



THE C.S. LEWIS
STUDY PROGRAM

Study Guide

*C.S. LEWIS'S
CASE FOR
CHRIST*



by Art Lindsley

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INTRODUCTION

It is now almost fifty years since C.S. Lewis's death. He thought that his influence would soon wane and his books go out of print. He was wrong. His books are all in print and his influence is global, far beyond the English-speaking world. He is known for many things but particularly for making a clear case for faith in Christ to nonbelievers and believers. Because of the Narnia films, many have become interested in Lewis and some are open to studying his ideas. This video series is meant to be the introduction for a small group study on C.S. Lewis's arguments against unbelief and for faith. Above all, it should be remembered that C.S. Lewis would not want people to focus on him but on Jesus.

HOW TO USE THE MATERIAL

1. Each video, which lasts approximately 15-minutes, is an interview meant to stimulate small group discussion t after having read two chapters of *C.S. Lewis's Case for Christ*. (Art Lindsley, InterVarsity Press, 2005)
2. The study guide questions are provided to guide your discussion in a direction that brings helpful insight and application.
3. At the end of each study, there is a recommended book for follow-up (if you desire). You also could have a member of your group read the recommended book and give a summary to build upon the two chapters of the assigned book.

STUDY QUESTIONS

SESSION 1: Why Study C.S. Lewis's Case for Christ? (Chapters 1 & 2)

Lewis's writings have had a major impact on believers in the 20th and 21st centuries. He did not approach his defense of the faith in a systematic, academic way. Rather, he addressed questions he struggled with during his years as an unbeliever. Lewis combined an intellectual genius with an ability to mesh reason and imagination, as well as a facility with words, a great sense of humor, and a keen discernment of what people needed to hear. He addressed issues that are perennial questions which people have struggled with throughout the ages.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did you come to know about C.S. Lewis?
2. What influence (if any) has he had on your life?
3. What struck you in the first two chapters about Lewis's personal qualities?
4. Does anything in his spiritual journey resonate with you?
5. What questions that Lewis wrestled with echo your own past or present doubts?
6. What was Lewis's relationship with J.R.R. Tolkien?
7. How might this study be helpful in your lives?

Recommended Book: *Surprised by Joy* by C.S. Lewis

SESSION 2: Chronological Snobbery and the Problem of Evil (Chapters 3 and 4)

C.S. Lewis had to overcome both of these intellectual issues before he could come to faith. The first was chronological snobbery—that beliefs from past times are necessarily untrue or at least dubious. Owen Barfield taught him to ask: Has a past belief been proved to be untrue? If so, where and how conclusively? The problem of evil had haunted him from the days of secondary school classes. Lucretius’ lines echoed Lewis’s doubts: “Had God designed the world it would not be, a world so frail and faulty as we see.” His answers are clear, concise, and memorable.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the blind spots or illusions of our own era?
2. Is it ever right to “turn back the clock”?
3. Can you think of modern views enslaved to the recent past?
4. What are the latest advances in technology?
5. Even if the latest is best in technology, why is this not true in terms of the true, the good, and the beautiful?
6. What is Lewis’s argument for God from the existence of evil?
7. How is evil a clue to the cosmos? If evil is real, how does this show atheism, postmodernism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and neo-paganism to be false?

Recommended Book: *The Problem of Pain or A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis

SESSION 3: Myth and Rationalism **(Chapters 5 and 6)**

One obstacle that Lewis had to overcome was the parallel between pagan myths and Christianity. It was assumed in his schooling that the pagan myths were false and Christianity true. On what basis could he exempt Christianity from the same criticism? His answer described in this chapter is the “myth become fact.” Lewis was tutored in rationalism by “Kirk” but later rejected it in favor of a combination of faith and reason.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why are myths not lies?
2. How is Jesus the “myth become fact”?
3. How would Lewis critique the “demythologization” of Scriptures that liberals practice?
4. Can you believe in a place for reason without being a rationalist?
5. What did C.S. Lewis say about the relationship of faith, reason, and evidence?
6. What are some other sources of doubt that don’t come solely from intellectual questions?
7. How do you deal with doubt?

