



Thirty Days in The Shire

Tea with Tolkien

Thirty Days in the Shire

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Becoming Hobbits (in all but size)

“I am in fact a Hobbit (in all but size).” - J.R.R. Tolkien

In a letter written in 1958, Tolkien famously declared, “I am in fact a Hobbit (in all but size). I like gardens, trees and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of a field); have a very simple sense of humour (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much...” - *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter 213*

It’s easy to understand why the man who filled our hearts with tales of Hobbits would identify with them. They enjoy simple pleasures, slow living, and treasure a good meal spent with friends above nearly everything else. While Hobbits are, of course, not perfect -- they are prone to gossip and are known to enjoy meddling, while also being altogether unwelcoming of any new ideas or people -- they are rooted in a way of life that values “food and cheer and song above hoarded gold”. Despite their shortcomings, Hobbits are a lovable people -- and their stories within Tolkien’s works provide endless inspiration for those of us who wish to adopt their way of life.

“My dear Frodo!” exclaimed Gandalf. “Hobbits really are amazing creatures, as I have said before. You can learn all that there is to know about their ways in a month, and yet after a hundred years they can still surprise you in a pinch.” - *The Fellowship of the Ring, The Shadow of the Past*

This month we’re becoming hobbits - in all but size.

This past summer, the Tea with Tolkien community journeyed through this idea together. With a checklist and a few general guidelines, we asked ourselves: *What does it mean to be a Hobbit at Heart? What would it look like to live like the Shire-folk? How would our lives change for the better?* Over 900 people around the world joined in on this first Thirty Days in the Shire and I was truly amazed by how dedicated and excited they were to participate.

I've since expanded the challenge into this little book with the hope that it will be a companion for you along your journey! Now take a deep breath, grab your walking stick and cloak, and step out of your door.

Concerning Tolkien's Catholic Faith

Because Tolkien himself was a devout Catholic, I've included a few specifically Catholic elements to these challenges (attending daily Mass, memorizing a new prayer, and visiting an Adoration chapel). While my inspiration for Tea with Tolkien comes from a desire to grow in Hobbitness and Holiness in response to Tolkien's own Catholic faith, I also want the Tea with Tolkien community to be a place that feels like home for everyone regardless of their faith or beliefs.

If you are uncomfortable or unable to participate in these challenges, I invite you to modify them to fit your needs.

If you are unfamiliar with Tolkien's Catholic faith but would like to learn a bit more about it, I warmly invite you to consider taking a moment to learn about the foundation Tolkien himself built his life

upon. Throughout the book, there will be a description of each challenge item, especially those pertaining to his faith, and I hope these are helpful and inspiring!

How to Use this Book

This book is meant to serve as a companion and guide as you spend the next thirty days developing new habits and becoming more like the shire-folk through daily challenges. Towards the back of the book, you'll find several printable pages to enrich your journey and help you keep track of things along the way.

Think of these challenges as starting points. See how many you can accomplish within the next thirty days, but don't stress if you can't get every single one done in one month. Some might need to wait to be completed until next month, and that's okay. Remember: this is meant to be a good experience!

There is a printable checklist of these challenges at the back of the book; I recommend printing and hanging it up somewhere you'll see it every day. There is also a blank calendar that I recommend using to schedule out when you'll complete certain tasks, such as cooking a meal fit for a Hobbit or hosting a small party — since those might take a bit of planning.

A Note on the Challenges: I realize, of course, that a few of these might be impractical due to the weather where you live -- going for a long walk in an Arizona summer or a Minnesota winter might be a bad idea. However, try to adapt them to your circumstances as best you can!

Embracing Hobby Habits

Over the next thirty days, we're committing to forming new, Hobby habits. I've listed five below, but I want to challenge you to choose three in particular and work on intentionally building up those habits.

Be honest with yourself and mindful of which habits you would benefit from the most, and work on developing a new daily routine which includes them. There will be a printable page at the end of this book if you'd like to hang it on the wall or keep it on your desk as a reminder.

Keep in mind that this is meant to be a positive experience; if you mess up or miss a day, don't worry -- just keep going! You can only 'fail' if you give up entirely.

