



# THE C.S. LEWIS STUDY PROGRAM

## MERE CHRISTIANITY *study guide*

### *How to Use This Study Guide*

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*This Study Guide is most effectively used in a small group setting. It is organized into four sections, corresponding to the four books that comprise . Your preparation for the first two sections can be completed in one week each, but the last two are longer and ideally need two weeks each. Thus, six weeks is a reasonable length for the study, and two hours is recommended for each session.*

#### **Step One: Understanding**

*Before the first meeting of your group, acquire a copy of Mere Christianity in which you can make notations, read it through and number the paragraphs in each section. Before meeting to discuss each lesson, work through the Study Questions for Mere Christianity appropriate for the section of the book the group will be discussing. This will help*

*you follow the logic and grasp the points C. S. Lewis is making in that section of the book. You can download additional copies of the study guide at [www.cslewisinstitute.org](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org).*

#### **Step Two: Discussing Mere Christianity**

*When your group meets to discuss the book, first view the appropriate lecture by Dr. Christopher Mitchell, each of which is approximately fifty minutes long. Then use the Study Questions for Mere Christianity. There are six to seven questions for each of the lectures.*

*We hope this study program provides you with greater understanding as you explore Lewis's timeless book.*

### *Study Questions for Mere Christianity*

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These study questions will help you to get the most out of the lectures by Dr. Christopher Mitchell on Mere Christianity.

There is an underlying theme to Mere Christianity that even the most careful reader can miss due to the many rich insights and profound wisdom that overflow its pages. Chris Mitchell's lectures and these questions are intended to both explain Lewis's ideas and to help you to keep track of the underlying themes that tie together all four sections (books) that comprise .

Summarized briefly, Lewis writes that morality is a mystery that gives helpful clues to the meaning of the universe (Book One). Human morality points to a spiritual/religious dimension of life

that, among all the possible solutions, is best explained by the Christian understanding of a moral God (Book Two). Our moral nature needs guidelines and, again, Christianity provides the most helpful and satisfying morality on the planet (Book Three). That satisfying answer for our moral hunger is not found in ourselves, but in the only true human capable of complete morality, Jesus Christ (Book Four).

In order to get the most out of these questions, it will be helpful to treat Mere Christianity like a textbook. Take a pen and number the paragraphs in each chapter before you begin to read. You will find that these study questions will direct you back to specific paragraphs in each chapter for serious consideration and thoughtful application.

## BOOK ONE:

### *Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe*

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#### *Chapter 1: The Law of Human Nature*

1. Why does Lewis think it noteworthy to pay attention to the underlying dynamics of quarreling, ¶s 1 and 2?
2. Why is there good reason to believe that the idea of a universal law of human nature is a solid truth, ¶s 7 and 8?
3. Lewis's summary point is that while everyone believes in Right and Wrong, none of us is consistent in living that way, ¶ 11. How do you respond when someone points out your inconsistent behavior?

#### *Chapter 2: Some Objections*

1. What are the reasons for making a distinction between the Law of Nature and "herd instinct", ¶s 2, 3 and 4?
2. Some things we learn in school are merely good manners and social convention. Other things we learn, like mathematics, are universal truths, ¶ 6. Why is there good reason to believe that the Law of Human Nature is a universal truth, ¶7?
3. How would you answer someone who has reservations about a universal morality?

#### *Chapter 3: The Reality of the Law*

1. The Law of Nature as it refers to most of nature is descriptive—it describes how nature acts. However, the Law of Human nature is prescriptive—it says how humans ought to act, ¶ 3. What clues does this provide for understanding the world, ¶s 4 and 5?
2. What clues do we have, in a culture that is committed to a material/naturalistic understanding of the world, that there is actually something "beyond", ¶ 6?

3. What encourages you to believe that there is more to the world than your five senses can perceive?

#### *Chapter 4: What Lies Behind the Law of Human Nature*

1. There are two fundamental views of the universe, the materialist and the religious. How are these two views different from one another, ¶ 2?
2. Why can't science help us decide which view, materialist or religious, we should choose ¶ 2?
3. If we can't find out about the Law of Human Nature from science, how can we investigate whether it actually exists or not, ¶s 3 and 4?
4. When you look inside yourself, what hunger and desires do you have, that point to something beyond?

