

What does it mean to be a hero?

"God is raising up his heroes and He places them where they are needed and the world does not know where they came from." This quotation from A.B. Simpson has meant a lot to us at UPC this year. Denny Rydberg first shared it at a Tuesday evening meeting of the Inn, and in a way this saying has been a watchword for our students in University Ministries.

It is true too! God does raise up from among us men and women, girls and boys to be his models of hope — real people in real places who make a difference where they are needed in the world. It happens because when we belong to Jesus Christ, and when His love is at work in and through our lives, we then become available for God's grand purpose in the world.

This quote means a lot to us at UPC because one of the most important tasks we have, as a Christian church is to be about the business of encouraging, strengthening and deploying God's heroes.

But what is a hero? I think St. Paul has given the best definition and he does it in a totally unconscious way. Paul writes to his friends at Philippi that he wants to live his life each day so that Jesus Christ is honored, and then he prays, "It is my prayer that with full courage now as always Christ



From Your Minister

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shall be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." (Phil. 1)

The word Paul uses here that the English Bible translates "courage" is literally the Greek word "openness" — "with full openness." Yes that is the definition of a hero — someone out in the open where people can spot you and find you when they really need you. A hero is not necessarily a person who feels braver than

other people, but a hero stays in a place of risk just a few minutes or seconds longer than other people were willing or able to do. That exposure, whether in public view or behind the scenes, make that man or woman a hero.

This causes me to think that what the world needs are some heroes who are servants of Christ with full courage. We don't need more hidden, secret, silent Christians; though I realize

that there are times when each of us needs to retreat in order to gather strength and focus, but our destiny is to be heroes in ways unique to us.

We are meant to become that man or woman who does something concretely good in the open or behind the scenes. Paul is a hero in Philippians but so is his young friend Epaphroditus who "risked his neck" for Paul. They were both heroes — the one famous and the other with a name few of us can pronounce.

The best part of all is that when God places his heroes into their posts of responsibility, the world does not know where they came from. Where did this Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Teresa come from? Who ever heard of such a quiet and behind-the-scenes thing as a ministry to dying folks in Calcutta becoming for all of us an heroic event of world-wide consequences? How did Holland produce people like the family that hid the Otto Frank family with their daughter Anne from the Nazi invaders?

Heroes are ordinary people just trying to do what seems right as human beings who have experienced God's love. Heroes are rarely famous though some are later recognized for what they are. This is what A. B. Simpson meant by his sentence, "The world does not know where they came from."