

Be a Child's Christian Hero
Deut. 6:4-9; 8:2-3 and 2 Timothy 4:1-5
October 31, 2010

When I was a kid I used to love to read comic books at the barber shop, and watch the TV shows about heroes. There was Superman, Batman & Robin, and for the ladies along came Wonder Woman. Probably my favorite all-time movie hero figure is John Wayne. I don't know who your heroes were, but we all had them. They are important to us because they inspire us to be a better version of ourselves and to look beyond ourselves to how we can serve other people around us.

Origin of the word *hero* in the ancient languages includes ideas related to protector, defender, sacrifice for another's good, and keeping vigil over another person. A spiritual hero would be one who strives toward spiritual strength in their own life, and who sacrifices something of themselves in order to protect, defend and keep vigil over the soul of another. Children need spiritual heroes who are dedicated to keeping vigil over their young vulnerable souls.

Who is that to be? It's you and me. Spiritual heroes are not perfect people, nor are they completely perfect in their own spiritual lives. Instead, they are adults (parents and others in the church) who understand that the eternal lives of children are more important than their temporal lives here on earth. They are the ones who understand that Sunday School, Bible Study and Worship are more important than soccer, baseball, volleyball or whatever other activity competes for their time. Spiritual heroes understand that a child can gain the whole world by getting good enough in a sport to get a scholarship to college, but such activities do nothing for their eternal soul. In other words, spiritual heroes get the big picture of eternity as it relates to the temporary snapshot of 8 or so decades here on earth. Sports and other activities are important for mental and physical health, but a spiritual hero does not forego spiritual health in a child because the secular activities conflict with spiritual ones.

Moms and Dads vow to be that spiritual hero for their child when they bring them for baptism. When children are baptized specific vows are made, and the following is one of the most important:

*Will you nurture these children (persons)
in Christ's holy Church,
that by your **teaching and example** they may be guided
to accept God's grace for themselves,
to profess their faith openly,
and to lead a Christian life?*

The Bible assures us that parents are to be one of the primary teachers of things spiritual for their children. *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4)

The rest of us in the Christian community pledge at a child's baptism to do the same thing as we help support the efforts of the parents.

The passages we read from Deuteronomy remind us that we are to *tell them the story* of how we are in relationship with God through Christ. We are to witness to them about the Lord. We must tell them the story that they are a part of.

We do this with biological families. We tell them stories about their grandparents and great-grandparents so they can know who it is that they are. However we can only do this if we know the stories...it's the same with spiritual stories. You must know your story from the Bible as well as your personal story of a relationship with Christ.

We must also show children how to live by what we *do*. A child who sees their parents read on a regular basis are more likely to believe the parent when they say that reading is important. A child who sees a parent exercising regularly is more likely to believe them when they say exercising is important. A child who sees a parent reading the Bible, going to Bible study, going to some small group ministry like Sunday School and involving themselves in worship are more likely to believe them when their parent tells them these things are important. More importantly, they are more likely not just to believe these activities are important, but they are more likely to do them themselves. Dropping your child off for Sunday School and then leaving the building undermines the message you are wanting to give your child, and communicates to the church that it is little more than a convenient baby-sitter.

More and more often I witness the reality that parents are abdicating their role and responsibility as parents to the teachers, counselors and administrators in the public school system.

Unfortunately, many parents are doing the same thing when it comes to the church. Parents are abdicating their role and responsibility as spiritual leader of their child to the church. That's one reason why so many children grow up and leave the church. They receive conflicting messages. The church tells them one thing, and parents tell them another by how they live in front of their children. Remember, children have a stronger bond with parents that they do with the church. Parents must never forget the truth: *Children do what we do, not what we say.*

The passage from 2 Timothy assures us that in every time, there will be those who, in the absence of teaching, will search for something to fill that void – they very possibly will find it in false teaching that is pleasing to the ear. You don't want that to happen to your children.

I encourage you this morning to make the decision today to be your child's spiritual hero. Sacrifice for them, watch over them, and live your life like you want them to live theirs.

I want to lift up this final thought to you from one of Oswald Chambers' sermons. He invites us to remember:

"Until others learn to draw on the life of the Lord Jesus directly, they will have to draw on His life through you. You must literally be their source of supply, until they learn to take their nourishment from God." (Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest - Feb 9)