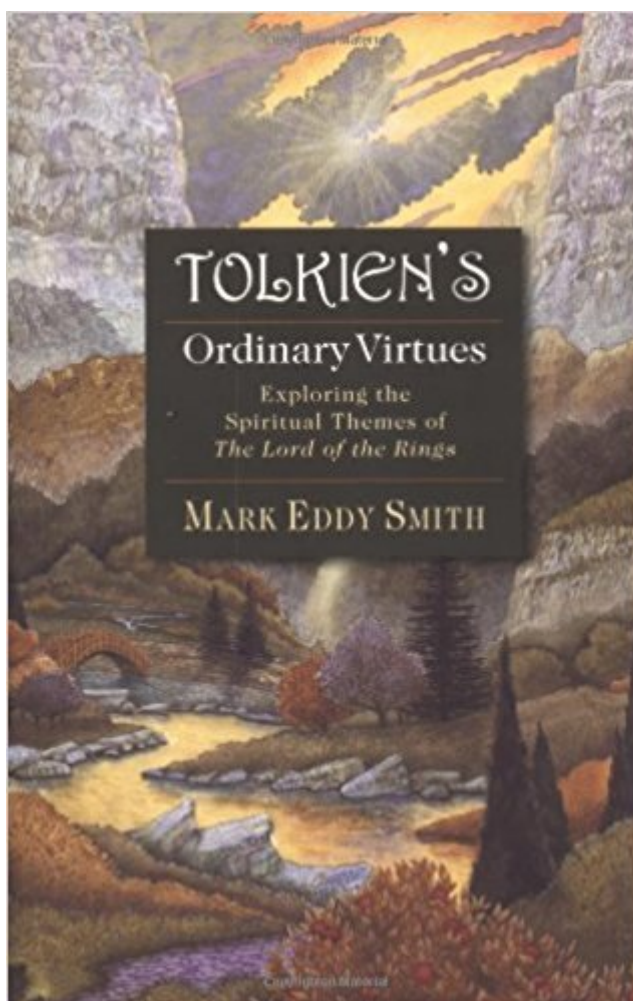


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# Tolkien's Ordinary Virtues : Exploring The Spiritual Themes Of The Lord Of The Rings



## Synopsis

"I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way." --Frodo Baggins, at the council of Elrond "The mere recollection of [this phrase] can move me to tears. I have been reading this tale since I was twelve years old, taking it from my shelf every year or so and returning to Middle-earth . . . . As I get older, and learn more of what sort of person I am, and continue sojourning to the rich soil of the Shire and the high towers of Minas Tirith, I discover that many of my notions of what is good and right and noble in this world have their source in that one." - from the introduction

The Lord of the Rings offers us the essential lessons in living. Here we discover ordinary virtues, like generosity, pity, hospitality and rest. We meet extraordinary people, like Bilbo, Gandalf, Tom Bombadil and Glorfindel. We learn about the roots of destruction in pride and betrayal. And we find the ingredients for success, such as community and sacrifice. Each of us-even the most simple-is called to a journey. We may be asked to leave behind everything we have grown dependent on. And when this is the case, the tale of Frodo and his friends offers hope that we will be given the strength and the help we need to overcome every obstacle and defeat every foe. This book will help you find the way. "Writing in graceful, easy prose, Smith invites us to admire Tolkien not only for the epic scope of his imagination but also for the depth of his spiritual insight." David C. Downing, professor of English at Elizabethtown College and author of Planets in Peril and The Most Reluctant Convert

"Mark Eddy Smith's gentle account of Tolkien's ordinary virtues gets to the very quick of the great storyteller's vision." Colin Duriez, author of Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings and The Inkings Handbook

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## Customer Reviews

With insight, humor, and a good deal of personal passion for his subject, Mark Eddy Smith offers glimpses into the deeper spiritual meaning of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* by looking at 30 virtues exemplified by its characters throughout the tales. He then invites readers to embrace these virtues for themselves. Using a persuasive, conversational style, Smith offers reflective commentary, sometimes with a direct call to action: "Are there not enough heroes left in the world? Become one yourself." Tolkien aficionados will appreciate such attention to detail as Smith's note that he uses the Ballantine paperback edition, 95th printing, for references. The author writes that he has found in Middle-earth "a training ground, a place where I can apprentice to those whose gifts of charity, wisdom, kindness, mercy, love and faithfulness far surpass my own." Readers who love the Tolkien tales will be challenged to make changes to their own lives through Smith's gentle, thoughtful prose. --Cindy Crosby

