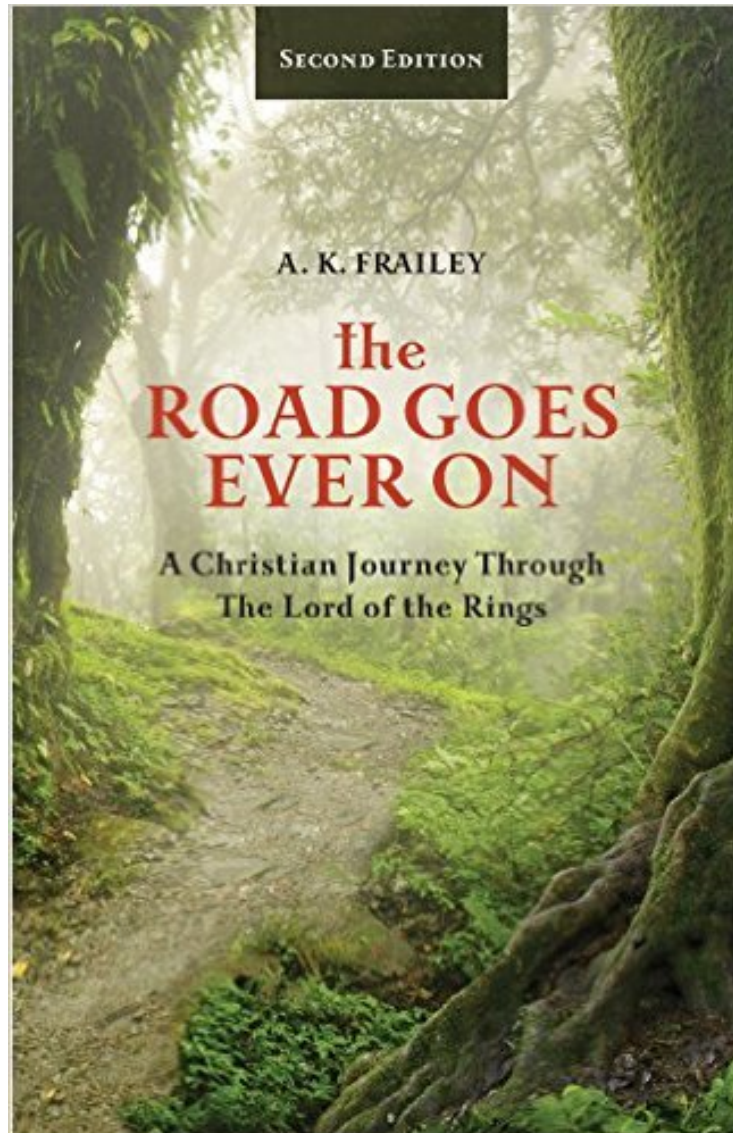


The Road Goes Ever On
A Christian Journey Through The Lord of the Rings
Book Sample



<http://amzn.to/2yGTvYs>

Introduction

“But in the wearing of the swift years of Middle-Earth the line of Meneldil son of Anarion failed, and the tree withered, and the blood of the Numenoreans became mingled with that of lesser men. Then the watch upon the walls of Mordor slept, and dark things crept back to Gorgoroth. And on a time evil things came forth, and they took Minas Ithil and abode in it, and they made it into a place of dread;.....” (The Fellowship of the Ring p321)

The first time I read of Hobbits and their adventures I was eleven years old and I was borrowing *The Hobbit* from a friend. When it came to the dark mines of the goblins I was unnerved and I could not finish the story. I felt as if I had missed something of importance but what it was I could not at that time discern.

When I was much older, carrying my second child, and enduring the torments of severe morning sickness my husband suggested I read *The Lord of the Rings* to get my mind off my suffering. It was a strange suggestion as I think of it now but it turned out to be a wonderful act of benevolent insight if ever there was one. I began *The Hobbit* again, to get the background, and I felt myself drawn into a world that spoke volumes to a heart that was expanding, as it never had before.

In that reading, and in subsequent readings, I glimpsed the mind of a soul that saw meaning in the lives of the most varied characters which reflect the real world people in our own lives. Even more surprisingly there are reflections of the various aspects of each of our own personalities.

