

Influential Christian Literature

*Exploring Essential Works That Shaped
Christian Thought*

Wilbur Reid, summer of 2025



The Inklings at Oxford



1933-1949

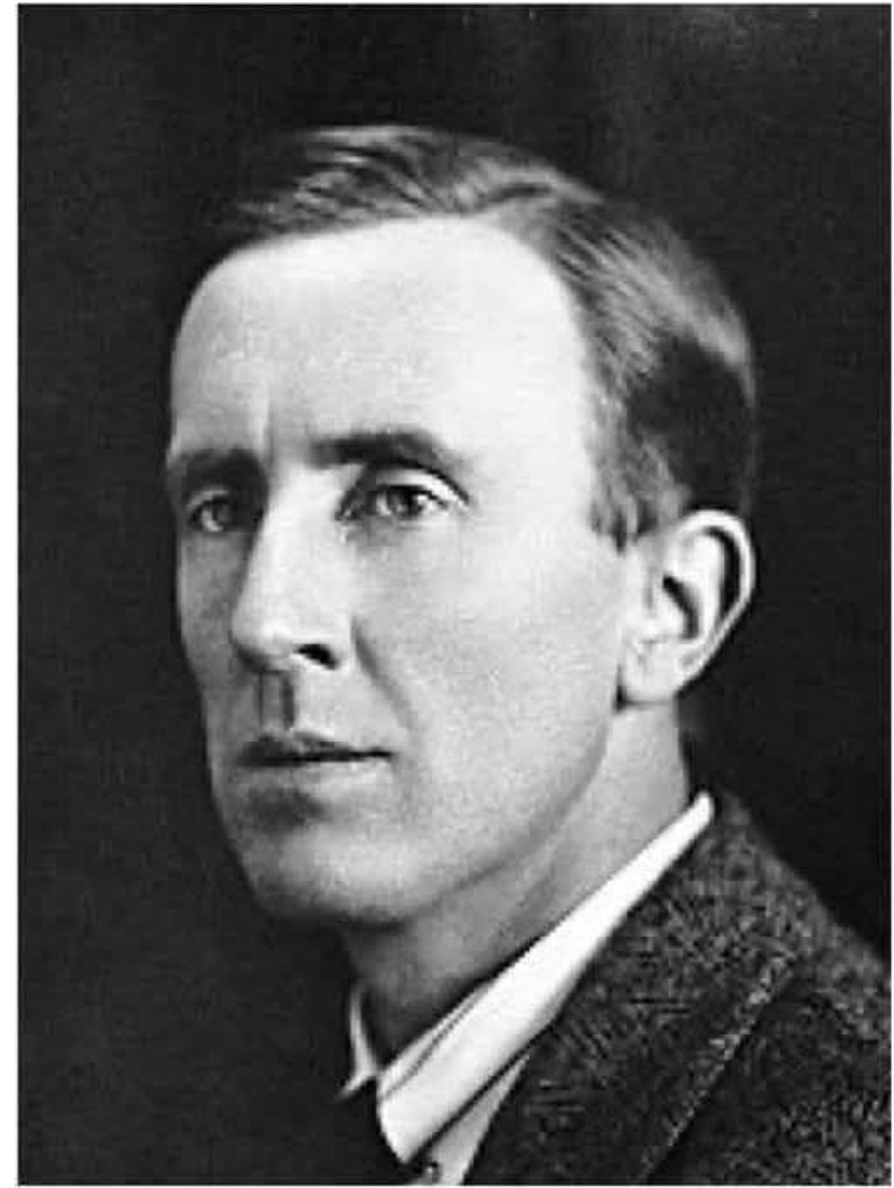
"We were united by a common distaste for the modern world"

What if Christ came to another world?

- How might he reveal himself?
- What would salvation look like?
- How would the gospel story unfold?
- *This question sparked two of the greatest works of Christian literature.*



C S LEWIS



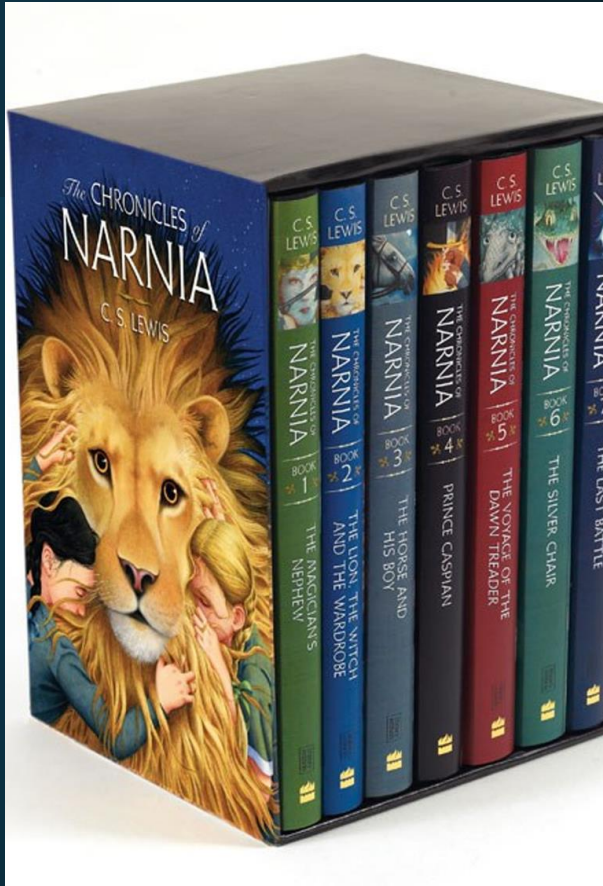
J R R TOLKIEN

Lewis & Tolkien: Mutual Influence

- Tolkien helps convert Lewis to Christianity
- Shared Passions: Medieval literature, mythology, languages
- Creative Process: Reading works-in-progress aloud
- Different Approaches: Lewis (direct allegory) vs. Tolkien (applicable myth)



