

# Lamenting a Noble Cause



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*“One Improved Unit” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).*

When “The Hobbit” came out in theaters, I decided to read the book instead of seeing the film adaptation. In fact, I decided to start with *The Hobbit* and continue on through *The Lord of the Rings*. As of this writing, I’ve completed *The Hobbit* and Books I through IV of *the Rings*. I am enjoying the books much more than I enjoyed the movies. The differences between the two are staggering. I highly recommend reading the books. They’re much more colorful. The movies put me to sleep, originally. But what I really wanted to write about was a parallel I’ve noticed between Frodo’s burden and my own.

## **Frodo’s Burden**

In *the Rings*, a ring of incredible power finds itself in the possession of Frodo, a hobbit. This ring has an interesting (and evil) origin and peculiar history. Frodo obtained the ring as an inheritance from his uncle Bilbo. Bilbo obtained the ring sixty years prior quite by accident. The story is told in *The Hobbit*. He along with his party of dwarves, were kidnapped by goblins and as they made their escape (with the help of a wizard, Gandalf), Bilbo got left behind and found himself in another area of the mountain cave system. He was feeling around in the dark and found the ring, after which he ran into a despicable character named Gollum, who lived on an island in the middle of a lake within the caves. It turns out, the ring had belonged to Gollum, but he lost it one night on his return from capturing a goblin for dinner.

Because Bilbo was looking for a way out of the caves, he made a deal with Gollum to show him the exit. They would play a game of exchanging riddles. After a few rounds, Bilbo, for his turn, asked Gollum what Bilbo had in his pocket (the ring). Gollum agreed that it was a valid question and answered incorrectly. Gollum now had to show Bilbo the way out. Before he would, he asked to retrieve something from his island but was unable to find it. He became enraged and figured that Bilbo had taken it. As he pursued Bilbo, Bilbo slipped on the ring and Gollum ran right by him as if he wasn’t there. It was then that Bilbo learned that the ring made the bearer disappear. He then followed Gollum, who proceeded to block

the exit. Bilbo managed to get around him and leave the caves.

The adventure continued, of course, but sixty years later (so begins *the Rings* books) Bilbo decided it was time to take a long vacation. He never had any children of his own, but was partial to his nephew Frodo, so he left him his house, most of his stuff, his wealth, and the ring. Not understanding what the ring truly was, Frodo accepted his inheritance and continued on for another seventeen years before learning (from Gandalf the wizard) the real origin and power of the ring. He also learned that because of how evil it was (it gave the bearer power over all of Middle Earth), it must be destroyed. The only way to destroy it, however, is within the very mountain where it was built, Mount Doom, in the heart of Morder, the darkest place in all of Middle Earth. The adventure that ensued would have Frodo running for his life more than once; a very perilous journey for a very righteous and noble cause.

## **My Burden**

Now, before accusing me of exaggeration, no, my burden does not quite compare to Frodo's. On his shoulders rested the future of all Middle Earth; on mine, not so much. However, someone's future is resting on my shoulders. The future of two people, in fact (and perhaps more later on). The burden I speak of is parenthood, specifically peaceful parenthood and unschooling. Because I was raised by neither, this burden is mostly personal. It has been very difficult breaking away from a deeply ingrained culture of punitive parenting and compulsory schooling. Though it has been difficult, I know that my burden is a very righteous and noble cause.

More than once Frodo laments, due to the difficulty of his burden, his receiving the ring. But he also has a deep-rooted belief that the ring must be destroyed and that he must be the one to do so. Men, dwarves, and elves are too easily corrupted by it. The burden is his, he knows it, but he wishes it wasn't. Likewise, I have more than once lamented having received the knowledge of the principles of peaceful parenting and unschooling. Had I never been exposed to it, my life would be much easier right now. My children would ultimately pay the price, of course, but my burden would be lighter. I, too, have a deep-rooted belief that what's best for my children, all children, actually, are peaceful parents and the intellectual freedom that unschooling facilitates. As their father, this burden is mine to bear, and I know it.

## **Final Thoughts**

In fear of being misunderstood, I do not regret having children. I do not even regret coming to a knowledge of peaceful parenting and unschooling. Did Frodo regret obtaining the ring? He said more than once that he wished he never got it, that his uncle never found it, that it was never even made (many shared this regret). That's where our parallel ends. But he

accepted the fact that it was his and that he must be the one to destroy it. I often lament what amounts to becoming a better person and father because of how difficult it has been. But it is getting easier. My burden is getting lighter the more I learn to peel off my old culture. I have hope and faith that I will be the father I need and want to be, and that my children deserve.