

Heroes 6

James was born in Hamilton, Missouri. He was one of 12 children raised in poverty on a farm. His father worked the land six days a week and on Sunday preached in a small Baptist church for no pay. James was taught scrupulous honesty by his father.

James got his first job in a general store...and saved enough money to finally purchase his own butcher shop. To retain the town's leading hotel as a customer, he was expected to buy a bottle of liquor for the head cook each week. But James didn't smoke or drink... and he wouldn't bribe the cook, so the hotel didn't buy its meat from his shop and his butcher business failed.

Later in life he often said, "I lost everything I had... but I learned to never compromise."

His real career began when in 1902 in Kemmerer, Wyoming he open the "Golden Rule" store. Those were the days when everyone bought on credit and paid high prices. He tried a different formula: cash and lower prices to attract more sales. It worked.

He changed the name of his stores as he expanded... but the Golden Rule was still his motto and by 1927 he had 750

retail stores in 45 states. Managers were allowed to buy an interest in their stores and profits were shared with employees.

James believed that Christian ethics and hard work would succeed in business... and he left 1700 stores scattered all across America with his name on the front door to prove it...J. C. Penney.

James Cash Penney said at the end of his career, "What I've done, given the times and circumstances, anyone could have done. I haven't any special attainments." But the boy who was baptized "Cash", by living the Golden Rule, became a leader of refined gold.

He became convinced (internally "convicted") that, even in debt and poverty, he should begin returning a tithe to God (90%) --- he did, and J.C. Penney department stores have sprung up all over America.

At his death in 1971, Penney, 95, left a 1,660-store empire that he built without compromising the stiff principles he had absorbed from three generations of Baptist preacher ancestors. He neither smoked nor drank, and for years demanded the same conduct from his employees. "I believe in adherence to the Golden Rule, faith in God and the country," he often said. "I would rather be known as a Christian than a merchant."

This may not sound like a particularly great American hero story to you but it has a personal element for me. In the early 70's when I first began to take God's call on my life seriously, I

determined to return to college to study music. I auditioned, was accepted, and enrolled in the music program of Pensacola Junior College. I was employed at the time at a wholesale nursery. I thought I had worked out an arrangement with my boss but after a few days of juggling classes and work he told I had to quit school or quit work. I stepped out in faith. I quit work.

I shared my situation with the minister of music at my church, Olive Baptist in Pensacola. Within a few days, I received a phone call from the manager of the catalog department at J. C. Penney offering me a job. She and the store manager were members of my church. They probably gave me the only job in the store where an employee could go back and forth from classes to work throughout the day. I checked in the daily catalog shipments.

Almost every person I worked with was a devout Christian and my working there did much to strengthen my faith. That job sustained me until I began serving in ministry full time. I will be forever grateful to the J.C. Penney company for its Christian philosophy, very kind a supportive managers and employees, and for giving me work to sustain me through my preparation for ministry.

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Usually, when the subject of heroes, even Christian heroes, comes up, we tend to think of bigger than life people who led armies, rescued nations, preached to thousands, or influenced kings. But I want to talk about a different kind of bible hero today. His name is Andrew and though his name is mentioned fairly often in the bible it is usually as “the brother of Peter” or

“one of the twelve.” Certainly his brother Peter, in all practical terms and even in the restrictive realm of heroes of the faith, was the “greater” hero. But there is at least one consistently heroic element in the life of Andrew that is worthy of our observation and application to our own lives. Andrew’s heroism is definitely transferable and applicable to us today in the 21st century church. Following is the sum total of Andrew’s activity in scripture.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means “Anointed One”), ⁴² and he brought [Simon] to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said, “**You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas**” (which means “Rock”). **John 1:40-42 (HCSB)**

1 After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).
2 And a huge crowd was following Him because they saw the signs that He was performing on the sick. **3** So Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with His disciples.
4 Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. **5**
Therefore, when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward Him, He asked Philip, “**Where will**

we buy bread so these people can eat?”⁶ He asked this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do.⁷ Philip answered, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn’t be enough for each of them to have a little.”⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him,⁹ “There’s a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?”¹⁰ Then Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” John 6:1-10 (HCSB)

²⁰ Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival.²¹ So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. John 12:20-22 (HCSB)

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away.¹³ When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James,

Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

¹⁴ All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. Acts 1:12-14 (HCSB)

According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Andrew was eventually crucified on an X shaped cross in the Greek city of Patras because he dared to share Christ with the wife of a high Roman official. She was gloriously saved but he was sentenced to death on a cross for his witness. He suffered horribly for three days before finally dying but throughout that time he continued to witness to all who came by of the grace and mercy of Christ even as he hung on that cross.

