

HOW BE THE TYPE OF HERO THE WORLD NEEDS  
IN THREE DIFFICULT STEPS:

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Don't merely seek a degree, be a lover of truth. But don't merely be a lover of truth, possess conviction. But don't merely possess conviction, be strategic, leave a legacy that exemplifies Jesus Christ in all of life.

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. Congratulations! What an honor to be able to join you on this incredible day of celebration! A day where your hard work is rewarded with people who have participated in your achievement! They have counseled you, encouraged you, provided for you, and pushed you! Your achievement is also theirs! Moreover, you are blessed! You have been given a gift that millions of people across this world will never experience, namely, a very rich education.
- B. But this morning is not only about celebrating achievement and reflecting upon the blessings you have received, but it is also about a turning point in your life. Many of you are about to leave the comforts of the familiar and chart off on a new adventure with all of its possibilities, promises, and perils. You will soon be leaving your place of safety and security, and head into, at least from your personal perspective, foreign lands and uncharted waters. You will certainly experience trials and loss! But not every one of those circumstances will be bad for we nutritiously grow *more* from adversity than we do from pleasure.
- C. Like Gandalf the Grey said to Bilbo Baggins as he started on his new adventure to help the dwarves reclaim Mt. Erebor: *"You will have to do without pocket handkerchiefs, and a great many other things, before we reach our journey's end, Bilbo Baggins. You were born to the rolling hills and little rivers of the Shire, but home is now behind you. The world is ahead."*

- D. Therefore, it is about this "world" you will be adventuring into with all of its treasures and trappings (and your role in it) that I would like to speak about in my personal charge to you. In fact, I am going to ask something great of both you and me, namely, **how to be the type of hero the world needs in three difficult steps.**

## II. WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO BELIEVE IN:

**But first, let me set the context:**

- A. If you understand the power of the arts, you realize that the movies, the music, and the shows you see and hear not only mirror our society, but they also can tell you where we are going. The arts possess predictive powers.<sup>1</sup> In the era in which you have been born and raised, with all of this technology, clothing apparel, entertainment venues, and video gaming, one of the over-arching cultural themes we repeatedly encounter has to do with super heroes.
- B. Like never before in the history of human society we have been touched by fictional characters on the silver screen, in our comings and goings, and in our homes: Batman, Black Widow, Captain America, Daredevil, Ezio Auditore, the Flash, The Green Arrow, Link, Mario, Master Chief, Superman, Wonder Woman, and X-Men.
- C. While we have always loved stories of heroism, as evidenced in the history of literature with characters like Hector of Troy, Beowulf, 47 Ronin, or even Bilbo Baggins, heroic stories told today are touching us in *new* ways because of the incredible technology we have in our possession.

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<sup>1</sup> American philosopher John Dewey acutely observed, "Art is a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration." John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 363

- D. But I also suspect that there is another reason why we find ourselves so attracted to these super heroes with all of their muscles, powers, skills, and tactics: we are looking for someone to believe in! As a society we are looking for hope and for some of us, we are turning to the imagination to find that answer. Reality as it is, is not doing it for us!

**Or we could look at it this way:**

- E. Powerful ideas are entering into our homes disguised *in the form of entertainment*. As we sit there in our comfortable chairs and couches being entertained by images, words, and sounds, presented in attractive ways, powerful ideas are making their way into our minds and affections. But I am not the only one saying such things. Consider the following observations by people in the entertainment industry:

1. "Film and visual entertainment are a pervasively important part of our culture, an extremely significant influence on the way our society operates. People in the film industry don't want to accept the responsibility that they had a hand in the way the world is loused up. But, for better or worse, the influence of the church, which used to be all-powerful, has been usurped by film. Film and television tells us the way we conduct our lives, what is right and wrong."<sup>2</sup> ~ George Lucas
2. "Movies are powerful. Good or bad, they tinker around inside your brain. They steal up on you in the darkness of the cinema to form or conform social attitudes... In short, cinema is propaganda."<sup>3</sup> ~ David Putnam, Producer of *Chariots of Fire & The Mission*.
3. "...the film industry can capture an idea and make it glamorous and gorgeous so that the audience isn't even aware that they're

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<sup>2</sup> George Lucas, quoted by Aljean Harmetz in "U.S.C. Breaks Ground for a Film-TV School," *New York Times*, Nov. 1981, C16.

