

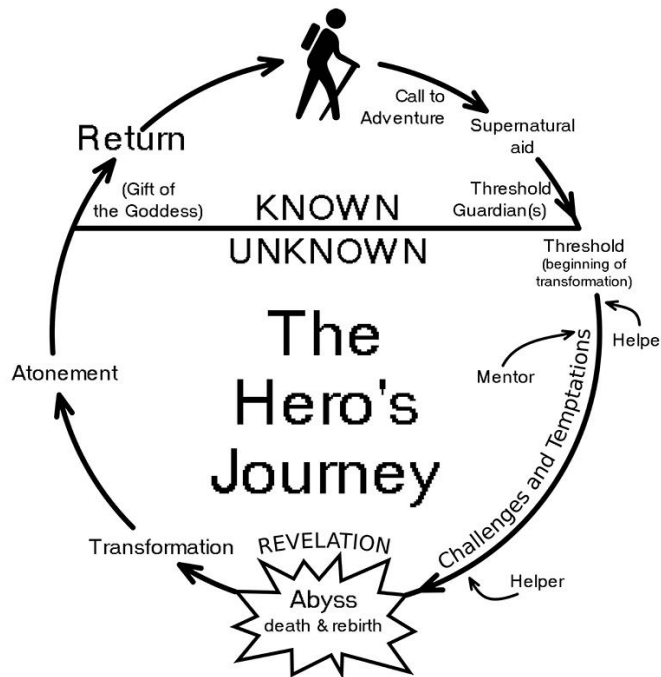
# "Your Great Adventure" Can Be a Hero's Journey

By Heather R. Butler

In his most recent General Conference address of October 2019, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, addresses discipleship as ["Your Great Adventure."](#) His talk follows a pattern known as The Hero's Journey. He follows the story of Bilbo Baggins in J. R. R. Tolkien's beloved novel, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*. There is a clear message: being a disciple of Christ is the journey of all heroes past and present, fictional and real.

## The Hero's Journey, A Divine Pattern

The Hero's Journey is a type of story that shows what all heroes typically experience, what they must endure, and the reward for following through. Each step is vital to the hero's adventure: the choice to go, the failure and pain, success and transformation, and return. The archetype of The Hero's Journey looks like this:



This article is an invitation to you to define your own hero's journey. At the end of the article, there is a printable worksheet for you to use on this quest!

## Step #1: The Call to Adventure

Elder Uchtdorf says, “The story of Bilbo Baggins is about a most normal and unremarkable hobbit who is presented with a most remarkable opportunity—the wonderful chance at adventure and the promise of a great reward.”

Bilbo stands at a crossroads: will he stay in his comfortable hobbit-hole enjoying reliable refreshment, remaining safe and unremarkable? Or will he venture out, learn why he was chosen in the first place, share his unique abilities, stretch his knowledge, grow his capacity? Clearly the Call to Adventure has caught him off guard and after a night of resting, and almost missing the opportunity, he races out of his home to meet the chance.

Why does he go? Elder Uchtdorf explains, “He [Bilbo] understands from the outset that the journey will be challenging. Even dangerous. There is even a possibility he might not return.” But “when Bilbo is presented with the prospect of a grand adventure, something surges deep within his heart.” The Call to Adventure has reached its mark; Bilbo hears and answers.

Does this sound familiar? Other stories share this same pattern. Nephi accepted the Call to Adventure, as did Abraham and Moses. What about Joseph Smith, when he said in Joseph Smith—History 1:25, “I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation”? Great men, women, and children accept the Call to Adventure come what may.

Part of the first step is to acknowledge that you’ve been called to discipleship within whatever roles you occupy. You have an active part to play and have already been prompted. Take a moment to think. What have been your most recent Calls to Adventure? What have you felt inspired to do within your discipleship? Go back to school? Forgive that person? Shift careers? Share your faith? Share a smile? Be faithful? Raise a family? Write it down in one or two sentences here, on the napkin closest to you, or in a journal:

**My Calls to Adventure** include:

Your Call to Adventure shares commonalities with mine as we strive to be “willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9, *The Book of Mormon*).

## Step #2: Cross the Threshold

Elder Uchtdorf tells us that we accepted our first Call to Adventure in the premortal world where we had the opportunity to hear and choose between God's plan and Satan's rebellion against it. In Abraham, chapter 3, in *The Pearl of Great Price* we learn:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones [these are the heroes];

...And there stood one among them that was like unto God [this is Christ], and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there...; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them...(Abraham 3:22 – 25).

This means that God was going to create the earth so we would have a place to live, to get a body and be tested. Those who decided to make this journey are said to have kept “their first estate.” We're still in Abraham Chapter 3:

And they who keep their first estate [premortar life] shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate [earth life] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever [exalted] life].

And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man [Christ]: Here am I, send me. And another [Lucifer] answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him [Lucifer] (verses 26 – 28).