Andrew- Hero factors

Resourceful looked for solutions, saw possibilities instead of problems

Faithful did not deny Jesus as Peter did nor did he betray Jesus as Judas did. In doing so was among those who repeatedly witnessed the resurrected Christ and received His command to "make and teach disciples." He did this 'til his death in Patras.

Brought people to Jesus- This was Andrew's entire legacy! From his brother, to the lad with the fish and bread, to the Greeks, to leading a Roman official's wife to salvation in

Christ, and even from his own crucifixion, Andrew, the quiet, behind the scenes disciple, consistently brought people to Jesus.

Great Christian heroes: (you and me)(obedient, available, sacrifice)

Resourceful- To be honest with you, and you may find incredibly hard to believe, I hear way more complaints than I do people offering solutions. Example- ants. Do you know how many people have reported to me that we have ants in our church? Do you know how many people have offered to do something about it?

Be an Andrew! Be a hero! Wipe out the ants! Fix the leak. Pick up the trash. Start a new bible study group outside of the 10AM hour. Pay off the mortgage. Win Cape Coral to Christ. Use your creative energy to offer solutions and solve problems. Be resourceful. Be an Andrew. Be a hero!

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, **9** "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish..... **John 6:8-9a (HCSB)**

Faithful Most of us would have probably been so offended that our brother was getting more attention than we were that we would either be in a corner somewhere pouting or just quit and walk away all together. Peter even got a special nickname from Jesus but not Andrew. Peter got to go to the mount of transfiguration, raising of the synagogue leader's daughter from the dead, prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, but not Andrew ... and James got to do all those things with his brother John but not Andrew And it was Andrew who brought his brother Peter to Jesus..... What a mistake!

Who or what are we serving? Why do we do what we do?

Andrew continued and was faithful to the end serving Christ even though it seems he got none of the recognition and position that Peter did. Andrew served Christ not men's applause or recognition.

If you find yourself often frustrated, disappointed, or discouraged in your walk with Christ and service for Him, you may need to rethink why you do what you do. Sure, it is nice when someone says "well done" or "thank you" but that can't be our motive. We serve because we love Jesus. And, we love Jesus because He first loved us.

Bring people to Jesus- When we stand before Christ in judgment, we will not be judged by how gloriously we sang, powerfully we preached, or how consistently our Sunday School room was packed. We will be judged and rewarded primarily and particularly on how faithful we have been in bringing people to Jesus.

Of course it is Christ who saves through His Holy Spirit but I would suppose that almost without exception everyone of us who are saved today came to Christ through the witness and invitation of someone or several people. That is God's plan. That is how He works- people bringing people to Jesus. Even in today's world of mass marketing and the internet, people bringing people to Jesus is still the preferred method.

Who do you give God credit and glory to for using them to bring you to Jesus?

You don't have to be a Peter who preached at Pentecost and 3,000 people got saved. You don't have to be a Paul who sacrificed his life preaching, starting churches, and training pastors. You can and should at least be an Andrew who quietly, behind the scenes consistently brought people to Jesus, and for the most part, one or a few at a time.

Each of us has the opportunity to be one of the greatest heroes to ever walk the face of the earth- one plays a part in rescuing people from the eternal grip of death and hell. Will you go and make disciples? Will you be a hero?

7 “As for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. When you hear a word from My mouth, give them a warning from Me. **8** If I say to the

wicked: Wicked one, you will surely die, but you do not speak out to warn him about his way, that wicked person will die for his iniquity, yet I will hold you responsible for his blood. ⁹ But if you warn a wicked person to turn from his way and he doesn't turn from it, he will die for his iniquity, but you will have saved your life. Ezek 33:7-9 (HCSB)