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# Witches, Wizards and Potions: The Christian Nature of the Harry Potter Best Selling Novels

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# Witches, Wizards and Potions

## The Christian Nature of the Harry Potter Best Selling Novels



**Created by**  
**Craighton Hippenhammer**  
**Laura Ladwig**  
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**Presented on June 10, 2021**

# **Craighton Hippenhammer, MLS, MFA**

**Associate Professor of Library Science and Technology Emeritus  
Benner Library & Resource Center  
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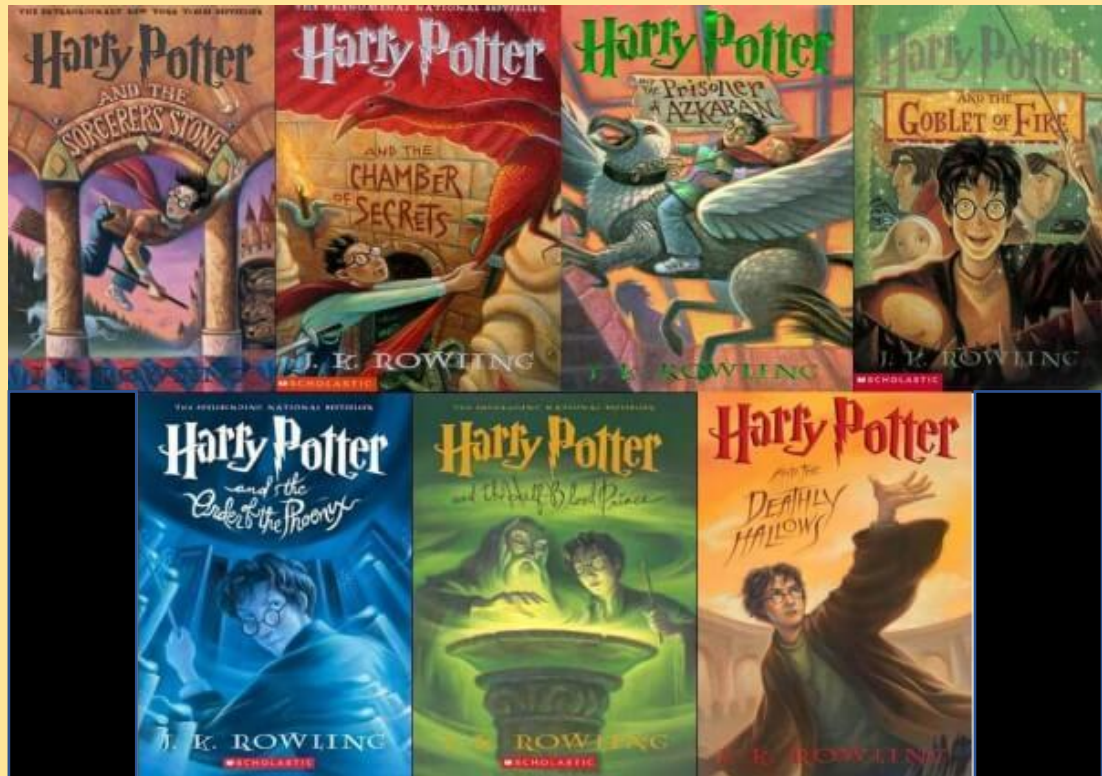
# Summary of the Seven Books

# The Four Houses of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry





# The Books: Harry Potter and the... Sorcerer's Stone, Chamber of Secrets, Prisoner of Azkaban, Goblet of Fire, Order of the Phoenix, Half Blood Prince, and the Deathly Hallows



# Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone





# Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

**Dobby**



**Fawkes**



**Basilisk**



**Tom Riddle**



# Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban





# Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire





Steal a dragon's egg



Rescue a friend  
from under water





# Harry Potter Battling Lord Voldemort in the graveyard

# Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix



**Order of the Phoenix**



**Dumbledore's Army**

# Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince



**Snape making unbreakable  
vow to protect Draco**



**New potions professor,  
Horace Slughorn**



# Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince



**Snape kills  
Dumbledore when  
Draco cannot.**





# Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

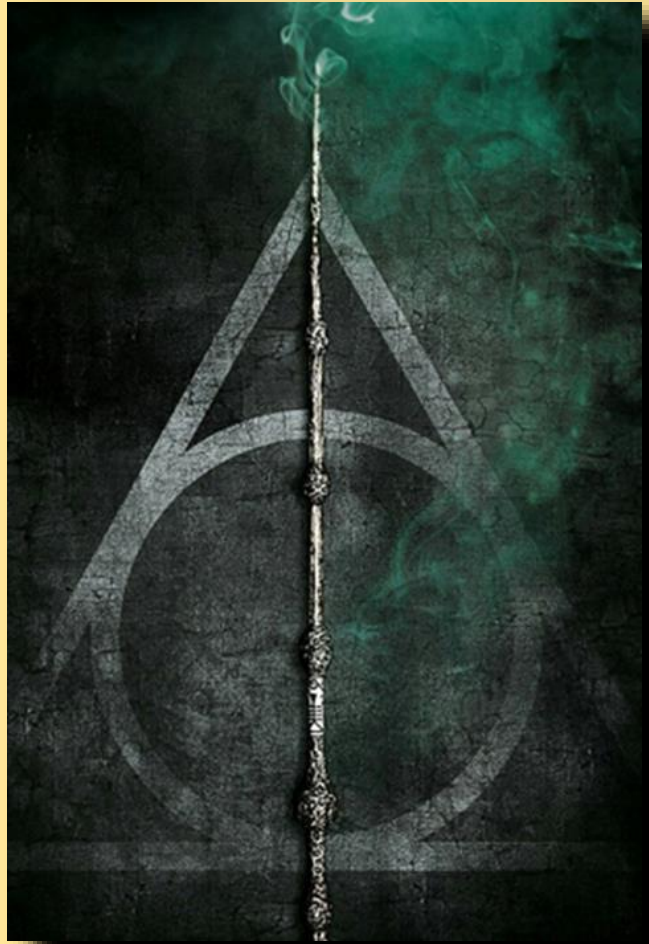


**Retrieving a horcrux  
from Gringotts Bank**



**The last encounter after all the  
horcruxes have been destroyed.**

# Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows



**“Perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it.” Albus Dumbledore**

**“Do not pity the dead, Harry, pity the living, and above all those who live without love.” Albus Dumbledore**

**“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” 1 Corinthians 15:26.**

**“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19.**

# Debra Mattingly, MSLIS

**Assistant Director  
Clinch River Regional Library  
Tennessee State Library & Archives  
Clinton, TN 37716**

# Magic and Alchemy in Harry Potter

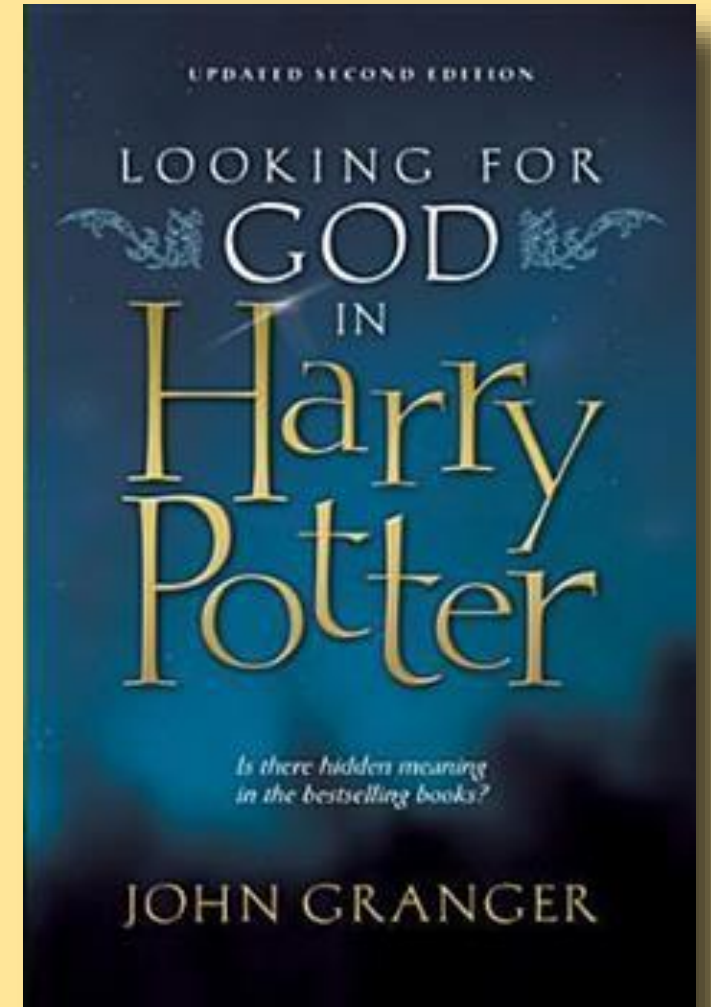


# Invocational Magic vs Incantational Magic

The magic in Harry Potter is not “sorcery” or invocational magic; it is incantational magic.

