

*The Chronicles of Narnia:
The Lion, The Witch and
The Wardrobe*

C. S. Lewis

An introduction to Narnia for Small Groups

 The United Methodist Church of the
Resurrection

Biography of C. S. Lewis

Introduction

Clive Staples Lewis (November 29, 1898 – November 22, 1963), commonly referred to as C.S. Lewis, was an Irish author and scholar, born into a Protestant family in Belfast and died on the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Lewis is known for his work on medieval literature and for his Christian apologetics and fiction, especially *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

After the death of his mother in 1908, Lewis was sent to various schools in England. At about 15 years of age, he abandoned his childhood Christian faith but became a theist (believes one God created and rules humans) at age 31. “In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed...” Encouraged by friends T.S. Eliot and J.R.R. Tolkien, in 1931 he returned to Christianity.

Career

Lewis won a scholarship to University College, Oxford in 1916 while World War I was raging. Because he was Irish, Lewis was exempted from the draft but he enlisted anyway in the British Army in 1917. After his discharge in 1918, Lewis returned to his studies, receiving Firsts in Moderations (Greek and Latin Literature), Greats (Philosophy and Ancient History) and English.

Lewis taught as a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford for nearly 30 years, from 1925 to 1954, and later was the first Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Using this position, Lewis wrote many scholarly works concerning the Middle Ages, especially the use of allegory.

In addition to his scholarly work, Lewis wrote a number of popular novels, most of which contained allegories on Christian themes such as sin, the Fall, and redemption. His first novel after becoming a Christian was *The Pilgrim's Regress*, his take on John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which depicted his own experience

with Christianity. Lewis's "Space Trilogy" novels dealt with the dehumanizing trend occurring in science fiction novels of the time. He wrote several short novels dealing with the themes of heaven and hell, including *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*.

The most popular of all his works are *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of seven fantasy novels for children. The books have Christian themes and describe the adventures of a group of children who visit a magical land called Narnia. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was the first published and the most popular book of the series. Lewis is said to have stated that he wrote the novels when he wondered what it would be like if Jesus Christ was incarnated on another planet or world to save the souls of those inhabitants.

Lewis also wrote many books about Christianity, the most famous of which was *Mere Christianity*, considered a classic work in the area of Christian apologetics. Because he approached religious belief as a skeptic and was converted by the evidence, his books on Christianity examine common difficulties in accepting Christianity such as "How could a good God allow pain to exist in the world?" He writes that most people are willing to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but the Gospels record that Jesus made many claims to divinity. Assuming that the Gospels are accurate, Lewis said there are then three options: Jesus was telling falsehoods and knew it, so he was a liar; Jesus was telling falsehoods but believed he was telling the truth, and so he was insane; or Jesus was telling the truth, and so he was divine. Therefore, one cannot argue that Jesus was merely a great moral teacher because his moral teachings would be invalidated by virtue of either his lying or his insanity. If he was divine, however, he must be clearly more than a great moral teacher.

Lewis also wrote an autobiography called *Surprised by Joy* which describes his conversion. His essays and public speeches on Christian belief, many of which were collected in *God in the Dock* and *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* remain popular today for their insights into faith.

Character Summaries

The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe was written by C.S. Lewis to help people better understand the meaning of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Even though he was a university professor, Lewis wrote this delightful story in the simplicity of a children's story. Lewis' life had been transformed by Jesus and he wanted others to share in that experience.

The story is about the four Pevensie children, who enter through the door of a "wardrobe" into the wonderful world of Narnia. The two girls are called "the daughters of Eve," and the boys are called "sons of Adam," just as we all are. These four children represent what is good and not-so-good in each of us.

LUCY - Queen Lucy the Valiant

Lucy is the youngest of the four Pevensie children. She is always kind, cheerful, and very brave. She is the first of the children to venture into Narnia. She is very optimistic, the exact opposite of her skeptical brother Edmund. She is an example of compassion, which means putting others first. This selflessness is demonstrated when Lucy makes a special drink to heal the wounded who fought the Witch's troops.

SUSAN - Queen Susan the Gentle

Susan is the second-oldest child. She and her sister are called "the daughters of Eve." Her beauty is derived from her sweet kindness. Like her sister, Lucy, Susan uses what is given her to help others.

