a supernatural God. Secondly, he points out how society tends to glorify physical attributes and talents rather than focusing on character. Thirdly, he mentions how the media elevates individuals as heroes, only to reveal their lack of moral values, which influences the standards of our children. Lastly, he emphasizes the use of entertainment and entertainers to subtly introduce new standards of conduct as normal. The preacher also provides guidance on how to approach the parables in the Bible, explaining that they teach spiritual reality and reveal the importance of various character traits. He suggests incorporating daily experiences, news events, and TV shows into discussions about character qualities with children.

Transcript

The lesson you're about to hear is designed to help you in your spiritual pilgrimage. We pray that this will be a blessing in your life. Our teacher is Russell Kelfer of the Into His Likeness radio broadcast.

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We also invite you to visit us anytime on the World Wide Web. Our Internet address is simply www.dtm.org. We pray God's richest blessing may be yours as He continues to live His life in you. Every generation has its heroes, men and women who rise to the top in times of crisis, displaying seemingly supernatural strength and sometimes seemingly supernatural courage or supernatural wisdom.

Ones to whom men and women point in amazement and proclaim to their children, He's a hero. George Washington was a hero. Naturally, Abraham Lincoln was a hero.

The first astronauts to land on the moon were heroes. And it is no small wonder that who our children's heroes are in some measure is important, for in some measure they will strive to become like their heroes. This morning we're going to look at Satan's lies and God's truth about the heroes of our generation.

Who are this generation's heroes? First of all, let me explain three things. Number one, each generation has a hero pattern, the qualities that each generation worships. Kind of a pattern.

Secondly, each generation has a list of make-believe heroes, comic-strip caricatures of the real dreams they would like to become. And then thirdly, each generation has real people who are their idols, dead or alive, men or women who portray what that generation considers to be heroic. And this generation is no exception.

I believe if you watch television, read the newspapers, or talk to young people, you'll see what I mean. First of all, let me remind you that even from the world's perspective it is no sin to have heroes. I'll read just a little from an article that appeared in a recent issue of Newsweek magazine written by Pete Axtheim.

It's entitled, Where Have All the Heroes Gone? And it goes like this. He was in San Antonio, of all places, and he wrote this, Near that sign at the door of the Alamo, there are several simple warnings. No smoking, quiet, gentlemen remove hats.

I did not see anyone light up inside the Alamo, he said. There were few noises except for the subdued and reverent words of the tour guides. The gentlemen were all bareheaded, and somehow these minor gestures of respect seemed important.

Standing in a dusty courtyard in the dry Texas heat in a season when Americans were knifing one another over tanks of gasoline, I felt refreshed to be in a place where the memory of heroism and trailblazing can still make a friend take off his hat. I have been reading, he goes on, quite a bit lately about how America has grown too rich, too confused, and too sophisticated for heroes. John Wayne is gone.

His larger-than-life adventures have been replaced mainly by movies that offer only blinding special effects or characters trying to find themselves. Once we routinely asked our kids who their heroes were. Today we fumble for answers when they ask us if there are any.

Vietnam and Watergate played their part in all of this as we learned to beware of our leaders and to scrutinize them, warts and all. The media have done so with a vengeance, and few leaders can stand up to the barrage. But a cynical age now accepts the tarnished coin of celebrity in place of heroic virtue, and thus the bestseller lists are filled with books by Watergate felons and their co-conspirators.

Even in a troubled land of cookie-cutter shopping malls and thought-deadening discos, he goes on, I suspect there are few people who still seek out the lonely roads, take the personal risks, and dare to shape their worlds. While modern legions may prattle about human potential, those few actually fulfill it and call it destiny. The Alamo, he goes on, overcomes.

In its resistance to the vast scale of Texas, it asserts a stubborn grandeur of its own. And he goes on to talk about the experiences he had going through the Alamo, being acquainted with the experiences of the heroes that died there. And then he ends by talking about Bonham.

