

These notes give a gentle introduction to the subject of spiritual formation, and are intended to be used after hearing Sermon 2. They have been designed to be accessible to a wide range of people and, although they will be more fun to use in a group, they may also be used by people working on their own.

STUDY NOTES 2

2: MY HERO

National heroes tend to reflect the values and priorities of their day. So that, for example, heroes in a time of possible enemy invasion are likely to be different from those in a time when other concerns and preoccupations (e.g. sport) are to the fore. Personal heroes may reflect these concerns, or they may reveal a desire to escape into a fantasy world where wrongs are righted and the good guy always wins. That's why Superman is so popular!

QUESTIONS

Can you remember the heroes of your childhood?

What was their 'mission'? What values and causes did they stand for?

In your childhood and teens, was there someone you wanted to be like when you grew up? If so, what was it about them that caused you to feel like that?

Who are the 'heroes' and 'heroines' in our country today – those prominent in the media?

(If taking 2 weeks, you could save these questions for next time.)

Is there someone you are aware of striving to be like at the moment?

If so, what is it about them which leads you to want to do this?

The expression 'hero worship' is part of our language. What do you think it means?

Do you think having heroes is good / bad / neutral / a mixture?

STUDY 1

Read Hebrews 11. (This could be read by group members at home beforehand.)

This is a brief history of God's chosen people, highlighting those who were seen as good examples of what it means to trust him in real-life situations. The characters and events referred to were well-known to the writer, and he expected them to be familiar to his readers who, as the name of the book suggests, were mainly Christians from a

Jewish background.

These stories would also have been told by those who surrounded Mary as she grew up in a Jewish community – one aspect of the preparation for the role God was giving her (*see Study Notes 1, STUDY 2*). How do you think these stories might have shaped her thinking about God and what it means to serve him?

Homing in on one story... Read Judges 6 – God's call to Gideon.

How would you describe Gideon at this stage in his life?

What does this story reveal about God's priorities, and the kind of people he calls to serve him?

If you have time, read Judges 7 and see God working with Gideon to develop his faith / trust in him.

STUDY 2

Note that, after listing the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, the writer points his readers to Jesus (Hebrews 12:1 – 3) as the one on whom to fix their eyes.

Read Philippians 2:1 – 18.

Paul, in this part of his letter to the Christians in Philippi, is also pointing people towards Jesus, and his emphasis is on *character*.

Make a list of Jesus' characteristics, and the attitudes listed in the passage which Paul is encouraging his readers to develop. Pick out those which you think the Lord is particularly wanting you to work on at the moment. Pray for one another in twos and threes, for the grace and perseverance we need when we're following Jesus and training to become more like him.