

The Life of C. S. Lewis

Fall Bible Conference

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I want to say something before I begin. Melissa is a true woman of dominion. I gave her this responsibility to fill out this little outline here, and I'm shocked that she was able to fit it in with such fine penmanship. Well done, Melissa. Thank you very much. And by the way, just to the deacons, this man, this church, might benefit from a copying machine, maybe to put that on the list of wishes for the upcoming year. I'm told that a very favorite preacher in these parts is Bill Hughes, and that when Bill Hughes comes, oftentimes for a Sunday school class, he will give a biography and therefore, I will be writing in the wake of Bill Hughes and providing a biography in the way that he provides, though I can't promise anything near the caliber of his teaching.

I, in the summer of '07, took with me to Clear Lake, Iowa, on my vacation three biographies. I'll do this often and then be able to feast on these during our two weeks at my father-in-law's cabin in Clear Lake while the kids are out on boats and jet skis and wave runners. I usually sit under a tree reading my books and one of the books that I read in the summer of '07 was a book entitled "Not a Tame Lion: The Legacy of C. S. Lewis" by Terry W. Glaspey. This is a book that's part of that "Leaders in Action" series. I really recommend having those books in your bookshop, really enjoyable reading, edited by George Grant, published by Cumberland House. I read through that book in the summer of '07, and during our devotions as the extended family gathered together, I pulled many a quote out of this book and drew biblical principles from this biography of Glaspey on the focus of C. S. Lewis.

His biography is divided into two major sections, Lewis Life and then Lewis Thought. I've actually done two lectures on this, only time this morning to focus in on C. S. Lewis Life. Hebrews 11:4 regarding Abel says, "Being dead, he yet speaks." And C. S. Lewis is a dead man but he yet speaks. In fact, he's spoken to some of you, hasn't he? Probably most commonly through "The Chronicles of Narnia." Anybody read anything? Put your hand up if you've read anything in "The Chronicles of Narnia." You did put your hand up, right? "The Chronicles of Narnia" are very common. You may have read "The Magician's Nephew; The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; The Horse and His Boy; Prince Caspian; The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; The Silver Chair; The Last Battle; and then some of you may have read "Mere Christianity." Anyone? Alright. Anyone read "The Great Divorce"? Alright. So you're quite familiar with C. S. Lewis.

C. S. Lewis was born in 1898 and he died in 1963 and, in fact, he died on the same day that John F. Kennedy was shot in 1963. Some may say, "Now wait a minute, Pastor Chanski, why are you focusing in on C. S. Lewis? C. S. Lewis didn't hold to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. In fact, there were some teachings that C. S. Lewis brought that are questionable. Makes us wonder if he was really fully orthodox in all areas." Well, I will say this, I don't know that any of us are fully orthodox in all areas, and regarding C. S. Lewis, I will say the best of men are but men at best. He did have theological aberrations and maybe if I had the second lecture, not his life but his thought, we could expand more on that but this hour I simply want to give you some highlight gleanings, the life of C. S. Lewis, and many of the things I say will be drawn directly from Glaspey and his book. Excellent read, by the way, Glaspey's biography of C. S. Lewis, "Not A Tame Lion."

Again, Melissa, I'm fascinated by your penmanship and your fine proportion in presenting these here. This is our itinerary for the hour. Consider with me firstly September 28, 1931. Jack Lewis at the age of 33 and then his brother Warren, along with Janie and Maureen Moore, traveled 40 miles to Whipsnade Zoo. The ladies drove in a car. The men drove on a motorcycle. Warren was holding the handles and Jack was in the sidecar. Do you see them there? There's a biting wind that was coming up against them. And as Lewis sat in the sidecar, his thoughts were dominated by this: who was Jesus Christ?

When they arrived at Whipsnade, they had a picnic on the grass. They spent the afternoon at the zoo. Warren complained that there were too few animals. The afternoon was highlighted by their meeting a bulky brown bear. Jack Lewis wanted to adopt the bear. In fact, later you might read in his novel about a big, bulky brown bear. I quote now, "To all appearance, it was a very ordinary day, a day like any other and yet it would be remembered as a most momentous day in the life of C. S. Lewis, for it was a day of decision." Lewis later wrote in his autobiography, now I quote from Lewis, "When we set out on that trip, I did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and when we reached the zoo, I did."