James Butler Bonham, he said, was a courier who left the Alamo during the siege and rode to Goliad, ninety-five miles away, to plead for reinforcements. He is less known than Crockett or Bowie, but his

horse, it seems to me, should gallop through our modern consciousness the way the hero-devil Thomas Supin's echoing hoofbeats gave resonance to Faulkner's South in *Absalom, Absalom*. The commander at Goliad could offer no troops.

At that moment, Bonham knew that the Alamo was doomed. But he turned around, fought his way back through the Mexican army, and rejoined his comrades to fight to certain death. Now here's his conclusion.

No one faced the odds more squarely than Bonham. No one had more options. He was already a hero.

He could have joined the other forces, fought to glories, grabbed a few more days or years, for a life that ended at twenty-nine. In the modern idiom that replaces self-respect with self-serving, he could have coped. It is difficult even to speculate on the depths of Bonham's dedication.

Perhaps modern analysts would speak of obsessions, self-destructive tendencies, even, God save us from analysts, male bonding among heroes. But the hoofbeats of Bonham's ride express it much better. They leave us with the lingering and essential challenge, who among modern heroes would have made the return trip? He goes on and concludes, it took a twelve-year-old to still the hoofbeat echoes for me.

I brought home an Alamo T-shirt for my daughter, he said, who attends a very fashionable and expensive Manhattan school. I presented it amid enthusiastic tales of what I had seen in Texas. She accepted the gift with a polite, bemused smile, and then admitted she had never heard of the Alamo.

Her history and social studies classes, it turned out, had learned about ancient Greece and the institutions of democracy. They had studied slavery and the roots of black consciousness. They knew of other relevant stuff.

It would be a cheap gesture to criticize such curricula. There is some undeniable wisdom in the decision of scholars to tackle hard, complex social issues and leave Davy Crockett to Walt Disney. But I would feel better about it, he concludes, about the ongoing prospects for heroism if our school kids were allowed a few moments to listen for the hoofbeats.

So it isn't wrong to have heroes, even from the world's perspective. But it is wrong to have the wrong heroes. First of all, what is the hero pattern of this generation? Let me give you three things.

Number one, this generation is cynical. As the article explains, we have so pulled back the curtain of men's lives through the media that no one stands untarnished. And our children have become cynical and questioning, majoring on the rottenness of heroes' past.

Secondly, this generation is accomplishment-oriented. With no confidence that character remains or is essential, our generation now looks to aggressive success stories rather than qualities that set men apart as different. And thirdly, this generation is seeking to overthrow traditional values, by and large.

So a man's or woman's heroism may be largely the result of his or her rebellion to the standards and ethics that, in years past, set men apart. How do we worship? Who do we worship in the age in which we live? I'll give you three examples. Men worship the macho man.

He glides in a glider. He rides the rapids. He faces certain death.

He drinks with the crowd. He boasts of his conquests. He is tough, and he knows it.

He manifests no form of gentleness, holds virtue not as something to be sought but rather to be scorned. He is rugged, but by God's standards, he is not really a man at all. On the other hand, we worship a composite woman, a strange combination.

She is glamorous but liberated. Her glamour appeals to the men. Her liberated condition appeals to the women.

On commercials, you will see, for instance, on one, the young lady who wears a certain perfume. During the daytime, that perfume gives her an aura because she is an executive by day. But at night, she is a temptress, and the same perfume accomplishes the same purpose.

She handles men like a man in the marketplace, but she handles men like a woman by the fireplace. She is not even a shell of God's kind of woman. Her beauty is external, her role is aggressive, and she longs to be a woman who is at least as tough as a man.

And thirdly, we worship, unfortunately, for the most part, children who are smart alecks. You just watch the television programs that succeed, the children who talk back, who are smarter than their parents, who are always just a little bit slow, who seek now to educate their parents away from the traditional values that seem, at least on television, so old-fashioned. Well, if that's the pattern, then who are our make-believe heroes? Well, gals, the make-believe heroes seem to be the new Wonder Woman and the Bionic Woman.

Beautiful but supernatural. They are surrounded often by inept males who would be crushed into feet did not our heroines display super-masculine qualities in super-feminine bodies. But the guys, they look for the Incredible Hulk, the Six Million Dollar Man, and Superman.

