



March 2012 - *Comparing Notes – The Importance of Mutual Encouragement*

C.S. Lewis was a world renowned scholar in 16th century English Literature. He wasn't a theologian, pastor, or priest. And so, in the introduction to his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*, he acknowledges with sincere humility his lack of professional training in the field of theology. And yet, he points out that often we learn more from fellow students than from the experts, especially when it comes to matters of faith. He writes:

This is not a work of scholarship. I am no Hebraist, no higher critic, no ancient historian, no archaeologist. I write for the unlearned about things in which I am unlearned myself. If an excuse is needed (and perhaps it is) for writing such a book, my excuse would be something like this. It often happens that two schoolboys can solve difficulties in their work for one another better than the master can. When you took the problem to a master, as we all remember, he was very likely to explain what you understood already, to add a great deal of information which you didn't want, and say nothing at all about the thing that was puzzling you. I have watched this from both sides of the net; for when, as a teacher myself, I have tried to answer questions brought me by pupils, I have sometimes, after a minute, seen that expression settle down on their faces which assured me that they were suffering exactly the same frustration which I had suffered from my own teachers. The fellow-pupil can help more than the master because he knows less. The difficulty we want him to explain is one he has recently met. The expert met it so long ago that he has forgotten. He sees the whole subject, by now, in such a different light that he cannot conceive what is really troubling the pupil; he sees a dozen other difficulties which ought to be troubling him but aren't.

In this book, then, I write as one amateur to another, talking about difficulties I have met, or lights I have gained, when reading the Psalms, with the hope that this might at any rate interest, and sometimes even help, other inexpert readers. I am "comparing notes," not presuming to instruct...The thoughts it contains are those to which I found myself driven in reading the Psalms; sometimes by my enjoyment of them, sometimes by meeting with what at first I could not enjoy.<sup>1</sup>

Don't discount the knowledge and experience that God has given you to share with fellow believers. If, like Lewis, in humility you are willing to "compare notes" with other inexpert believers, you may be joyfully surprised at the results. As well, if you are a "teacher," in humility, be ready to learn from your pupils, especially when it comes to matters of faith.

*I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—  
that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.*

ROMANS 1:11-12 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960), pp. 1–2