#### *Chapter 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy*

1. Lewis has made a case for a reasonable and intelligent religious worldview in a culture which dismissed Christianity as passé and outdated. In what three ways does Lewis seek to counter common objections of his readers to Christianity, ¶s 2, 3 and 4?
2. Why is it that the God behind the Moral Law is both attractive and terrifying, ¶ 3?
3. How is it that, according to the Moral Law, we can both desire God and discover that we have made ourselves his enemies, ¶ 3?
4. Christianity makes no sense apart from a sense of the Moral Law and one's personal inability to keep it, ¶ 4. How much sense does Christianity make to you?

## BOOK TWO:

### *What Christians Believe*

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#### *Chapter 1: Rival Conceptions of God*

1. The first major question everyone must confront is whether to believe in God or not. How do you respond, reading that Christians have a more "liberal view" than atheists about the existence of God, ¶ 1?
2. The second question everyone must face is to decide what kind of God to believe in, ¶ 3. Some, including Pantheists,

believe that God is beyond good and evil. What is the fundamental problem of Pantheism, ¶ 4?

3. Others (Jews, Muslims and Christians) believe that God is good and judges evil. What's the problem created by this point of view, ¶ 5?
4. What problem must be confronted if you reject the God of right and wrong because there is cruelty and injustice in the world, ¶ 6?

## Chapter 2: *The Invasion*

1. Lewis concludes that both atheism and Christian Liberalism (Lewis calls it “Christianity-and-water”) aren’t sufficient. What specifically is Lewis’s objection to Christian Liberalism, ¶s 3, 4 and 5?
2. According to Lewis, there are only two religious systems which directly confront the problem of evil and a good God, Dualism and Christianity (¶ 6). What does Dualism teach and what is its fatal flaw, ¶s 7, 8 and 9?
3. What is Christianity’s solution to the problem of evil and a good God, ¶s 10 and 11?
4. In what ways have you experienced this world as a place of spiritual warfare?

## Chapter 3: *The Shocking Alternative*

1. The existence of the devil doesn’t completely address the fundamental issue—how can a good, all-powerful God tolerate the existence of evil in his creation? How might the existence of free will be a good place to start in answering this question, ¶s 2, 3 and 4?
2. However, even the existence of free will raises questions about God. How can a good God make creatures that are capable of doing wrong, ¶ 5?
3. How did the Dark Power and our first ancestors go wrong, ¶ 6?
4. What three preliminary steps did God take to begin the rescue, ¶ 9?

# BOOK THREE:

## *Christian Behavior*

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### Chapter 1: *The Three Parts of Morality*

1. Lewis writes that morality is concerned with three things: a) fair play, b) character, and c) eternal accountability, ¶s 3, 4 and 5. Which of the three is the most pressing concern for you?
2. Many people who think of morality just focus on fair play. What is the problem in ignoring the other two parts of morality, ¶s 7 and 8?
3. How does the illustration of a naval fleet help explain how each aspect of morality is mutually independent ¶s 6, 7, 8 and 9?

### Chapter 2: *The Cardinal Virtues*

1. There are four cardinal or “pivotal” virtues: a) prudence, b) temperance, c) justice and d) fortitude, ¶ 2. In your own words, give a definition of each one.

5. How is Christ the “shocking” solution, ¶ 10?
6. After reading this paragraph containing Lewis’s famous “Lunatic, Liar or Lord” trilemma, ¶ 13, how would you answer the person who says that Christ was merely a good teacher?

### Chapter 4: *The Perfect Penitent*

1. Christians believe that Christ was God in human form (the Incarnation) and that by his death he makes us right with God (the Atonement). How does Lewis explain the way that these two doctrines help us, ¶ 4?
2. What is at the heart of all the theories about how Christianity works, ¶ 5?
3. What is the basic problem of human repentance, ¶ 7?
4. How is Jesus Christ the solution to our human dilemma, ¶ 9?

### Chapter 5: *The Practical Conclusion*

1. Why would Lewis draw a parallel between sex and faith ¶ 2?
2. What do baptism, belief and Communion have to do with passing on the new life of Christ, ¶s 4 and 5?
3. What do Christians mean when they say they are “in Christ”, ¶ 7, and why is that important?
4. After reading this chapter, what would you say to those who object to becoming a Christian because there are people in the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ?

2. If one social grouping—club, association, lodge, etc.—was especially filled with many people who practiced the four cardinal virtues, in what ways might that be unique and attractive?
3. How does the illustration of a tennis player explain what it means to be virtuous, ¶ 6?
4. Virtue is a quality of character that God is very concerned with. Why is virtue important for this life and the life to come, ¶s 8, 9 and 10?

### Chapter 3: *Social Morality*

1. Since we live now, more than when Lewis wrote, in a Post-Christian Society, what concerns or questions come to mind as you read this chapter on a Christian society?
2. In what way is the church responsible to create a Christian society, ¶ 3?

3. How would a Christian society break the stereotypes of both the political left and right, ¶s 4 and 5?
4. As Lewis describes it, what attracts you to the idea of a Christian society? What concerns do you have about a Christian society?

### *Chapter 4: Morality and Psychoanalysis*

1. Christianity and psychology are both concerned with the inner person, yet each has a unique focus. According to Lewis, how are they different, ¶ 4?
2. How does the illustration of the two soldiers help explain the difference between morality and psychology, ¶ 5?
3. Why is it unwise to judge the moral actions of others, ¶s 7 and 9?
4. How will Lewis's reflection on inner motivation make a difference in your relationships with others?

### *Chapter 5: Sexual Morality*

1. Lewis provides three reasons why he believes that the sexual appetite, not the Christian teaching on sex, is out of order. What are they: ¶s 3, 4 and 6?
2. While the sexual appetite is out of order, what hope is there for those who want to change, ¶ 9?
3. What challenges and difficulties must be faced for those who are seeking a cure to a dysfunctional sexual appetite, ¶s 10, 11 and 13?
4. What difference has this chapter made in the way that you think about Christianity and sex?

### *Chapter 6: Christian Marriage*

1. Lewis observes that the Christian idea of marriage is extremely unpopular, ¶ 1. Do you agree?
2. Why does Christianity teach that marriage is for life, ¶s 2 and 3?
3. What do you think of Lewis's suggestion that there should be two kinds of marriage, ¶s 4, 5 and 14?
4. What is the problem of basing a marriage on the popular ideal of "being in love", ¶s 9, 10, 11 and 12?
5. After reading this chapter, what advice would you give to a young couple about to get married?

### *Chapter 7: Forgiveness*

1. Why might the Christian concept of forgiveness be even more unpopular than the Christian beliefs on sex and marriage, ¶s 1, 2, 3 and 4?

2. How is the idea of loving one's self the key to Lewis's explanation of forgiveness, ¶s 5, 6 and 11?
3. How is forgiveness central to the experience of eternal life, ¶s 7 and 10?
4. Apply this chapter practically: Who are the top ten people you need to forgive? Write in a journal how you feel about forgiving them and then perhaps make plans to begin the process.

### *Chapter 8: The Great Sin*

1. Lewis writes, "Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind." ¶ 2. Why does Lewis call pride the chief sin, ¶s 3 and 8?
2. Not everything that goes by the name of pride qualifies as sin, ¶s 10 and 11. Why isn't pride in being praised by others or taking pride in another person, sin?
3. True pride is not so easy to spot, ¶ 8. In what ways might you catch a glimpse of pride in those around you? What do you discover when you begin to look for pride in yourself?

### *Chapter 9: Charity*

1. Going against the flow of our cultural concept of love, Lewis writes that love is not a feeling but an action ¶ 2. What do you think of this?
2. What are the dangers of hating and the benefits of loving, ¶s 7 and 8?
3. How does Lewis's definition of Christian love make our responsibility to love our neighbor both easier and more difficult?

### *Chapter 10: Hope*

1. Mere Christianity is filled with poignant phrases. One of the most famous is found in this chapter, "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither." ¶ 1. Explain what he means.
2. In our culture, why is it difficult for us to have a Christian hope of heaven, ¶ 2?
3. How is it that the desire for heaven gives a good reason to hope that heaven actually exists, ¶ 5?
4. Are you more inclined to the Fool's Way, ¶ 3, the Disillusioned Way, ¶ 4, or the Christian Way, ¶ 5, of thinking about heaven?

### *Chapter 11: Faith*

1. How is faith, like love, a "feeling to be learned", ¶s 3, 4, 5 and 6?
2. Why is it foolish to think about faith as a bargain with God, ¶s 8 and 9?