Smith, a graphic designer at InterVarsity Press, is clearly an avid fan of J.R.R. Tolkien's epic tale *The Lord of the Rings*. His emotional attachment to the book is unfortunately not coupled with the skill needed for the kind of thematic analysis he undertakes. Each chapter explores a different virtue, such as friendship, sacrifice or humility. However, several of the topics, such as resurrection or providence, cannot be appropriately categorized as "virtues." Within each chapter, Smith's thoughts meander and sometimes even contradict. "Wise generals lead from the rear," he notes, but he counsels on the very same page that "the proper position of leadership is in front, partaking fully in the dangers of the lowliest of soldiers." Smith's chapter about the virtue of justice is actually entirely about mercy. Many Tolkien fans will disagree with much of Smith's interpretation, particularly the assertion that Gandalf clearly dies and is resurrected, or that Gollum and Sam are very similar characters. Christian readers will also be disappointed at the paucity of theological thought; Scripture references are rare and often appear to be tacked on as afterthoughts. Also puzzling are the indications that Smith believes the story to reflect some actual past time somehow "revealed" to Tolkien. Although it contains some original ideas, especially in the chapter on community, this book lacks depth and clarity of expression. Copyright 2002 Cahnerns Business Information, Inc.

It started out weak and shallow to me, but as I read on I got the hang of his writing. At times I felt like he was trying to "baptize" the story or make it Christian in nature which I'm not convinced is what Tolkien intended. He is not C. S. Lewis, just his friend. But this book did help me recall the Lord of

the Rings stories in a new way. So Virtues is okay.

This author does a great job of collecting various quotes from the LOR books and tying them together with scripture quotes. Just terrific insights to be gained in reading this. Get the audio book that goes with this, as the narrator adds an additional nuance to its reading.

Excellent book to really explore Tolkien. The explanation of the virtues as well as how they are portrayed in the characters is very enlightening. Definitely a good read!

This is a good one thanks for this

I used this book while homeschooling my daughter. After reading Lord of the Rings, this helped her dig deeper. It was a joy to read and sparked good conversations

This book serves as a great source for those looking for research on virtues. As a graduate student working on my thesis, I was glad to find a book that so closely related to my central and secondary topics.

This book makes me cry, but in a good way. This book peels away the difficult language use, the silly songs and poetry, the lineage, history and racial complications and the unfamiliar politics in Lord of the Rings to present a simple, heartfelt stripping down to the basic virtues exemplified in the Trillogy. It does it in such a reverent way, one cannot help but be touched by it. If you love Tolkien, you will love this book. If you don't care for Tolkien, you will love this book. If you are indifferent, but your mind is open, you will definitely experience something uplifting. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

Once more a book has been published which tries to venture into the spiritual depths of Tolkien's literary characters. Since the first part of the film trilogy had been released, the book market has got absolutely carried away in the sale of recent publications making any effort to get the Tolkien phenomenon more tangible for us. And do you know why? Well, it is just worth it. "The Lord of the Rings" is not a book to simply read and then to put down and forget it. On the contrary: it might change many of us forever, for the tale of Frodo and the One Ring leaves deep marks in our hearts and souls. This is what you feel when you read this work of Mark Eddy Smith, who - perhaps most of

all for himself - has tried to work out what exactly it is that is touching him so deeply through Tolkien's work. And it is a wonderful fact that he has decided to share his cognitions with us. The feelings that the author might have experienced during the writing are passed on to the reader to leave him in a grateful and contemplative mood. Mark Eddy Smith has classified Tolkien's novel according to values and virtues to give us a clear vision of what we have to rediscover and cultivate to satisfy our contemporary desires. This book is simply a fantastic work.

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