These men are the product of either science or chance. These heroes are split personalities. They exist in a natural world until crisis comes, and then from within themselves come supernatural powers, or from a telephone booth, depending on the situation.

And these powers enable them to overcome. They are our heroes. Now what do they have in common? Three things.

Number one, they all have supernatural strength, which does not come from God. Number two, they have either in their heroic or non-heroic form natural beauty or handsome features, maybe because they're played by movie stars. Three, they are on the side of goodness, but the end always justifies the means.

These are our children's make-believe heroes. And who are our real heroes? Well, there's always Charlie's Angels, who fit the pattern, once again, of being tough but beautiful, who in real life aren't anybody's angels at all. And then there's the number one box office attraction, Barbra Streisand, talent but no morals, liberated, beautiful voice, but in bondage to the new morality.

And then there's Elvis Presley, America's dead hero, but we won't let him die. He lived like a king, but he died like a dope addict, in bondage to his success. And now cheap imitations squeeze themselves into sequined tights and wiggle and moan in high school auditoriums, and our children faint, just like some of us did when Frank Sinatra used to sing.

There's three of you who remember that. He's really old, you know. And then there's Marilyn Monroe.

She's our dead heroine, wracked by insecurity, immorality, guilt, and frustration. She died of suicide, the only way out of her success, and we have been resurrecting her ever since. This generation wants to elevate those who succeed at any price.

Morals, traditional qualities, are not a factor. Our heroes have these things in common. They have money.

They defy sex standards, but they entertain us, and that in itself justifies their exalted position. Well, if that's Satan's lineup of heroes, just what is it that Satan is after? Let me give you some possible suggestions. Number one, he wants to prove that there is something supernatural apart from God.

That's why he takes us into the realm of superheroes. It's a lie, you see, that man can do supernatural things without a supernatural God. Secondly, he wants to glorify that which is physical, beauty, brains, strength, talent, as opposed to character.

Thirdly, he wants to elevate men and women into the public eye as heroes, and then reveal their absence of moral values. And in so doing, our children who worship the hero re-evaluate their own standards. Fourthly, he wants to use entertainment and entertainers to create a world of make-believe, into which we will accept subtly new standards of conduct as that which is normal.

We talked several weeks ago about a statement from one of the network officials that if we're ever going to change the standards of behavior of this nation, we would do it through situation comedies. Because while America is laughing, it is accepting what it sees. All in the family made such great inroads several years ago, a number of years ago now, but now it's such a mild program, because it simply was a door-breaker that opened the door to other television programs that in the process of breaking down traditional values while we were laughing at what was going on, would subtly work into our subconscious thinking a new standard of norms.

Three's Company, Soap, Dallas, Saturday Night Live, which unfortunately has now become Weeknight Live. Satan wants to convince us through a smokescreen that a president's personal or moral life has no bearing on his ability to rule a country, that the immorality of those who entertain us does not affect the moral conscience of our children, that athletes who endorse alcohol do not make alcohol more acceptable to youth. These are lies.

He wants to convince us that movie stars can swap wives and promote immorality, but they're basically good people whose positions of prominence do not require a higher level of conduct. It's a lie. He wants to convince us that girls' concepts of womanhood are not affected by Wonder Woman, Charlie's Angels, the Bionic Woman, the Police Woman, and that's a lie, that heroes of our day shape the moral consciousness and reflect the dreams and aspirations of young people.

Well, that's the truth about the world's heroes. Now, what's the truth about God's heroes? Well, first of all, the Bible is a book of heroes, men and women who in times of crises, using God's strength, rose to the occasion and conquered evil. You see, because from God's perspective, there still is such a thing as good and evil.

David was a hero. Armed with nothing but a slingshot and confidence in the provision of his God, he tackled a giant that had paralyzed a nation. He had courage.

His courage made David a hero. Moses was a hero. With all of the odds against him, he stood before Pharaoh and cried, let my people go.

Through the sea, through the wilderness, against all the odds, he remained the leader of God but the meekest of men, and Moses' meekness made Moses a hero. Joseph was a hero. He was rejected by his brothers, sold into slavery, unjustly accused, imprisoned and forgotten.

Joseph remained faithful. Joseph's faithfulness made him a hero. Ruth was a hero.

She had the opportunity to turn back and start a new life. She had every right to do so. But Ruth was loyal, and whither thou goest, I will go, is now a watchword of loyalty.

Ruth's loyalty made her a hero. Stephen was a hero. In the face of certain death, he saw a vision of God and he sought forgiveness for those who took his life.

Stephen had compassion, and his compassion made him a hero. Joshua was a hero. He saw life from a different perspective.

He and Caleb and ten others were sent in to view the land. The ten saw defeat, and Joshua saw God. So Joshua was allowed to lead his people into the land.

He believed God and had faith, and his faith made him a hero. Daniel was a hero. All he had to do to save his life was worship no one but the king for 30 days.

A whole kingdom obeyed, but Daniel turned to Jerusalem and prayed to the eternal God and became potential lunch meat for lions. But God stepped in and shut the mouth of those lions, and God became exalted because Daniel in the face of danger was bold, and his boldness made Daniel a hero. Abraham was a hero.

Paul was a hero. Jesus was the greatest hero of all. God's courage, meekness, faithfulness, loyalty, compassion, faith, boldness, these are all qualities of God manifested in the lives of men when they believe God.

And this is what makes real heroes. Have you ever wondered what it is that makes a man a superman to God or a wonder woman to God? I took some time this week, and I took some of these stories we've just been going through, and I tried to come up with at least five common denominators. These are oversimplified, I realize.

But these five things were woven through the lives of all of God's heroes. Number one, it is someone, a hero is someone who is single-mindedly God's man. Someone so devoted to God in the quiet place, so faithful to God in the marketplace, that in the heat of the testing place, it never enters his mind that there are less noble alternatives.

Do your children know that? Do they understand that heroes are made in the prayer closet, alone with God? That's where the character comes from that reveals itself under pressure. Secondly, heroes are those whose strength is in God. Do our children understand that what made Paul strong was his weakness, that what made David strong was his weakness, what made Moses strong was his weakness? These were not the men who could.

They were the men who couldn't, but they knew a God who could, and that's what made them God's men, heroes. Thirdly, a hero is someone who gives all the glory to God and keeps none of it for himself. It was Daniel who said, I can't interpret those things, mighty king, but my God can.

It was David who said, I can't slay a giant, but I know a God who can. It was Abraham who said, but God will provide himself the lamb. John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, Moses, Abraham, Joseph, so long as they knew, once they became heroes they never forgot they were not heroes, and God could still use them to the end of their lives.

Fourthly, a hero is someone who stands the test of time. David and Abraham and Moses and Peter all made mistakes, all failed at some point, and the Scripture records those failures, but the years surface the qualities of their lives, and that made them worthy to be heroes. Heroes stand the test of time.

And lastly, a hero is someone whose character is more important than his accomplishments. That's basically the theme of the rest of this lesson this morning, that above all else what separates man's heroes from God's is not what a man accomplishes, but the quality of life that is exemplified in the accomplishment of it. Who are your children's heroes? Have you ever stopped to ask them? Who do they think your heroes are? They wear helmets and carry footballs, we know that.

But have you ever stopped to wonder who your children think your real heroes are? If your children are still small, or you have grandchildren, or if you're a teacher of young people, you can to a large measure determine who their heroes will be, and what will be the measure of the man to which they strive. Some examples. Do your children consider missionaries to be heroes? How many times do you sit down with them and share the cost people are paying on the mission field to share the gospel of Jesus Christ? How many of your children pray for specific missionaries every day? How many of them realize, have read the stories of great missionaries, and realize the value of going forth to the ends of the world to preach the gospel? Missionaries, many of them, are the heroes of our day, and they'll never be on television.

How many of our children realize that prayer warriors are the heroes in God's kingdom? Those quiet men and quiet women that, in the solitude of their own prayer chambers, spend hour upon hour simply pleading on behalf of the kingdom of God, pleading for the lost, pleading for the Christians in need of growth, pleading for the affairs of the world. Prayer warriors, the hardest job in the world, the least overt rewards in the world, but perhaps the most in heaven. Prayer warriors.