Faith, Reason, and Wonder



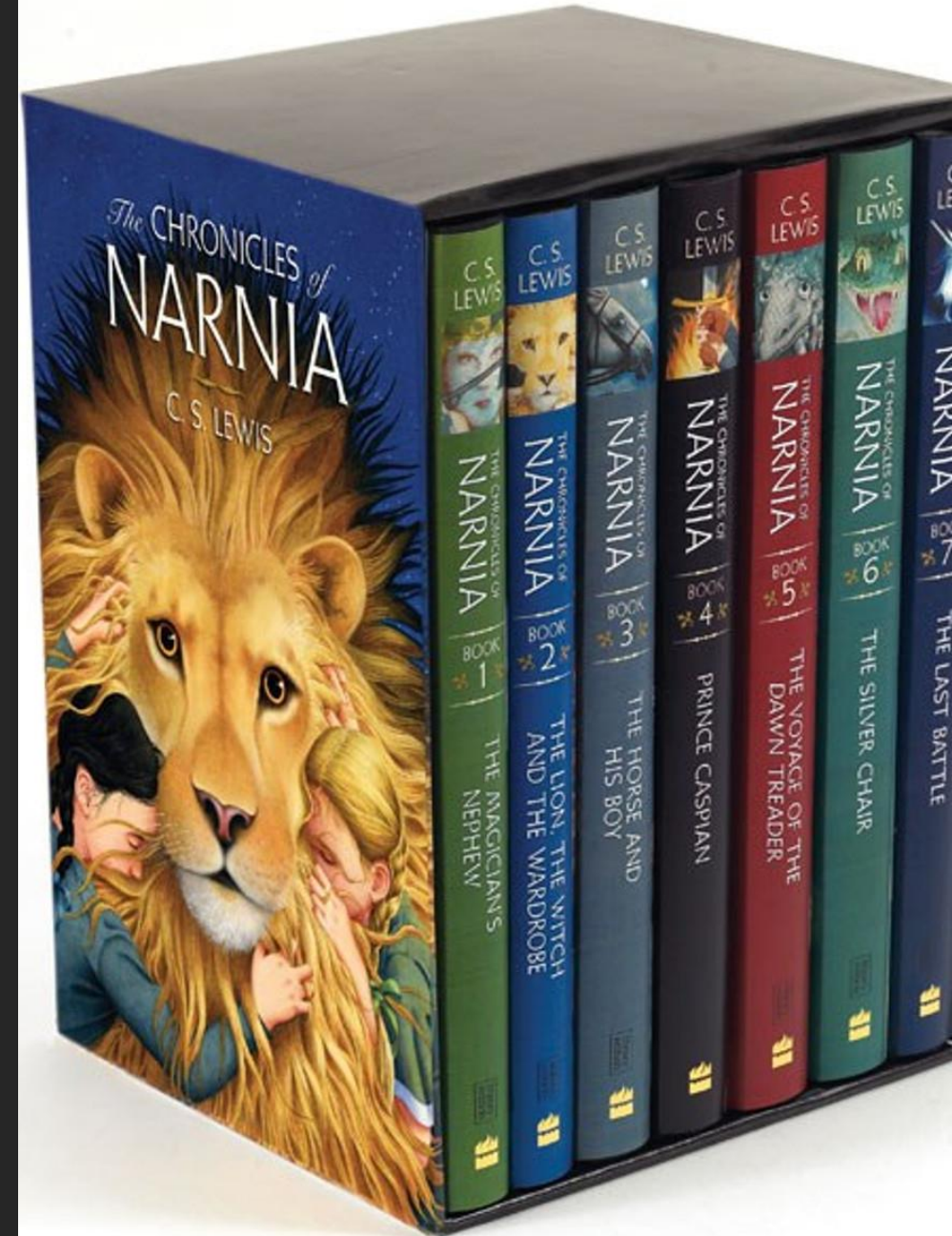
1950-1956



1954-1955

The Chronicles of Narnia (1950-1956)

- **Author:** C.S. Lewis
- **Summary:** Seven fantasy novels using allegory to explore Christian themes through the magical world of Narnia and Aslan the lion.
- Sold 120 million books
 - 60% of Lewis' total of 200 million
- Movies grossed \$1.5 billion



i.
THE
AGE OF
CONQUEST

ii.
THE AGE OF
THE LONG
WINTER

iii.
THE
GOLDEN
AGE

iv.
THE
DARK
AGE

v.
THE
TELMARINE
AGE

vi.
THE AGE
OF
RESTORATION

vii.
THE
LATTER
AGE

Years 0 - 900

900 - 1000

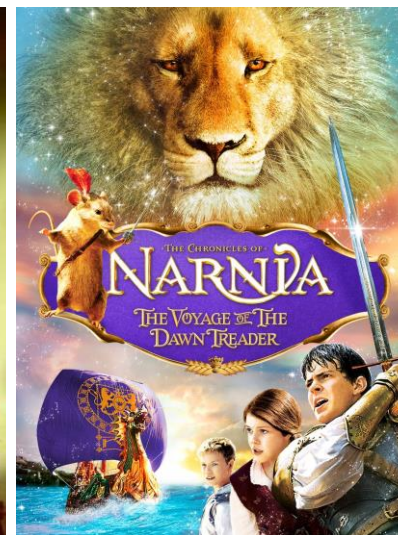
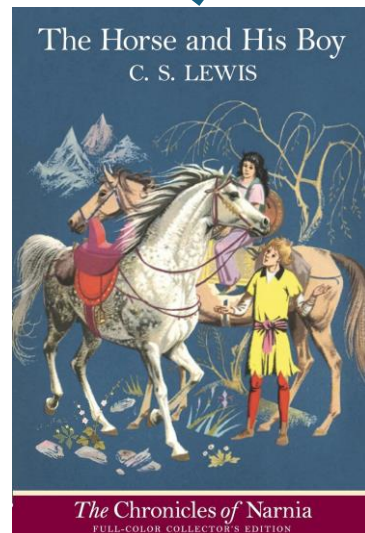
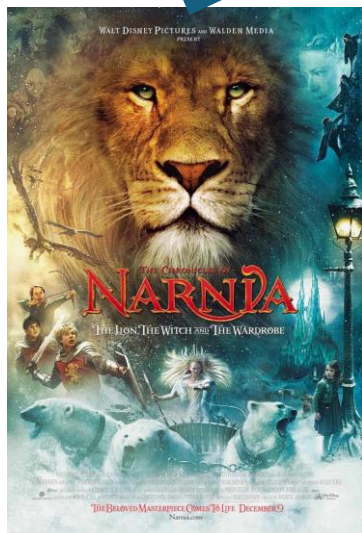
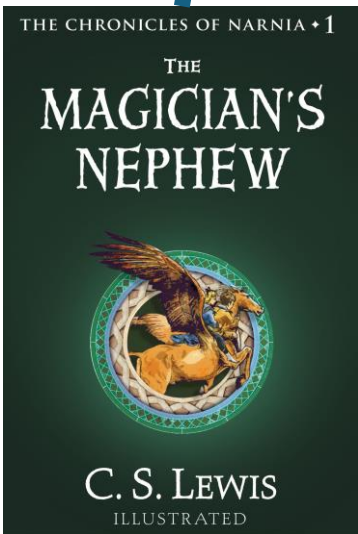
1000 - 1015

