

Theology of Heroes and Villains

for ELF 2025

by Dr. Brian S. Chan, Professor of Media Arts & Worship at Dallas Theological Seminary

Why do we have a culture of heroes and villains?

The Hero

Who is one of your favorite heroes and why?

What is a hero? ...in a story ...in real life

Heroes invented as a search for answers to problems
...but more - **ideals**

The Journey and Arc

Calling
and the **Problem**

Trials (Death and Resurrection)

Truths (Necessary Lessons Learned)

Beliefs

Universals

Character and Transformation

- Truth & Moral Conscience
- Choices: *doing the right thing*

How do heroes matter to society?

The Hero as a *schema* for being and living

Models for society

"Great 8 Traits"

Smart
Strong
Selfless
Caring
Charismatic
Resilient
Reliable
Inspiring

Central recipe:
Self-sacrificing & Altruistic
(Allison & Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*)

What about the **antihero**?

The **messiah archetype**

Christ, hero of the gospel story
and **model** for a New Self

Romans 8:29 (Eph 4:24)

New schema for humanity - second Adam
Romans 5:15-17

The Villain

Who is one of your favorite villains and why?

What is a villain?

What makes a villain a *villain*?

Backstory?

Character & Change
Vices vs. Virtues

Beliefs & Views about Reality

Presence of Universals (and truths)

What is the value of villains in stories to **society**?

Warning vs. Model

Flourishing

Humanizing Villains

A Core
issue of
reality

Pain &
Problems

Fallenness

Heroes and Villains in **General Revelation**?

e.g. Romans 2:14

How we **Navigate** through this complex world

Allison & Goethals: "We do know that people create heroes and villains to help them understand and navigate their daunting worlds."
(*Heroes*, 206)

Who we **BE**come in the complex world

Joss Whedon: "Heroes are better versions of us."
(San Diego Comicon 2008)