1. Avoid fast food & drive-thru's.
2. Drink more water and tea (avoid soft drinks or sugary coffee etc.)
3. Cook "slow food" using fresh, in-season ingredients, as often as possible
4. Drive less whenever possible (stay home, walk, ride your bicycle, take the bus, etc.)
5. Limit screen time, being intentional about using your devices for the purpose of connection rather than empty entertainment or mindless scrolling

Thirty Challenges for Thirty Days

1. Read one wholesome book
2. Read one of Tolkien's letters
3. Read one of Tolkien's shorter works
4. Memorize a poem or song
5. Memorize a new prayer or verse of Scripture
6. Journal or write poetry
7. Write a letter to someone
8. Give a small gift to someone
9. Host a small party
10. Have a pint with a friend (or a cup of tea)
11. Reconnect with someone you've fallen out of touch with
12. "Carry" a friend in need
13. Introduce yourself to a neighbor
14. Bake Lembas
15. Cook a meal fit for a Hobbit
16. Dress colorfully
17. Sit beside the fire and think
18. Go for a long walk
19. Sit beneath a tree and read
20. Sit on the porch
21. Listen to live music
22. Plant or tend to a garden
23. Attend a weekday Mass
24. Visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament
25. Ask for forgiveness
26. Do something inconvenient for the sake of another
27. Let go of something "precious" to you
28. Donate items you don't use or need
29. Purchase something you need from a locally owned business rather than a big-box shop
30. Volunteer

Thirty Challenges

Over the next month, I want to challenge you to complete as many of these tasks as you can! Each one is meant to draw you closer to a life of simplicity and joy. Below is a list of all thirty challenges; we'll talk a bit more about each challenge on the pages to follow.

Read One Wholesome Book

Choose a book that will enrich your life and edify your soul. You are, of course, welcome to choose any wholesome book you'd like, but I've provided a list of book recommendations below—hopefully one or two will stand out to you! Some of these books are quite long and probably can't be read in a month, but at the very least you can make a good dent in it.

Written by Tolkien

- The Silmarillion
- The Hobbit
- The Lord of the Rings
- Beowulf (translated by Tolkien)

(Tolkien's shorter works haven't been included in this list because we'll be reading those later!)

Written About Tolkien

- [Tolkien: Author of the Century](#) by Tom Shippey
- [Tolkien: Man and Myth](#) by Joseph Pearce
- [Symbol or Substance?: A Dialogue on the Eucharist With C. S. Lewis, Billy Graham and J. R. R. Tolkien](#) by Peter Kreeft

- [The Flame Imperishable: Tolkien, St. Thomas, and the Metaphysics of Faerie](#) by Joseph McIntosh
- [Tolkien: Maker of Middle-Earth](#) by Catherine Mcilwaine
- [The Road to Middle-Earth](#) by Tom Shippey
- [Tolkien and The Great War](#) by John Garth

C.S. Lewis & The Inklings

- [The Chronicles of Narnia](#) by CS Lewis
- [Till We Have Faces](#) by CS Lewis
- [The Screwtape Letters](#) by CS Lewis
- [The Great Divorce](#) by CS Lewis
- [The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings](#) by Philip Zaleski
- [The Inklings](#) by Humphrey Carpenter
- [CS Lewis and the Catholic Church](#) by Joseph Pearce

Classic Literature

- [Kristin Lavransdatter](#) by Sigrid Undset
- [Brothers Karamazov](#) by Dostoevsky
- [The Divine Comedy](#) by Dante
- [Middlemarch](#) by George Eliot
- [Dune](#) by Frank Herbert
- [Lord of the World](#) by Robert Hugh Benson
- [Brideshead Revisited](#) by Evelyn Waugh
- [Les Miserables](#) by Victor Hugo

Looking for even more book recommendations?

Check out [Haley Stewart's "The Literary Medicine Cabinet"](#).

Read one of Tolkien's letters

Over three hundred of Tolkien's letters can be found in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, compiled and edited by Humphrey Carpenter. This collection offers an unparalleled look into Tolkien's writing process, his relationship with his children, and the influence of his faith on his works. Six of these letters have also been published on the Tolkien Estate website and can be read for free [here](#).

Recommended Letters

Letter 43 to Michael Tolkien | This letter is primarily a father's advice to his son regarding marriage, love, and women. However, at the end of the letter, Tolkien also shares about his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

“Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament ... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves upon earth.” - Letter 43 to Michael Tolkien

Letter 45 to Michael Tolkien | Written in 1941, Tolkien's son Michael is now an Officer Cadet at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst. Many of Tolkien's thoughts regarding war – in general, but also World War II specifically – can be found in this letter. He also calls Adolf Hitler a “ruddy little ignoramus” which is my personal favorite description of the guy.

Letter 54 to Christopher Tolkien | In this short letter, Tolkien reminds his son of his guardian angel and instructs him to “make a habit of the ‘praises’” in prayer.

Letter 64 to Christopher Tolkien | This letter begins with a lament of the horrors of war, followed by a bit about the parts of *The Lord of the Rings*

Tolkien is currently working through, and ends with a few words of encouragement for his son.

