

KNOWING & DOING

C · S · LEWIS INSTITUTE



A Teaching Quarterly for Discipleship of Heart and Mind

From the Spring 2015 issue of Knowing & Doing:



A Love Without End

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We say ‘God is love,’ but do we really understand how powerful those three little words are? “Love’s as warm as tears,” wrote C. S. Lewis, “love is tears.” And so begins one of the most important poems I’ve ever read. I love it, not because it’s well known or because Lewis is such a popular figure in contemporary Christian thought, but because it reminds me of my wedding. Lewis is much more to me than an author, professor, novelist, and Christian apologist: he’s a matchmaker.

Ten years ago (roughly 40 years after his death), C. S. Lewis brought my husband Mart and me together. We both came to know his work long before we knew each other. *Mere Christianity* helped bring Mart back to the faith after years of wandering, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* enthralled me from the first time I read it. So when we crossed paths at a C. S. Lewis conference several months after we first met, we had a great deal to talk about. That weekend, we spent almost all our time together, telling stories, laughing, and discovering miles of common ground. We scheduled our first date for the following weekend, and exactly a year later, we married.

As we planned our wedding, it seemed only fitting that Lewis be involved. Though a brilliant writer and thinker, Lewis is not known for his poetry, but “Love’s As Warm As Tears” struck a chord with us. So, during the ceremony, while a dear friend of ours read the poem, I sat next to my groom and thought about the path that had led me to this day. Each stanza reminded me of some aspect of the love Mart and I shared and, even more so, God’s love for us.

Our wedding was in mid-March, with Easter in sight. Although the temperatures were still chilly, pink camellias at the house we would share had already bloomed, and forsythia offered blazing yellow blossoms against the tired grays and browns of winter. Similarly, this love of ours was bright and beauty-filled. It was, as Lewis would say, “fresh as spring.” I could see a lovely new life unfolding for us. And I wondered at the goodness of God—the everlasting kindness that was giving Mart and me a love to last a lifetime.

As I listened to the scriptures we’d selected being read aloud, I thought of the tears I had wept when my first marriage ended. In desperation, I’d clung to the Lord, and He never let me go. As He healed me, I felt nothing but gratitude for His grace and redemptive work in my life. He had given me so much, including a little girl who was my delight, and a family who loved and supported me. But the greatest gift in those years—or ever—was the Lord Himself, His presence with me.

Because God loves us, He allows trials in our lives to teach and grow us. Scripture and Lewis’s poem speak of the refiner’s fire and its resulting purity. Some trials are of our own making, but regardless, He uses them to mold us into the likeness of His Son. When I was at my lowest, God did not stand back or turn away in disgust. Rather, He walked through it with me. His Word says over and over that He will never leave us nor forsake us. The same God who stood in the furnace with three young Israelites stands in the furnace with us (Daniel 3).

When Jesus walked among us, He didn’t spare Himself the pain of this life. He immersed Himself in it. Early on, He taught from Isaiah 61, a passage that has brought me comfort and hope during hard times: “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” (v. 1



NIV). He was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, release the captives, and comfort all who mourn—to give them a garment of praise. Because He is our hope, He can turn our weeping into dancing.

On our wedding day, I was clothed in joy, my gown a garment of praise.

I celebrated the Father's gift of love between this godly man and me. I couldn't help nodding when our friend read 1 John 4:19: "We love, because He first loved us." After all, God set the standard in 1 Corinthians 13, a passage often read at weddings (including ours), used in premarital counseling, and memorized by many. It's a love we Christians speak of in a casual way, as

though words could contain it, as though we understand it. But do we?

That's why the final stanza in Lewis's poem still stuns me. It begins, "Love's as hard as nails, love is nails." Mart and I chose the poem for that line, and it keeps drawing me back. God's love compelled Him to allow human hands to drive nails into His Son's flesh. In those moments when I see myself as I truly am, I wonder why He would do that for me. Moments like these: When I realize yet again I'm worrying about health issues, or my loved ones, or the future instead of trusting the Lord. When my hasty words nick Mart or hurt our daughter. When a stranger needs something I can provide, but I don't have the time, or energy, or heart to give it. How many opportunities have I missed to share some of the hard-as-nails love that God has showered on me?

The Easter season urges me to examine my life and explore that love. How has it changed me? What has it made possible in my life, in my relationship with Mart, our daughter, and others? In what ways do I need to allow it to refine me? Easter encourages me—and perhaps you too—to discover how wide and long and high and deep (Eph. 3:17-18) is the love of Christ, a love like no other, a love without end.

Love's As Warm As Tears

Love's as warm as tears,
 Love is tears:
 Pressure within the brain,
 Tension at the throat,
 Deluge, weeks of rain,
 Haystacks afloat,
 Featureless seas between
 Hedges, where once was green.

Love's as fierce as fire,
 Love is fire:
 All sorts—infernal heat
 Clinkered with greed and pride,
 Lyric desire, sharp-sweet,
 Laughing, even when denied,
 And that empyreal flame
 Whence all loves came.

Love's as fresh as spring,
 Love is spring:
 Bird-song hung in the air,
 Cool smells in a wood,
 Whispering 'Dare! Dare!'
 To sap, to blood,
 Telling 'Ease, safety, rest,
 Are good; not best.'

Love's as hard as nails,
 Love is nails:
 Blunt, thick, hammered through
 The medial nerves of One
 Who, having made us, knew
 The thing He had done,
 Seeing (with all that is)
 Our cross, and His.

— C.S. Lewis



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LeAnne Martin, Freelance writer and C.S. Lewis Institute Fellow, LeAnne Benfield Martin, has loved Lewis ever since she read *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. LeAnne has a Master of Arts in English, and has written hundreds of articles and devotionals for a variety of Christian magazines. Inspired by Lewis's fiction and a lifelong desire to write, she is now working on her first novel. She completed the C.S. Lewis Institute - Atlanta Fellows Program in 2010, mentored the following year, and also served on the ministry team. The Fellows Program stoked her interest in apologetics; she currently leads an apologetics group for women at her church. Her desire is to continue using her gifts of writing and speaking to glorify the Lord, shine His light, and share His hope with the world around her.

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