

# Hobbits, You, and the Spiritual World of Middle-earth

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ONE  
STRUCK BY LIGHTNING!

(BILBO BAGGINS)

Vital Stats

Favorite Activity: Food. Anything remotely related to it.

Least Favorite Activity: White water rafting.

Most Prized Possession: His vest buttons.

Always on the Lookout For: Those Sackville-Bagginses. And a good piece of cake.

Where to start with Bilbo? If a person even *tried* to make up a less likely hero, I'm not sure he could. Vital Stats

Bilbo is short, scared, out of shape, and thinking a little more about his dinner than helping out a brother. Who's betting on him to slay the dragon and save the world? Definitely not the thirteen, slightly taller people stuck with him for what they guess will be a *long* trip with the little whiner. Who even believes in him? He certainly doesn't.



“Poor Bilbo couldn't bear it any longer. At *may never return* he began to feel a shriek coming up inside, and very soon it burst out like the whistle of an engine coming out of a tunnel. The poor little hobbit could be seen kneeling on the hearthrug, shaking like a jelly that was melting. Then he fell flat on the floor and kept calling out, ‘Struck by lightning, struck by lightning!’ over and over again; and that was all they could get out of him for a long time.”



Yep, that's the first impression we get of the daring adventurer. He's afraid of the dark corners of his own house; forget facing trolls, goblins, and dragons. And not one of the thirteen dwarves thinks he's going to survive, much less be of any use.

But in the end, he does a lot more than survive. He saves all their butts--more than once. Through the whole book, he's knifing giant spiders, going for a wild ride on a wet barrel, and coming up with a plan to save everyone, even if he has to put his own life out there. He proves he's not that shaking bowl of jelly anymore. He proves he's what Gandalf said he'd be all along—a hero.

What does this highly unlikely hero have to show by the end of the story? He has amazing courage, uncommon common sense, unbelievable compassion, and brilliant negotiating skills. Not bad for a guy who started out complaining that adventures would make him late for dinner, and that missing a meal was the worst fate he could imagine.

This is not the Bilbo who began his journey whimpering about pocket handkerchiefs. Or is it? Gandalf insists from the first night: “I chose Mr. Baggins and that ought to be enough. There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea. You may, possibly, all live to thank me yet.”

Gandalf seemed to think Bilbo could do it from the start. What did he see inside the hobbit that no one else, not even Bilbo himself, saw there? Did Gandalf know he would learn to leave those handkerchiefs behind and embrace his “herohood” in ways no one ever expected?

But Gandalf is not the first to notice someone everyone else overlooks. Look at something Paul wrote to one of his young friends, centuries before Tolkien wrote a single word.



I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord . . . He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Timothy 1:5-9).

In this letter, Paul knows he's close to the end of his life, and he has a lot he needs to pass on. He's the leader for dozens of churches—pretty much all that existed at the time. He knows it's time to leave others in charge. If he doesn't find people to take on the job of leading the church and telling people the story of Jesus, this thing is going to die. So, he looks around for the person he can confidently pass the torch to, and he picks a *kid* in Greece. Would you be scared to be handed an adventure that big? Timothy was, and he has good reason. Look at the verses again, putting yourself in his place.

- 1. Why might Timothy be afraid? Of what?**
- 2. Paul reminds Timothy that he does have a couple qualifications. What are they?**
- 3. Have you ever tried to start a fire? What does it mean to “fan (a fire) into flames?” What happens to the little spark your fire starts with if you don't fan? What happens if you do?**
- 4. Like starting a fire, what kinds of things can a person do to take their spark--whatever gift or ability they have--and make it into something big? What would be scary about that?**

## 5. What does Paul tell Timothy God gave him to help?

Timothy wasn't born ready for the job. He doesn't feel equipped. He doesn't have the Jewish background the other church leaders have. He has no formal training. He learned all he knows from his mom and grandma. Can you see that one played out in a job interview?

“What qualifies you for this job?”

“Well, um, my grandma...”

Yeah, you can pretty much stop right there.

But, he has two things no degree can ever give him. One, the willingness to do what he's been chosen to do, no matter how hard it may be. And two, a humble spirit that won't let pride (or fear) stand in the way.

Paul encourages Timothy: you've been chosen to do this by the God who raises the dead! That's all you need. It doesn't matter that you're young. It doesn't matter that you don't know all I know. God chose you —are you willing?

That's the secret of Bilbo's victory, too: he's been chosen. He doesn't know why. He probably thinks all of Gandalf's fireworks have shaken the wizard's brain too much. But, *just knowing that someone so great picked him* makes him gather his small courage and believe he has a shot.

Then, he takes the next step. He decides he's willing to do whatever he has to do for the job. Steal from a dragon? Carry out a wild river raft escape? Negotiate peace between forces at war? Take on giant spiders? (That's where you'd lose me!) He just *does* it, because someone has to, and he's been chosen.

### WHAT ABOUT YOU?

What responsibilities has God given you? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to do them well?

Is there some particular task you feel God wants you to begin? What's stopping you? Make a plan for you and God to get moving—without fear.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

*“The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’ ‘Alas, Sovereign LORD,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am too young.’ But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the LORD.”* Jeremiah 1:4-8