“All we do know, and that to a large extent by direct experience, is that evil labours with vast power and perpetual success—in vain: preparing always only the soil for unexpected good to sprout in.”

Letter 89 to Christopher Tolkien | Tolkien introduces the term Eucatastrophe, stating that the Resurrection was the greatest eucatastrophe possible.

Letter 96 to Christopher Tolkien | In this letter Tolkien writes on ‘the tragedy of Gollum’, which is quite interesting.

Letter 131 to Milton Waldman | Tolkien attempts to explain the connections between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, which he is hoping to publish. This is one of the longest letters included in this collection, and it provides a huge amount of detail regarding the history of Middle-Earth.

Letter 142 to Fr. Robert Murray, SJ | In a response to a letter from Robert Murray, a Jesuit priest and close friend of the Tolkien family, Tolkien writes about the order of Grace. It is also in this letter that Tolkien calls *The Lord of the Rings* a “fundamentally religious and Catholic work.”

“The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like ‘religion’, to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.”

Letter 163 to W.H. Auden | Tolkien shares a good deal about himself and his life at the request of Auden who is giving a talk about *The Lord of the Rings* on the BBC; this letter could be called a mini-autobiography.

Letter 181 to Michael Straight | This letter deals chiefly with Gollum’s role within *The Lord of the Rings*, which I find extremely interesting!

Letter 21 to Deborah Webster | Tolkien provides several facts about himself at Deborah’s request, famously calling himself “a hobbit (in all but size)”. On the Tea with Tolkien podcast, we talked about this letter in [Episode 13](#).

Read one of Tolkien’s shorter works

There’s so much more to Tolkien than *The Lord of the Rings*! Tolkien published several short stories and essays over the course of his life, and each offers a unique glimpse into the way he understood myth, faith, literature, and life. Pick up a copy of one of these works this month!

Smith of Wootton Major

Published in 1967, “Smith” is the last work Tolkien published before his death. “Smith of Wootton Major” fits all the requirements of a fairy-story as laid out in his essay, “On Fairy-Stories”, which makes it an absolute delight. The story is short and simple, and yet it is quite deep! In 2015, a hardcover edition of “Smith of Wootton Major” was published which includes a letter written by Tolkien himself concerning the meaning behind the story.

On Fairy-Stories

Tolkien presented this essay in the spring of 1939 at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. In it, Tolkien addresses three questions primarily: What are fairy stories? What are their origins? And what is the use of them? It is also in “On Fairy-Stories” that we first see the word Eucatastrophe, a term coined by Tolkien himself, which refers to the ‘happy turn’ of events. “On Fairy-Stories” can be read online for free [here](#), or in print in [The Monsters and the Critics](#) or [Tree and Leaf](#). This is one of the most important works to

read when studying Tolkien; if you're unsure of which on this list to read first, choose this one!

Roverandom

Roverandom is a children's tale originally written by Tolkien for his son Michael about a dog who is turned into a toy by a wizard. The story follows the dog on his quest to find the wizard again and be returned to his original size. Fun fact: Tolkien originally submitted Roverandom for publication in 1937, but unfortunately it was not published until 1998. This story was published as its own book, but it can also be found within *Tales from the Perilous Realm*.

Leaf by Niggle

“Leaf by Niggle” tells of the life and passing of an artist named Niggle. Perhaps one of the most allegorical of Tolkien's works, “Leaf by Niggle” reflects Tolkien's thoughts on purgatory and heaven. On episode 22 of the *Tea with Tolkien* podcast, we were joined by Father Dan Bedel to discuss “Leaf by Niggle” — [you can listen to it here](#). “Leaf by Niggle” is included in two compilations: *Tree and Leaf*, and *On the Monsters and the Critics*.

Farmer Giles of Ham

“Farmer Giles of Ham” is set in a fantastical Britain of long ago and tells the story of Farmer Giles and a dragon named Chrysophylax. This delightful story was published in its own [hardcover edition](#) in 2001, but it can also be found in *Tales from the Perilous Realm*.

Mythopoeia

“Mythopoeia” is a poem written by Tolkien after a conversation with C.S. Lewis in which the two discussed truth and myth. Lewis had argued that myths were “lies breathed through silver”, which inspired Tolkien to write this poem in defense of the truths reflected in mythology. It can be found in *Tree and Leaf*.

Compilations

Tree and Leaf

Perhaps the handiest of all Tolkien compilations, *Tree and Leaf* includes: “On Fairy-Stories”, “Leaf by Niggle”, “Mythopoeia”, and “The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth”. If you’re considering which compilation book to purchase, I’d go with this one because “On Fairy-Stories” and “Mythopoeia” are quite important and good starting points when studying Tolkien.

