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Who Is Your Hero?

By Mike Pace

Most everyone has a hero. Sometimes we don't even realize it, but there is some one who is our hero. Especially when young, the natural tendency is to identify with someone as a hero. Most motion pictures and movies have at least one character that can be identified as the hero. The dictionary defines the word hero as "one greatly regarded for his achievements or qualities; the chief man in a poem, play or story; an illustrious warrior; someone that is bold and courageous". Someone, anyone that you or I admire and uphold in our estimation as a person to emulate. Many of our young people today have selected numerous individuals as their "hero". Some, because of their admiration for athletes and sports figures, have various football, basketball, baseball or other sports personalities as their "heroes". Others respect and admire movie stars; and still others, have as their "heroes" some of the rock music stars of today.

I would probably agree with many of you that many of the "heroes" of today have certain qualities which might gain the respect and admiration of many people. Some are admired for their dedication and commitment to their particular field or area of endeavor. Some of these "heroes" are regarded highly because of their rigorous training and others are esteemed for their accomplishments. In one sense of the word, it is good to know of someone whose lifestyle you are familiar, to emulate certain specific qualities or traits. However, on the other hand, I'm equally confident that you'll agree with me when I suggest that certain areas of the lives of even these "heroes" should not be imitated by others, not even admired or respected in any sense of the word. It is a shame when some of these "heroes", who are in the public eye, conduct themselves in such a shameful manner. Some are guilty of displaying

shameful conduct and sportsmanship, certainly a trait not to be desired by anyone. Others whose lives are in the spotlight are guilty of using drugs or alcohol illegally. Other "heroes" leave much to be desired as they live such openly blatant immoral lives, misrepresenting to their admirers such a disgraceful lifestyle. Certainly those whose lives are admired by others should be encouraged to be extremely cautious about how they conduct themselves while being scrutinized so closely by others. But that is not what we are attempting to deal with in this article. Our concern is focused upon those of us who have our "heroes" of everyday life.

"WHO IS YOUR HERO?" Who do you uphold in your estimation as one whose life you would most like to emulate? I'm sorely afraid that too many would quickly respond to a question like that by calling out the name of a sports figure, or a movie star or a rock star, or some other individual without carefully considering the seriousness of such a question. "WHO IS YOUR HERO?"

If we were to look to the world for an answer we would likely receive numerous and varied answers. As the world thinks, each is entitled to his/her own ideals and should not force their ideas upon others. I shall not attempt to force upon you my ideas or opinions either. So, to best answer this questions let's turn to the final and absolute resolve in all matters - the "Word of God". Since God is our Maker and Creator (Psalms 95:6), then He logically knows what is best for us in this life. As Jesus said, "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." (Matthew 6:8). He knows our physical needs as well as our spiritual needs.

To assist us in living this life as we ought, God included in Holy Writ the ex-

amples of others as both encouragement and instruction to us: Consider Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." And I Corinthians 10:6, which reads "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." In other words, there are those whose lives are recorded in the Bible that we might know of their mistakes and shortcomings and being prewarned we might be able to avoid the same pitfalls in life. Continue reading I Corinthians 10:1-13 to read how that God forewarns us to not imitate the lives of some individuals.

There are some whose lives should be admired and respected and even imitated. Let's start at the very top. The Apostle Paul encourages us, "Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God . . ." (Ephesians 5:1). Since we are made in the very image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27) we should ever strive to imitate the qualities of our Creator. I Peter 2:21ff informs us "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps . . ." The Apostle Paul instructed us to "Be ye followers (imitators) of me." (I Corinthians 4:16). But Paul was not really speaking of his own personal qualities because he went on to explain in I Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers (imitators) of me, even as I also am of Christ."

In the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 6 verse 12, the writer states, "That ye be not slothful, but followers (imitators) of them who through faith and patience inherit the blessings." Those referred to include those HEROES OF FAITH written about and recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. If you really want to have a "Hero" worth following, worth imitating, worth admiring and respecting, then especially consider carefully the lives of those that God considers noteworthy. Lives worth emulating and imitating to the extent that God included their exam-

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Biblical Addiction

By Jack Gray

Addiction is a word that usually has terrible connotations. It suggests a bondage from which one cannot release himself. To the Christian it brings to mind the coils of the serpent. At the very best it is a pitiable plight.

Sometimes it is a struggle with tobacco and anyone who thinks that it is easy to quit smoking has never been addicted. They may have toyed with it a little but it was never really that important to them. Once the deep craving for nicotine has been established, it is a terrible taskmaster; and some lose their souls because of it, because they stand self-condemned by their own consciences in regard to it. Romans 14:14 and 23 make it very clear that we must not live a self-condemned life. Sometimes the culprit is alcohol. Solomon knew how pleasant it could be, yet he said that the time comes when *"At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder"* (Prov. 23:32). Drinking does such terrible things to people. It wrecks homes and destroys lives. Yet there are those who repent in shame and sorrow time after time; and yet in half a lifetime are really never free from liquor's enslavement. In fact, just one look at the life and struggles of a real alcoholic should be enough to make anyone never take that first drink.

Drugs are even more addictive. Some of their effects are both accumulative and reoccurring. You can have all the bad effects at a later date, without even taking the drug. It tears at our hearts to see what it does to the lives of its victims.

Sin is a terrible master; yet we all have a master. Paul said, *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yielded yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Rom. 6:16). So we choose our own master.

We are also taught in New Testament Christianity not to allow things other than Jesus to control our lives. The apostle declared, *"I will not be brought under the power of any"*, in speaking of habits of the flesh. (I Cor. 6:12); and Solomon emphasized that he who controls himself is greater than he who conquers a city. (Prov. 16:32). Self-control, therefore, is truly one of the Christian graces as indicated in II Peter 1:6.

Yet with this background we find a most remarkable statement in I Corinthians 16:15 concerning the house of Stephanas *"... they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."* This is Bib-

lical addiction! We need to give ourselves completely to Jesus as sinners give their bodies to alcohol or drugs.

Sometimes we simply fail to see that Christianity was an all-consuming passion with the early Christians. It was not a manner of convenience. It didn't matter if they had a headache. The busy activities of life were not permitted to stand in the way. They were addicted. There was a deep craving in their souls that compelled them to serve Jesus.

Sadly many Christians today have lost that spirit. We spend our time explaining why we are the exception in regard to *"forsake not the assembly"* or *"seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."* We are looking for loopholes in regard to true liberality and presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice. We want to be involved; but we are not sure we want to be THAT involved.

It is time, therefore, to call God's people back to Biblical addiction. Let's relearn the application of Galatians 2:20 and what it should mean in our lives to say: *"I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* Beginning today, let's be addicted to Jesus.

How Much Difference Has The Great Commission Made In Your Life?

By Cline R. Paden

Perhaps no truth has been more universally accepted among members of churches of Christ than that our Lord has commissioned us to evangelize earth's total population in our time. There is probably more unanimity of thought among us regarding this matter than there is concerning any other single Biblical concept.

Furthermore, we know at least academically, that the church which is *"subject to Christ"* (Eph. 5:24) has no higher priority than the necessity of covering the earth with a knowledge of the Lord as *"waters cover the sea"* (Isa. 11:9). While we have allowed other matters, some trivial and childish, to divide us, on this issue we are of one heart and one soul.

With few, if any dissenters in the brotherhood to question the obvious claims of the Great Commission on our lives, and with the only semblance of op-

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ple for us and then said, *"Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."* Imitating the lives of men will lead to many disappointments and many become disillusioned with life itself when trying to follow in the steps of men, when these men are not themselves living godly lives. But having "heroes" that God considers "heroes" will surely lead us on the right path towards contentment and satisfaction in this life and ultimately eternal life.

Now, "WHO IS YOUR HERO?"

Sympathy

Our sympathy is extended to the family of ORDELL HEAVIN of Springfield, Mo. Bro. Heavin recently passed from this life following a lengthy illness. Bro. Heavin was a faithful Christian in this life and is remembered mostly of his frequent and untiring visits to the hospitals to visit those upon beds of affliction. He also has written many articles for many of our brotherhood publications, including this publication. Our hearts are saddened at his departure but our spirits are made to rejoice when we remember, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."* (Psalms 116:15)

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position limited to questions of METHOD rather than of the work itself, it is simply amazing that so little has been done! It is almost impossible to accept the fact that MORE than 18,000 congregations of the Lord's people, having accepted the fact that He holds us responsible for the evangelization of the world, could have such a poor record of performance.

Since we believe that our knowledge of Christ imposes upon us the sacred obligation of sharing that knowledge with our contemporaries, surely we will not object to answering the following questions: "How much difference has the Great Commission made in our lives? Has the responsibility which each of us shares for preaching the Gospel in every hut, in every hamlet, on every hill on earth greatly altered our lifestyle? Have we already so budgeted our time, money, prayers, and energy to bring to fruition some plan or some commitment already made which will reflect the difference His last words on earth have made on our lives?"

Suppose Christ should say to us today, "I no longer want my Gospel preached throughout the world. I therefore forbid you to proclaim my message of salvation to the lost." Would that prohibition require you to cancel any plans now pending; How much of your financial projections would have to be re-directed? How much of your time would have to be re-assigned? To be really objective in replying to the foregoing questions consider this final one: What has happened during the past twelve months which could not have taken place had the Lord voiced such a prohibition one year ago today?

The Great Commission has already changed your life whether you are a Christian or not. All of the benefits of a moral, social, and political nature which have made our world a better place in which to live have been the results of Christ's teaching and the distribution of that teaching by those who have spoken for him. If you are a Christian your life has been changed by virtue of the fact that someone told you of Jesus and the old life ended and "all things became new." (II Cor. 5:17). Whoever preached the Gospel to you was fulfilling the demands of the Great Commission in that moment.

The question we're asking in this moment is: how much has your life been changed by the Great Commission since you became a beneficiary of it?

I believe that Jesus intended that the Great Commission should affect our lives to the same degree the commission He received from the Father affected His life. Jesus came to earth with a mission to accomplish: "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Just before his crucifixion, he pray to the Father: "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me

to do" (John 17:4). And to prove that he intended that our commission should affect our lives as radically as his commission affected his life, he declared: "As the Father hath sent me, even so, send I you." (John 20:21).

No sacrifice was too great for him to make to complete successfully his mission to earth. "For their sakes I sanctify myself" (John 17:19), he declared in making himself available for man's needs. He refused to eat when mealtime came so he could break the bread of life to famished mankind, declaring that "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John 4:32). He came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10) and allowed no hindrance (Matt. 16:23), or circumstance of life to deter him (John 6:38). He knew his mission well and worked "the works of him who had sent him while it was day" (John 9:4). In all of his earthly sojourn he kept himself close to his Father and "was faithful to him who appointed him" (Heb. 3:20). With these thoughts in our mind let us hear him say again, "As my Father hath sent me even so send I you."

The same degree or urgency which prompted his faithfulness in fulfilling his commission needs to subsist in ours. The salvation of the world depends on it.

If the Great Commission has not greatly affected your life you probably have not greatly affected (for good) the condition of lost men. And if you have not worked in human redemption since your conversion you may well have lived in vain.

Consider these words of Ion Keith Falconer of Arabia, spoken to a past generation but with relevance for our time: "While vast continents live shrouded in midnight darkness and hundreds of millions still suffer the horrors of heathendom and Islam, the burden of proof rests on you to show that the circumstances in which God has placed you were meant to keep you out of the mission field."

Those are strong words but they were probably spoken by one who has seen a generation of men who claimed to believe in Christ go about their careless ways in total unconcern for untold millions yet untold.

Church Leadership Today - Is it Scriptural?

By Manuel DeOliveira

In the New Testament there were two forms of leadership organization, one based on charismatic gifts, which we shall call charismatic leadership and the other based on spiritual maturity.

The charismatic leadership was for the establishment, building up and spreading

of God's word, and its existence was necessary only while the church was young, while the one true faith had not been fully revealed (I Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:13) and it consisted of:

1. Apostles and prophets; (Eph. 2:20-22; I Cor. 12:28-30; Eph. 4:11).

2. Inspired teachers, gifted with supernatural wisdom, knowledge, faith and power to do miracles, healings and speak in tongues. (I Cor. 12:7-10, Rom. 1:11).

The leadership based on spiritual maturity was and is the ideal leadership, the way that God wants the church to be organized throughout the ages (Please follow the following Scriptures in your Bible):

1. Elders (Bishops/overseers, pastors/shepherds) and ministers (Deacons); (I Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; I Peter 5:1-3).

2. Apostles (distinct from the 12) Missionaries; (Acts 14:4; Rom. 16:7; Gal. 1:19; II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25).

3. Evangelists (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; II Tim. 4:5).

4. Mature Christians (I Cor. 16:15-18) who were preachers, teachers, and workers for God (see Acts 8:4; II Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12).

5. Teachers (James 3:1).

THE CHURCH TODAY:

The church once again faces tremendous challenges today if it is to continue to grow; all indications are that we have virtually stopped growing. Bro. Paden, writing a series of articles for the "Firm Foundation", claimed that in 1976, 2,500,000 Christians only baptized 150,000 people, and quoted other brethren who have studied our growth over the past twenty years and who claim that if our present lack of growth continues the next twenty years will see the end of the church.

Somewhere in our leadership organization lies the answer to our lack of growth, since we cannot expect immature Christians to do most of the converting.

The obvious difference between our leadership organization today and that of the New Testament are:

1. The Elders, generally speaking, hire "ministers" to do most of the preaching and some of the teaching and counseling that they were appointed to do.

They are like shepherds who have hired "pastors" to look after their flock. Often this hired "minister" lacks the Biblical qualifications to build up a congregation, but has a university or college degree.

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The present trend to have elders and fully sported "ministers" working together cannot be defended Scripturally.

2. The lack of apostles as they were called in the New Testament (see Phil. 2: 25, etc.), or missionaries as we call them now is amazing. Bro. Reuel Lemmons in a recent editorial to the "Firm Foundation" claimed that 95% of preachers, preached only to 5% of the population, that leaves 5% of preachers spread through 95% of the population.

An urgent need of the church today is men and women who are unselfish enough to give up some of the pleasures of life in order to reach the lost. We need people on the move for Christ.

3. Evangelist were the closest counterpart of our "ministers" today. However they only stayed in a congregation as long as there was a doctrinal problem to solve, or in order to appoint elders and deacons, after that they moved on to the next city. They were people on the move for Christ.

4. The lack of mature Christians' involvement in the preaching and teaching of the gospel is staggering. In practice we have reached a stage when we have a definite visible division between the "clergy and the laity". This is caused by the pre-eminence given to the "minister" who can feed the flock because he has gone to a Bible School or has graduated from a University; and the person sitting on the pew who works in a secular work and often has no university education, and thus he feels inadequate, or not as good as the "minister".

When 2,500,000 Christians baptized only 150,000 people in a year, it clearly shows that at least 2,400,000 Christians did not baptize anybody.

Mature Christians in local congregations should be the back-bone of evangelism and Biblical teaching, the light and salt of the world.

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

The Church will continue to decline until such time as we have less "ministers" and more elders doing the oversight of the congregation.

More "ministers" should become what God wanted them to be, missionaries or evangelists, people on the move for Christ.

Most important, mature Christians should realize that they are not "simply members", if they are mature they should be preaching and teaching, reaching out; until this is done, they will be held by God to be "unfaithful servants".

How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12: 2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*" (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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