1015 - 1998

1998 - 2303

2303 - 2356

2356 - 2555

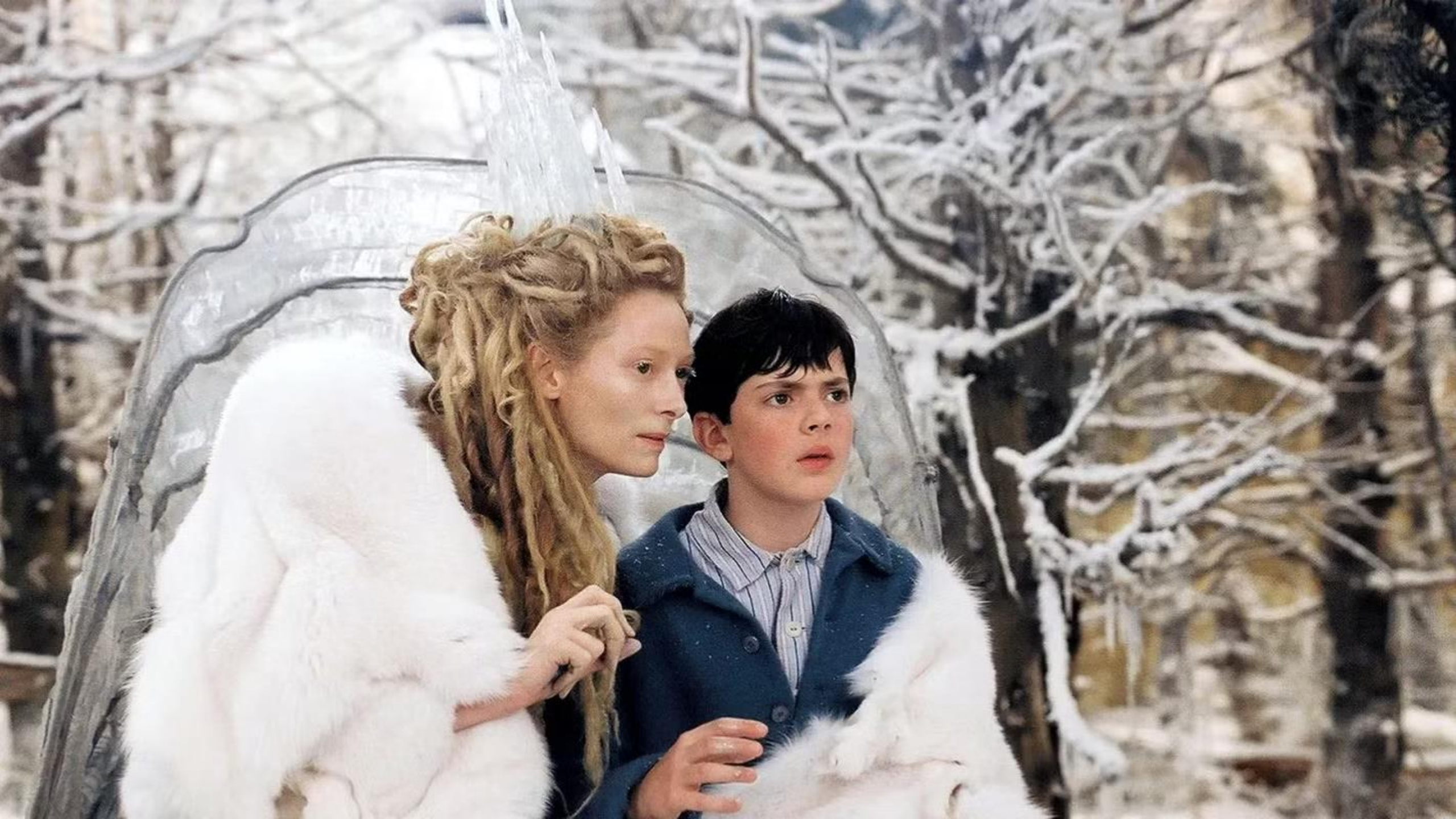




The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

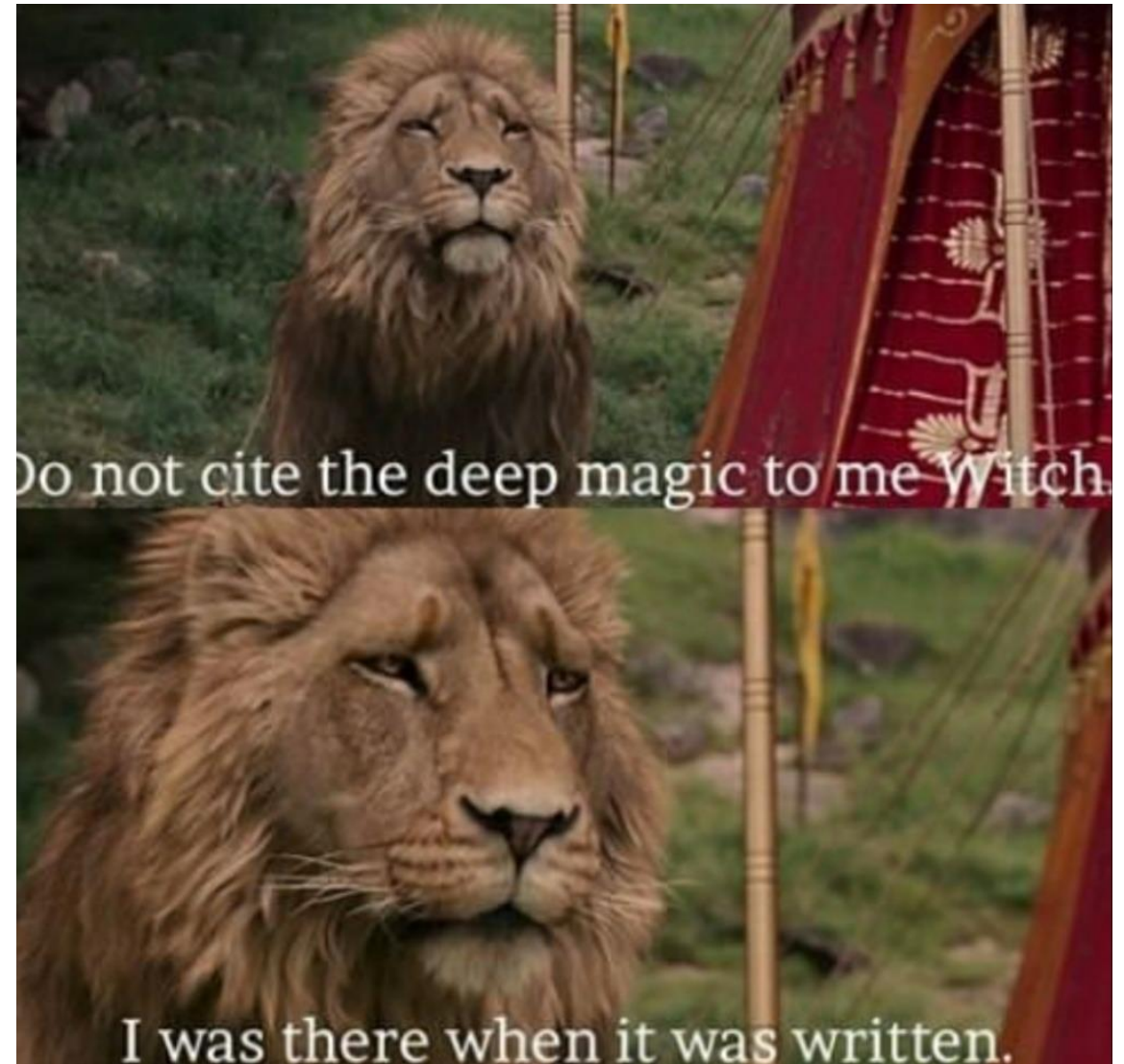
The Pevensies:
Peter, Susan, Edmund, Lucy





Law, Justice, and Grace in Narnia

- The Deep Magic: Law written at world's foundation
 - "Every traitor belongs to me"
- The Deeper Magic: Love conquers death
 - "Death itself would work backwards"
- Biblical Foundation: Romans 6:23, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