There is NO invocational sorcery in the Harry Potter books.

Incantational means “to sing along with” or “to harmonize.”



# John Granger

A professor who has lectured often about the Harry Potter books explaining their meaning

Author of *How Harry Cast His Spell*, *The Deathly Hallows Lectures* and many other books about the Harry Potter series



## **J. K. Rowling – A Christian and Member of the Church of Scotland**

**Do I believe in God: Yes.**

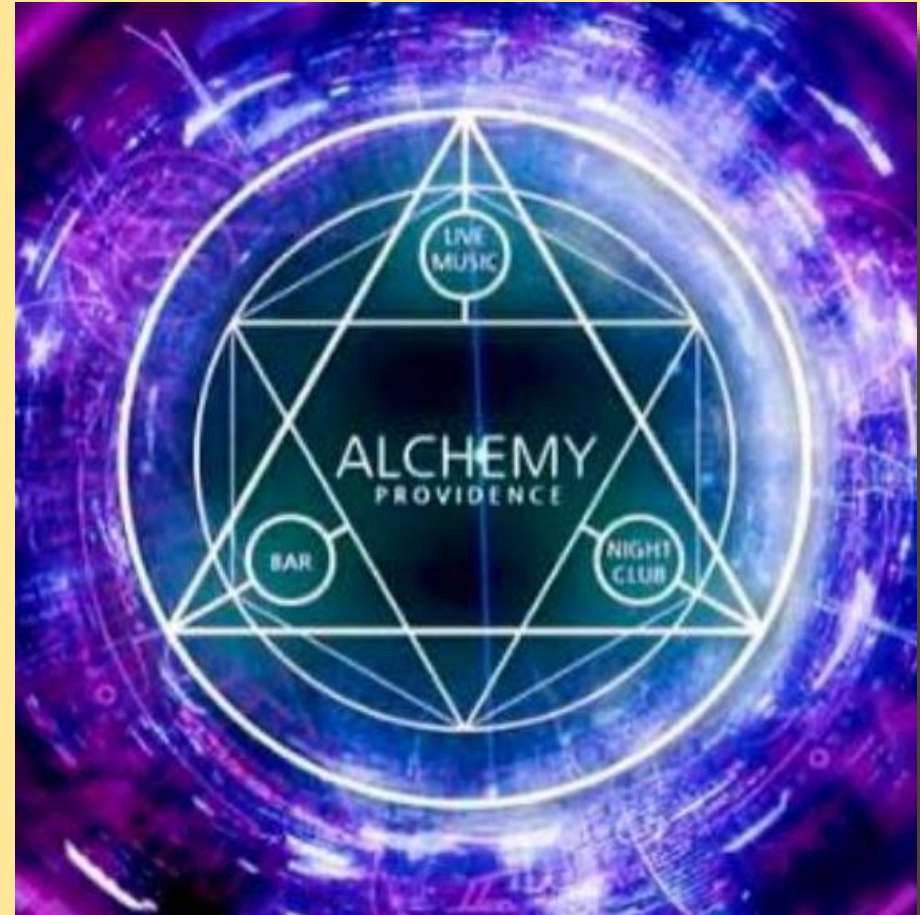
**It suits me to not go too deeply into that.**

**If I talk too freely about my faith, the intelligent reader – whether 10 or 60 – will be able to guess what is coming in the books.**



# Alchemy in Harry Potter

**Rowling:**  
“I’ve never wanted to be witch, but an alchemist, now that’s a different matter.”





# Alchemy

**Alchemy is a spiritual path to return fallen man to his Edenic perfection and is a large part of English literature used extensively by Shakespeare, Donne, Eliot, Lewis, Tolkien and now Rowling.**



