



# DOCUMENTARY STORYTELLING

**PRE-PRODUCTION**

# Introduction

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**Why?**

**Great stories told well can inspire action and mobilize the Church.**

**“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell.”**

Seth Godin

# 3 STAGES OF PRODUCTION

# DOCUMENTARY STYLES

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- **Docu-Drama** - Scenes from the beneficiaries life are acted out.
- **Talking Head** - Interview driven film with b-roll to fill the gaps.
- **Expository** - Spoken narrative to inform the audience on a specific matter or cause.



# PRE-PRODUCTION



# Planning

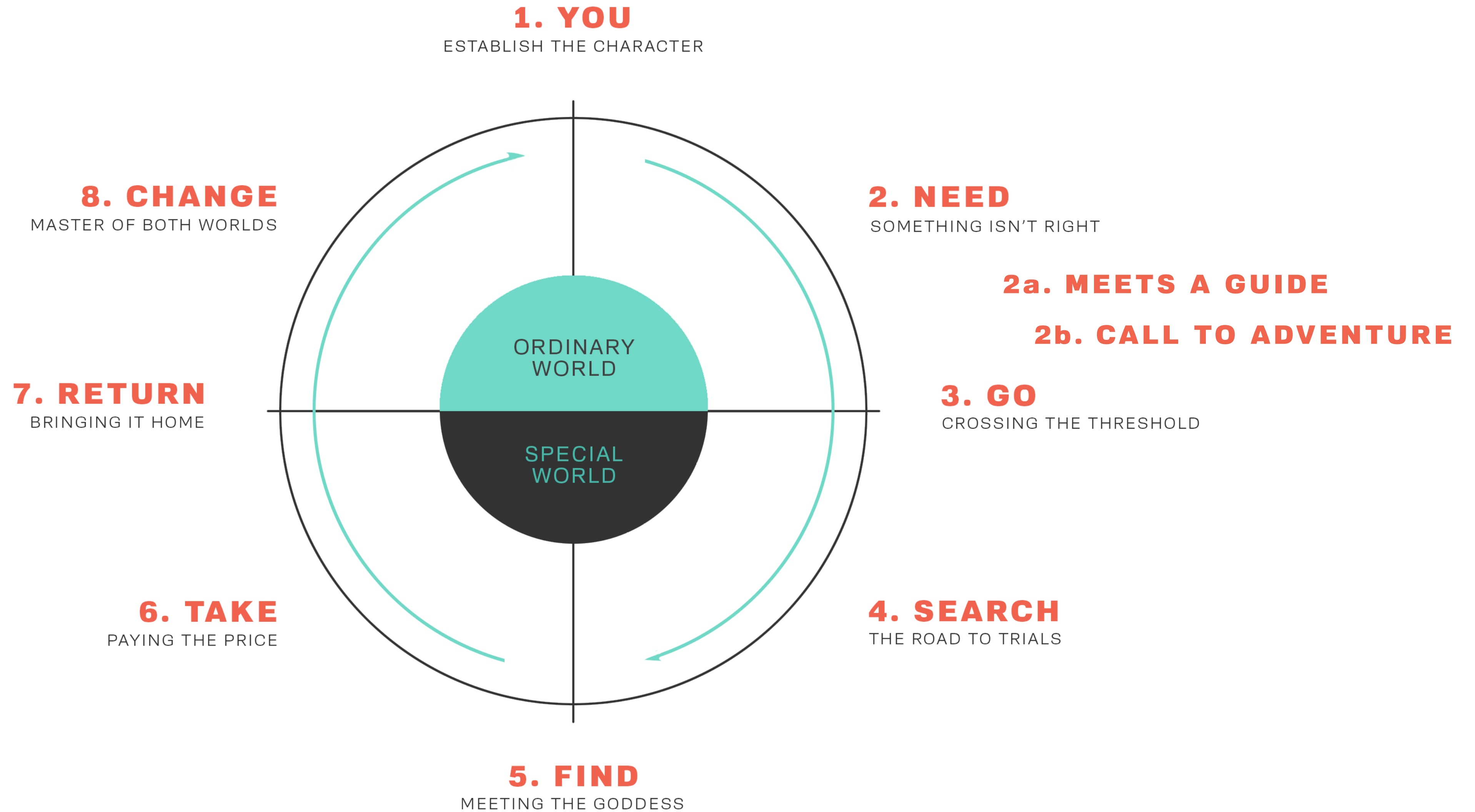
- **Define the story and characters.**
- **Plan locations and scenes based on the story.**
- **What's the storyline or plot?**
- **Determine a theme for the story. What's the moral of the story or the message?**
- **Who is the audience?**
- **What action should the viewer take?**
- **What value can I offer my donor?**
- **What is the format?**

# Script-Writing

- **Structures allow us to create content quicker and with greater efficiency.**
- **The Hero's Journey relates to all humans across all cultures.**
- **We follow Dan Harmon's version of The Hero's Journey**

# Dan Harmon's Story Circle

Revised version of *The Hero's Journey*



# Interview Preparation

- **Questions** - These will serve as your guide to tell a story with structure.
- **Location** - Make a list of ideal locations that fit the story.
- **Gear** - What gear will you need to execute your interview?