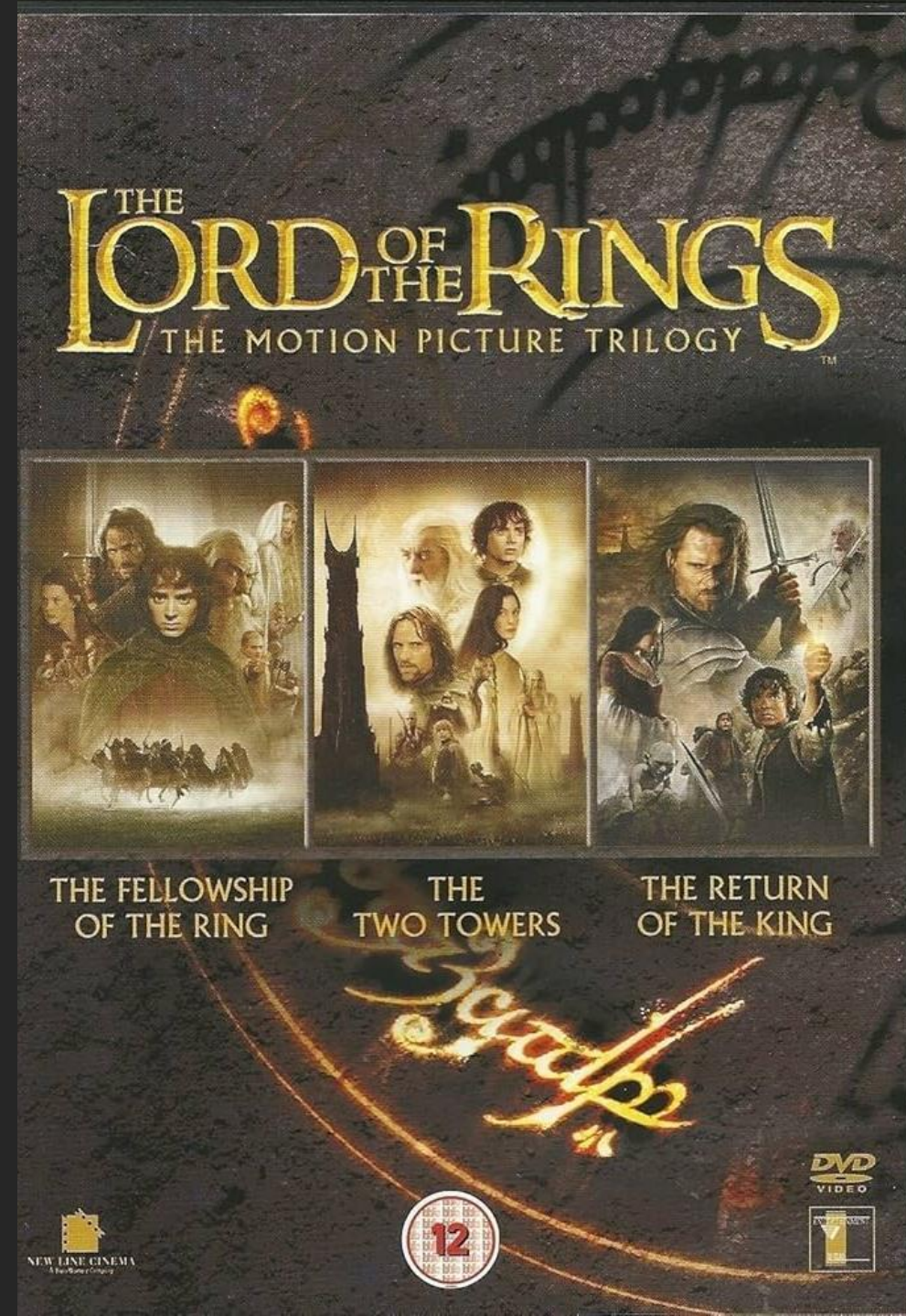


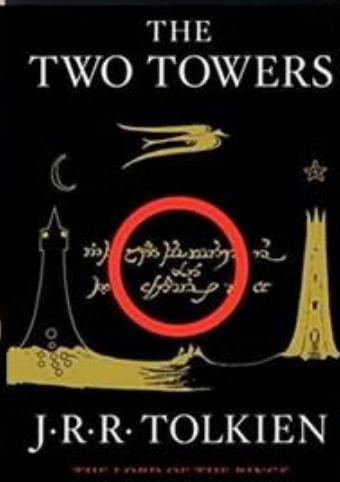
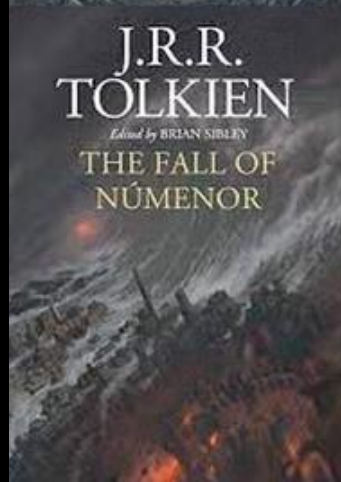
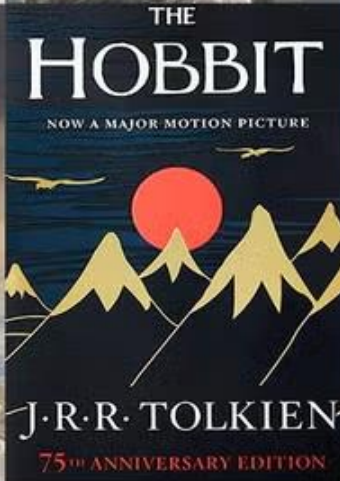
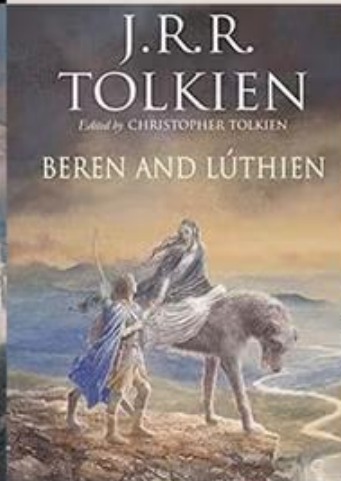