<sup>3</sup> *Movieguide*, Nov. 1990, 13.

embracing something they never would have embraced before."~  
Actor Tom Hanks.<sup>4</sup>

- F. Once again, as a society we are looking for hope and for some, we are turning to the imagination to find that answer. *Why?*

### III. THE EMERGENCE OF A POST CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

- A. Unlike past generations in human history, you are entering into a post-Christian society. These waters are uncharted! These lands are new! To our detriment, the Christian consensus in our Western culture has been lost. It first happened in Western Europe and now it has happened here in the U.S.
- B. From the ashes of a society that once operated within a Christian mindset (even though many may not have embraced Christianity but operated within the forms of Christianity), our society is now terribly fragmented with persuasive people and their attractive ideas - warring for the hearts and minds of people who will legitimize gods of their own making. Like Nancy Pearcey pointed out in *Finding Truth*, they are "absolutizing" some aspect of creation, making it their own god, in an effort to live the way they want to live.<sup>5</sup>
- C. But is this liberating? No, it is not, for they are putting themselves in a terrible place and state of intellectual and existential tension. Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer, one of my personal heroes, observed in his interaction with thousands of people over the course of his life and ministry:

Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has made, including what man is. This being so, every man is in a place of tension. Man cannot make his own universe and then live in it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *New Dimensions* (June 1992), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, 45.

<sup>6</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer: The Trilogy [The God Who is There]*, 132.

- D. Consequently, when we come to discover that what we believe is not actually true, it can cause us to spiral downward into painful anxiety, depression, and even despondency. Their idols did not generate the hope they were looking for. Why? Unlike the Judeo-Christian faith, their worldviews did not possess (a) logical strength, (b) empirical evidences, (c) not able to fill or satisfy the void within, and (d) pull all of life together. (e) Their idols did not work. Though they may so terribly wish things were different and might even try and try again with all their resources, their man-made creations are just not (f) viable; they are dead; they are even non-existent. Thus, brokenness, anger, disillusionment, incompleteness, and shame is becoming a widespread experience.
- E. In fact, in this post-Christian society where authentic love is lacking, brokenness in our homes abound, and the pursuit of materialism is valued, anger or apathy is becoming all too common. The tension builds!
- F. Moreover, too many times we've trusted certain leaders, hoping for change, but finding the same thing over and over again: corruption, duplicity, exploitation, greed, manipulation, and the spin. Expedience is chosen over virtue, the sensual and profane over what is most noble, and the maximization of self-interest over and against what is true, good, and beautiful. We seem to no longer care for virtue. We just want an instant fix to our problems regardless of the formation of character.
- G. And if it could not get even worse evil seems to be running amok with thousands of lives divided, displaced, and dead in certain regions of our world. But this shouldn't surprise us. Like Malcolm Muggeridge, a famous British journalist once stated (1903-1990), "*The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact.*"
- I. Therefore, people are looking for relief from their tension, pain, and evil. They have shattered expectations generated from worldviews that did not provide adequate final answers.

#### IV. "AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH"

A. But there is also another new problem that is unforeseen in ages past. As predicted by Neil Postman's 1985 social commentary, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, more and more us are being taken in by the perils of non-sensical entertainment. Taken in by dangerous nonsense, we are losing ourselves in amusement, becoming distracted, diverted, and immobilized intellectually, emotionally, and in spheres of political and social discourse. While thirsting for the trivial, the popular, and the sensational, we have become bored with serious analysis, argument, and reasoned discourse. Thus, we are losing opportunities to make a life-giving difference. We are only able to give our leftovers to what matters most.

B. But Neil Postman was not the only one to see this trend emerging. Consider, once again, the words of Malcolm Muggeridge:

*"It is difficult to resist the conclusion that twentieth century man has decided to abolish himself. Tired of the struggle to be himself, he has created boredom out of his own affluence, impotence out of his own erotomania, and vulnerability out of his own strength. He himself blows the trumpet that brings the walls of his own cities crashing down, until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, having drugged and polluted himself into stupefaction, he keels over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus, and becomes extinct."*

C. But not only are people in tension, angry, and looking for an escape, they are also longing for peace, wholeness, and redemption.

All too often in those still moments we look at ourselves in the mirror and ponder the costly mistakes we have made. Regret wells up within us and we ask ourselves, *"Is there any real hope for me?"* To be honest, we really are looking for change we can believe in! We hunger for peace, wholeness, & redemption. We ask, *"Does hope even exist*

*for someone like me? Is forgiveness even possible?" We no longer know who we are or what we have become. We have changed in the most unexpected ways and we do not like what we see. We ask ourselves, "Will we ever be happy?"*

**Let's consider the following:**

- D. One of the greatest desires or deepest longings we inherently possess is hope. The word "hope" expresses the ideas of trust, an expectation of deliverance, restoration, and rest.
- E. We also earnestly seek to know that what we believe in is actually true and, thus, comfort us no matter how fierce our troubles become. We want something that we can believe in that will also give meaning to our lives, especially in view of the ups and downs of this vaporous, vaporous life where everything we know and love can be snatched from us. While we long to make sense of the world and our relationship to it, hope involves the expectation that one day all things will be made right.
- F. Let's think about hope another way:
  - (1) If hope is crushed in view of our personal experiences;
  - (2) If disappointments or emptiness accompany the long-term goals we have achieved;
  - (3) If physical pleasures are vaporous;
  - (4) If Material goods, jobs, relationships, popularity or recognition, wealth, power, or physical beauty did not generate the hope we are looking for;

Then, we are faced with at least two possible conclusions:

- (a) First, hope can never be realized; it is impossible. Consequently, we are simply left exhausted or resigned to live for "punctuated moments of happiness" in a random universe that is ultimately meaningless. While we feel this inherent need to hope we suppress this longing stating it is nothing more than wishful thinking.

- (b) Or second, hope can be realized but only in God. Therefore, we need to seriously investigate whether there exists a personal & infinite God who can satisfy our deepest longings, needs, and expectations.
- G. Therefore, young men and women, you are entering into a society that is in **deep crisis**. But if we will take that crisis on and **NOT** give into the pitfalls of skepticism, relativism, or worse, apathy, we can help people discover that there are answers that can truly satisfy the intellect, the heart, and emotions in the most dynamic and refreshing ways; hope is possible! While society continually changes, people's needs do not.
- H. So, if you want to be the hero the world needs, and not become part of the problem, you need to be able to point people to real hope and that hope I have discovered as a philosopher who has common needs and problems like everyone else, is found in the God in the Bible.

## V. CONCLUSION:

- A. Therefore, I conclude with three points. If you want to be the type of hero the world needs the first step is this: **Don't merely seek a degree or job, be a lover of truth.**
  - 1. Don't merely process information in order to get a grade or seek a promotion to get a higher paying position, be one who loves the pursuit of truth. Be curious!
  - 2. Critique the truth-claims people are making. Be open but think critically. Don't ever allow yourself to be processed. Understand the what, the how, and the why. Always be asking what people mean and how they came to that conclusion. Learning can be very pleasurable.
    - a. Quoting Malcolm Muggeridge one more time, and applying it here: *"Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream."*



- b. John Dewey also made a similar statement, *"The path of least resistance and least trouble is a mental rut already made."*
  - c. If you are a lover of truth, you will possess a certain attractiveness for you will be able to give real answers. You will possess certain listening and observation skills that will make you stand out among so many others. You will see what so many others fail to see.
  - d. But this means that being a lover of truth is part of your disposition. *Be!* Don't merely do!
- B. If you want to be the type of hero the world needs, don't merely seek a degree or job, be a lover of truth! **But don't merely be a lover of truth, possess conviction!** What I mean is that you need to make sure you possess a worldview whereby you know what you believe, why you believe it, and whether you have rock solid good justification for it!
- C. All too often I come across students whose worldviews have collapsed because they lacked conviction. They believed something because they were told to believe it and never considered why something should be believed. Thus, because their worldviews were built incoherently, when faced with a problem, a painful or pleasurable experience, a persuasive person, or a powerful idea, their worldview fractured if not collapsed. Thus, you need to understand what you believe, why you believe it, and whether you have the greatest justification for it.
- 1. Take ownership of what is actually true! Don't fall guilty to what Blaise Pascal observed, *"People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive."* Not all attractive beliefs are mere illusions. Some of them are fish lures with sharp hooks. They promise much but will end up slaying you!
- D. As a student of philosophy I've become convinced that the biblical worldview possesses the greatest explanatory power among ever other worldview. The Judeo-Christian faith not only possesses logical

- strength, empirical evidences, and fills the void within, but when followed, it is workable, pulls all of life together, and offers the greatest ethical values, virtues, and duties.
- E. If you want to be the type of hero the world needs, don't merely seek a degree or job, be a lover of truth! But don't merely be a lover of truth, possess conviction! **But don't merely possess conviction, be strategic: leave a legacy that exemplifies Jesus Christ in all of life!**
  - F. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who had an utterly unique entrance into human history, was without evil and sin. Though He never offered a sin sacrifice, He became the substitute sacrifice we needed in order that we might receive eternal life. All we have to do is place our trust in Jesus Christ, believing that He is God, who died on the cross for our sins and rose bodily from the dead. Once we receive the gift of eternal life, we have the capability, by His empowerment, to leave a legacy that is worth leaving behind. Here is Jesus Christ, who not only did the greatest and most noble deeds and performed miracles, but He also spoke the greatest words ever spoken, loved the unlovely, and satisfied the incompleteness within. Moreover, by means of the Holy Spirit, He can bring out the best in us when we consistently yield ourselves to Him-not merely out of obligation, but out of delight. Jesus Christ, who overcame our most pervasive and feared enemy, namely, physical death, is the only one who offers true hope!
  - G. Therefore, if you have received eternal life in the open arms of faith, then I encourage to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow after Him (Mark 8:34). His priorities are to become your priorities. His values are now yours-all expressed in moment-by-moment living.
  - H. What you will discover as you follow hard after Christ is that the Bible speaks to the totality of life: from education to the arts, from politics to philosophy, from parenting to work, from home-life to the environment.

- I. Further, in every area of life you will be called to exemplify Christ. In fact, there is to be no dichotomy between a sacred life and secular life. In every area of life He is be worshipped. There are good reasons why. Not only is the Christian life operable in all of these areas of life where you and I are called to represent His interests, diligently obeying His life-abundant truths, but also you will have a holistic life where everything is connected together in a very consistent, cohesive way. You will be free of worldview tension. Your beliefs will match your lifestyle.
- J. But there is another reason why you want exemplify Christ in all of life: Using the words of Abraham Kuyper, *"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine."*
- K. You will have no regrets in a life that truly honors Christ. You will live for what matters most; people will see Christ through you! He will touch lives through you! And He is beautiful!

**In sum, if you want to be the type of hero the world needs, don't merely seek a degree or job, be a lover of truth. But don't merely be a lover of truth, possess conviction. But don't merely possess conviction, be strategic: leave a legacy that exemplifies Jesus Christ in all of life.**

#### **Final Thought:**

Our world is in crisis and people are looking for heroes! People are looking for hope! Do you want to be the hero the world needs? Then follow hard after Christ! What you will discover, all by means of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the more consistently you follow after Christ, the more you reflect His glory in how you live in the moment-by-moment choices you make, the values you embrace, and even the pleasures you pursue, the more heroic you become.

Will you be that daring?