# Documentary Storytelling Process

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## PRE-PRODUCTION

### MAKE A PLAN

- Find the character
- Determine the story
- Define the pstoryline/plot
- Extract the theme/message
- Determine the audience
  - Specifically, where do they focus their attention?
- What is the Call to Action?
  - Pray, Volunteer, Give
  - Provide value by sharing a story of a transformed life.

### OUTLINE A ROUGH SCRIPT

- How does the story roughly fit into **The Hero's Journey** story structure as an outline? There are two options to follow.

1. YOU
2. NEED
3. GO
4. SEARCH
5. FIND
6. TAKE
7. RETURN
8. CHANGE



OR

### THE STORY SCRIPT

CHARACTER  
PROBLEM  
MENTOR (BRAND)  
SOLUTION  
CALL TO ACTION  
RESULT / RETURN

### PREPARE THE INTERVIEW

- Follow our Interview Questions PDF
- Plan your locations
- Outline the necessary gear

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## PRODUCTION

### SHOOT THE INTERVIEW

- Find a location that matches your plan
  - Look for good light that is consistent and won't change
  - Look for depth and separation from the backdrop
  - Look for leading lines
  - Quiet scenes with slight movement increase interest
- Follow the interview questions PDF we've designed
- Set your interview up and shoot in one session
- \* Have a translator on scene and translate along the way
- Shoot with multiple cameras when you can

### SHOOT THE SUPPORTING CONTENT

- Shoot B-Roll (**Shoot close, medium, and wide**)
  - Shoot the shots you planned for
  - Shoot the shots that naturally arose out of the interview
- Shoot the "drama" scenes that arise out of the interview. These will be re-created and may require actors (**your character might tell a part of their story from childhood or their story might be too difficult to act out on their own due to trauma**)
- \* As often as you can in both of the above situations, shoot close, medium, and wide shots

### CAPTURE THE AUDIO

- Capture sound effects that will help bring your story to life
  - Capture natural sounds to help give context to location
  - Capture sounds from re-created scenes
- Capture audio from local songs or worship. If you have access to local musicians, local music can give your content an extra layer of contextual depth

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## POST-PRODUCTION

### ASSEMBLE THE CONTENT

- Rough cut your interview footage and lay out the pieces on your chosen video editing timeline following **The Hero's Journey** outline from the pre-production stage
- Overlay the B-Roll footage and your "drama" or re-creation footage over the matching interview sections
- Rough match your audio sound effects and natural sounds to the matching pieces of footage
- Rough outline any music or songs you recorded in the production stage

### EDITING

- Use close and medium shots in interview footage more often
- Balance close, medium, and wide shots in your B-Roll and "drama" footage
- Make editing cuts on action (when your character moves their hands for example)
- Make editing cuts on dialogue (words with strong pronunciation or the end of a sentence)
- Avoid jump cuts. You may have to remove mistakes in the interview, cover those up with B-Roll or "drama" scenes whenever possible
- Remove pieces that waster time and don't support the story, even if you don't get to use all of your favorite shots.
- Edit and color grade the film. You may want to darken the conflict scenes and add contrast, or brighten the hopeful scenes
- Get Creative! The edit is where the magic is, so have fun.

### FEEDBACK AND CRITIQUE

- You've now got a full documentary. Export it and start sharing with close friends and family. Send it to other creatives and ask for critiques. This process can help polish the final product.

# Download

The Production Process - PDF

# Resources

- **The Elements of Documentary Filmmaking** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx99KdAF1LI>
- **How to Make a Documentary** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmQfPHLCjdg>
- **Dan Harmon Story Cycle** - <https://youtu.be/-XGUVkOmPTA>
- **Jonah Sachs Story Wars** - <https://youtu.be/o69xW8wtBhk>
- **Start with Why** - <https://youtu.be/IPYeClXpxw>
- **Every Story is the Same** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuD2Aa0zFiA>
- **The Science of Story** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSxeDtwQnuY>

# www.reliantcreative.org

*Ministries are busy doing ministry work and don't have time to tell their stories.*

*God is at work globally in powerful ways and those stories inspire action.*

*We partner with Christian ministries to tell engaging stories that mobilize the Church.*



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**Thank You!**