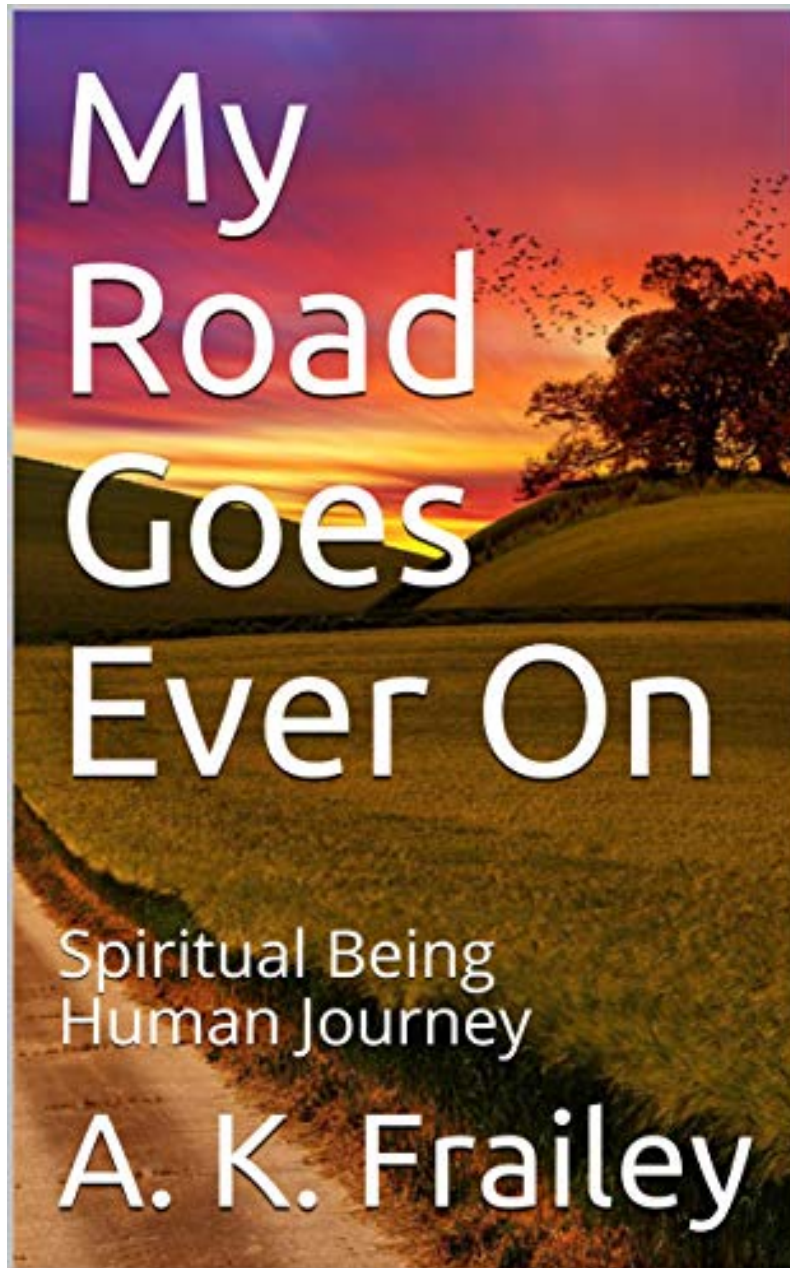


My Road Goes Ever On
Spiritual Being, Human Journey
Book Sample



<https://amzn.to/2KvF3LI>

A Timeless Truth

Henrietta has escaped, and my daughter is dearly worried. Henrietta has been missing all day. Henrietta is a hamster.

The truth is, I heard Henrietta scrabbling at her cage, saw that it was two in the morning, mumbled, “No bloody way,” and pulled the covers over my head to keep out the cold. And any furry visitors.

My daughter got up, comforted her progeny, and went back to bed.

But did that satisfy the quadruped? Nope. Henrietta chewed a hole through a cage any decent rodent would be proud of and ran off to golly-knows-where.

As my kids searched the house from top to bottom, I tried really hard to get emotionally invested. I squinted so I could remember what the tan and white critter looked like, squeezed my heart into kid-remembrances of former rodent pets, cajoled my mood to get into the spirit of concern...but...frankly, it was a losing battle.

I’ve had too many episodes with mice in the cabinets, rats in the outbuildings, possums in the feed sacks, and countless other run-ins with wildlife to get overly upset over a missing hamster.

But that doesn’t mean I don’t care about Henrietta. I do care, for one very good reason. My daughter cares.

There have been many instances in my life where I have had to stretch my emotional bank account into new territory. Many the time I have stood before an array of photos while family members gushed through wonderful memories, smiling, giggling, outright belly laughing at memories of so-and-so doing such-and-such and nudging me in the ribs as if I shared their glorious past. I had no clue. No memory. No warm feelings. No shared gush of any kind.