Tales from the Perilous Realm

Tales from the Perilous Realm is actually a compilation of several shorter works by Tolkien, which is nice because you only need to purchase and carry around one book. The book includes: “Farmer Giles of Ham”, “Leaf by Niggle”, “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil”, “Smith of Wootton Major”, and “On Fairy-Stories”.

On the Monsters and the Critics

The Monsters and the Critics is a compilation of essays written by Tolkien. This book includes: two essays on Beowulf (“Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” and “On Translating Beowulf”), “English and Welsh”, “On Fairy-Stories”, “A Secret Vice”, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, and “Valedictory Address”.

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil

This book is a collection of 16 fairy tale poems, only two of which include Tom Bombadil—so don’t be fooled by the title. Unlike many of Tolkien’s other short works, this book does concern Middle-Earth so that makes it quite a fun read!

Memorize a poem or song

Bilbo Baggins was known for his love of poetry, and Hobbits as a whole were very fond of song. Memorize a poem or song that holds some kind of special meaning for you. There are plenty tucked within the paragraphs of Tolkien's works, so flip through your books and find one (or find one from another source, if you'd like!).

Some of my favorite poems or songs from The Lord of the Rings:

“The Road Goes Ever on and On”

— *The Fellowship of the Ring, A Long-Expected Party*

“All That is Gold Does Not Glitter”

— *The Fellowship of the Ring, Strider*

“I Sit Beside the Fire and Think”

— *The Fellowship of the Ring, The Ring Goes South*

“Where now the horse and his rider?”

— *The Two Towers, The King of the Golden Hall*

“In Western Lands Beneath the Sun”

— *The Return of the King, The Tower of Cirith Ungol*

“Out of Doubt, Out of Dark, to the Day's Rising”

— *The Return of the King, Many Partings*

Memorize a new prayer or verse of Scripture

"If you don't do so already, make a habit of the 'praises'. I use them much (in Latin): the Gloria Patri, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Laudate Dominum; the Laudate Pueri Dominum (of which I am specially fond),

and one of the Sunday psalms; and the Magnificat; and also the Litany of Loreto (with the prayer Sub tuum praesidium). If you have these by heart you never need words of joy. It is also a good and admirable thing to know by heart the Canon of the Mass, for you can say this in your heart if ever hard circumstances keep you from hearing Mass..."

- The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter 54 to his son Christopher

Tolkien recommended making “a habit of the praises” in a letter to his son Christopher. I suggest we do the same! Whether it’s a verse of Scripture that holds a special meaning to you, or a specific prayer that has brought you comfort, take the time to memorize it this month.

Journal or write poetry

Journaling can be quite cathartic! Spend 10-15 minutes dumping your brain out onto paper. It doesn’t have to be pretty and nobody ever needs to see it, but I guarantee it will be good for you! And if you feel up for a bit of a challenge, write a bit of poetry as well!

Write a letter to someone

Hobbits were fond of writing letters to one another and, honestly, it’s a lovely form of communication that has unfortunately fallen out of practice these days. So we’re bringing it back, one letter at a time!

Think of someone you’ve fallen out of touch with or haven’t seen in a while. Spend a little bit of time handwriting them a letter. Tell them about your life and ask them about theirs. It doesn’t have to be long or fancy, just something from the heart.

Give a small gift to someone

Try to limit yourself to a \$5 budget for this. It's not about spending a lot of money or doing anything extravagant; rather it's about showing a friend that you care! Ideas include: a handmade card, baked goods, a small bouquet of flowers, chocolate, coffee, or tea. If you aren't able to be with your friend in person, send them a \$5 gift card to their favorite coffee shop!

Host a small party

Much like your gift, this party should be something simple and small — no more than 2-3 guests. Focus on creating a cozy atmosphere and enjoying quality time with your guests.

Have a pint with a friend (or a cup of tea)

Whether you'll meet at a pub, a coffee shop, or a bookstore, find some time within the next few weeks to meet with a friend for a drink. Set a time and date and add it to your calendar so you don't forget!

Reconnect with someone

This could be something along the same line as the letter-writing challenge but think of a friend or family member you've fallen out of touch with and find a way to reach out to them.

“Carry” a friend in need

“Come on, Mr. Frodo!” he cried. ‘I can’t carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride. Just tell him where to go, and he’ll go.”

- The Return of the King, Mount Doom

Inspired by the example of Sam Gamgee, think of a friend in your life who is going through a difficult season and make a conscious effort to ‘carry’ them in whatever way you can. Offer help in concrete ways, such as bringing by a meal, helping with housework, running errands, etc.

Introduce yourself to a neighbor

Hobbits were known for living in a tight-knit community. They would have known their neighbors and their lives would have been interwoven, as we see in the beginning pages of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Yet most of us don’t really know any of our neighbors at all! So take a moment this month to introduce yourself to one of them. Invite them over for tea or a meal, if you’re able; if not, simply say hello and ask their name!

Bake Lembas

“Often in their hearts they thanked the Lady of Lórien for the gift of Lembas, for they could eat of it and find new strength even as they ran.”

- The Two Towers

While Tolkien unfortunately doesn't provide us with an exact recipe for this Elvish way-bread, we do know a few things about it. Lembas is sweet, often described as a cake; it is made with the fruit of the Mallorn tree, a round nut with a silver shale; and it is cream-colored on the inside and has a light brown crust.

For more details regarding Lembas, I came across an excellent article [here](#).

Note: There is a printable Lembas recipe at the end of the book if you'd like to add it to your recipe collection.

“Eat little at a time, and only at need. For these things are given to serve you when all else fails. The cakes will keep sweet for many many days, if they are unbroken and left in their leaf-wrappings, as we have brought them. One will keep a traveler on his feet for a day of long labour, even if he be one of the tall men of Minas Tirith.”

-The Fellowship of the Ring

Lembas Recipes

- [Almond, Lavender, and Citrus Lembas Recipe by Tea with Tolkien](#)
- [Elven Lembas Bread Recipe by Vomitting Chicken](#)
- [Lembas Recipe by Feast of Starlight](#)
- [Lembas Recipe by The Quotable Kitchen](#)

Cook a meal fit for a Hobbit

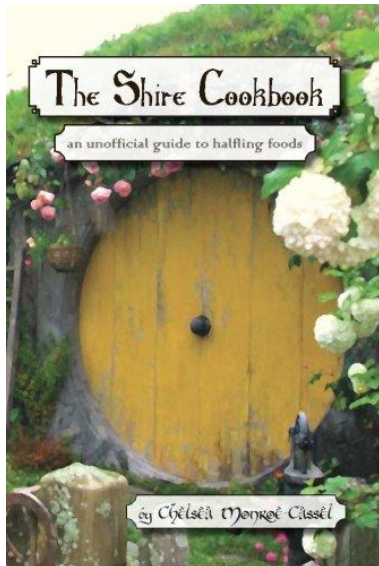
*“And laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted.” –J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.*

Imagine a full English breakfast complete with eggs, bacon, sausages, fried mushrooms, baked beans, tomatoes, and fried potatoes. Or for supper, simple, home-cooked comfort foods will do; think of stews, savory pies, mushrooms, meats and cheeses — all served with bread and butter.

For more menu inspiration, visit www.teawithtolkien.com/party.

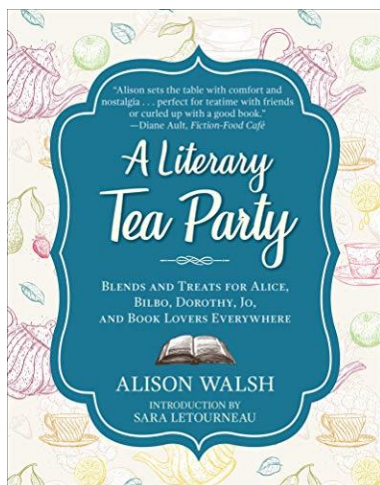
Below are two cookbooks I've found quite inspirational:

The Shire Cookbook by Chelsea Monroe-Cassel



“After years of demand from hungry fans, there is finally a lovingly researched and thoughtfully crafted cookbook on the way that transports readers, cooks, and eaters just a bit closer to the rounded doors of Bag End. Showcasing dishes inspired by the works of JRR Tolkien, and enriched by details such as facsimiles of “original” recipes and marginalia, this is an immersive work of combined fiction and food. With just over 40 recipes in a halfling-sized paperback format, it's a great little addition to your kitchen collection. So pack your pocket handkerchief, roll up your sleeves, and prepare to eat like a Hobbit!”

Literary Tea Party by Alison Walsh



“There’s nothing quite like sitting down on a lovely afternoon with a good book and a steaming cup of tea, falling down the rabbit hole into the imaginary worlds of Middle-earth, Sherlock Holmes’s London, or other fictional escapes. Now you can indulge your literary fantasies—or a host a very special book club get-together—with this collection of recipes that bring beloved classics to life.”