EDMUND - The Willful Brat

Edmund is the third-oldest Pevensie child. He is a mean, spiteful brat who enjoys teasing his sister Lucy. He is an example of how sinful greed, in this case for the enchanted Turkish Delight, leads one down a very destructive path. He joins forces with the evil White Witch and betrays his own brother and sisters. He represents all of us in our drift away from God. Fortunately, he eventually changes his ways and is forgiven.

PETER - High King of Narnia

Peter is the oldest. He and his brother are termed “the sons of Adam.” He is noble and courageous. He protected his sister Susan from a fierce wolf at the risk of his own life. With his good character, he quickly matures into a young man in Narnia. King Aslan rewards him by crowning him “King Peter the Magnificent!” He represents the wonderful image of God that we are all born with.

THE WHITE WITCH - The Evil Queen of Narnia

The White Witch is very evil and represents Satan. She places a spell on the land so that it is always winter (a symbol of death). She prevents Christmas (a symbol of Christ’s arrival). The Witch is the “Emperor’s hangman,” using her wand to turn creatures and people to stone. She also produces the delicious Turkish Delight treat (which represents sin and its appeal). Through it she enslaves Edmund and transforms him into a greedy, voracious boy.

ASLAN - The Noble Lion King

Aslan the lion is the king and god of Narnia, and he represents Jesus Christ. He sacrifices his life so that the White Witch will spare Edmund. The next morning when he is resurrected, having overpowered death, he defeats the White Witch once and for all.

THE STONE TABLE

The Stone Table represents the stone tablets that contained the Ten Commandments, which God gave to Moses. It was part of the old set of promises between God and his people, a relationship based on law-keeping, with harsh penalties for disobedience. When Aslan is resurrected from death, the Stone Table is shattered, bringing an end of the former age and the birth of a new era based on grace, forgiveness, and restoration. The creatures and people who had been turned to stone were made alive again. Aslan defeated death, making forgiveness and new life available to all.

Story Summary

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is an epic film, set in a breathtaking world at the limits of imagination. It tells the story of four siblings – Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter Pevensie – sent to live on the estate of a mysterious professor to escape the horrors of the WWII bombing of London.

While playing hide-and-seek, the youngest child, Lucy, discovers the world of Narnia. She convinces her brothers and sister to journey through the open back of a magical wardrobe to travel to Narnia with her. Narnia, a once-peaceful land inhabited by talking beasts, dwarfs, fauns, centaurs and giants, has been cursed with eternal winter by the evil but beautiful White Witch, Jadis.

Under the guidance of a noble and mystical ruler, the magnificent lion Aslan, the children fight to overcome Jadis' powerful hold over Narnia in a spectacular, climactic battle destined to free Narnia from the icy spell forever.



Pre-viewing Discussion Questions for The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

By Pastor Yolanda Villa

(Adapted from Colin Duriez's A Field Guide to Narnia, and HarperCollins Publishers Discussion Questions at the end of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe).

1. In the Chronicles, Daughter of Eve, and the Son of Adam are the names by which female and male humans are formally addressed.
 - How do the Narnia Chronicles reflect different expectations for boys and girls?
 - How do attitudes about gender roles at the time the series was written (early to mid-1950's) compare with attitudes now?
 - Does God differentiate between roles for men and women? What makes you say that?

2. Some of the themes that are prevalent in the stories are: beliefs, courage, and fantasy.

Beliefs

- Characters regularly confront issues of good and evil.
- How does what a character believe affect how he or she acts, and vice versa?
- What are some examples of good and evil behavior?
- How do the characters respond to good and evil?
- How do you understand good and evil from a biblical perspective?
- Are there expressions of good and evil in birth stories of Jesus?
- Do you think the author has the same perspective?

Courage

- When do characters show courage?
- Examine the difference between impulsive action and courageous action.
- What is the difference between caution and cowardice?
- How does fear affect how the characters perceive the world, and how they act?
- We just completed a sermon series on the book of Proverbs. In your readings did the writer of Proverbs have anything to say about courage/fear?
- Is fear something you can overcome? How?

Fantasy

- What are the elements that make up fantasy?
- What images of this fantasy world are most vivid?
- How do the children adapt to the altered realities of Narnia?
- What preconceptions do they bring with them?
- How do you think God feels about fantasy? Why?