# Stages of Alchemy

**The 3 stages of the alchemical process parallels the spiritual stages of transformation:**

**The Black stage represents repentance**

**The White stage is illumination and purification**

**The Red stage is the sanctity of perfection**

# Alchemical Characters in Harry Potter

**Albus Dumbledore –  
an alchemist of some  
renown and partner  
of Nicolas Flamel.**

**Nicholas Flamel was  
an alchemist who  
lived in 14<sup>th</sup> century  
Paris.**



# Symbols in Harry Potter

## Symbols

## Meaning

Philosopher's Stone

Transforming lead to gold = Communion

Red Lion

Life-giving alchemical elixir; Aslan; Rev 5:5

Gryffindor = Golden  
Griffin

Eagle/Lion = Kings of heaven/earth =  
God/Man = Two natures of Christ

Unicorn

Biblical references: Numbers, Psalms, Job;  
Christian tapestry & literary tradition

# More Symbols in Harry Potter

## Symbols

## Meaning

Phoenix

Resurrection Bird; immortal life

Stag

Tradition: regeneration of antlers = Resurrection

Centaur

Perfect man in control of passions

Hippogriff

Eagle/Horse, Heaven/Earth, God/Man; two natures of Christ

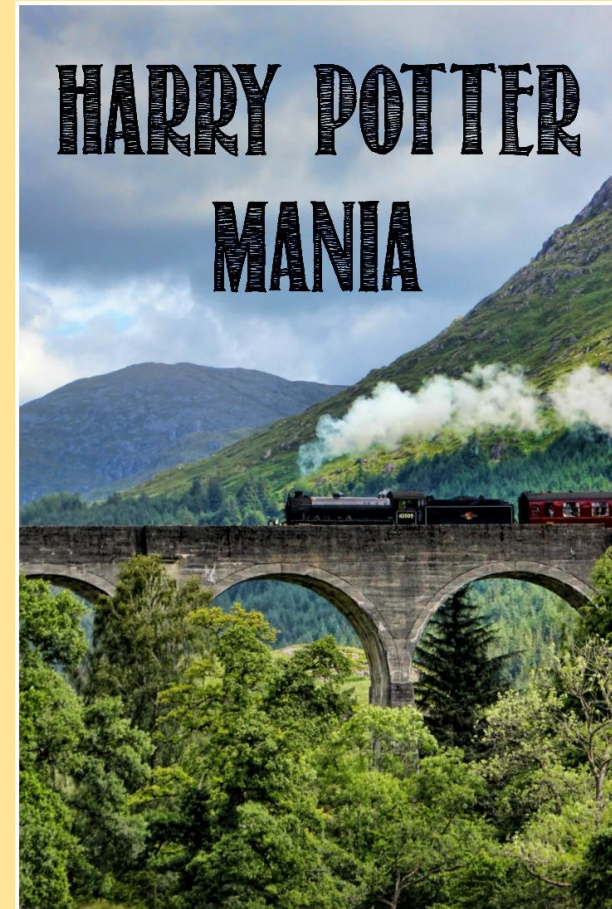


# Harry Potter Mania

Extensive use of Christian themes and symbols.

Rowling's approach is "very English"

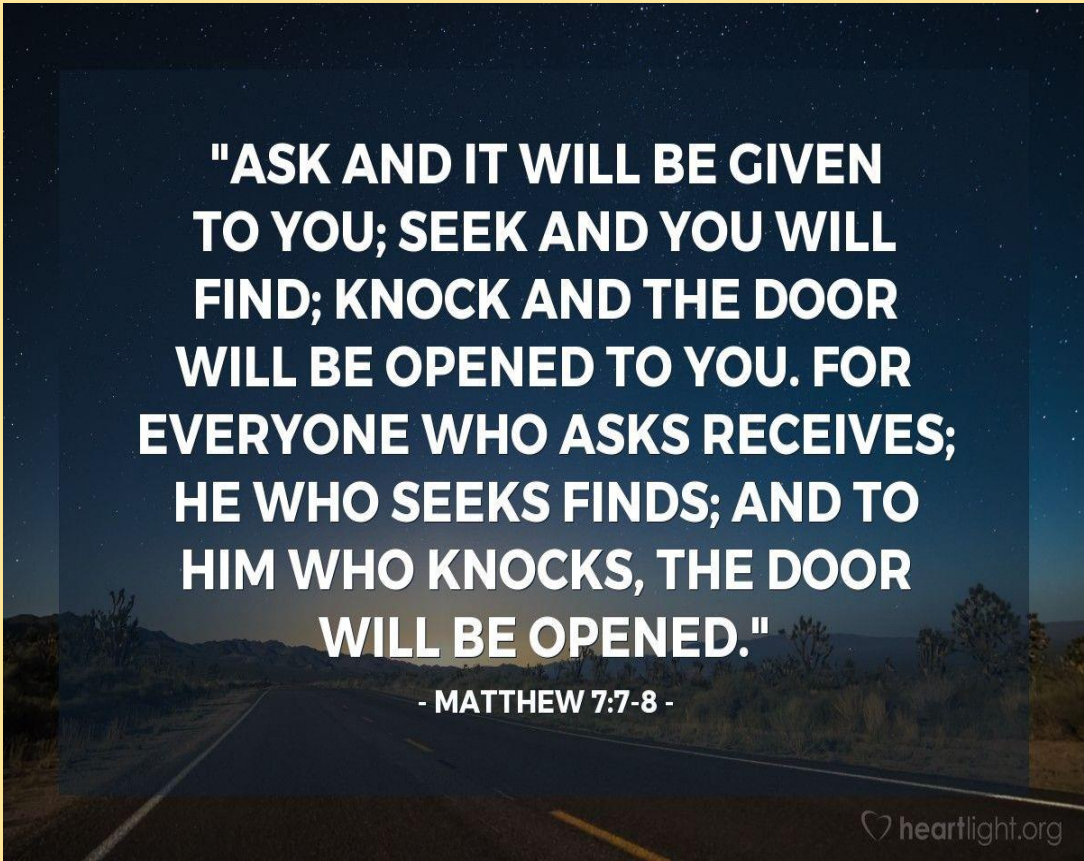
"If there was an altar call at the end, there never would have been a **Potter mania**.."



# Harry Is a Seeker

Harry is not perfect, but he is a seeker.

Overcoming interior and real-world evils.



**"ASK AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU; SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND; KNOCK AND THE DOOR WILL BE OPENED TO YOU. FOR EVERYONE WHO ASKS RECEIVES; HE WHO SEEKS FINDS; AND TO HIM WHO KNOCKS, THE DOOR WILL BE OPENED."**

**- MATTHEW 7:7-8 -**

♡ heartlight.org

# Two Strengths to Rowling's Writing

She is very accessible to readers, young and old, and her message gets through.

She uses great humor and the occasional crude juvenile joke.





# Rowling's Writing is Extremely Powerful

J.K. Rowling delivers difficult truths to a postmodern audience in such a way that they accept as givens ideas they would otherwise reject, even laugh about.



**Postmodern Architecture**



# Difficult truths

The existence of the soul

The importance of choosing to believe

The certainty of life after death



Voldemort's atrophied soul.

# Laura Ladwig

**Library Director, MLIS**

**William Perkins Library**

**Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary**

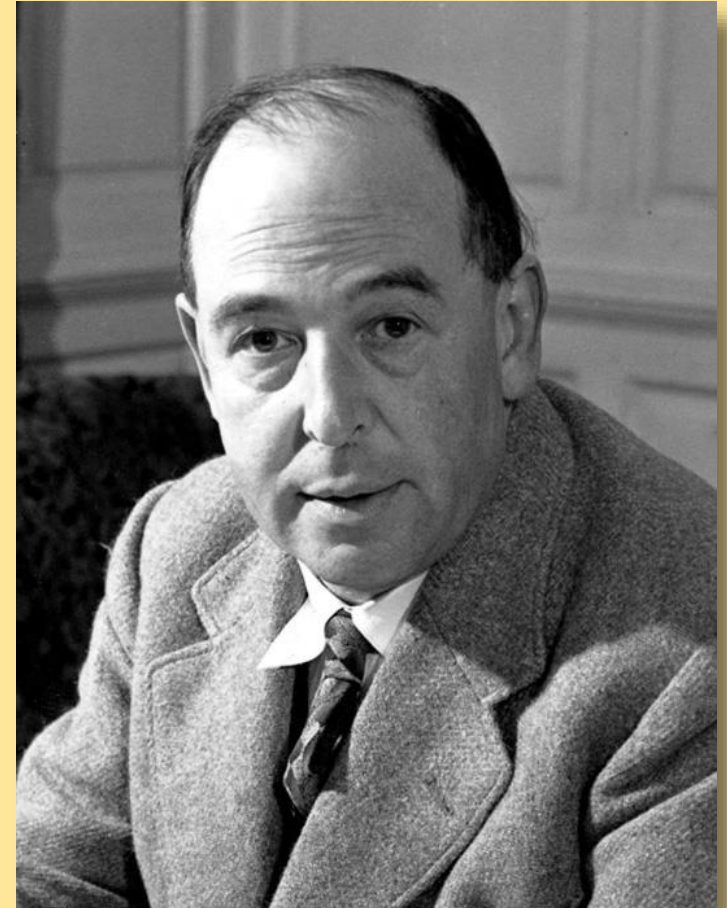
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# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

