

Authentic Heros

(Ken Wilson)

*After removing Saul, he made David their king.
He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse
a man after my own heart;
he will do everything I want him to do.'*
Acts 13:22

Chuck Swindoll writes, "Our world is desperately in need of models worth following. Authentic heroes. People of integrity, whose lives inspire us to be better, to climb higher, to stand taller. This has always been true."

I am in search of heroes myself. I find myself captivated by real-life figures who call me to live beyond where I am today. Real people who understand that life is hard but, still live life with integrity and purpose. Most of us have a few men or women who inspire us to be more. Who are those figures for you? Who are your heroes? John Adams? Kurt Warner? Helen Benafield? Indiana Jones? Athanasius (a prominent figure from Church History)? Elizabeth Elliot?

Over the years, I have encountered a few heroes that have captivated me. Earnest Shackleton, the captain of the ill-fated Antarctic expedition aboard the HMS Endurance, is a favorite. In 1914 Shackleton led a team of 28 men to the Antarctic in an attempt to be the first trans-antarctic expedition, landing on one coast of the continent and crossing the South Pole to come out on the other side. As the Endurance crew neared the coast of Antarctica they encountered ice floes that beset and eventually crushed the ship. Without a boat and without any way to communicate with the outside world Sir Earnest Shackleton and his crew survived on the pack ice eating seals and burning blubber in converted stoves for 22 months in one of the most inhospitable regions of the world. After an 800-mile voyage across open seas in one of the ship's salvaged lifeboats (Don't even get me started about the voyage of the James B. Caird) the entire crew of 28 men were rescued. Shackleton had kept a diverse team of sailors, scientists, and adventurers together and did not lose a man. There is a real hero.



I also find myself enthralled with many of the characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's Trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*. These characters are brilliantly portrayed in the film version as well as the books; however, I must pause long enough to encourage you to read the books (maybe even as a family). They present heroism in epic fashion and are deservedly called classics.

From kingly Aragon and wise Gandalf to the swift elf Legolas and the unstoppable Dwarf Gimli the book is full of heroic figures. Yet no figures are more heroic than the diminutive hobbits Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin. I may identify too closely with these four hairy feet, meal-eating, story loving adventure seeking home bodies, but I still think they are worth a closer look. They are small beings when compared to those around them, and yet they, through loyalty, friendship, and self-denial play the most significant role in the victory over growing evil that seems certain to overtake them. More heroes in fiction form.

These stories have captured my attention, and, I suspect, many of you as well. I have read four versions of the Endurance Expedition and haven't grown tired of it yet. Some of us have read the books and seen the movies repeatedly.

Stories of heroes have a powerful influence and mesmerizing impact on our lives, and God knows it. Stories happen to be, as Eugene Peterson would say, "the Holy Spirit's genre of choice." More of the bible comes in story form than any other. In fact, more comes in story genre than all the other genres combined. God has seen fit to deliver His revelation to us primarily in a narrative format. Again, Peterson says, "God reveals Himself not in a metaphysical formulation or cosmic fireworks display but in stories." In the midst of all that narrative, no



single character outside of Jesus Christ (the ultimate hero) receives more ink than King David - the central Old Testament hero.

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel (a single book in the Hebrew Canon) cover the *story* of this biblical *hero*. In the story of David, we find a man who was not recognized for his natural abilities (1 Samuel 16). He was unnoticed and did not even cross his father's mind when Samuel came looking for one of Jesse's sons to anoint as King. At one point in his life, he acted like a crazy man to save himself (1 Samuel 21:13). He dodged spears thrown by his father-in-law who happened to be his employer as well (1 Samuel 18:11). And let's not forget that when he was King of Israel, he committed adultery and murdered a man (2 Samuel 11).

The story of David is no sanitized saint story presenting life in gossamer terms unconnected with real life. No! This narrative is about a man who knows what it means to be the underdog, to grapple with a dysfunctional family, and face his own sin. He lives where you and I live, facing giants (1 Samuel 17) and the consequences of sinful choices (2 Samuel 12). David's life is the most comprehensive depiction of God-influenced humanity that we have. His is an ordinary, earthy life that God used to shape history and to bring Himself glory.

David is a real hero. He is authentic. He struggles with his passion which sometimes erupts in holy dancing before the ark of God (2 Samuel 6) and sometimes spills over into the bathtub of a soldier's wife (2 Samuel 11).

David is common and earthy and, yet one of the most amazing statements in scripture is made about him. In a sermon early in his missionary career, Paul makes explicit what is clearly implied in two Old Testament passages. While preaching in Antioch, Paul says God called David "a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22). How can that be? Here is a man with weaknesses and struggles that are obvious. Reading many portions of the Old Testament, he seems to be having his name drug through the mud. How does he rate such an epitaph? Is he really an authentic hero worth following? Should I read his story four times and take my family to see the movie?

I say, "Yes!" In David we find a hero far superior to Sir Earnest Shackleton. In him we find a role model more real than Aragon, Frodo and Sam. Most importantly, we find a hero that God sets before us as worthy of our time and consideration.