The story of *The Hobbit* and the continuing adventure, *The Lord of the Rings*, speaks to many universal themes. As Tolkien was a Catholic he surely reflected the teaching and thoughts of the moral forces around him. He lived through two great world wars and undoubtedly saw in his teaching profession and marriage, as well as in fatherhood, both the noble and the treacherous parts of our human experience as we struggle to overcome temptations and become transformed into the beings God called us forth to be from the beginning of time. As he himself said while talking with C.S. Lewis one night; “We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed only by myth-making, only by becoming a ‘sub-creator’ and inventing stories, can man aspire to the state of perfection that he knew before the fall. Our myths may be misguided, but they steer however shakily toward the true harbor, while materialistic ‘progress’ leads only to a yawning abyss and the Iron Crown of the power of evil.” (J.R.R. Tolkien: A biography, by Humphrey Carpenter, page 151)

In each character in *The Lord of the Rings* it is as if we can see the various struggles each person on this earth must grapple with in order to advance to that state of perfection which our Lord calls us to as sons and daughters of God. It is in the development or the abandonment of the practice of Christian virtues that each character either ascends into greatness or descends into madness and evil. In the prudent justice of Bilbo, the wise fortitude of Frodo, and the faithful hope of Sam, so each of us is called to reflect on our own lives; the virtues we practice or ignore, and the meaning of our existence.

We can see so clearly in the movie depiction the glory and wonder of the adventure as it is played out so magnificently in bright images on a large screen. Then it seems that the ordinary becomes truly extraordinary and meaningless acts of mere living suddenly take on a value of tremendous proportions. If we look at the story and those same characters through the lens of faith in the one true and perfect God, then we would find that our own existence can be revealed for the wonder that it is. For everything we do has meaning and though we may never have a song sung about us and we may never have our personal memoirs published, that does not in any way diminish the nobility of our struggle to become what we are called to be. If anything, it is suggested by our Lord Himself, that what prayers and struggles we offer to Him in the secret places of our minds and hearts may in fact be more worthy for the very fact that they are seen by Him alone.

There will come a day and there will be a place in which all the secrets of the world will be revealed and the great battles of good and evil each one of us has had to face will be known and revered for what they truly are. In every sincere act of love toward our own best self, toward our family and friends, toward the world at large and most of all toward the One who is our all we make the transformation from servant to family member happen. We come into union with the God who made us.

May these simple reflections of an extraordinary story give you time to pause and ponder the purpose of your existence and the greatness of the adventure we all experience in this journey called life. We may not bear the ring of power but in the depth of each of us we carry a soul that is called to live forever and ever with the hidden Lord. It is He who carries us to the mountaintop and asks us on a daily basis to practice the virtues, which give us the strength to bear the rings of power that haunt our earthly lives. It is He who humbled Himself even to being born as one of us. It is He who set us the perfect example of all the virtues, most especially of love in which He offered Himself on a cross to pay for our sins.

It was Sam who through his wisdom understood the purpose and value of his existence as portrayed in its deepest mystery through a good story.

“ ‘Yes, that’s so,’ said Sam. ‘And we shouldn’t be here at all if we’d known more about it before we started. But I suppose it’s often that

way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them – usually their paths were laid out that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd be forgotten. We hear about those as just went on – and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know, coming home, and finding things all right, though not quite the same – like old Mr. Bilbo. But those aren't always the best tales to hear, though they may be the best tales to get landed in! I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into?" (p. 362 *The Two Towers*)

In the end it was Frodo's mercy that allowed Gollum to live and in that virtue he saved himself from himself. Sam's faithfulness and abiding love carried the weight of the struggle and yet brought forth the new life that would carry on the journey of the Hobbit race. In *The Lord of the Rings* there was only one ring of power whereas we struggle in a world that is inundated with trials and tribulations leading to great variety of evils. But in this world the power that guides us may be

hidden but He has a name, a name above every other name. And we have our own fellowships, broken or not. Through the goodness of the One we are blessed with the very same gifts that Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Aragorn and all the rest carried; the gifts of virtues and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. May we look at these gifts and fruits and see in them the antidote to the evil temptations, which beset us. May we drive back the dark things that want to come into our world and make it a place of dread. May we be strong enough to throw the evil rings away and bring forth the fruit of new life.

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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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