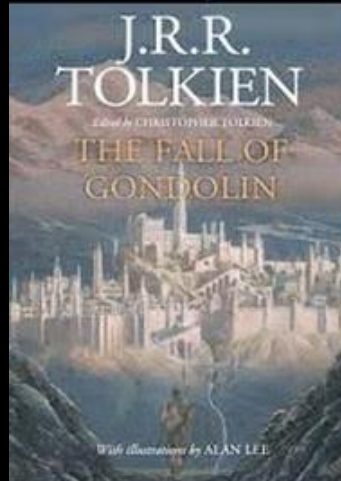
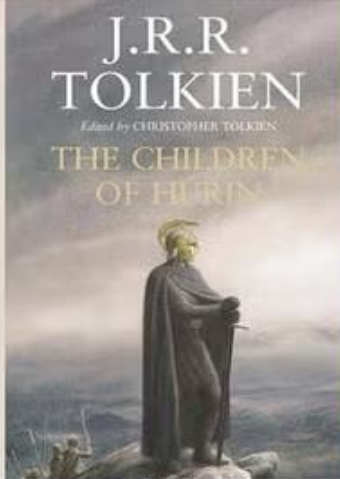
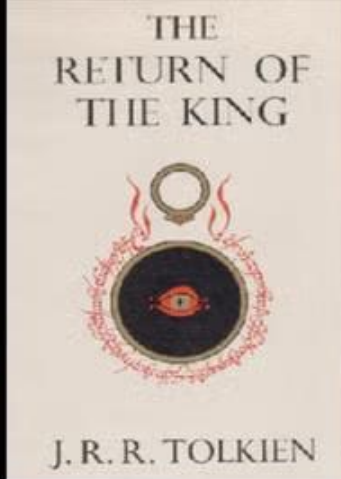
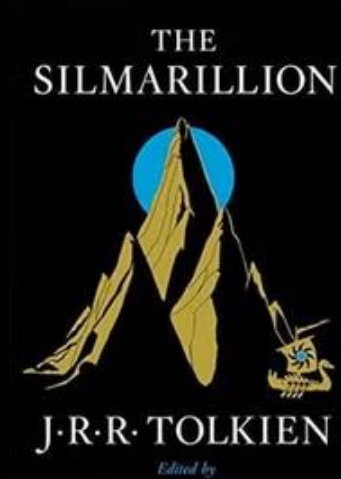


Lucy Pevensie

The Lord of the Rings (1950-1956)