Recommended Book: *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis

SESSION 4: Imagination and Miracles **(Chapters 7 and 8)**

The first stage in Lewis's coming to faith was having his imagination "baptized" through reading George MacDonald's book *Phantastes*. Later Lewis combined reason and imagination in an effective way. He said that reason is the natural organ of truth but imagination is the organ of meaning. *Miracles* were at first a stumbling block to belief but later became an area of interest. He wrote a book called *Miracles* in which he argued that miracles are not impossible, improbable, or inappropriate.

QUESTIONS:

1. What's the story behind Lewis's imagination being baptized?
2. Do representatives from other worldviews try to baptize our imagination? (Hint: consider *Star Wars* and Philip Pullman's *Dark Materials*)
3. How can imagination be the organ of meaning?
4. How can imagination be an escape to reality?
5. What is the argument from reason?
6. Why are miracles not impossible, improbable, or inappropriate?
7. Who are those inside and outside the church that deny miracles today?

Recommended Book: *Miracles* by C.S. Lewis

SESSION 5: Wish Fulfillment and Postmodernism **(Chapters 9 and 10)**

The charge that belief in God is due to wish fulfillment has been one of the central factors for encouraging atheism today. Just as Freud was suspicious of our personal beliefs, so postmodernism extends that suspicion to the whole of culture. Lewis was very aware of Freud's and Marx's critiques of faith (ones he had held himself) and provides powerful answers to them.

Although Lewis did not live to see the full flowering of postmodernism, he did critique some of its earlier forms. What might Lewis say to postmodern people? There are some ways that he would agree and other ways in which he would disagree.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does wishing for something prove the nonexistence of that for which we wish?
2. What is Bulverism?
3. What is the logical fallacy that Freud, Marx, and Feuerbach commit?
4. How is disbelief in God wish-fulfillment?
5. How would Lewis agree to some postmodern tenets?
6. How would Lewis disagree with postmodernism?
7. How is postmodernism self-refuting?

Recommended Book: *First and Second Things* by
C.S. Lewis

SESSION 6: Relativism and Other Religions **(Chapters 11 and 12)**

Relativism has become rampant in our culture. At least two-thirds of people surveyed denied the existence of absolutes. Lewis wrote *The Abolition of Man* in response to this issue in his time. He regarded it as his most important book. Lewis also wrote about the truth of Christianity compared to other religions. He did not exclude truths in other religions or some areas of overlap, between different ones but he did claim that Christianity's assertions were true. In fact, if the historical facts claimed are true, believing in it is of infinite importance. If not true, it is of no importance. The one thing it cannot be is of moderate importance. Lewis did believe that salvation was only through Christ, but he also speculated about how others who didn't know the name of Jesus might be saved.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Lewis come to believe that his relativism was false (i.e., that there was objective evil)?
2. How does relativism reduce values to feelings (emotivism)?
3. How do relativists contradict themselves?
4. Why does the attempt to create an ethic without God fail?
5. What are the different types of religion as Lewis described them (numinous, moral, numinous/moral)?

6. How does Christianity differ from these other religions?
7. What's the difference between exclusivism and inclusivism?

Recommended Book: *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis

SESSION 7: Death and Immortality and Christ (Chapters 13 and 14)

Walter Hooper (a noted authority on C.S. Lewis) has said that Lewis's central theme was that all men and women are immortals. Lewis maintained that "There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal." This was not just theory for him, but something he lived out. The biblical view is strikingly different from other religious or nonreligious views. The great sign that proves the biblical view of immortality is the resurrection of Jesus. Lewis portrays this not only in his apologetic writing but in his fiction. In the *Narnian Chronicles*, Aslan dies for Edmund but is raised from the dead. Aslan is always close but not often seen. He is the one who transforms. As Christ is to our world, so is Aslan to Narnia. Christ is either a liar, lunatic, legend, or Lord. Lewis's famous argument still persuades.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between the atheistic and the Christian view of death?
2. What was the significance of the belief that "you have never met a mere mortal" for Lewis (and for us)?
3. How did Lewis face his own death?
4. What is Lewis's argument for rewards in heaven?
5. What images of Aslan help us to see Christ better?
6. What do you think of the liar, lunatic, legend, or Lord argument?
7. What have you learned through this study?

Recommended Book: *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis