



The Weight You Carry

The Fellowship of the Ring & The Two Towers · A Journey Through Middle-earth — a Steady Path special, with Paul Cleworth

THE BIG IDEA

The Ring was made by Sauron to control everybody else, and its cleverest trick is that it does not need what is worst about you. Very often it gets in through what is best — the duty, the loyalty, the love, the responsibility you genuinely do have to people genuinely depending on you. That is the handle it takes, which is why Boromir is not a villain and why the answer is almost never to put the responsibility down. Then Tolkien gives the same temptation to Boromir's younger brother, and Faramir simply refuses it. And what finally defeats the thing is neither strength nor cleverness. It is mercy, shown to somebody who has not earned it, when nobody is watching.

"I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way."

— FRODO BAGGINS · THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, "THE COUNCIL OF ELROND"

One of the smallest and least considerable people in the room volunteers for the heaviest job in the world. No relevant experience, no plan, and no idea of the route.

"I pass the test. I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel."

— GALADRIEL · THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, "THE MIRROR OF GALADRIEL"

Remarkable not because she refuses power, but because she names what she is choosing instead. She chooses to get smaller rather than to get worse.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

The Hook	Not a trilogy. One novel, split into three volumes for paper and cost.
Seventeen Years	Frodo keeps it in a drawer without looking at it. Then Gandalf tells him what it is — and he waits five more months.
Galadriel	Offered the Ring outright, and she refuses it — naming what she chooses instead.
Boromir	A good man, and the mechanism that catches him.
The Two Towers	Théoden gets up, Helm's Deep holds, and the Ents decide for themselves.
Faramir	His younger brother, offered the same thing — and he says no.
The Stairs	The Stairs of Cirith Ungol. Gollum reaches out in the dark, Sam wakes up, and the door closes.
Who It's For	Anyone worn out by something they love and would never put down.

WHY 'THE WEIGHT YOU CARRY'?

In investing — the position you cannot review objectively, because reviewing it would mean admitting what it has cost you to hold.

In family life — the seventy-hour week done entirely out of love, so the children never go without the way you went without.

In business — the person you quietly wrote off two years ago, whose file you have never reopened.

In life — the question is rarely whether to put it down. It is whether to carry it differently, before it starts carrying you.

"Who have I quietly decided the worst about — and what would it cost me to be wrong?"

— the question underneath the whole episode

STOIC & OTHER WISDOM

"Men exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then, or bear with them."

MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS 8.59

"Take away thy opinion, and then there is taken away the complaint, 'I have been harmed.'"

MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS 4.7

"For me perhaps the most tragic moment in the Tale... His repentance is blighted and all Frodo's pity is (in a sense) wasted."

J.R.R. TOLKIEN · LETTER 246, TO MRS EILEEN ELGAR, SEPTEMBER 1963

"...I am not an animal! I am a human being!..."

MERRICK · THE ELEPHANT MAN (1980) · THE FILM CALLS HIM JOHN

REFERENCES THIS EPISODE — every item below is a live link

FILM

The Elephant Man (1980) — David Lynch

Addressing the person rather than the reputation · IMDb

MUSIC

Running Up That Hill — Kate Bush (1985)

A deal to swap places, so each finally understands the other

BOOKS & THINKERS

The Lord of the Rings — J.R.R. Tolkien (1954–55)

Volumes one and two: The Fellowship of the Ring and The Two Towers

Meditations — Marcus Aurelius

Books 4 and 8 · free full text, George Long translation

The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien

Letter 246, on Sam, Gollum and the blighted repentance

Joseph Merrick — the real man

The film calls him John; his name was Joseph

THE STEADY PATH PRINCIPLE

Check the handle. Reopen one door. Ask the two questions.

THIS EPISODE'S REFLECTION QUESTION

"Who have I quietly decided the worst about — and what would it cost me to be wrong?"

Not somebody who wronged you badly — that is a different and much harder job. Somebody you simply filed. A colleague, a neighbour, a relative reduced to one sentence and not looked at properly since.

COMING UP — BONUS 3 OF 3

The Last Mile — and What Comes After

"Who would walk my last mile — and when did I last actually tell them?"
The Return of the King, and the six chapters after the ending. Thursday 17 September 2026.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU It does not need your worst. It usually comes in through your best.

Slow down. Think clearly. Keep walking your steady path.

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