So that was a striking day, September 28, 1931 but we need to rewind a little bit to get to the beginnings of Lewis' life and that would be heritage. Clive Staples Lewis was born on a wintry day in Belfast, Ireland, November 29, 1898. He was the second child of Albert and Flora Lewis. Now Albert was a prosecuting solicitor in the Belfast police courts. And though he never achieved his dream of winning a seat in the House of Commons, he was well talented in debate and oratory. He was known for his honesty and for his great skill in giving anecdotes and tales.

So that's the pedigree then of C. S. Lewis, his heritage. We move on to a romantic temperament. As the slanting rain fell outside the windows of their Belfast home, Clive Lewis and his brother Warren, who was three years older than Clive, they were best friends, they passed many a long and wet day inside. Kids don't like, you guys don't like to spend time inside, do you? Well, miserable weather conditions and their mother's fear that her sons might get sick from being caught in a rain shower meant that these two boys

spent a disproportionate percentage of their youth indoors. You see, they had a henpecking, doting mother, Flora. With little or no entertainment but their imaginations, they set out to work with their pencils, their chalk, their paints, and their paper.

At age four, Clive decided he liked the name Jacksy better and so it stuck. Imagine Melissa, if you just woke up one day and said, I don't like Melissa, I want to be named Tiffany. In this case, it stuck. In fact, it was later shortened to be Jack, Jack Lewis.

Jack loves to read tales like Beatrix Potter. He was haunted by what he calls an unsatisfied desire, which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction and that desire for C. S. Lewis was the love of the mystical, the spiritual, the supernatural. He always had this conviction, even as a youngster, that there was a reality beyond the visible. He'd look out his second storey window and he would see houses and he would see hills but he knew that there was more to life than this. He knew that there was a realm, a dimension beyond the physical, the visible, the touchable. Please, yes, he's 311. He had eternity in his heart, something more that God has placed in him as image.

His father, Albert, was totally immersed in his job. Dad was cold and remote. I quote, "His father's emotional ups and downs taught Jack a distrust of emotions that would stay with him throughout his life."

In 1907, the family moved a short distance away to a place called Little Lea and there was a grand old house full of charm and mystery. I quote, "It was a huge sprawling edifice with an attic running nearly a full length of the house and tunnels running along the ridge tiles of the roof." Have you read "The Magician's Nephew"? Have you read it? Digory and Polly up in the attic? That's where this came from, his childhood. And this attic became a private place of refuge for the boys. Lewis' autobiography from it, I quote, "I am the product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles." And there he would read things like "Gulliver's Travels" and Milton's "Paradise Lost."

At age nine, his mom, Flora, became ill in 1908 and she experienced tiredness and headaches and a loss of appetite and the doctor diagnosed her with having abdominal cancer and she had surgery and things didn't go well for Mrs. Lewis. I quote now from C. S., "We lost her gradually. Withdrawn from our life into the hands of nurses and morphine, the house became full of strange smells and midnight noises and sinister whispered conversations." And if you've read "The Magician's Nephew," you know that Digory's mother became very, very ill in that story. At the end of that story, she was wonderfully cured, but that was only a story. In reality, Jack Lewis' mom did not live. She died when Jack was 10.

Lacking confidence he could raise Jack, father Albert determined to send him to a boarding school. Now I quote from Jack, "With my mother's death, all settled happiness disappeared from my life. There was sea and islands now. The great continent had sunk

like Atlantis." And his life was a water world of despair for the 10-year-old boy who lost his mom.

That leads us then, fourthly, to Wynyard and Cherbourg. "Wynyard boarding school was a nightmare," Warren writes, "with his uncanny flair for making the wrong decision, my father had given us helpless children into the hands of a madman," referring to the headmaster there at Wynyard. Within two weeks of mom's death, dad sent the two boys off to a new country, to a new school marked by cruelty and a lack of feeling, and dad never even bothered to visit the school to see if it was a good choice. Warren continues to say, "He would have recoiled at sights, the unsanitary facility with only one bathroom and a single wash basin for the entire student body." Robert Capron, a man who evidenced mental instability and caned the boys in public even for refusing inedible food, was the headmaster. His teaching method was dull. It was all rote memorization.

The boys begged their father for deliverance and eventually he transferred Jack to Cherbourg and shortly after Wynyard was then closed down. At Cherbourg, Lewis, like all young men, struggled with sexual thoughts and temptations and the attendant guilt. His method for overcoming this guilt was by a rejection of Christianity and its moral beliefs. You see, he was using, of course, the common traveled ploy of dealing with guilt by denying the reality. That often is the case. When people turn away from Christianity, it's not a cerebral problem, it's not a mental problem, it's not how someone says I don't believe in God anymore because they've come into some great new data or truth. It's typically a moral problem and the shrieking of the conscience somehow needs to be numbed so they don't have to deal with God anymore, Romans 1, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

Jack was a precocious but not peculiarly great student. He ranked in the lower half of his class where although he was quite gifted in literature and poetry, he was only mediocre in Greek and Latin and frankly, he was very poor in mathematics. So there's hope here. If you're 12 or 13 years old and you're poor in mathematics and you're not a genius, doesn't mean that you're going to become a nothing in life. Sometimes we have this idea that our kids have to be childhood prodigies if they are going to ever become anything. Don't be like that, parents. Oftentimes, boys in particular, are late bloomers. Lewis was one of those.

Much bullying went on at this boarding school. In fact, have you read "The Silver Chair"? Ah, remember, Jill and Eustace and all the bullying that took place at the boarding school? That's where this came from, over there at Cherbourg.

Disappointed with an atmosphere there at Cherbourg, Jack begged his father to let him study with William Kirkpatrick, that was his dad's personal tutor, and that leads us then to number five, learning to learn. William Kirkpatrick's nickname was "Old Knock." Old Knock greeted Jack at the railroad station. He was tall, muscular, a shabbily dressed gentleman with a mustache, sideburns, and a wrinkled face. On the way home from the railway station, Jack commented while riding along, "The scenery here is wilder than I'd expected." Ah, the crusty old knock shouted, "What do you mean by wildness? And on

what grounds did you expect it?" You see, Kirkpatrick was a rationalist, ever challenging false and unsubstantiated notions and though William Kirkpatrick gave Jack a bit of a rough edge that later needed sanding, he taught Jack to think and to learn how to teach himself. Now on the downside, William Kirkpatrick, "Old Knock," was a convinced atheist, bearing Lewis' appetite for the spiritual deeper, deeper down in suppression because the atheist doesn't want to have dealings with God. And Old Knock would say, "What evidence do you have that there is a God? Bah! No such thing as God." But at age 17, Jack picked up the Scottish writer George MacDonald. Have you ever heard of him? George MacDonald and his novel "Phantastes"? And Lewis devoured the book, and that reawakened within him the longing for the spiritual. There's something beyond the trees, the houses, and the hills. There's the mystical. There's the supernatural. We find that he knew that there was something beyond that which could be touched and seen. I quote now, "The young atheist, so confident in the world of materialism, that is, atoms, evolution, military service, could not suppress the longings that welled up in his heart and caused him to value things which his rationalism, that Old Knock had taught him, couldn't explain."

That leads us then to the woes of the war. In 1917, at the age of 18, Jack Lewis arrived at Oxford. He was awed by and he loved this new world full of intellectual challenge and history and the beauties of historic architecture, but his bliss was cut short when he was called into service to fight in World War I after only eight weeks at Oxford there. Lewis was made in the military a second lieutenant, an infantryman. And on the way the war was going, he had little hope of returning to England alive. He spent his one month leave prior to deployment in France with his Oxford roommate, Ed Moore. There, Jack spent time with Ed's family and came to love Ed's mother, Janey Moore, age 45, as his substitute mother. Flora had died about a decade earlier.

On Jack's 19th birthday, he arrived at the French battle trenches where death was only a frequent explosion away. Jack was soon wounded, two bits of shrapnel in the hands and one in his chest. Eventually, nearly all of Jack's battalion died. He was hospitalized in London where his father failed to appear to see him and check his wounds and comfort him. But Mrs. Janey Moore did come to visit him. You see, her son Ed had died at the front and Jack had promised that if anything happened to Ed on the battlefield that Jack would look after Ed's mother and for decades following, Jack would live with Mrs. Moore and her daughter, Maureen.