- **Author:** J.R.R. Tolkien
 - English Philologist, professor, author
- **Summary:** An epic fantasy trilogy exploring themes of sacrifice, providence, and the battle between good and evil through Christian allegory and symbolism.
- Sold 150 million books
 - 25% of Tolkien's total of 600 million sold
- LOTR movie trilogy earned \$3 billion
 - Another \$3 billion from The Hobbit and
 - Amazon paid \$0.7 billion for season 1 of The Rings of Power (prequel)







Humans



Dwarves



Elves



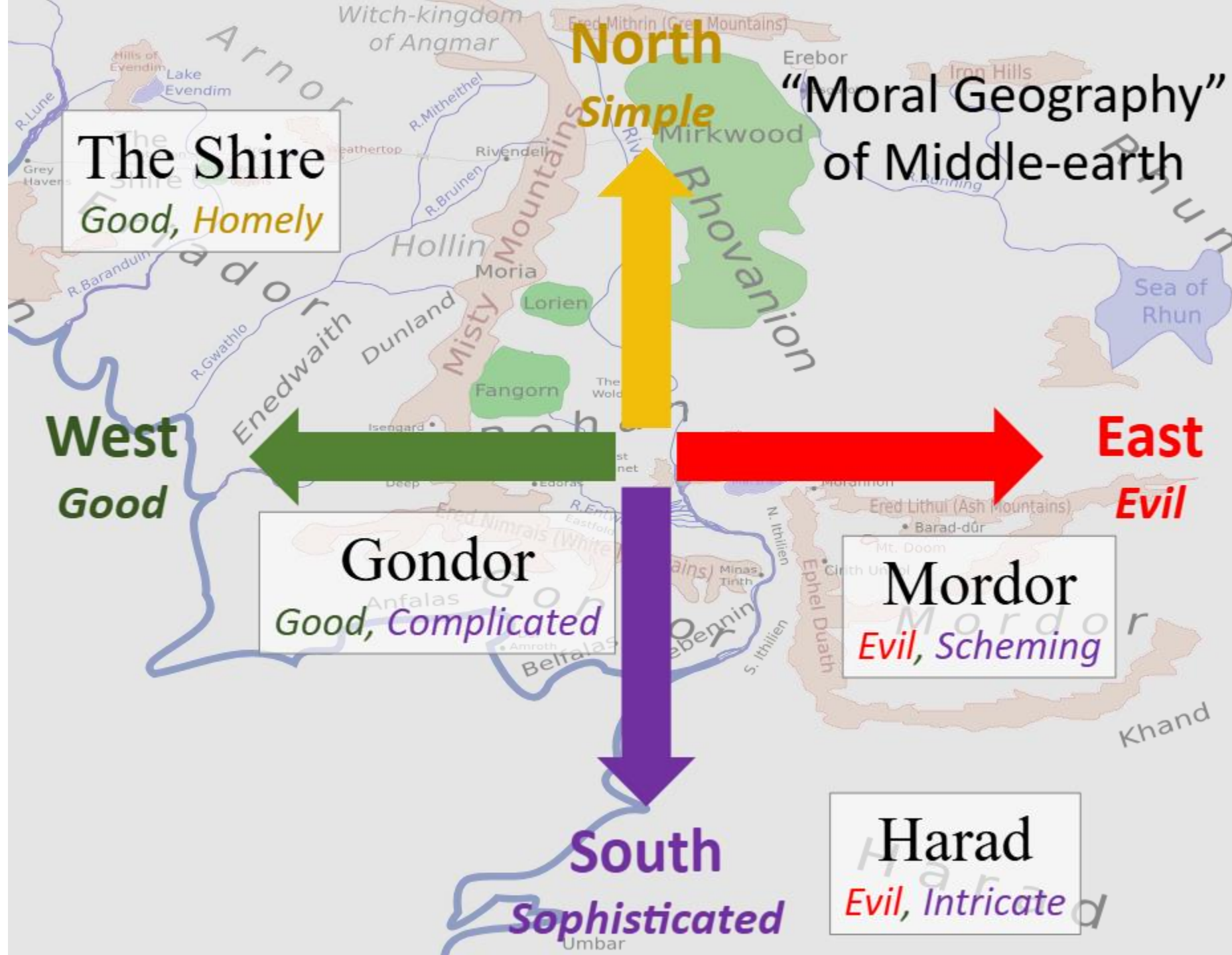
Wizards: Gandalf vs Saruman



Hobbits: Merry, Pippin, **Frodo**, and Sam



Evil Characters





Sauron's One Ring

Invisibility · Longevity · Enhanced Senses · Corruption



Galadriel's Ring
(*Nenya*)

Magic Protection



Cirdan's &
Gandalf's Ring
(*Narya*)

Magic Strength



Gil-Galad's &
Elrond's Ring
(*Vilya*)

Magic Healing



The seven rings for
the dwarf lords

Longevity · Leads
to greed



The nine rings for
men

Longevity · Some Invisibility ·
Leads to becoming a wraith

Themes and Metaphors



- The One Ring:
 - Absolute power
 - Addiction and temptation
 - Self-defeating evil
- Good vs Evil
- A journey / pilgrimage
- Hope and Resilience
 - The power of the small
 - Mercy and forgiveness
- Other Christian symbolism
 - The good fight (free will, humility, etc.)
 - Christ-like figures

