

Jesus Was A Hero Maker

When I say the word, “hero” what images come to mind?

- Firefighters?
- Men and women who serve in the military?
- Teachers? (Pray for teachers going back to school)
- Medical personnel?

Maybe it’s someone closer to home. Your mom or dad. A grandparent. We also live in a day when we make heroes out of some interesting people- Athletes and pop singers and rock stars.

Superheroes are also really big right now. From the Avengers to Wonder Woman to the Incredibles there are superheroes everywhere.

Who’s your favorite superhero? According to ranker.com, here are the top 5 superheroes.ⁱ

5. Captain America 4. Spider-Man 3. Wolverine 2. Superman 1. Batman (Tech Note: Show these one at a time for a more dramatic “reveal” of the number one answer.)

Anyone else surprised that Aquaman isn’t on this list? Me neither!

Batman is number one on the list as the greatest superhero of all time, but do you know Batman couldn’t be Batman without the guy who enables Batman to be a hero?

Do you know who I’m talking about? That’s right: Alfred!

A free copy of the book we’re using for this series, Hero Maker, to anyone who can tell me his last name.

Yes: Pennyworth!

Here’s a little more information about Alfred Pennyworth.ⁱⁱ

His full name is Alfred Thaddeus Crane Pennyworth. He became little Bruce Wayne's legal guardian after the murder of his parents. Now he is his loyal

butler, best friend, aide-de-camp, and surrogate father. He's also British ex-Special Operations Executive operative.

The Wikipedia article about him calls him Batman's batman. There would be no Batman without Alfred.

People would not be saved if it wasn't for Commissioner Gordon shining the "bat symbol" into the sky and then Alfred doing his job—having Batman ready to go.

Tech Note: Shine Bat Symbol on the front wall of the auditorium.

This series isn't about Batman. It's about Alfred. Alfred is a hero maker.

We begin a six week series today called Hero Maker. It's based on this new book by Dave Ferguson called called...Hero Maker. As I've mentioned before I participate in an online sermon planning and preparation group, and for this series, we had the opportunity to work directly with Dave, the book's author, in developing the official sermon and teaching materials that will accompany the resources that go with the book. My prayer for all of us is that, through this 6-week series, we will all become Alfreds, hero makers in our own way, and in our own places whether at school, or where you work, right here in church, your child's little league team, or in your own family. I want you to become the maker of heroes that are far more important than the caped crusader in Gotham City.

Here's what we mean by "Hero Maker." Hero Maker: A person who shifts from being the hero to making others the hero in God's unfolding story.

Here's why this is so important, and why we need churches filled not just with heroes, but hero makers. I can't operate this church by myself. I can't reach this community by myself. The elders can't do it by themselves. But together, we can!

If each of us shifts from being the hero to making others the hero in God's unfolding story, we will see this church grow and have an impact like never before.

Of course, the ultimate hero maker, and example for all of us, is Jesus Christ.

In the book, *Hero Maker*, Dave Ferguson and co-author Warren Bird identify 5 essential practices of a hero maker. We're going to touch on each of these during this series but let me introduce them for you now.

In Matthew 28:16-20, some of His last words to his disciples, Jesus touches on all of the practices of a true hero maker. This passage is commonly known as the "Great Commission."

This is when Jesus commissions, or sends out His disciples—that is His students, His followers, His heroes—to fulfill the mission for which they had been trained. This is when they go from simply being his disciples, to become his apostles— his representatives and ambassadors.

This is such an important passage of Scripture for the church, because the commission they receive continues to ripple out to all of us. Jesus' mission and purpose didn't end with these 12 guys. That's just where it began.

This is why the church is on earth. This is the reason for our existence. But here's something shocking—according to Barna Research—51% of churchgoers say they've never heard about the Great Commission.ⁱⁱⁱ

So, I'm going to give you a commission of my own this morning— memorize the Great Commission during this series. In your bulletin you'll find a memorization card with the Great Commission printed on it.

Let's read Matthew 28:16-20.

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

This is the equivalent of Commissioner Gordon shining the “bat symbol” into the night sky. It’s a call to action. It’s Jesus sending out the heroes He’s made into a dark and dying world to save as many lost souls as possible.

All of the practices of a hero maker are in this commission and—if we understand these practices and start to live them out in this church and in our community—we will raise up a new generation of heroes and we will see countless lost people find salvation.

I. Multiplication Thinking

We see Jesus’ multiplication thinking when He challenges His heroes in Matthew 28:19, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.*”

From 12 disciples to disciples of all nations – that’s multiplication! Too often we think too small. We think in terms of addition, or even maintaining. We limit what we can do by what we can do.

Common Practice: Lead until you’ve reached the limit of your time and energy.

Hero Making Practice: Dream big and invest yourself in others to multiply your impact.