3. When you find your faith is weak, what can you do to strengthen it, ¶ 6?
4. How has reading Mere Christianity so far strengthened your faith?
2. When making an effort to live a moral life, why should a Christian “leave it to God”, ¶s 5 and 6?
3. How does faith affect the way in which we live by Christian virtue and values, ¶ 7?
4. In your reading of Mere Christianity so far, what have you learned about the Christian faith that you did not know before?

### *Chapter 12: Faith continued*

1. In Book Three of Mere Christianity Lewis has written about Christian virtue and values. Why is it important that we make every possible effort to live a moral life, ¶ 7?

## **BOOK FOUR:**

### *Beyond Personality or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity*

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#### *Chapter 1: Making and Begetting*

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “theology”?
2. Why does Lewis think it’s important to devote this last “book” of Mere Christianity to theology, ¶ 5?
3. In what ways are we naturally sons of God and yet not “actually” sons of God, ¶s 10 and 14?
4. What do Christians mean when they say that Christ is the Son of God, ¶s 11, 12 and 13?

#### *Chapter 2: The Three-Personal God*

1. The Christian God is not impersonal, like the “Force” in Star Wars. Why is this good news, ¶ 3?
2. According to Lewis, theology is very practical, ¶ 4. What is the practical good of knowing that God is a tri-personal being, ¶s 8 and 9?
3. How does personal character help or hinder us in the knowledge of God, ¶s 13 and 14?
4. What do you personally discover about God when you look inside yourself?

#### *Chapter 3: Time and Beyond Time*

1. It’s a big idea, but how does Lewis think that understanding that God is beyond time address common concerns about prayer, ¶s 4, 5, 6 and 7?
2. How did the understanding that God is beyond time help Lewis understand the Incarnation, ¶ 10?
3. How might your life be different if you believed that you personally had God’s full and undivided attention?

#### *Chapter 4: Good Infection*

1. What is the practical benefit that comes from understanding the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son, ¶ 5?
2. Lewis explains the Trinity in a practical way, like a dance, ¶ 8. What personal benefits come to us through each person of the Trinity, ¶ 7?
3. Which person of the Trinity are you more inclined to connect with, the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit?
4. Getting to know God is like catching a good infection, ¶s 8, 9, 10 and 11. What can you do to catch the divine infection?

#### *Chapter 5: The Obstinate Toy Soldiers*

1. How does the analogy of the toy tin soldier explain God’s agenda for the human race, ¶s 3 and 4?
2. Jesus Christ is not only God, but the true human—that which God intends for us all, ¶ 5. According to Lewis, what difference will that make for you and me, ¶ 8?
3. In what ways do you resist God’s transformation from a tin soldier to a true human? In what ways do you welcome it?

#### *Chapter 6: Two Notes*

1. Why God “begot” one son—Jesus Christ—so that he might create many, is a great mystery; why bother thinking about it at all, ¶s 1 and 2?
2. What benefits come from knowing both our spiritual unity with the rest of the human race and yet our personal distinctiveness, ¶ 3?



### *Chapter 7: Let's Pretend*

1. Why is choosing to act like Christ essential to becoming like Christ, ¶s 2, 3 and 4?
2. How can we recognize the spiritual help of Christ in shaping our character, ¶s 7 and 8?
3. What is our role and what is God's role in transforming our character, ¶s 12 and 13?
4. Based on the insights from this chapter, how might you be able to discern the help of Jesus Christ in your life this week?

### *Chapter 8: Is Christianity Hard or Easy?*

1. What is the difference between the ordinary idea of morality and that of Christian morality, ¶s 2 and 3?
2. How does Lewis use the images of a grass field and eggs to explain how Christianity is both hard and easy, ¶s 7 and 9?
3. How can all the various religious activities of the church get in the way of the one central point of Christianity, ¶ 10?
4. What do you find difficult about Christianity? What do you find easy?

### *Chapter 9: Counting the Cost*

1. God's expectation for us is moral perfection, ¶ 1. Why shouldn't we be discouraged when we repeatedly fail, ¶ 6?
2. What does Lewis mean, Christians are in for a rough time, ¶s 9 and 11?

3. If being a Christian is so hard, why would anyone want to become one, ¶s 3, 4 and 7?
4. What reservations might you have toward the Christian faith?