Dress colorfully

“As for the Hobbits of the Shire, with whom these tales are concerned, in the days of their peace and prosperity they were a merry folk. They dressed in bright colours, being notably fond of yellow and green; but they seldom wore shoes, since their feet had tough leathery soles and were clad in a thick curling hair, much like the hair of their heads, which was commonly brown...” - The Lord of the Rings, Prologue

This may seem like a silly challenge but try to dress a bit more colorfully, if only for one day! Perhaps you’ll find yourself feeling more cheerful and lighthearted as the day goes on.

Sit Beside the Fire and Think

Sometime this month, set aside an evening to sit beside the fire (whether you have a fireplace, a fire pit, or simply a few candles). I've found it can be a wonderful opportunity to read, reflect, or even pray. Spend a bit of time reflecting on this poem as well, if you'd like:

*I sit beside the fire and think
of all that I have seen
of meadow-flowers and butterflies
in summers that have been;*

*Of yellow leaves and gossamer
in autumns that there were,
with morning mist and silver sun
and wind upon my hair.*

*I sit beside the fire and think
of how the world will be
when winter comes without a spring
that I shall ever see.*

*For still there are so many things
that I have never seen:
in every wood in every spring
there is a different green.*

*I sit beside the fire and think
of people long ago
and people who will see a world
that I shall never know.*

*But all the while I sit and think
of times there were before,
I listen for returning feet
and voices at the door.*

—The Fellowship of the Ring, The Ring Goes South

Go for a long walk

Read this short poem —Bilbo’s walking song— and head out on a walk of your own! It could be around our neighborhood or through a local trail or even in the woods if you’re lucky enough to have some nearby. Enjoy the created world that surrounds you!

*The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.*

- The Fellowship of the Ring, A Long-Expected Party

Sit beneath a tree and read

This scene from the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* film always stuck with me as such a perfect, Hobbit moment: the warm afternoon sun is shining as Frodo sits in the grass, resting his back against a tree and reading. If the weather allows, take some time this month to do the same! Grab your wholesome book and spend at least half an hour reading outside.

Spend time on the porch

Another iconic scene from Peter Jackson's *The Fellowship of the Ring* film depicts Gandalf and Bilbo sitting on the front porch of Bag End before the long-expected party. The sense of comfort and warmth that comes from within Bag End seems to flow out into Bilbo's garden as we watch these two old friends blow smoke rings.

Find some time to simply sit outside of your home, whether with a friend or by yourself. Whether it's a porch, a patio, a balcony, or a front stoop, think about how you can make this outdoor area into a cozy extension of your home — perhaps with a comfortable chair or a few potted plants.

Listen to live music

One of the most mesmerizing and beautiful aspects of Tolkien's elves is their music. And of course, if you've read *The Silmarillion*, you understand why. (And if you haven't, you probably want to read it now, right?) Before the Council of Elrond, Frodo is introduced to the music of Rivendell:

“But those near him were silent, intent upon the music of the voices and the instruments, and they gave no heed to anything else. Frodo began to listen.

At first the beauty of the melodies and the interwoven words in elven-tongues, even though he understood them little, held him in a spell, as soon as he began to attend to them. Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the firelit hall became like a golden mist above seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the world...”

- The Fellowship of the Ring, Many Meetings

Just as music holds such meaning and power in Tolkien's world, it also does in our own. See if your local coffee shop or pub is hosting any musicians this month, find a concert to attend, or even make a bit of music on your own if you're able!

Plant or tend to a garden

Whether it's growing a few potted herbs in your kitchen windowsill, building a raised bed in your backyard, or tending to an already-abundant homestead farm, this challenge will depend greatly on your living situation. However, no matter how big or small your home is, be intentional about cultivating a garden in some way.

Attend a Weekday Mass

"The only cure for sagging of fainting faith is Communion. Though always Itself, perfect and complete and inviolate, the Blessed Sacrament does not operate completely and once for all in any of us. Like the act of Faith it must be continuous and grow by exercise. Frequency is of the highest effect. Seven times a week is more nourishing than seven times at intervals..." - Letter 250 to Michael Tolkien

From a young age, Tolkien himself attended daily Mass as often as he could. He wrote to his son Michael that it is the only cure for a fainting faith, recommending it in the highest frequency possible.

Check local Mass times to find a daily Mass your schedule allows and add it to your calendar so you don't forget.

If you've never been to Mass before and would like a few tips, these are good places to start:

- [Catholic Answers: The Institution of the Mass](#)

- [Attending Catholic Mass for the First Time? By Restless Pilgrim](#)
- [Explanation of the Mass \(a walk-through of each step\) by Catholic Online](#)
- [Why Non-Catholics Should not Receive Communion at Mass](#)
(Video)

Visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament

“Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament ... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves upon earth.” - Letter 43 to Michael Tolkien

As a Catholic, Tolkien believed that the Blessed Sacrament, also called the Eucharist or Communion, is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Needless to say, it was a big deal to him! Outside of the Mass, many Catholic churches have small chapels (usually called Adoration Chapels) inside or attached to their main building where the Blessed Sacrament is displayed for those who would like to come and pray.