And that leads us to the trouble about God. Jack returned to Oxford and published his first book called "Spirits of Bondage." It's a compilation of poems. At this time, he wrote a friend, I quote, "I believe there is no God, last of all, that he would punish me for the lusts of the flesh but I do believe that I have a spirit." See, Romans 1, he's still suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. I say that's like when I'm having vacation with my kids and we've been playing with a volleyball and I'm in the pool and I put the volleyball under my feet and it's hard to be in eight feet of water and hold the volleyball under the feet. So what am I doing? I'm suppressing the volleyball. And that's what unrighteous men do who love their sin. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

"God? What God? Volleyball? What volleyball?" See, it takes a lot of energy to keep it down and suppress it. We find this is what Lewis was still doing at this time.

He soon moved out of his college lodgings and in with the Moores. Jack earned first class honors in Greek and Latin classics. He got better, didn't he? He was just mediocre earlier on. First honors in classical philosophy and English literature, but he had difficulty securing a teaching position and while searching, he lived near poverty. Only the financial assistance of his father kept him going. And finally, he secured a fellowship to teach English at Magdalen College in Oxford. And then he became a rumples professor at Oxford.

Lewis loved Oxford, especially the animated leisure conversations with other tutors and professors. He found a group who loved old Norse myths. That's where he met J. R. R. Tolkien. Anybody ever hear of Tolkien? Yeah, good friend of C. S. Lewis. They became friends and they had engaging fireside talks amidst smoke and drink, which later developed into a group called the "Inklings," a group meeting for mutual literary critiquing. In his spare time, Lewis wrote a book called "The Allegory of Love."

As a teacher, he was very impatient with students who failed to take their work seriously. He and his disciplined work ethic detested the wasting of time. Lewis read voraciously and his friends were amazed at his retention of what he had read. One student wrote, and I quote, "Given any line in 'Paradise Lost,' he could then continue on with the following lines by memory."

Lewis did not concern himself with fashion. He was a rumples professor, you know. He in his attire was a bit slovenly. Quote, "He wore an old battered tweed sports coat, well-worn shirt with a nondescript antique tie. He was ruddy of complexion, radiating health, of substantial girth all over and his eyes sparkled with mirth. He had an extraordinary knack for making a new suit look shabby the second time he wore it."

His lecture style was captivating. One observer wrote, quote, "Vivid images and portraits just tumbled out of him." Harry Blamires says that Lewis was the biggest draw as a lecturer there in Oxford in the 1930s. You'd have loved to have had Lewis as a professor.

That leads us then to the unholy muddle. Many can tell stories of powerful convulsive movements and experiences which led to a dramatic conversion. That wasn't the case with Lewis. Lewis' conversion came slowly over time and in several stages. Warren writes regarding Jack's conversion, "It was no sudden plunge into a new life, but rather a slow, steady convalescence from a deep-seated spiritual illness of long-standing."

Let me just pause to comment here. The Bible teaches that regeneration, the new birth, is instantaneous. It takes place at a moment in time. Ephesians 2 says you were dead in transgressions and sin and just like Lazarus is called up, "Lazarus, come out," he was made alive in Christ Jesus. New birth is instantaneous but as far as knowing the precise time of our new birth, that's not necessarily a knowledge that we have. I don't know the exact time which I myself was born again. In fact, when I first gave this lecture, this was

a day when a young lady about your age, Melissa, was being baptized in our church and part of her testimony was she didn't know exactly when she was saved. Makes me think of a comment that Pastor Albert N. Martin has brought on this theme. He talks about children who are raised in Christian nurture. You know, they weren't raised in a pagan home where they were drunkards and drug addicts and they had a dramatic conversion experience on a given day. Pastor Martin says the precise moment oftentimes for children raised in Christian nurture, the precise moment when Christian nurture becomes Christian nature is not always known. As it says in John 3 and verse 8 regarding the work of the Spirit of God, the wind blows where it may blow. The wind is not restricted to any one pattern, is it? And so the Spirit of God is not restricted to any one pattern when it comes to the regenerating of the soul. And so we should not uniformize the experience and say it has to be a certain way.

