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### **You Want to be a Hero ?**

In Junior High my hero was Pat Stenkamp. I wanted to talk like Pat Stenkamp, I wanted to walk like him. He was clever, smooth and confident. He was a great athlete and always had the gals hanging around him. In my little mind it seemed he had it all together and I wanted to be just like him. He went away to college to run track for the University of Washington. In addition to scholarships, he was given free training shoes and I remember one time when I needed a pair for track, since we had the same shoe size, he actually gave me one of his older pairs. I remember wearing these shoes so proudly. They were yellow mesh with blue stripes made by Nike. They were the ones with the waffle pattern on the bottom. I knew I could run much faster in them. Growing up we didn't have such money for those expensive shoes so I felt pretty neat showing them off to my friends...but the best part was they used to be Pat Stenkamp's shoes and he ran for the University, he was my hero.

Where are all of the hero's today? Who are your heroes? Are you the hero type for grandchildren to look up to? For AWANA kids to look up to and say, I want to be just like him, I want to talk just like her. Are we being the kind of men and women who kids look up to and think, (they would never say this out loud) I want to walk my life in their same shoes. I want to be like them. Where have all the hero's gone today? On this election week we rejoice that some of the people we voted for got in office, and are saddened that some did not. Yet, we know that there will be those we voted in that will soon disappoint us. Those we had pinned much hope on will be disgraced in failure. Politics, leadership in business, in our homes and now too often the church has dropped the hero ball. We have a character crisis that is ruining our land. So many say Don't look at me my feet are made of clay, Don't fixate on the man, people will disappoint us every time...but where are the hero's. Where are the men and women who will stand alone. Where are those who will walk not in tandem with the morals and beliefs of this worlds, but will stand for truth in an ever darkening and decaying mess around us. Where are those Daniel's who will stand up for God even though others around aren't standing up. Where are the Nehemiah's who keep building when everything else screams stop. Where are the Nehemiah's who will stand against worldly greed? Where are those handful who are willing to be a hero?

I know many never grew up with a model that was worth following. Maybe it was an abusive or distant dad, maybe you have been modeled a wild life that ran on the

raw edge of the world's pleasure trove. Maybe you grew up in Middle America with still no model, no hero. All you ever experienced was complacent ambivalence. Prayer and the reading of God's Word was not integrated into family life. You watched your parents say one thing and then do another. Your teachers in school, your coaches on the field failed to be the models they could have been. Is there any need for examples? At work you watch as people sleep their way to the top, rip off the company for all they can and unethically scratch each others back's raw. Cheating on wives, unmarried cohabitation. What are we teaching our kids? Is there any need for Godly heroes today? My purpose this morning is to challenge men and women, youth to stand for God and be a hero. Remember all who claim the name of God are being watched. What do you wish to model to those younger kids. Be assured they are watching. What do you wish to model to your children? Your friends, your neighbors? Chances are you are somebodies hero...what are they seeing?

Turn with me to Nehemiah chapter 5:14-19. In the first part of this chapter we see that Nehemiah has confronted the wealthy aristocracy with their sins against the people. The nobles, some who had helped bankroll the return of captives out of slavery were now exploiting these same people, charging exorbitantly high interest rates in a time where there was great overpopulation, famine and high taxes. Nehemiah urges them to stop feeding that monstrous greed within and begin to follow God's way showing compassion to these people who are helpless. Nehemiah backs up his talk with his walk. Lets read Nehemiah 5:14-19 and picture the example, the hero that Nehemiah was.

Nehemiah was one who led by example. He was a leader who modeled what he wanted his people to do. Notice in verse 14 he had just received a promotion. He had been appointed to the governor ship of all Judah. He had every opportunity to exercise his authority, his rights, his privilege. But he foregoes all that so he can be an example to the nobles, the rulers, the officials, but not only them but the bricklayers, the carpenters, and the farmers. His example as the leader made him a hero worth following. Nehemiah and his servants never once in the twelve years he was governor took advantage of the governors expense account. This was a great break with tradition. The former governor's had milked that position for all it's worth simply to line their own pockets, thinking nothing of the people. Nehemiah had been blessed with enough to live comfortably and did not burden the people by taking what was rightfully his. He could have...it was his privilege, but he didn't. He generously shared with others of what he had.

Verse 15 the former governor's took their salary, expenses and then stole even more. They squeezed everything they could from the people. Even their servants were

domineering to the people. The former governors put their buddies in offices so they could rip others off too. They threw lavish parties for their friends. Nehemiah comes and cleans up the corrupt government. He comes through and cleans house. Others may operate that way...but I cannot. Nehemiah's example was sending a clear message to the people. I'm not in this for the money. I'm not in this to build my own empire. I'm not in this for the prestige. His message? I'm here to serve God and the people of God. Nehemiah combats the nobles greed and desire for more by sacrificially giving up his rightful rights, to better serve the people. How deep would have been the impact of his words had they not been backed up by actions. Are the words we tell our children, business partners, neighbor's are they back up with actions?