Do your children realize, do they have any desire to become that? Do they realize these men and women will never be on the big silver screen until they get to heaven? Anybody can do the things that people do overtly, but it is the power of God working through the people that are doing the things that come as a result of the faithful few that pray and pray and pray and pray. These are the heroes of our day. Our children need to know that.

Those who are faithful in the details of the kingdom, those who show up week after week to work on this building here with no thanks, those who do the little things day after day without ever having a word of thanks, those that work in the sound room, that work in the office, that do this, that do that, simply available to people to serve people. These are heroes from God's perspective. Those with a vision, those who have compassion, those who are handling tribulation well.

Do you sit down with your children and share with them people in your fellowship who have just undergone grief or who have just undergone a great sea of tribulation and they are handling it so well in the Spirit and giving glory to God? Have you ever told your children, these are the heroes of the 20th century? You see, they must come to understand that the key to being a hero is character. It's not an optional, it's a necessity. What is character? Character are those qualities which make up the essence of a man's being which, when expressed, reveal the degree to which God controls his life.

Those qualities which make up the essence of a man's being which, when expressed, reveal the degree to which God controls his life. Now, all of you are familiar with what character qualities are. I want us to be clear that we understand what a character quality is.

These are just a few. Availability. A state of readiness to do the will of God.

Confidence. Positive identification with God's promises. Correctability.

Openness to review. Discernment. The God-given ability to clearly see issues and motives.

Faith. Walking with confidence where you cannot see. Faithfulness.

Consistency in the expression of your faith. Gentleness. The act of always responding in love.

Humility. Accepting last place as deserved. Modesty.

Discretion that never calls attention to itself. Power. Might that comes as a result of having developed inner strength.

These are just samples. But you and I need to learn them all. We adults, we need to memorize the definitions.

We need to crystallize scriptural examples. And I'll show you why as we progress. Because they're the key to man's success.

His appropriation of godly character. And our children and our disciples and we ourselves need to restructure our thinking so that we think character. Think character.

Think character as we pray, as we teach, as we discipline. Behavior is not our goal. It is a byproduct.

Character is our goal. Attitudes that reflect the personality of God. Now, for the rest of this lesson this morning, I want us to look at some practical ways to study character.

And thus build a consciousness of character into the lives of your family. Number one, how to approach the parables to learn character. Number two, how to approach proverbs to learn character.

Number three, how to study character qualities as a family or as a growth group. Number four, how to study the lives of godly men. Number five, how to view Christian success stories.

Number six, how to find character qualities in daily experiences. And lastly, how to do a composite study of God's Wonder Woman and God's Superman. Well, fasten your seatbelts.

We're going to try to see what we can accomplish. Number one, how to approach the parables. The parables are sketches of physical truth which to the spiritual mind teach spiritual reality.

But they teach much more than principles. Each parable manifests the need for a particular character trait. And it reveals the cause and effect of either having or not having that character quality.

Luke chapter 12, if you want to learn about stewardship. Matthew chapter 13, if you want to learn about right priorities. Matthew 25, if you want to learn about patience.

The parable in Matthew 18, if you want to learn about mercy. The parable in John 10, if you want to learn about sacrifice. The parable in Luke 14, if you want to learn about humility.

The parable in Luke 18, if you want to learn about fairness. The parable in Matthew 13, if you want to learn about discernment. You see, the key is if you look for character quality in the parables, then as your children come up against issues where character qualities have been violated or are needed, all you have to do is take them to the word and share these parables.

And ask the spirit through the parable to awaken them to the real meat of the issue, which is character. Well, the second is how to approach the proverbs with character in mind. How many of you like to read a proverb a day? Quite a few.

Try sometime reading the proverbs using character qualities as the central issue. Get yourself a box of three by five cards, or a little notebook with sheets in it, either one, and alphabetically arrange all of the character qualities that interest you. And then each day as you read the book of proverbs, you go through and read that proverb with an eye to drawing out statements, conclusions, warnings, promises relating to that character quality.