I learned after one particularly dramatic episode when a friend laughed till she nearly cried to look—not at the photo—but rather at the person remembering. The one still loving. Then I discovered that I could join in. Sort of.

In some weird, mysterious way, I could then see the baby, the brother, the husband, or mother through familiar eyes and gain a semblance of the reality they were seeing. I never actually co-opted their memories. I could never go back in time and experience those exact

memories of nights rocking the little one, sibling pillow fights, intimate spousal lovemaking, or parental forgiveness, but I could love the person standing next to me as they remembered. That act of love crosses time, distance, and even death itself. The remembered loved one might as well have been perched on the arm of the couch, filling in the details. They become that real.

So now, when photos are pulled out, I don't pull away. I look, listen, and watch the walls of reality open to a timeless truth. Sincere love does not die. It may lie quietly on a shelf for years but pull out the photos...and it lives once again.

As for Henrietta, she must have been sleeping. Once night fell, her tummy awoke, and she sashayed into the middle of the bedroom looking for all the world as if she owned the place and expected room service. My daughter scooped her up, offered a minor scold, fed, and played with her. Lucky rodent.

Okay, the truth is, I don't feel any closer to Henrietta...but I still care. Because love can be shared. Even with a hamster.

The Real Reason

So last evening, I sat on the back porch and watched fireflies twinkle, appearing at different spots in our beautiful garden like Tolkien-esk-fairies. When I tipped my head back, I could see faint stars turning ever brighter as the blue sky darkened to dusky-purple.

The kids still living at home slumbered in their beds. The dogs and cats stretched out on the porch. The garden rested without chiding me for neglect. Peace and contentment pervaded my little universe, and my heartbeat slowed to the rhythm of a lovely universe.

Then a mosquito bit me. A moth fluttered close and attempted to smack me in the face.

What the—?

I decided I had tempted fate long enough, and I rose to my feet. I was just about to go inside when the phone rang. It was my daughter who had moved into her own place last week. With a lurch, my heart gripped the phone harder than my hand. It was so good to hear her voice. To

chat. To know she was okay. Yeah, I had figured she was fine...but now I *knew*. Happiness. Even better than contentment.

Later, as I crawled into bed, a soft cool breeze rippled the curtains, sending a chill down my spine. I realized, for the umpteenth time, that I'm in a new period of adjustment. I can name four families without blinking that are going through the same adjustment—transitioning on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis from caring for aged parents to children flying from the nest.

Was there ever a time when life was simple? When the fireflies ruled and the stars stayed still? If there was, it didn't last long.

One of the things I always loved about Tolkien's stories was the way he managed to include some kind of retreat. A time-out. Or maybe, a time-in. It was a period where the characters would get off the road, luxuriate in a hot bath, shift into clean clothes, eat honey and homemade bread, and enjoy a bit of peace and quiet.

I've been pregnant eleven times, lost a husband to cancer, and raised eight kids over twenty-three years. I could try and list the number of things in the house that I have fixed, but it would be a fake number since I usually have to fix the same blessed thing multiple times. I've supervised innumerable gardens, raised chickens, stacked woodpiles, managed accounts, planned and executed educational programs, and done whatever job/task/mission seemed necessary to ensure the health and wellbeing of my family...and my sanity.

Days run together like a stream joining the ocean. Yet, over time, the stream of life changes course. Challenges are met and new missions accepted. Chickenpox, the death of a beloved pet, toppled trees, a shoulder injury, a new electric appliance, a scholarship, college, a new job...

Being a child and loving our parents—difficult as that some times can be—seems easy when you become a parent yourself and look back—*I had it easy then*. Raising a baby seems heroic until you get to the teen years and wonder how the human race ever survived. Each new challenge seems to play a game of one-up-man-ship with the stage before.

So, that's why God created fireflies. And starry skies. The real reason behind hot showers and cool breezes. I'll never actually get to Tom Bombadil's house, but I can sit on the back porch, nibble a chocolate-zucchini-nut muffin, watch the fireflies twinkle and the stars turn.

And answer the phone when it rings.

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As a teacher with a degree in Elementary Education who has taught in big cities and small towns, Ann Frailey homeschooled all of her children. She manages her rural homestead with her kids and their numerous critters. She writes books and a Friday blog alternating between short stories and her *My Road Goes Ever On* series.

Her nonfiction work focuses on the intersection of motherhood, widowhood, practicing gratitude, and rediscovering joy.

Her fiction novels expand from the OldEarth world to the Newearth universe—where deception rules but truth prevails.

She earned a Masters of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing for Entertainment from Full Sail University.

In her spare time, she serves as an election judge, a literacy tutor, and as secretary/treasurer of her small town's cemetery.

She is currently finishing a new science fiction novel in the Newearth world and a historical fiction & science fiction blend in her OldEarth series. To check out her stories, novels, inspirational books, and her film and TV scripts, visit <https://akfrailey.com/>



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