What does this mean? It means that every single person on the earth has already accepted the Call to Adventure. You have. I have. The guy who cut you off driving this morning has. Elder Uchtdorf teaches: “By the gift and power of moral agency, we determined that the potential of what we could learn and eternally become was well worth the risk. And so, trusting the promises and power of God and His Beloved Son, we accepted the challenge. I did. And so did you. We agreed to leave the security of our first estate and embark on our own great adventure of “there and back again.”

Just by being born, we complete step #2: **Cross the Threshold**. That's just the beginning and that's where it gets messy.

## Step #3: Experience Challenges and Temptations

Life is not easy. In Ether 3:2, the Brother of Jared says, “because of the fall our natures have become evil continually.” And he’s right. Elder Uchtdorf recognizes this: “we knew we would make many mistakes along the way.” But God is not cruel. He knew we could be bombarded by self-doubt, by fear, by sin and weaknesses. Sometimes we would do bad things ourselves. Other times, bad things would be done to us through the misuse of someone else’s agency.

What’s the point if there’s no way out? What hope is there? Why is it so hard?

Distractions, deflections, fear, doubt, sin. Elder Uchtdorf says, “mortal life has a way of distracting us, doesn’t it? We tend to lose sight of our great quest, preferring comfort and ease over growth and progress.” The same things that tempted Bilbo to stay behind are our temptations too: ease, fear, the unknown, danger, failure’s possibility, etc. The list is too long—and personal.

What is the solution? This brings us to step #4.

## Step #4: Accept Helpers and Mentors

God is first and foremost a Supernatural Aid—a Heavenly Father with a vested interest in our success on the earth. Because God knew the fallen nature of this world, a Savior would be provided who could help and mentor us, if we wanted Him to. We are simply not alone if we don’t want to be.

Elder Uchtdorf says, “...because of the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we could be cleansed of our transgressions, refined and purified in our spirits, and one day resurrected and reunited with those we love. We learned how much God loves us. He gave us life, and He wants us to succeed.” He is also our primary Mentor and Helper. Additionally, the Holy Ghost also acts as our Helper—daily, hourly.

There’s just one catch: God will not violate our agency to save any of us—that was Lucifer’s idea. We have to choose our mentor and helper. Moses clearly taught, “...thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee...” (Moses 3:17, *The Pearl of Great Price*). This same truth is echoed in 2 Nephi 2:26, in *The Book of Mormon* (emphasis added):

And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

What if I mess up? Am I still on The Hero's Journey? Am I using my agency to accept the mentoring and help provided by the Savior? Take a moment. Think about all your Supernatural (Heavenly) Aids and Guardians, about your Helpers and Mentors (Earthly). Write them down in one or two sentences here, on the napkin closest to you, or in a journal:

**My Supernatural Aid**

includes:

**Helpers/Mentors**

include:

## Step #5: Abyss (Death and Rebirth) and Revelation

In each of our journeys, we will experience what Joseph Campbell refers to as an Abyss—a place of such peril either physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—so deep that escape seems hopeless, unattainable, nonexistent.

Elder Uchtdorf addresses this when he says, “There are many bends in this road. There are hills, valleys, and detours. There may even be metaphorical spiders, trolls, and even a dragon or two.”

But the way out will be given to those who look for, wait on, and search out the Savior. It is in the Abyss that the death of our old selves gives way to the rebirth of the new. It is also in the depth of the Abyss that Revelation is given. Why here? Why not before? Who's to say it hasn't been given all along?!

It is often the case that our Abyss is where we are most humble, most searching and open, most willing to pay whatever price to be redeemed. The deeper the Abyss, the deeper the urge to get out. Enos, from *The Book of Mormon*, experienced a spiritual Abyss:

I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins. Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered.... I

cried unto [God] in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:2-4).

In his own mental and spiritual Abyss, King Limhi in *The Book of Mormon*, “did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily” (Alma 22:17). In his Abyss he bargains, “I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day” (Alma 22: 18).

What have you learned about yourself in your own Abyss? What have you desired? What have you learned about the Savior? How have you “incline[d] your heart to God” as Elder Uchtdorf counsels? Make a quick note here:

In my **Abyss** I have  
learned:

## Step #6: Transformation

After the Abyss is Transformation. Enos is transformed after his struggle, “there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away” (Enos 1:5-6).

After the transformation comes a new capacity for compassion for others, “I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites.... [A]nd I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites” (Enos 1:9; 11). Did you catch that? As soon as Enos receives revelation that he is released from his personal Abyss, his next thought is to “reach out in love to others” just as Elder Uchtdorf recommends.

The same thing happens to King Limhi, a repentant Lamanite king in *The Book of Mormon*. After deliverance from his Abyss, King Limhi, “stood upon his feet, receiving his strength.... And the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them. And he did minister unto them, insomuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord” (Alma 22: 22-23).

