

QUALIFYING HEROISM

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Heroes stand on a firm foundation of truth. They are life-givers.

Heroes are... "admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities... regarded as a model or an ideal." — dictionary.com

I've never purchased a "gossip" magazine. I don't have to. I do the grocery shopping in my family. You cannot, CANNOT make it through the checkout lane without eyeballing the latest Kardashians drama, what's going on with Jennifer Aniston, or discovering which hot celebrity has the best abs. So of course, I also read (as I was unloading my bread and eggs onto the checkout stand and waving my kids away from the candy) the highlights on Bruce Jenner's transformation into Caitlyn Jenner.

My personal problem with the timing of this news was that I had just seen the movie, "American Sniper." So of course, my standards for bravery and heroism had already

been elevated to a level of nearly insurmountable immediately after sucking in my breathe during the last 5 minutes of the show. A man announcing his formal transition into female status (Christian perspective or not) just did not seem heroic to me.

I'll take pause for a moment and clarify that in this moment I have no interest in addressing my beliefs and feelings on the topic of gender identification or sexual orientation. Because it seems that these conversations often take away from the more eternal focus of what is true, and how we pursue it. So for today, I'll just say that I realize there are certainly a lot of men and women who are facing enormous battles with their own sexual identity and I have no interest in downplaying the significance of that reality.

Here's the bigger issue that we must face... based on what absolute standard are we glorifying heroism? To what or whom are we referencing when we assign such honor? I fear so often our beliefs, our examples of heroism, are standing on shaky foundations because as a culture out of a fear of being intollerant, we reject any absolute moral standard. **When we reject an absolute moral standard, an established set of truths, we withdrawal our ability; our right even, to assign a measure of success to moral attributes, displays of character, heroic acts.** Our declarations become a wafting aroma of our feelings and opinions. A mere limited reflection of our experiences. They are as fleeting as the wind blowing and tossing our senses about and as evolving as the seasons we enter and exit. It is foolishness to set our standards of praise as rooted more deeply in heart experiences than they are unshakable, absolute, dependable standards. While perhaps they are sweet, relatable, even treasured image bearers of our hearts, they cannot be set up as a universal anchor. **There is no wisdom in a declared truth that is given the freedom to change circumstantially.**

How can we assign praise without something solid, incorruptible, absolute in reference, to compare? **When we choose to reject an established set of standards, or absolutes on truth or justice; we declare ourselves the moral authority on life — and the problem with that is that often our pool of truth is polluted, corrupted, foggy and quite simply not enough to handle the demands of this world.** We are not God. We are not big enough to manage this task.

But, oh; (insert tremendous sigh of relief); we *have* been given a reference! We do not have to hope and wonder if we are on the right track. There is something powerful

and unshakable about the truths God gives us in his words to us... they are heart shapers. They hold the mirror of truth up for us to discern reality from perception.

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." — Hebrews 4:12

But we all know that heroism and bravery are qualities worth glorifying, right? **We know, somehow, in our heart of hearts, perhaps even without knowing where our moral compass comes from, that there are applaudable attributes and detestable ones, don't we?** We know when something is evil and when something is good... generally speaking. How? Why? Because Eve took the fruit, and because our eyes were opened... and because God's curse and punishment was actually the most loving pursuit of our hearts. He has imprinted on us, an attraction to his character; his justice, compassion, and mercy. **And when we witness little reflections of who he is, we are drawn to it. We are attracted to life.**

I'll end with this; we are wise to consider what standard we're pulling our qualifications from. Is the foundation of truth we rely upon strong? We need it to stand firm as on a rock rather than shifting sand. And then let's stop and **pay attention to the aroma of life and death that we most certainly breathe in so frequently. And ask this — to what is it pointing?**