Lewis had little Christian nurture in upbringing beyond an empty formalism but Lewis always had a perception of spiritual realities. Even the idea of Romans 2, that we have this conscience bearing witness, our thoughts alternately accusing or defending us. He was made in the image of God. He had eternity in his heart. Owen Barfield convinced Lewis of the error of Kirkpatrick's realism and rationalism, which must conclude that, and I quote, "Thinking is simply the result of chemical interactions in the brain." Lewis became too smart for that. He was traveling up Headington Hill on the top floor of a bus when it came to him that he would have to make a decision about God. Theism or naturalism must explain the world. During the summer of 1929 at the age of 31, he knelt down in his bedroom and gave in to the truth that God was God but he didn't yet embrace the Jesus of the Gospels.

T. D. Weldon, a hard-headed skeptic, unbeliever of a professor, once commented on the strong evidence for the truthfulness of the gospels and a dying God, quote, Weldon said, "It almost looks as if it really happened once." This was unbeliever saying this and the fact that the unbeliever said that maybe the resurrection actually happened, that comment haunted Lewis as we think of even Psalm 76:10, the wrath of man shall praise thee. God is going to use even the comment of that Balaam's ass in the life of Lewis.

Lewis was troubled with the idea that Christ sacrificed himself because that just seemed absurd. Also, the idea of a dying God was a recurring theme in pagan myths. Why should we believe the gospels any more than the legends? Tolkien argued that the early pagan myths were God's expression of himself in the mind of the poets, that fragments of eternal truth were transmitted in a limited way as hints of God's plan. It's interesting how certain pagan myths do echo biblical truths and there are various reasons to explain this. Some say God injected in these pagan myths shadows of the gospel by injecting them into the culture. But there's another explanation. You think of how almost every culture has an explanation of creation and a great flood as the oral narrative would oftentimes begin to get foggy. But the basics are still there in almost every culture.

Tolkien said that Christ has died and risen again, and so must every sinner with him. Twelve days after this conversation with Tolkien, following the motorcycle trip to the Whipsnade Zoo, Lewis wrote to a friend that he had become a Christian and that leads us to the regress of an Oxford pilgrim. One of the first fruits of Jack's conversion was his

publishing of a book in 1933 at the age of 35 called "The Pilgrim's Regress," an allegorical apology for Christianity. It's a semi-autobiographical account of his philosophical journey patterned after John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Lewis depicts his spiritual or romantic longings as a voice that implored him, "Come beyond the hills, beyond the barns. Come, come further." He was searching for satisfaction. This reminds us of Augustine's "Confessions," where Augustine wrote, "Our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee." You see, he was looking for a resting place for his heart. The book depicts this quest in his search for a beautiful island. Here is planted Lewis' greatness. He matured into a writer who became able to explain great themes, not simply with logical arguments, but with powerful images. This is much like the prophetics of the old prophets of the Old Testament who spoke in metaphors and allegories, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the best teacher of all who spoke in many parables.

The 1940s produced his great trilogy: "The Problem of Pain: How an Evil World with a World War Can Ever Have an Omnipotent God"; the second was "Mere Christianity"; and the third of the trilogies was "Miracles." All these demonstrating the truth of the gospel. Lewis' academic peers sneered that he dared venture into philosophy, a discipline for which he had no formal training. Such an elitist environment, isn't it, those halls of academia?

We lead then to the voice of truth. In 1941, Jack was asked to give four live 15-minute radio broadcast lectures for the BBC and the broadcasts were entitled "Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe." And they were an immediate success. His rich voice, his earthy but educated tones communicated the same kind of enthusiasm for his subject that made him a popular Oxford lecturer. The bartender in a club full of soldiers turned up the radio for Lewis and shouted, "You listen to this bloke! He's really worth listening to!" And they did, for the entire 15 minutes. The initial success brought the additional broadcast series entitled "What Christians Believe, Christian Behavior, The Christian View of God," and eventually these lectures were gathered together and published in a book form under the now familiar title, what? "Mere Christianity." That's where the book came from.

Lewis also founded the Oxford Socratic Club, a debating society that pitted Christians against atheists in honest intellectual debate. Lewis demonstrated that Christianity could hold its own in the intellectual sphere and need not be purely defensive in its stance. He became the most visible public defender of the faith in the UK. In fact, did you know that Winston Churchill later actually offered Lewis a knighthood to become Sir C. S. Lewis? But he turned it down.

That leads us to number 12, a tour of duty. As World War II arose, Lewis was uncomfortable with the idea of doing nothing for the war effort while others fought and died. So his offer to instruct cadets, his way of serving, was declined. He didn't volunteer for duty with the Ministry of Information because he knew he'd be forced to lie in writing up propaganda literature. So he joined what's called the Oxford City Home Guard Battalion. It's a group of part-time soldiers whose job it was to repel German troops who might attempt to parachute in from the air by stealth. So every Saturday morning at 1:30 a.m. till dawn, he'd patrol dark Oxford with a rifle. He and the Moores, remember the

family, Mrs. Janey Moore and Maureen, her daughter, they lived together, he and the Moores also decided to open their home to children evacuated from London and other large cities vulnerable to the vicious night bombings by the Germans. So if you've read "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," the children come from London out into the country to the big house and there is an old rumped professor, guess who that was? Guess who the less than hospitable matron of the house was? That would be Janey Moore. And you see where these novels actually came from.

He loved the children who visited his home during the war. No doubt the Narnia tales stem from this period of a house full of young ones. You just contemplate how for generations these "Chronicles of Narnia" have been used for great good in the kingdom of God, how the Lord in the life of this boy who lost his mom at age 10 and all the catacombs of his life and how God used this. Romans 11 says, "Oh, the depth of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out." God is masterful in his historical and personal weavings, isn't he?

That leads us to number 13 here, Screwtape. It came to Lewis at church one morning in the autumn of 1942, and I quote now from Lewis, "Before the service was over, I was struck by an idea for a book, which I think would be both useful and entertaining. It would be called 'As one devil to another' and would consist of letters from an elderly retired devil to a young devil who had just started work on his first patient. The idea would be to give all the psychology of temptation from the other point of view, from the bad guys, from the enemy camp." Now, I recommend you pay attention to the sermon at church and don't write a book in your head at church like Lewis did, but God used that too. The writing came quickly. Thirty-one letters were written and sent to "The Guardian," which is a conservative newspaper. Lewis reveals brilliant insights about prayer, humility, the meaning of pleasure, obedience, gluttony, greed, love, lust, marriage, and liberal theology. In fact, a country pastor, a parson, wrote to the newspaper "The Guardian" Editor asking that his subscription be canceled because, and I quote, "Much of the advice given in these letters is not only erroneous, but positively diabolical." And Lewis said, "Well, isn't that the point?" It's interesting to be an author and have people respond to the writing.

Also now, the "Inklings." The "Inklings," this is a literary discussion group that formed. The tea was nice and strong, smoke from pipes drifted toward the ceiling, and Jack, who was leading the conversation, asked, "Well, has anybody got anything to read us?" Tolkien offered to read more of what he called "The New Hobbit," which was eventually published as "The Lord of the Rings." This was the ritual at the Thursday evening after dinner "Inklings" gathering, where discussion ranged from literary criticism to theological issues like whether dogs had souls. Attendees sought evaluations of their writings, and it was no mutual admiration society. Criticism was often brutally frank. Tolkien so disliked Lewis's "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" that Lewis considered abandoning the project. But another member of the "Inklings" defended Jack and encouraged its completion.

Just pause here. Praise God for the Barnabases among us, those who will bring, and the Barnabettes as well, those who will bring words of encouragement. "You can do this. This is a good thing." Let's resolve to be Barnabases to each other.

This leads us then to the humble apologist. In 1948, Jack debated an Oxford philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe. She attacked Lewis for his criticism of naturalism in the third chapter of "Miracles." Although Anscombe was herself a Christian, she felt that Lewis had tried to argue beyond where reason could posit. And for Lewis, the attack was devastating. Humbled by defeat, Lewis wrote, "I can never write another book like that sort." This was a turning point in Jack's career as an apologist for Christianity. He now turned his attention to the intuitive argument of a well-told story and for this, he saw himself best suited, in this way, he found that he could best communicate the Christian gospel. You see, a Barnabas encourages, but also, like it says in Psalm 141:5, let a righteous man, or in this case, woman, "Let a righteous man smite me in kindness and reprove me, swirl on my head. My head won't refuse it." And when someone gives criticism, we ought to take it, evaluate it, and go with it. And he did. He began to write narrative and story.

This leads us to, would you pronounce that for me, Melissa? Eucatastrophe. This is a word coined by J. R. Tolkien for a good catastrophe. The ultimate is the gospel story. It's a catastrophe, but it's a good one. In his space trilogy, "Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength," Lewis presented classic themes of Christian doctrine in a new and imaginative way. He believed that such writings could soften up hardened hearts to gospel truths. Commenting on his own surprise that few reviews recognized his trilogy's allusions to biblical themes, Lewis writes, "He will be both grieved and amazed to hear that out of about 60 reviews, only two showed any knowledge that my idea of the fall of the bent one was anything but an invention of my own. Any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under the cover of romance without their knowing it." So was the intellectual climate of England in those days. In our day, too, as Bible knowledge has almost been erased from the hard drives of people.

By repackaging the Christian story, Lewis attempted to awaken a longing for God by providing fresh images of the divine, such as the landlord in "Pilgrim's Regress," and the most powerful Aslan in "The Chronicles of Narnia." And that's why I think Christian filmmakers and Christian writers in the 21st century can learn a lot from Lewis. There are these media through which we can smuggle in, bring in the gospel. Maybe some of the young people could be used by God as writers and film producers, who knows? It's like a coffee shop, stealth approach of brewing into our culture.

This leads us then to "Narnia." Lewis wrote to one of his readers, I quote regarding "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe," "A number of mothers and still more schoolmistresses have decided that it is likely to frighten children. So it is not selling very well. But the real children like it, and I am astonished how some very young ones seem to actually understand it." Although the key elements of Christian theology are in "The Chronicles," you've got creation and temptation, the fall, death, judgment, redemption, heaven, Lewis did not want his readers to feel they were reading a work of veiled

theology. Instead, he saw the goal of the Narnian tales as that of preparing his reader for the gospel.

That's interesting because your daughter-in-law, Sherry, after I gave this lecture, came to me downstairs in the church kitchen and said, "You know, Pastor Chanski, I read 'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe' two weeks before somebody brought the gospel to me and I was converted down in Florida." So this was for Sherry, preparation for the gospel, the very thing that Lewis had hoped for.

Biographer and longtime friend wrote, "His idea, as he once explained it to me, was to make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life. He hoped that they would be vaguely reminded of the somewhat similar stories that they had read and enjoyed years before. 'I am aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination,' wrote Lewis." Lewis aimed to awaken the reader's longing for God.

A pupil of C. S. Lewis wrote, "The figure of Aslan tells us more about Lewis' understanding of God than anything else he wrote. It has all his hidden power and majesty and awesomeness, which Lewis associated with God, but also his glory and tenderness, which he believed belonged to him so that children could run up to him and throw their arms around him and kiss him." And so it is with the living God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That leads us to member by letter. Every day brought to Jack a stack of mail. It was a daunting task to correspond with people who had been touched by his books and reached out to him as a long-distance spiritual mentor. Many sought counsel regarding deep spiritual problems. One woman wrote to him seeking marital advice regarding her husband's infidelity and Jack viewed such correspondence as a part of the location to which God had called him, sort of a pastor by correspondence. There's an entire volume of compiled correspondence to youngsters entitled "Letters to Children," which I haven't read, but I think it would be fascinating.

It leads us to 19, to Cambridge. Janey Moore, Ed's mom, Ed died in World War I. Janey Moore had now aged and her condition was not good. Her outbursts of anger ran off maids that Jack would hire. And again we think of "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" and that matron of the house who caused the children to shudder and hide sometimes. In the spring of 1950, Jack had to put her in a nursing home. He visited her nearly every day, although she had become so senile as to verbally abuse and be childishly petulant. You think of what it says in James 1:27. This is pure and undefiled religion, someone who looked after orphans and widows in their distress. We can have all kinds of theology and we can quote Calvin and Owen and Boice, and we may have great theology, but do we really have true religion that would be humble and patient and cultivate and look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep ourselves from being polluted by the world? Lewis seemed to have had something of the real deal. He was convinced that his visits eased her misery. She died of influenza in 1951 at the age of 79.