How will you know when you have experienced a Transformation? The evidence is clear: you will have a deep and driving desire to "reach out in love to others," just as Elder Uchtdorf teaches:

True disciples of Jesus Christ love God and His children without expectation of something in return. We love those who disappoint us, who don't like us. Even those who ridicule, abuse, and seek to hurt us. When you fill your hearts with the pure love of Christ, you leave no room for rancor, judgment, and shaming. You keep God's commandments because you love Him. In the process, you slowly become more Christlike in your thoughts and deeds. And what adventure could be greater than this? (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Oct. 2019, General Conference).

How have you been transformed on the other side of your Abyss? What effect did it have on you for good? What has your Transformation helped you become? Think, and write:

The **Transformation** I have experienced has helped me:

## Step #7: Atonement

After every Abyss and following each Transformation, an Atonement takes place in the heart of each hero. The Atonement in the diagram is not the Atonement we think of when we remember that, "great and last sacrifice of the Son [Jesus Christ]" referenced in Alma 34:14 of *The Book of Mormon*, though this has been invoked and used during the Abyss phase of the journey.

This Atonement refers to the obvious change which has taken place within the hero who makes things right, who rises to the challenge at hand and "come[s] off conqueror" who has the nerve and strength to "conquer Satan, and...escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work" (Doctrine & Covenants 10:5).

The Atonement of the Hero is the renewed power to not only resist evil, mediocrity, and oppression but to master these things in their reborn state or condition. The prophet Nephi is a great example of this. Remember? He said:

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. ... O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in

the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm.

Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen (2 Nephi 4: 28; 34-35, *The Book of Mormon*).

You can sense his devotion, his determination, to act as a new person: redeemed, transformed, empowered. And he shares his story with us so we can learn to follow in his righteous footsteps.

What are the practical steps that show I have experienced Christ's Atonement? What does my own Atonement in The Hero's Journey look like?

In the Atonement phase of The Hero's Journey, we do as Elder Uchtdorf teaches, we choose to "take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and not be ashamed of being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. We do not hide our faith. We do not bury it. To the contrary, we talk about our journey with others in normal and natural ways.

That's what friends do—they talk about things that are important to them. Things that are close to their hearts and make a difference to them. That's what you do. You tell your stories and experiences as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

Isaiah refers to those who partner in the work of the Savior as "saviors...up on Mt. Zion": "And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S" (Obadiah 1:21, *The Bible*).

The Doctrine and Covenants reveal this role further:

For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. But verily I say unto you, I have decreed that your brethren which have been scattered shall return to the lands of their inheritances, and shall build up the waste places of Zion.

For after much tribulation, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, cometh the blessing. Behold, this is the blessing which I have promised after your tribulations, and the tribulations of your brethren—your redemption, and the redemption of your brethren, even their restoration to the land of Zion, to be established, no more to be thrown down (Doctrine and Covenants 103:9-13).



After transformation, there is an obligation—to build, to testify, to conquer, to serve—whatever the situation may require, to change the damage that has been done, to fight with renewed strength and conviction with a new and enhanced capacity. What atonement have you offered? What are you currently doing as an expression of rebirth? Make a note of it:

As an **Atonement** (as evidence of my own transformation), I have:

## Step #8: The Return and Gift(s) of the Goddess

What is the reward for accepting the unknown and adventurously stepping into The Hero's Journey? What is the promise upon return when the journey is ended? For one thing, because of the path journeyed this far in Christ, or in the Gospel, we will have learned a few things about ourselves: about our capacity, about our gifts, about truth and about our purpose on the earth and how to repent. There's one last bit of writing to get down before we part: What has your Journey revealed to you about your Gift(s)? What abilities have you discovered or developed along the way? Make note here:

My Journey (thus far) has helped me recognize/develop the following **Gift** or **Gifts**:

These questions also make me think of the Celestial Room in the Salt Lake City Temple. The picture below is from a scaled model of the Temple room:



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Notice the decorations directly above the windows. They are trophy cups overflowing with abundance. I think of the temple as the archetypal symbol of the Return to Heavenly Father's presence, with the Celestial Room symbolizing the final destination—a living trophy of order, beauty, abundance, comfort, truth, knowledge, purity, and closeness to God.

The beauty and symbolism of the temples surely teach us the rewards that await those who are faithful: "Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. And they shall overcome all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:59).

The Call to Adventure given by God is a promise couched with a command: "For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you" (Doctrine and Covenants 78:7).

And so, Elder Uchtdorf concludes his talk with the invitation, "Come, Join with Us!" Why? Because "Along the way, you will discover yourself. You will discover meaning. You will discover God. You will

discover the most adventurous and glorious journey of your life.” Discipleship is the path of the hero and we are invited to join. Do you accept?