Everyone is welcome to these chapels; you do not need to be Catholic to visit. To find one, check the websites of nearby Catholic churches or call their offices for hours and information.

If you've never been to an Adoration Chapel before and would like a few tips, these are good places to start:

- [A Beginner's Guide to Adoration by Caitlin Sica](#)
- [Modern Misconceptions about the Eucharist by Catholic Culture](#)

- [Adoration Q&A by St. Luke the Evangelist Parish](#)
- [J.R.R. Tolkien's epic cure for frustration, depression, and doubt by Philip Kosloski](#)

Ask for forgiveness

"I tried to take the Ring from Frodo," he said. "I am sorry. I have paid."

"No!" said Aragorn, taking his hand and kissing his brow. "You have conquered. Few have gained such a victory. Be at peace! Minas Tirith shall not fall!"

- The Two Towers, The Departure of Boromir

In the opening chapter of *The Two Towers*, Boromir confesses to Aragorn that he tried to take the Ring from Frodo. In an effort to reconcile himself, he has given his life to protect the Hobbits against the Orcs. In his final moments, Aragorn comforts him, assuring him of his victory and granting him pardon and peace. Boromir smiles as he breathes his last, and Aragorn mourns bitterly for the loss of his friend.

Be encouraged by Boromir's confession and the comfort it brings him. Seek out reconciliation, whether by receiving the Sacrament itself, by apologizing to a person you've wronged, or by doing what you can to heal any brokenness in your life.

Do something inconvenient for the sake of another

Throughout Tolkien's works, his characters are carried through their tales nourished by the small sacrifices of others. Frodo wouldn't have made it to Rivendell, let alone Mordor, without countless friends along the way allowing themselves to be inconvenienced for the sake of his safety.

Not only does Farmer Maggot shelter and feed Frodo, Sam, and Pippin in *A Short Cut to Mushrooms*, he also offers them a ride to the Ferry and sends them off with a basket of mushrooms. Similarly, in *The Hobbit*, the company of Dwarves plus Bilbo are rescued and carried by the Great Eagles — something inconvenient for the eagles but life-saving for the company.

Throughout these journeys, there are so many examples of small inconveniences and hospitalities proving to be life-saving. With this in mind, try to go out of your way this month to allow yourself to be inconvenienced for the sake of another.

Let go of something "precious" to you

"Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right. I need a change, or something." - The Fellowship of the Ring

As you reflect on the way the Ring stretches Bilbo, causing him to become restless and obsessive, allow yourself to look inward and reflect on your own attachments. Ask yourself, *Have I ever felt this way? If so, what am I holding on to? What is it that I call "Precious"?* It could be an unhealthy habit, a damaging lifestyle choice, or even a material belonging that pulls you away from your purpose or joy. Make a plan to let go of whatever it is, encouraged by Bilbo's strength as he let go of the Ring!

Donate items you don't use or need

As you spend the next 30 days becoming more of a Hobbit at Heart by slowing down and simplifying, take note of which items you don't find yourself using or needing anymore. Gather up these items at the end of the month and donate them.

Purchase something you need from a locally owned business rather than a big-box shop

“The next day more carts rolled up the Hill, and still more carts. There might have been some grumbling about ‘dealing locally’, but that very week orders began to pour out of Bag End for every kind of provision, commodity, or luxury that would be obtained in Hobbiton or Bywater or anywhere in the neighbourhood.”

- The Fellowship of the Ring, A Long-Expected Party

Bilbo's thoughtfulness in planning his party shines through this passage. While he ordered several carts of goods from distant lands, he had also purchased as many things locally as possible. Similarly, it can become tempting to order anything we might need online or pick it up from Walmart, but I want to encourage you this month to slow down and consider buying something you might need from a locally owned business instead. It will make such a difference for the families who own them, and it helps your local economy as well.

Volunteer

The idea of volunteering is one that often makes us feel uncomfortable. And honestly, it should because it means setting aside our own comfort in order to help someone else. Plan to sign up for at least one volunteer opportunity this month.

If you aren't sure where to start, begin with a local school or church community — they are more than likely in need of volunteers for one event or another. Soup kitchens, food pantries, libraries, animal shelters, community centers, or retirement homes are also often in need of volunteers. You also probably have an elderly or disabled neighbor in need of help with tasks around their home. Whichever way you decide to offer help, be sure to do so with a humble heart.