### *Chapter 10: Nice People or New Men*

1. What's the problem with expecting that Christians should be "nicer" than other people, ¶s 3, 4 and 5?
2. How do the illustrations of toothpaste and factory management help explain how Christians do change in their moral development, ¶ 5?
3. From a Christian perspective, what is the problem of being "nice", ¶ 11, 13 and 15?
4. Many people dismiss Christianity by saying that the church is full of hypocrites. What would you say to them after reading this chapter?

### *Chapter 11: New Men*

1. How does the analogy of evolution help us understand the transformation that God is bringing about through faith in Jesus Christ, ¶ 2, 3 and 4?
2. How is the next step in human evolution different than previous ones, ¶s 5, 6 and 7?
3. What illusions of "self" must you escape if you are to become a true person, ¶s 13, 14 and 15?
4. What is your role in your own evolution, ¶ 9?

## *Summary Questions for the Entire Book of Mere Christianity*

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1. How is morality a key to understanding human behavior (Book One)?
2. Why is belief in the Christian God the only adequate explanation of human morality (Book Two)?
3. How does Christianity explain and transform human morality (Book Three)?
4. Why is faith in Christ the only way to become the true human being that, deep down, you hunger to become (Book Four)?

## *First Lecture Discussion Questions*

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1. Share your initial observations and impressions.
2. Lewis was convinced that both the loss of a need for religion and a diminished moral sense made Christianity implausible to many people in England. How does this first lecture on Mere Christianity point back to a rediscovery of the religious and the moral elements of life?
3. What did Lewis mean by seeking to make people good pagans before they could become good Christians?
4. What do you think are the primary reasons that people tend to dismiss or overlook Christianity today?
5. Two individuals quarreling is a small-scale expression of the Law of Human Nature. The existence of a legal system in the pursuit of justice is a large-scale expression of the Law of Human Nature. In what ways do you observe the Law of Human Nature at work in the world?
6. On a scale of 1–10 (10 being high) how would your family and friends rate you regarding fair conduct? What responses do you have to your “perceived” evaluation?

## *Second Lecture Discussion Questions*

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1. Share your initial observations and impressions.
2. The basic essence of what Christians believe about God is covered in this lecture. Although there are many different religions, there are really only a small number of options available when it comes to which kind of God to believe in. After listening to this lecture, how many different ones can you recall? Which one makes the most sense to you?
3. According to Lewis, how is Christ God’s answer to a world gone wrong?
4. Some people suggest that because Christ was God as well as human, it was easier to live a perfect life. After listening to this lecture, what would you say?
5. The existence of pain and evil raises deep questions about God and this world. How have your challenges and struggles affected your spiritual and religious beliefs?
6. Christianity is not simple, but it makes sense. In what specific ways does it help you to make sense of your faith?
7. How does it make sense of your life experience?

## *Third Lecture Discussion Questions*

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1. Share your initial observations and impressions.
2. This lecture addresses what the Christian life looks like from the inside, by those who are seeking to live by Christian virtues and values. Which virtues are you most attracted to and which did you find uncomfortable?
3. Forgiveness is a very unpopular Christian value because it is not something we really want to do in response to those who have hurt us. When have you faced a challenge to forgive, what did you do about it? What is it like to be among a group of people who are not inclined to forgive?
4. Hope for heaven is a practical Christian value. How does it shape the way we think about the present and the future?
5. When the theological virtues are mentioned in Scripture, the order is that of “faith, hope and love”; why might Lewis have written about them in the order of love, hope and faith?
6. Lewis dismissed religious and moral bookkeeping (keeping a balance sheet of our good and “bad” actions) as a serious missing of the point. Instead, efforts to live by Christian morals and values lead us all to an experiential knowledge of our own spiritual bankruptcy. Is this true of you? If so, based on Lewis’s thought, how then are you to relate to God?

## *Fourth Lecture Discussion Questions*

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1. Share your initial observations and impressions.
2. The first and last books of Mere Christianity are like bookends. The first book defines the need that Christianity addresses and the last book explains God’s solution. Recall, as best you can, what is the basic problem addressed by the first book? And then, on the other hand, what is the solution covered in the last book?
3. Lewis sees the Trinity, three divine persons in relationship to each other as One, as essential to Christianity. What benefits come to humans because the Christian God is personal as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?
4. In what ways did your understanding of and appreciation for theology grow after listening to this lecture?
5. God has made it possible, through his Son Jesus Christ, to be joined in an intimate spiritual unity with him. What difference can it make, in the way you think and feel, to know that you are truly connected with God?