Christ figures: Priest, Prophet, King

Priest: Frodo



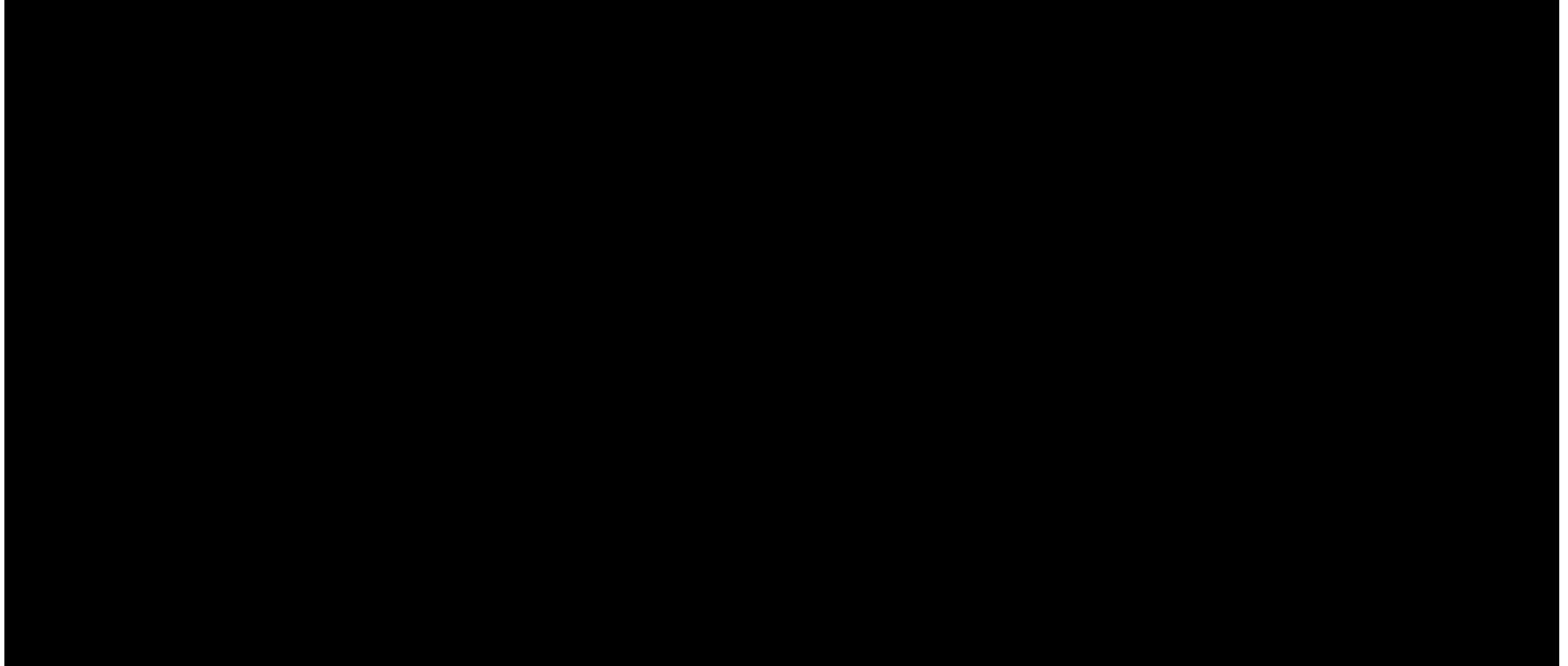
Prophet: Gandalf



King: Aragorn



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ALL AUDIENCES
BY THE MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



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THE FELLOWSHIP

The Literary Lives of the

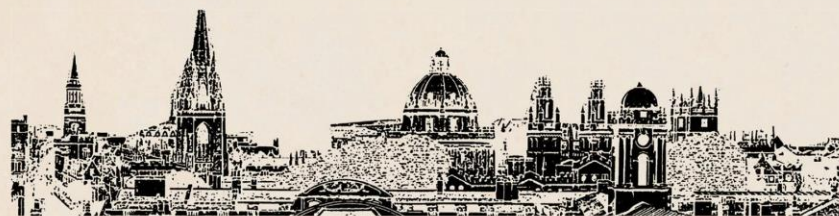
INKLINGS

J.R.R.
TOLKIEN

C.S.
LEWIS

OWEN
BARFIELD

CHARLES
WILLIAMS

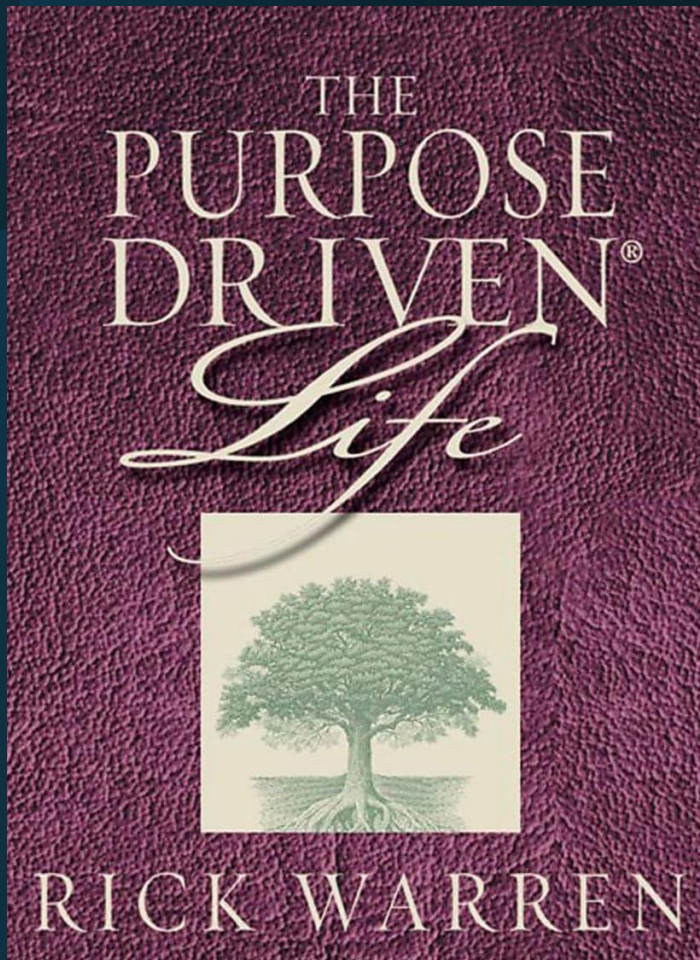


PHILIP ZALESKI & CAROL ZALESKI



Next Week:

Purpose and meaning in life



2002

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The Foundation of Faith
What we believe and why
<i>Luther, Calvin, Campbell</i></p> <p>2. Knowing God's Character
His attributes and nature
<i>Aquinas, Tozer, Packer</i></p> <p>3. Authentic Conversion
What real faith looks like
<i>Augustine, Edwards</i></p> <p>4. The Cost of Discipleship
Following Christ isn't easy
<i>Bonhoeffer, Chan, Platt</i></p> <p>5. Pursuing God's Presence
Intimacy with the Divine
<i>Kempis, Lawrence, Tozer</i></p> <p>6. Spiritual Warfare
The battle for our souls
<i>Lewis, Edwards, Peretti, LaHaye/Jenkins</i></p> | <p>7. Defending the Faith
Christianity makes sense
<i>Chesterton, Lewis</i></p> <p>8. Christian Worldview and Society
Faith and public life
<i>Augustine, Chesterton, Colson</i></p> <p>9. The Pilgrim's Journey
Life as movement toward God
<i>Bunyan, Dante, Sheldon</i></p> <p>10. Faith, Reason, and Wonder
Christianity appeals to the whole person
<i>Tolkien, Lewis, Aquinas</i></p> <p>11. Life's Purpose
Why are we here?
<i>Warren, Misc others</i></p> |
|---|--|

397 - 2010

Twelve Unifying Themes

1. The Foundation of Faith

What we believe and why

Luther, Calvin, Campbell

2. Knowing God's Character

His attributes and nature

Aquinas, Tozer, Packer

3. Authentic Conversion

What real faith looks like

Augustine, Edwards

4. The Cost of Discipleship

Following Christ isn't easy

Bonhoeffer, Chan, Platt

5. Pursuing God's Presence

Intimacy with the Divine

Kempis, Lawrence, Tozer

6. Spiritual Warfare

The battle for our souls

Lewis, Edwards, Peretti, LaHaye/Jenkins

7. Defending the Faith

Christianity makes sense

Chesterton, Lewis

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Faith and public life

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Life as movement toward God

Bunyan, Dante, Sheldon

10. Faith, Reason, and Wonder

Christianity appeals to the whole person

Tolkien, Lewis, Aquinas

11. Life's Purpose

Why are we here?

Warren, Misc others

Books,
ranked
by
reading
level

Rank	Title	Author	Reading Grade Level	Difficulty	
1	Summa Theologica	Thomas Aquinas	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	The City of God	Augustine	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	Institutes of the Christian Religion	John Calvin	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
4	Divine Comedy	Dante Alighieri	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Christian System	Alexander Campbell	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Everlasting Man	G.K. Chesterton	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
7	Orthodoxy	G.K. Chesterton	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Religious Affections	Jonathan Edwards	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
9	Confessions	Augustine	College/12-14	Difficult	★★★☆☆
10	The Imitation of Christ	Thomas à Kempis	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	Jonathan Edwards	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
12	The Pilgrim's Progress	John Bunyan	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Luther's 95 Theses	Martin Luther	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
14	How Now Shall We Live	Chuck Colson	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	Knowing God	J.I. Packer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Knowledge of the Holy	A.W. Tozer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Cost of Discipleship	Dietrich Bonhoeffer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
18	Mere Christianity	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Screwtape Letters	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Lord of the Rings	J.R.R. Tolkien	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
21	The Pursuit of God	A.W. Tozer	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
	The Practice of the Presence of God	Brother Lawrence	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
23	Chronicles of Narnia	C.S. Lewis	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Radical	David Platt	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Crazy Love	Francis Chan	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	In His Steps	Charles Sheldon	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
27	The Purpose Driven Life	Rick Warren	Elementary/5-7	Easiest	★☆☆☆☆

Great Christian Literature Course Schedule

Woodlawn Christian Church - Fellowship in Christ Class

Week	Date	Theme	Description	Texts		
1	July 13	The Foundation of Faith	Explore how the Reformation's call back to Scripture laid the groundwork for returning to biblical simplicity.	Luther's 95 Theses	Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion	Campbell's The Christian System
2	July 20	Knowing the Character of God	Discover God's attributes through three different eras showing He is both knowable and beyond full comprehension.	Tozer's The Knowledge of the Holy	Packer's Knowing God	Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)
3	July 27	The Journey of Conversion and Confession	Examine authentic spiritual experience from autobiography's father to America's greatest theologian.	Augustine's Confessions	Edwards' Religious Affections	
4	Aug. 3	The Cost of True Discipleship	Challenge comfortable Christianity through voices that demand everything in following Christ.	Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship	Platt's Radical	Chan's Crazy Love
5	Aug. 10	The Pursuit of God's Presence	Discover that God desires intimate fellowship with ordinary believers across three centuries of seeking.	Tozer's The Pursuit of God	Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence of God	Thomas à Kempis' The Imitation of Christ
6	Aug. 24	The Reality of Spiritual Warfare	Explore the spiritual battle for human souls through wit and fire-and-brimstone warnings.	Lewis' The Screwtape Letters	Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	Peretti's This Present Darkness
7	Aug. 31	Defending the Faith	Witness the golden age of Christian apologetics demonstrating Christianity's intellectual credibility.	Chesterton's Orthodoxy	Chesterton's The Everlasting Man	Lewis' Mere Christianity
8	Sept. 7	The Christian Worldview and Society	Understand how Christians should engage the world through voices from Rome's fall to modernity's rise.	Augustine's The City of God	Chesterton's Orthodoxy (selections)	Colson's How Now Shall We Live
9	Sept. 14	The Pilgrim's Journey	Experience the Christian life as a journey toward God through cosmic vision, everyman allegory, and practical action.	Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress	Dante's Divine Comedy (selections)	Sheldon's In His Steps
10	Sept. 21	Faith, Reason, and Wonder	See how Christianity engages both mind and imagination through rational foundation and imaginative power.	Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia (selections)	Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (selections)	
11	Sept. 28	Purpose and Meaning in Life	Compare contemporary approaches to purpose with insights from earlier authors on life's fundamental question.	Warren's The Purpose Driven Life	Synthesis of major themes	