Narnia Discussion Starters

Taken from: www.narniaresources.com

1. What has been your personal experience with reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*?
2. What is your favorite part of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* story?
3. What part of the story do you most want to see in the movie?
4. What impact has C.S. Lewis had on your personal thinking and/or your character?
5. What message do you draw from *The Chronicles of Narnia*?
6. What do you feel was special about Aslan? What is it that you like about him?
7. Which of the children do you most identify with?
 - ❖ Lucy (the adventurer who discovered Narnia through the wardrobe)?
 - ❖ Edmund (the independent boy addicted to Turkish Delight who betrayed the others)?
 - ❖ Peter (the brave warrior who killed the White Witch)?
 - ❖ Susan (the courageous big sister who struggled with believing in Narnia)?
8. What different opportunities do you see taking place with the movie's release?
9. What universal themes can everyone enjoy? What themes do people need to think about?
10. Why do you think people are ready to engage in the Narnia movie adventure?
11. Why do you want to see this movie?
12. What are you expecting from your movie experience?
13. How does the story of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* speak to you?

Post-viewing Discussion Questions for The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

(Adapted from *Further Up and Further In* by Bruce Edwards)

Finding What You're Not Looking For

1. What are the circumstances that cause the Pevensie children to end up in Professor Kirke's household? What is their initial reaction to being so far from home and their parents?
2. Think about the setting as you encounter Narnia for the first time. Who is in control in Narnia when Lucy first visits through the wardrobe? Why is it "always winter and never Christmas"? How is this symbolic of what is happening to the creatures who inhabit Narnia?
3. Why is Edmund so much different from his brother and sister? How would you describe his character?
4. Why are the children referred to as the "sons of Adam and daughters of Eve" by the inhabitants of Narnia? How does this factor into their personal peril and their role in saving Narnia?

Turkish Delights and Other Tempting Confections

1. What is the power of Turkish delight in Edmund's life? How does it captivate and enslave him? What is the Turkish delight in your life?
2. How would you describe the white witch? What kind of power does she yield? Why would Edmund, or anyone, fall prey to her cunning and sorcery?
3. When Peter and Susan bring Lucy's "odd behavior" to Professor Kirke, how does he respond? What are the professor's three options for explaining Lucy's behavior, and how does he lead Peter and Susan to the "logical" conclusion? What does he seem to think about their schooling?
4. Once in Narnia, how do the Pevensies find their bearings and learn whom to trust?

Hospitality Is as Hospitality Does

1. What's the difference between the ways the Beavers receive the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and the way the witch receives them?
2. What kinds of characteristics are attributed to Aslan by Mr. and Mrs. Beaver before he arrives on the scene in person? What anticipation do these descriptions create in the children? When he does arrive, what effect does his presence have?
3. Reflect especially on Mr. Beaver's comment that Aslan "is not safe, but he is good." What are the implications of this for the children and their evolving knowledge of what to expect in Narnia? What expectations does it create for you?
4. Think about the respective character development of Lucy and Edmund. Compare and contrast the differing reactions Edmund and Lucy have in their first trip into Narnia. How do you account for their different allegiances and behaviors?

Aslan on the Move

1. What is Father Christmas doing in Narnia? How does his coming affect the children and the other Narnians he greets?
2. How does the coming of Aslan affect Narnia itself, its landscapes and its inhabitants? Why is this ominous to the witch? How do you react to Aslan?
3. Imagine that you are each of the four Pevensie children. What would their journey look like after their first few hours in Narnia? Write several entries on behalf of each of the children, and explain how, with each unfolding episode, they would react.
4. How does Aslan prepare them for what must be done?

Deep Magic Is Never Enough

1. To justify her planned execution of Edmund, the white witch cites the “Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time.” What is the nature of this “Deep Magic”?
2. Why is Aslan bound to obey the dictates of the “Deep Magic”? Why does he rebuke Susan for suggesting that he might find a way around them?
3. Explain in your own words what the “Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time” is, and its thematic parallel to the story of Christ in the Gospels.
4. We know there are some obvious Christian parallels in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, including Aslan’s sacrificial death on behalf of Edmund and his resurrection from the dead. What are some other parallels at work in this first Chronicle?
5. Does the end of the story make you sad or glad? What makes it easy or difficult to take the journey to Narnia? After you have been there, is there a temptation to stay, or do you want to come back and share your experiences? Keeping in mind what the professor says at the end, with whom can you entrust these experiences?