# C. S. Lewis

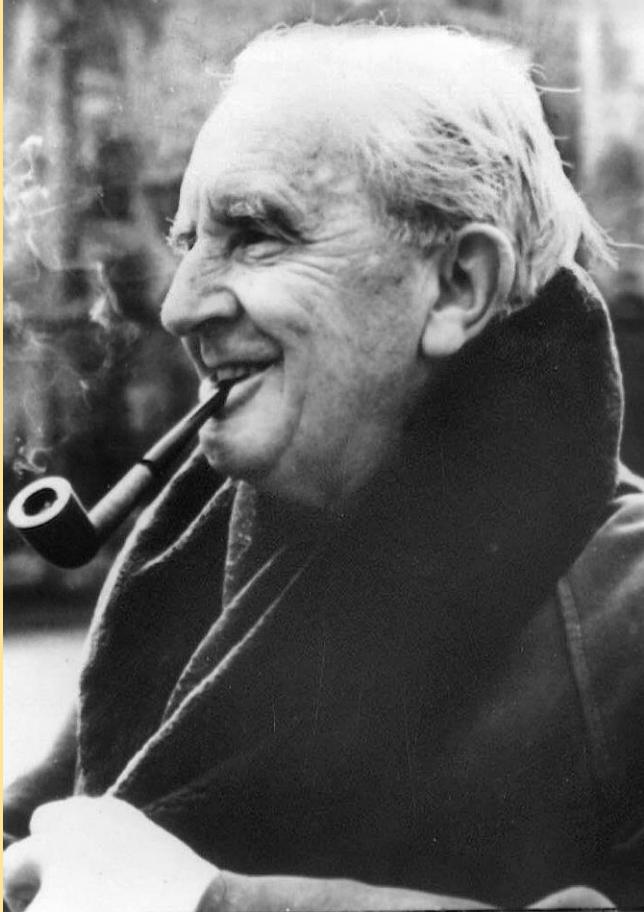
**“The Fantastic or Mythical is a mode available at all ages for some readers; for others, at none.”**

C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (San Diego: Harcourt, 2002), 38.





# J. R. R. Tolkien



**“If fairy story as a kind is worth reading at all, it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can.”**

Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” 15.

# Theologian Andrew Naselli

Naselli writes: “Harry Potter, the seven-book fantasy series by J. K. Rowling, is the best-selling series in history, with more than 500 million copies sold. ...Harry Potter... is the “shared text” of the twenty-first century. While some people think Harry Potter is dark literature that Christians should avoid, we are convinced it is filled with implicit and explicit Christian themes.”



# Harry Potter Christian Themes

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Atonement / Redemption

Good vs. evil

Virtues over vices

Courage

Love

Persistence



# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

**Atonement /  
Redemption**





# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

## Good vs. Evil



# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

**Virtues over Vices**

**Courage**



# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

**Virtues over Vices**

**Love**



# Christian Themes in Harry Potter

**Virtues over Vices**

**Persistence**





# J. R. R. Tolkien

“It is the mark of a good fairy-story... however fantastic or terrible the adventures... when the ‘turn’ comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to... tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art....”

Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” 23.



# J. K. Rowling



## Author, Genius

Rowling said she's proud to be on numerous banned-book lists. As for the protests of some believers? Well, she doesn't take them as gospel.

"I go to church myself," she declared. "I don't take any responsibility for the lunatic fringes of my own religion."