Jack now felt a new liberation. His health improved. In 1954, he accepted an English chair at Cambridge University and he found the academic air of Cambridge much fresher and more Christian than the hard-boiled Oxford.

20. Surprised by Joy. Jack met Joy Davidman Gresham at an Eastgate hotel in Oxford. Her witty letters from the United States had charmed him. She and her first husband had been communists. When her life and marriage crumbled around her, she found herself on her knees praying. She began attending church and eventually started reading Lewis. She actually moved to England with her sons, David and Douglas Gresham, have you heard of those names, where they took up residence in London and saw Jack occasionally. During one visit, Jack showed the boys the transcript of "The Horse and His Boy" and let them know that he planned on dedicating this book to them. You find it right there, "To Douglas and David Gresham."

In 1955, she and her sons actually moved to Oxford, which leads to sickness and health. In early 1956, when Joy's passport ran out, the only way she could stay in England was to marry an Englishman. Did she know an Englishman? Well, she desperately wanted to remain in Britain and raise her boys there, so Jack decided he would marry her in a civil ceremony. He was 58, she was 41. It would be purely a formal arrangement for the purpose of allowing her to maintain residence in England. It would be kept a secret. Sayer writes, he was not in love with her. It would not be a real marriage. Let me comment again: the best of men are but men at best.

Not long afterwards, Joy developed cancer. Jack spent much time helping her and the boys in her illness, which gave her difficulty in walking. And it was there that love blossomed and on Christmas Eve of 1956 in the hospital room, Jack married the dying woman, Joy.

Which leads us to happiness and Joy. She didn't die. They actually enjoyed three years of married life together. Jack had spent long hours in prayer. Joy's pain diminished, and by April of 1957, she was up and around and Jack thought it an intriguing thing that he had developed osteoporosis in his bones, just when Joy's bones were being replenished. He alluded to this, God's letting him bear Joy's pain. The days of married life were filled with much happiness of a kind that had eluded Jack all his adult life and now in his 60s, he was enjoying what had passed him by in his 20s. In late 1959, Joy returned for her final routine checkup, and it was told that the cancer had returned. Jack wrote, and I quote, "It is like being recaptured by the giant when you have passed by every gate and are almost out of the sight of his castle." And she died on July 11, 1960.

And finally, we come to a grief observed. Jack struggled to deal with Joy's death and recorded his feelings in a book called "A Grief Observed." A Job-like honesty made the book very helpful to sufferers. Lewis published it under the pseudonym N. W. Clerk. You see, it wasn't "A Grief Observed" by C. S. Lewis. It was "A Grief Observed" by a pretend name, N. W. Clerk. He wanted to be anonymous in writing it. Lewis was known to send it on to people who had lost a loved one with a note that it was written by someone he knew.

After Joy's death, Lewis' health itself began to deteriorate, and he died November 22, 1963, the same day that JFK was assassinated. And his funeral was attended by a few close friends, one of whom wrote about having seen Jack a week before he died, and I quote, "I somehow felt it was the last time we should meet and when he escorted me with his usual courtesy to the door, I think he felt also that it would be the last time we would never, ever meet. Never, in my mind," the writer says, "was a man ever better prepared to die." And so we can say, just in conclusion, 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, not only to me, but also to those who have longed for his appearing." The best of men are the men at best, hell-deserving sinners who need a Savior, and apparently the Lion of the Tribe of Judah had become Lewis' Savior.

So I hope in some way this has been helpful to you, to look at Lewis, though dead he yet speaks.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank you for this man. We thank you that you birthed him, and that you formed him, and that you purged him and polished him. We thank you that you used him for our good. We ask that we would be given wisdom to sift out the truth from the error, and may it be that we would be wise and true to serpents and innocent as doves as we breathe. We pray that we too would come to know and embrace and kiss the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.