By the end of the 31 days or the two months or however long it takes you, you will have a little notebook or a little file system on the qualities as related from the book of proverbs. And after you have completed each of those sheets, you can then go and write your own definition of that quality based on what you have learned from proverbs. It's a beautiful way to study the character qualities.

Then thirdly, how do you study the character qualities as a family or as a growth group? Well, if any of you are really interested in this, the Gothard Seminar has produced materials recently that really goes into depth or detail on how to use the character qualities for personal or group study. But some of the suggestions you might use are this. Just take a quality such as courage.

And you spend from one to six weeks on each quality. I would suggest at least two weeks as a family on each character quality. And each or every other day, you have a different aspect of that character quality to work through.

For instance, courage. The first day or two, you define it. Then you look it up in concordance and you cross-reference it.

Then you list all the synonyms that have to do with courage. And then you find the antonyms that express the opposite of courage. And then you find scriptural examples of courage.

There are lots of them. Then you find scriptural examples of the absence of courage. Then you can find insights and cause and effects that are a result of either having or not having courage.

Then you can ask the family to seek out needs in their own life in this particular area and pray for each other. You can make a notebook as a family with one section on each quality. You can design projects for your children that help them, for instance, to understand what courage really is.

And if your children are small, what we need to do then is to learn what character qualities ought to be developed in the order of their importance. This material was given out at the Bill Gothard Pastors' Seminar. And it's very helpful, I think, because it tells you some of the character qualities, and we've just listed a few here, at each stage of your child's growth.

He calls from birth to six the discipline or the foundation stage. And it's at this stage that your child can learn attentiveness, obedience, contentment, neatness, gratefulness, truthfulness. The age from six to twelve is the training stage, and this is when children gather information.

And it's at this stage that they can actively learn patience, dependability, determination, punctuality, loyalty, fairness. Then the skill stage from ages twelve to twenty. Some of us never quite got over that.

That's when you're supposed to learn self-control. This is where a child can learn, or a young person can learn wisdom, self-control, discretion, endurance, humility, love, creativity. And then there's the apprenticeship stage, at least as what he calls it, from the age of twenty to thirty, when people are learning to serve.

And you can learn thoroughness, flexibility, availability, and so forth. Then from thirty to fifty, the stage of public ministry. And then from fifty on, the stage of counsel or guidance.

And then from death on, the stage of heritage, when the focus is on the written or living epistles. In other words, the lives that have been affected by your life. The fourth area, a suggestion we'll deal with in practical areas, how to study godly men's lives as a family.

Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth, and Paul. All of these we've talked about. You can read their stories.

And I think it's really good to get the material or the character sketches, if your children are the right age for it, and use those as reference books. Read stories using a Bible dictionary. Get all the information you can about this one person in the world.

You'd be amazed if you take a Bible dictionary and find everything you can about Peter. It'll take days and days and days. Or Moses, or Paul, or Abraham.

You list their strengths and their weaknesses. And then you deal with your own strengths or weaknesses relative to theirs. You can get the godly men of old and assign biographies to your children of great Christians.

You can ask them to write letters to the godly contemporaries of this age. Let them interview the older Christians in your church who've lived a long time and who have a walk with God. And then five, learn how to look at Christian success stories.

We must be careful how we view successful men who become Christians. The inference is, if a millionaire becomes a Christian, God got a plum. If an entertainer becomes a Christian, God got a gym.

And if a quarterback becomes a Christian, God got pure gold. Now, what God got was another vessel that needs to be filled by him. But we must be careful because it is unfair to both them and our children to put them too quickly on a pedestal of success and to add the pressure of immediate spiritual responsibility to their newfound faith.

Oftentimes it's too much too soon, and oftentimes it cheats them of their right to have a spiritual childhood. So often God will temper their success in order to glorify the spiritual, to humble them personally, or to develop their testimony through testing. So be careful that you don't glamorize, for instance, Christian athletes' performances.

You tell your children, boy, you better watch old Roger today, he's a Christian. And Roger goes out there and he gets nailed behind the line of scrimmage eight times, throws 27 incomplete passes, four interceptions, and is carried from the game in a stretcher. And little Johnny says, boy, it's neat to be a Christian.