How can we begin to be a hero worth following? We often think of a hero as someone who does these great things, things no one else could do at great risk and personal sacrifice...that's a hero. I believe today, doing just ordinary things can make one an extraordinary hero. The reason is so few are willing to make the sacrifice. How can we be a hero. First, Sacrificially give up your rightful privileges. If we desire to be a Godly example in our homes there are certain things we must go without. We deserve rest after coming home from a stressful day at work. After a busy and stressful day often it's all you can do to ease into that sofa and read the paper or watch the evening news. You bring home the bacon...let the wife fry it up while you rest. Mom's you deserve a break today after corralling the kids from one event to the next, acting as policeman and judge all wrapped up together. The kids have yelled at mom all day and she deserves a rest. She deserves the night off too. But...how would the man who wants to be a Godly hero respond? By sacrificially giving up ones right to rest, to play with the kids, to give mom a break. It is these kinds of other centered things we can do that make us heroes to our kids, examples worth following. This is the tough way to the ring of honor. It demands consistency and dedication and love. And what better illustration of sacrificial giving than a mom. Am I not right? When one enters momhood all vestiges of individual expressions of freedom are gone. Sacrificially mom has given up her rights to pour her life into those kids. What a sacrifice and what better "spending" of ones life could there be. Most all of us had at least one mom. Some I know did not, there are men and women without partners who are valiantly stepping in some pressure packed shoes filling the roles of both mom and dad. My what a sacrifice of giving ones life for these kids, my heart goes out to you. I don't know how you do it. If we want to begin being hero, it demands us to be sacrificially giving up some our rightful rights. Others may take full advantage of their rights to rest, to privacy, to freedom, you've put in your time... the hero cannot if he wants to make a difference.

Notice what motivated Nehemiahs' sacrificial giving of his rightful rights. See verse 15. It was the fear of God. Proverbs begins by exhorting us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Why is that? How could the fear and reverence of God motivate us to sacrificially giving up our rightful rights? Fear is not terror. Fear involves an awesome respect for One far greater than ourselves. We are very careful about what we do and say around those we have great awe for. We address them using titles of honor, we are never rude or disrespectful, we never interrupt when they speak. When they speak or are spoken about, the E.F. Hutton principle kicks in, We listen. Is it any wonder that Nehemiah, the man who prayed constantly, one who was constantly before the throne of God in prayer, is it any wonder that he feared God. One who fears God is motivated to sacrificially give up rightful rights. One who fears God recognizes that there is someone far bigger than their own personal agenda. Question? Why do we lack a healthy fear of God today? Do we show a fear and respect for God when we come here this morning allowing our thoughts to drift off to the afternoon activities, ball games and chores to get done. How come we struggle to stay awake during a service dedicated to worshipping God. How can we come to church and flippantly talk during prayer? Is this just another school assembly where we feel free to walk about when we want a drink of water? Is God no longer worth taking seriously. Why do we fail to see his greatness and be struck with awe? Be assured one can be informal in a meeting about God and serious about God himself. God is much more important than a structure, yet, we must ask ourselves, am I being flippant with God? How is it that we have become so casual with God? Is He a friend? Is He kind, certainly Is He a just another buddy to help us through tough times? I think we would do well to think through the judgment and power and strength and infinite wisdom that God is. Nehemiah knew God well. He feared God and as one of His children, Nehemiah refused to do anything that might make God look bad. A flippant view of God leads to sloppy actions. A healthy fear of God can cause us to sacrificial giving up of ones rights.

Not only did Nehemiah give up his rightful rights, he gave of himself. He was in Jerusalem not to build up his own bank account, but to serve God and the people of God. See verse 16 he applied himself to the work on the wall. He wasn't just the coach who gave the orders, he was out there sweating with the best of them. He refused to use his position to take advantage of others. The same verse 16 he didn't buy up any of the cheap real estate. He avoided any accusations of conflict of interest. In his position he had the power to change zoning laws, streets, and services. He knew where the real estate would skyrocket in value, but he refused to do that. He was a hero with integrity in his business dealings. He gave of his time, money, ability, and strength.

Do you want to be a hero? An example others can follow? Then give of yourself, all that you have. You may say, I don't have that much ability, I can't do much. I'm just a little old V.W. bug without much power. Maybe there are Ferrari's that can blow you away using only six of their cylinders, but we aren't into comparison games. If your giving it all you can with the six cylinders you've been given then that's what God desires. Maybe you are a sports car that blow people away using half a motor, to you I say rev up your engine, To much has been given much will be required. You will be judged not on what you've accomplished but on what you've done with what you've been given. You want to be a hero? Then give it all. Nehemiah gave 100% to what he was called to do. A hero is never halfhearted. A hero sacrificially gives up rightful privileges and gives out himself, time, money, talents. Sacrificial love is so attractive. It doesn't look to people for the rewards and back slaps. Look at verse 19, Nehemiah looks to God for his reward. He does these things for God and looks to the One who can reward him.

Do you want to be a hero? An example that would be worthy of following? Then give up some of those rightful rights and give out your time, money, ability. We all need heroes to give up vision, hope, a path to follow. If you are an aspiring hero remember to keep in step with the Spirit's power and guidance. This hero stuff is not for oneself to look good, but for God to look good. True freedom comes from working under the power of God and not yourself. We cannot afford to "grow weary of doing good." Can you think about those who God has placed in your life? How can we be more of a hero to them? Pray "God, I know that Jimmy needs a hero...show me how I can creatively be that hero." Sacrificially give up your rights and give out yourself to others. Lets give people some heroes they can look up to.