My Thirty Days in the Shire

- Read one wholesome book
- Read one of Tolkien's letters
- Read one of Tolkien's shorter works
- Memorize a poem or song
- Memorize a new prayer or verse of Scripture
- Journal or write poetry
- Write a letter to someone
- Give a small gift to someone
- Host a small party
- Have a pint with a friend (or a cup of tea)
- Reconnect with someone you've fallen out of touch with
- "Carry" a friend in need
- Introduce yourself to a neighbor
- Bake *Lembas*
- Cook a meal fit for a Hobbit
- Dress colorfully
- Sit beside the fire and think
- Go for a long walk
- Sit beneath a tree and read
- Sit on the porch
- Listen to live music
- Plant or tend to a garden
- Attend a weekday Mass
- Visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament
- Ask for forgiveness
- Do something inconvenient for the sake of another
- Let go of something "precious" to you
- Donate items you don't use or need
- Purchase something you need from a locally owned business rather than a big-box shop
- Volunteer

My Thirty Days in the Shire

Month & Year

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

My Hobby Habits

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homemade Almond, Citrus, & Lavender Lembas

Ingredients

- 3 Cups Unsalted Butter, softened
- 1 Cup Brown Sugar
- 1/2 Cup Honey
- 4 Large Eggs
- 4 Cups Flour
- 1 Cup Almond Meal
- 1/2 Cup Slivered Almonds
- 1 tsp. Orange Extract
- 1 tsp. Lemon Extract
- 2 tsp. Vanilla Extract
- 3 Drops Lavender Essential Oil

Instructions

1. Cream butter and brown sugar. Add honey, then eggs. Mix until smooth.
2. In a separate bowl, mix flour, almond meal, and slivered almonds.
3. Fold flour mixture into batter, adding the extracts & oil slowly. Mix until well-combined. Carefully fold in dried fruit (optional).
4. Refrigerate dough until it has stiffened a bit (at least an hour) then preheat the oven to 350F and roll dough out on a floured surface. Dough should be about 1cm thick.
5. Cut into rectangles, about 2.5 x 2 inches. Gently score the tops with an 'x'.
6. Bake on a greased tray for about 15 minutes, or until the bottoms of the Lembas wafers have slightly browned.

Tips

This recipe will make approximately 36 pieces. They can be stored for a few days or frozen.

Lembas is traditionally served in "Mallorn leaves", so you can either wrap them in any non-poisonous leaves or use fabric cut like leaves.

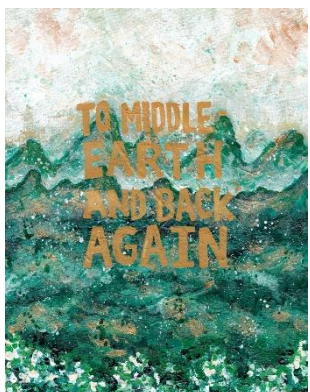
Connect with the Tea with Tolkien Community

Thank you so much for coming along on this journey towards Hobbitness and Holiness with me! If you would like to connect with thousands of your fellow Hobbits at Heart, you're invited to join the Tea with Tolkien Community online. You can find us hanging out online on our [Discord server](#), on [Twitter](#), and on [Instagram](#).

If you'd like to get in touch with me, you can email kaitlyn@teawithtolkien.com or send me a message via social media.

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If you enjoyed this book...



To Middle-Earth and Back Again,
my companion journal and
devotional for The Lord of the Rings,
is now available on Amazon!

Journey through J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-Earth and back again with this new companion journal and devotional by Tea with Tolkien. Chapter by chapter, grow in Hobbit-ness and Holiness as you reflect on major themes, quotes, and characters from The Lord of the Rings.

This workbook journal explores Tolkien's Catholic faith and the influence it had on his writings, inspiring you to reflection and action as we seek to carry the spirit of Middle-Earth into our own daily lives through journaling prompts, discussion topics, and tangible action items. Journey alongside Frodo, Samwise, and the other members of the Fellowship of the Ring as they each play their parts in the War of the Ring; and as they come to the final chapters of their tale, you may find yourself altogether changed as well.

For each chapter of The Lord of the Rings, this workbook includes: a chapter summary; space for note-taking; a short reflection on a theme, quote, or character; and discussion and/or reflection prompts. This workbook also features several "On the Road" bonus sections concerning certain characters and events, such as Tom Bombadil and the Gifts of Galadriel, where we can take the time to dig deeper into Tolkien's legendarium.

[Learn more here.](#)