See, the danger is athletes don't always win. Don't put them in that box and confuse them, and you frustrate the athlete. Set their standards apart, not their performance.

God, as we said earlier, may not allow their performance to be the same after they become a Christian. But you can point to the way they win, and you can point to the way they lose, to the way they take instruction, to the way they take criticism, to the way they take injury, to the way they handle priorities, to the way they handle money, to the way they handle praise, to the way they witness to their peers, to the way they deal with the press, to the way they handle pressure, to the way they handle their families. See, these are the important things.

But so often we get so carried away that we get confused and we try to tell our children, hey, so-and-so is a Christian, boy, he's going to be a good one now. And oftentimes his career goes down, but his life goes up, and his witness goes up, and his character changes. So we need to major on their character, not on their performance.

Then sixth, how to find character qualities in daily experiences. The same passage that we shared earlier, I believe, is found in Psalm 101, that says, let's make the godly of the land our heroes. And it goes on to say, invite the godly into your home.

And one thing you can do to promote godly characteristics in your children is when missionaries come to town or guest speakers come to town, invite them into your home and expose your children to those who have a ministry with the Word of God. Teach them how to pray according to the character qualities. Don't teach them just to pray that Johnny's leg will heal, but help them to teach that Johnny will gain patience while his leg is healing.

Learn to help them at the end of the day to relate each day's experience at the supper tables to character qualities in people's lives and in their own. Learn to relate character to nature by using something like the study materials, the Gothard materials. Learn to share from the newspaper or from the television set the news events and the character qualities that go along with the leadership of our nation and the needs there.

Stop and discuss TV shows. If they've watched them and they've stopped, turn the sound down and just say, why don't we talk a little bit now about what happened on that program? And discuss the different characters instead of just the plot of the thing. Discuss the qualities of life that the people either did or didn't have so the children will remember that's what's important.

Give prizes for the illustrations of character qualities. And above all, be sensitive to make the qualities you study a part of your own life. Because we need to be their heroes if it doesn't work in us.

And then seven, learn how to do a composite of God's Wonder Woman and God's Superman by taking certain passages of scripture and laying them out, such as Proverbs 31 and First Peter 3. That's God's Wonder Woman. Help your children work their way through that. And God's Superman can be found in First Thessalonians, First Timothy, Titus and First Peter and other places.

List the qualities and define them. Well, so much for the super practical aspect of the thing. But this is where it's at.

If we don't make it work in our lives and in their lives, what will we have accomplished? Nothing. Well, God knows we need visible examples to look up to, heroes, and the Word of God is full of hundreds of them. But God has given us some guidelines.

We are to look for men and women who are single-mindedly committed to God, whose strength is in the Lord alone, who takes no glory to himself, whose life stands the test of time, and whose character transcend his accomplishments. Now, you go home today and frame questions just to find out from your children and your friends who their heroes are and then begin immediately or continue fervently, as the case may be, above all, to make the godly of the land their heroes, the missionaries, the prayer warriors, the faithful who serve, the humble who lead. The men and women who reveal God, those are our heroes.

And our children need to understand that. Our job is to do that. Satan's job is to counterfeit that.

And he's doing a great job. It's about time we as Christians stand up and reveal the difference between Satan's lies and God's truth about heroes. The difference is God's character.

Let's pray. Father, sensitize our spirits in the days to come that character is what really counts. Teach us, Father, not to be satisfied with performance, but to look into the perfect law of liberty, to discern the qualities of life you desire us to have, and to pray without ceasing and to cooperate with your Spirit in achieving those qualities in our lives.

Father, so many here with small children, even this morning, can perhaps for the first time begin to deal with their children from a standpoint of quality of character. We just pray, Father, that as the days unfold, we may become more and more mindful that this is what real heroes are made of. Teach us by thy Spirit in the days to come, Father, and just fill us with so full of Jesus that wherever we go, we'll be excited, thrilled, and available to proclaim the good news.

Change us, Father, daily with ever-increasing splendor into your precious image. For we pray in Jesus' name.

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