

Your Great Adventure

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The Savior invites us, each day, to set aside our comforts and securities and join Him on the journey of discipleship.

Of Hobbits

A beloved children's fantasy novel written many years ago begins with the sentence "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."¹

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.

The problem is that most self-respecting hobbits want nothing to do with adventures. Their lives are all about comfort. They enjoy eating six meals a day when they can get them and spend their days in their gardens, swapping tales with visitors, singing, playing musical instruments, and basking in the simple joys of life.

However, when Bilbo is presented with the prospect of a grand adventure, something surges deep within his heart. He understands from the outset that the journey will be challenging. Even dangerous. There is even a possibility he might not return.

And yet, the call to adventure has reached deep into his heart. And so, this unremarkable hobbit leaves comfort behind and enters the path to a great adventure that will take him all the way to "there and back again."²

Your Adventure

Perhaps one of the reasons this story resonates with so many is because it is our story too.

Long, long ago, even before we were born, in an age dimmed by time and clouded from memory, we too were invited to embark on an adventure. It was proposed by God, our Heavenly Father. Accepting this adventure would mean leaving the comfort and security of His immediate presence. It would mean coming to earth for a journey filled with unknown danger and trial.

We knew it would not be easy.

But we also knew that we would gain precious treasures, including a physical body and experiencing the intense joys and sorrows of mortality. We would learn to strive, to seek, and to struggle. We would discover truths about God and ourselves.

Of course, we knew we would make many mistakes along the way. But we also had a promise: that 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. Therefore, He prepared a Savior for us. “Nevertheless,” our Father in Heaven said, “thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee.”³

There must have been parts of the mortal adventure that worried and even terrified God’s children, since a large number of our spiritual brothers and sisters decided against it.⁴

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.⁵

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.”

The Call to Adventure

And yet, 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.

Still, there remains something undeniable, deep within our hearts, that hungers for a higher and nobler purpose. This hunger is one reason why people are drawn to the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. The restored gospel is, in a sense, a renewal of the call to adventure we accepted so long ago. The Savior invites us, each day, to set aside our comforts and securities and join Him on the journey of discipleship.

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 if you stay on the path and trust in God, you will eventually find the way to your glorious destiny and back to your heavenly home.

So how do you begin?

It’s quite simple.

Incline Your Heart to God

First, you need to choose to incline your heart to God. Strive each day to find Him. Learn to love Him. And then let that love inspire you to learn, understand, and follow His teachings and learn to keep God's commandments. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is given to us in a plain and simple way that a child can understand. Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to the most complex questions in life and has such profound depth and complexity that even with a lifetime of study and pondering, we can scarcely comprehend even the smallest part.

If you hesitate in this adventure because you doubt your ability, remember that discipleship is not about doing things perfectly; it's about doing things intentionally. It is your choices that show what you truly are, far more than your abilities.⁶

Even when you fail, you can choose not to give up, but rather discover your courage, press forward, and rise up. That is the great test of the journey.

God knows that you are not perfect, that you will fail at times. God loves you no less when you struggle than when you triumph.

Like a loving parent, He merely wants you to keep intentionally trying. Discipleship is like learning to play the piano. Perhaps all you can do at first is play a barely recognizable rendition of "Chopsticks." But if you continue practicing, the simple tunes will one day give way to wondrous sonatas, rhapsodies, and concertos.

Now, that day may not come during this life, but it will come. All God asks is that you consciously keep striving.

Reach Out in Love to Others

There is something interesting, almost paradoxical, about this path you've chosen: the only way for you to progress in your gospel adventure is to help others progress as well.

To help others is the path of discipleship. Faith, hope, love, compassion, and service refine us as disciples.

Through your efforts to help the poor and the needy, to reach out to those in distress, your own character is purified and forged, your spirit is enlarged, and you walk a little taller.

But this love cannot come with expectations of repayment. It cannot be the kind of service that expects recognition, adulation, or favor.

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.⁷ And what adventure could be greater than this?

Share Your Story

The third thing we strive to master in this journey is 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 heart 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.

Sometimes your stories make people laugh. Sometimes they bring them to tears. Sometimes they will help people to continue in patience, resilience, and courage to face another hour, another day and come a little closer to God.

Share your experiences in person, on social media, in groups, everywhere.

One of the last things Jesus told His disciples was that they were to go throughout the world and share the story of the risen Christ.⁸ Today we too joyfully accept that great commission.

What a glorious message we have to share: because of Jesus Christ, every man, woman, and child can return home safely to their heavenly home and there dwell in glory and righteousness!

There is even more good news to share.

God has appeared to man in our day! We have a living prophet.

May I remind you that God does not need you to “sell” the restored gospel or the Church of Jesus Christ.

He simply expects you not to hide it under a bushel.

And if people decide the Church is not for them, that is their decision.

It does not mean you have failed. You continue to treat them kindly. Nor does it exclude that you invite them again.

The difference between casual social contacts and compassionate, courageous discipleship is—invitation!

We love and respect all of God's children, regardless of their position in life, regardless of their race or religion, regardless of their life's decisions.

For our part, we will say, "Come and see! Find out for yourself how walking the path of discipleship will be rewarding and ennobling."

We invite people to "come and help, as we try to make the world a better place."

And we say, "Come and stay! We are your brothers and sisters. We are not perfect. We trust God and seek to keep His commandments.

"Join with us, and you will make us better. And, in the process, you will become better as well. Let's take this adventure together."

When Should I Start?

When our friend Bilbo Baggins felt the call to adventure stir within him, he decided to get a good night's rest, enjoy a hearty breakfast, and start out first thing in the morning.

When Bilbo awoke, he noticed his house was a mess, and he was almost distracted from his noble plan.

But then his friend Gandalf came and asked, "Whenever *are* you going to come?"⁹ To catch up with his friends, Bilbo had to decide for himself what to do.

And so, the very normal and unremarkable hobbit found himself darting out his front door to the path of adventure so quickly that he forgot his hat, walking stick, and pocket handkerchief. He even left his second breakfast unfinished.

Perhaps there is a lesson here for us as well.

If you and I have felt the stirrings to join the great adventure of living and sharing what our loving Heavenly Father prepared for us a long time ago, I assure you, today is the day to follow God's Son and our Savior on His path of service and discipleship.

We could spend a lifetime waiting for that moment when everything lines up perfectly. But now is the time to commit fully to seeking God, ministering to others, and sharing our experience with others.

Leave behind your hat, walking stick, handkerchief, and messy house.¹⁰

To those of us already walking that path, take courage, exercise compassion, have confidence, and continue!

To those who have left the path, please come back, join again with us, make us stronger.

And to those who have not yet begun, why delay? If you want to experience the wonders of this great spiritual journey, set foot upon your own grand adventure!

Speak with the missionaries. Speak with your Latter-day Saint friends. Speak with them about this marvelous work and a wonder.¹¹

It's time to begin!

Come, Join with Us!

If you sense that your life could have more meaning, a higher purpose, stronger family bonds, and a closer connection with God, please, come, join with us.

If you seek a community of people who are working to become the best versions of themselves, help those in need, and make this world a better place, come, join with us!

Come and see what this marvelous, wondrous, and adventurous journey is all about.

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.

Of this I testify in the name of our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.