We see a great example of this in Jesus in the feeding of the 5,000. We just looked at this miracle a few weeks ago in our Seven Signs series, but we looked at it in the Gospel of John. Matthew includes a detail left out by John.

Jesus is the one who multiplies the loaves and fish, but He isn’t the one passing it out. Listen to Matthew 14:19, “And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”

Jesus let the disciples be the heroes and deliver lunch to the people.

As Jesus is multiplying the food, He’s multiplying His impact by investing himself in His disciples.

What is something you do really well?

Have you ever thought about teaching someone to do what you do? Why? So you can expand your impact.

I want to challenge you to think of at least one person you can invest in this week to help make him/her into a hero.

Now, write the name down of the hero you're going to make in the space provided in the sermon note page. Line (#1).

II. Permission Giving

Here in the Great Commission Jesus releases his authority and gives His disciples permission to carry on His mission.

Look at verse 18 and the first part of 19, *“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore...”*

Jesus has all authority and power, in heaven and on earth. But he doesn't cling to it. He's not selfish with it. Instead, he gives it to his disciples and then releases them. Go into world with the authority and power I have given you.

When we have power and authority, it can be tempting to micro-manage- to try to control every aspect of what happens. It doesn't matter whether its power in your family, or just amongst your younger siblings, or in your department at work, or in a ministry at church, or just amongst your group of friends at school. Life can be all about pecking order and once we achieve some position we strive to hang to onto it. Why would we ever want to pass some of that power and authority on down to others beneath us?

Because power in the kingdom shouldn't look like power in world. Because when you follow Jesus you lead by serving. Because we are called to be hero makers. Listen to what Jesus tells the disciples in Matthew 20:25-28:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28just as the Son of Man

did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The hero making, permission-giving example of Jesus is a call to not be micro-managers, not to be control mongers—especially in the kingdom, especially in the church.

If we really want to raise up a generation of heroes, we must understand the power of permission giving.

Common Practice: Leading with a tight rein on others.

Hero Making Practice: Making “yes” your default response as a believer.

This is what Jesus wished for His disciples in John 14:12.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

In wanting His disciples to do “greater works” than Him, Jesus is really giving them permission to pursue “greater works” than Him.

What an empowering thing for a leader to do!

Now, back to the hero you’re going to make—whose name you wrote down. Do you want them to do greater things than you?

On the next line below their name (#2), write a “greater work” you can see them doing.

When you communicate with them, remember to give them permission to do this.

III. Disciple Multiplying

If we want to become hero makers, we must... and I know you think this may go without saying... we must commit to making heroes, or as Jesus says it, “making disciples.”

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Have you ever really thought about duplicating, or reproducing, or multiplying yourself?

Common Practice: Prioritizing personal growth.

Hero Making Practice: Investing in the work of helping others to multiply disciples.

Jesus was wholly invested in the lives of His disciples.

We see it throughout the Gospels, but I want to show a single snapshot of even an ordinary moment on an ordinary day can take on eternal significance.

In John 3:22, it says,

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

It says that He “remained there with them and was baptizing,” and you would think Jesus was out in the river baptizing all these people. What he was really doing was multiplying his impact.

In fact, just a few verses later we read this in John 4:1–3:

1 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

Here again we see Jesus being a hero maker... he is doing the preaching and teaching, but letting his disciples become the heroes by allowing them to be the ones to baptize people! John was just one guy doing all the preaching and teaching and baptizing, but Jesus multiplied his impact by making heroes of his disciples. Imagine how many all 12 of them could baptize?

Back to the name of the hero you're going to make. Now, on the next line down (#3), write down one way you're going to invest in your hero.

IV. Gift Activating

One of the keys of being a hero maker is blessing the heroes we make by releasing them to use his/her spiritual gifts.

This is the "heart" of the entire Great Commission, but is evident in these verses. Look again at verses 19-20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Common Practice: Making sure every slot is always filled.

Hero Making Practice: Releasing others to discover and develop their gifts in new opportunities.

These verses are full of blessings!

Jesus blesses them by releasing them into ministry: "Go!" He blesses them by giving them a clear mission: "Baptize" and "Teach." Then He blesses them by empowering them for ministry: "I am with you always."

You don't have to do it alone, Jesus says. I will be there to help you. Now, Jesus was about to leave Earth and ascend back into heaven, so what does he mean by "I am with you always."?

Jesus left his Holy Spirit with us. When you become a follower of Jesus and place your faith in Him, His Holy Spirit indwells you. The Spirit takes up residence in your life to seal you in your salvation and to enable and empower you to become all that God wants you to be.

