



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

June 2015- *Carrying Out a Mission*

In *The Silver Chair*, one of *The Chronicles of Narnia* written by C.S. Lewis, Aslan calls two children, Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb, into Narnia to perform an important task—seeking to find a lost Prince. Because the children become separated soon after their arrival, Aslan presents the task to one of them, Jill. He gives Jill four signs by which he will guide the children in their quest, and has her repeat them until she knows them perfectly. Just before sending Jill on her way, Aslan exhorts her:

But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia... And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.¹

As Jill and Eustace proceed on the quest Aslan has given them, they forget several of the signs at the times they need to know them. Indeed, for each of the first three signs, they realize that they have missed the sign only after it is too late to take the desired action. As Eustace laments, “The second and third signs muffed,” Jill says, “It’s my fault... I—I’d given up repeating the signs every night.” Eustace recognizes that ever since they had heard about a place where they could get out of the cold and have good lodgings, they had “been thinking about nothing else.”²

Philip Ryken, President of Wheaton College, made the following observation about this story: “Whether C.S. Lewis meant it this way or not, to me this story has always illustrated the importance and challenge of Holy Scripture in the Christian life—of memorizing Bible verses, spending time in God’s Word every day, and putting what it says into practice. To be faithful to her calling, Jill needed to go back every day to the will of Aslan (for of course he was the lion who sent her on the quest). Yet, as time went on, she was tempted to neglect the daily quiet time when she recited the four signs. And because of this neglect, she and her friends fell into disobedience and confusion, nearly to the point of death.”³



This story and Ryken’s observation remind us of the vital role of Holy Scripture, not only in knowing God, but in carrying out the mission He has called us to.

“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates ...”

DEUTERONOMY 11:18-20 (ESV)

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, HarperTrophy, New York, pp. 25-26.

²Ibid., pp. 121-122.

³Philip Graham Ryken, “C.S. Lewis on Holy Scripture,” *Knowing and Doing*, Spring 2014, C.S. Lewis Institute, p. 1.