We see a perfect example and foreshadowing of this in how Jesus blessed and commissioned Peter for his leading role amongst the Apostles. Matthew 16:15-18:

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Jesus has identified Peter as a hero upon whom He will build His church and then He releases him with a powerful blessing and commissioning. But Jesus also makes it very clear that Peter's role as a hero isn't going to be about his amazing abilities and skills. His amazing insight was revealed to him.

We don't become heroes because we got it going on. We don't become hero makers because we're head and shoulders above everyone else. We become hero makers, because Jesus has called us. He's sent us, and He's empowered us with his Holy Spirit. Jesus can do more through you than you can ever do on your own.

Okay, back to the hero you're going to make. On the next line of the card (#4) I want you to identify a way you can bless or commission him/her as a symbol of releasing them to use their gifts.

V. Kingdom Building

How do you define success in life? Big house? Nice car? Large bank account?

How does Jesus define success? According to the Great Commission, Jesus defines success by disciples making disciples.

Common Practice: Defining success by what you gather and acquire.

Hero Making Practice: Defining success by what you release and send out.

We see this in this powerful promise from Jesus to the heroes He was making in John 15:4-5:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the

vine; you are branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

In these verses, Jesus is defining success by His “fruit”—the disciples—bearing “much fruit”—more disciples.

Dave Ferguson, the co-author of the Hero Maker book shared with our sermon planning team that one of the greatest compliments he’s ever been given was from a guy named Bob Buford. Bob said, “Dave, your fruit grows on other people’s trees!”

That’s one of the greatest definitions of a hero maker. A hero maker’s fruit grows on someone else’s trees.

As we continue to think about the heroes we’re going to make, I want you to—on the last line (#5)—list at least one “fruit” that, if your hero produces it, you will consider it a success.

Would you say that you are producing much “fruit” in your life?

If not, that can all change beginning today, if you and I will just be a little more like Jesus... and Shalane Flanagan.

Have you ever heard of Shalane Flanagan? The New York Times tells her incredible story.^{iv}

When Shalane Flanagan won the New York City Marathon last week, her victory was about more than just an athletic achievement. Of course, it’s a remarkable one: She’s the first American woman to win in 40 years, and she did so in a blistering 2 hours 26 minutes.

But perhaps Flanagan’s bigger accomplishment lies in nurturing and promoting the rising talent around her, a rare quality in the cutthroat world of elite sports. Every single one of her training partners — 11 women in total — has made it to the Olympics while training with her, an extraordinary feat. Call it the Shalane Effect: You serve as a rocket booster for the careers of the women who work alongside you, while catapulting forward yourself.

“Shalane has pioneered a new brand of ‘team mom’ to these young up-and-comers, with the confidence not to tear others down to protect her place in the hierarchy,” said Lauren Fleshman, who became a professional runner in the early 2000s, around the same time Flanagan did. “Shalane’s legacy is in her role modeling, which women in every industry would like to see more of.”

Here’s how it worked until Flanagan burst onto the scene. After college, promising female distance athletes would generally embark on aggressive training until they broke down. Few of them developed the staying power required to dominate the global stage. And they didn’t have much of a community to support them; domestic women’s distance running was fractious and atrophied. In 2000, for example, only one American woman qualified for the Olympic marathon, after training alone in her Anchorage home on a treadmill.

But things changed after 2009, when Flanagan joined Jerry Schumacher’s fledgling running group in Portland, Ore., called the Bowerman Track Club. She was the team’s lone woman, and worked with him to create something new: a team of professional female distance runners who would train together and push one another to striking collective success. They were coached by a man and surrounded mostly by male runners, but over time Flanagan and her teammates outperformed the men in the national and global arenas.

Instead of being threatened by her teammates’ growing accomplishments, Flanagan embraced them, and brought in more women, elevating them to her level until they become the most formidable group of distance athletes in the nation. National championships, world championships, Olympics: They became some of the best runners in the world.

I love that! “The Shalane Effect.”

Consider this sermon today as your call to action.

Tech Note: Shine the Cross symbol on the front wall of the auditorium.

There are lost people in our community who need to know there is hope.

They need us to be their heroes by becoming hero makers!

Beginning today, this church and our community are going to be better because of something we're going to call (insert your church name):

"The Son-Rise Effect"

or better yet...

"The Melissa Kilburn Effect" "The Shawn Latham Effect" "The Marshall Henderson Effect" "The _____ Effect."

May your life begin to affect those around you in profound ways... not because you're the hero... not because you're Batman... but because you are Alfred Pennyworth... you are Batman's batman.

Like Jesus, let's work to become Hero Makers in our world today. Let's pray.

ⁱ <https://www.ranker.com/list/superheroes-ranked-by-most-comic-book-appearances/ranker-comics>

ⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Pennyworth

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission>

^{iv} <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/11/opinion/sunday/shalane-flanagan-marathon-running.html>