

# CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE LAMP POST



A Study Guide to  
*The Chronicles of Narnia*  
for Personal or Group Discussion and Reflection

Edited by Rickey Letson



SMYTH &  
HELWYS

# CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE LAMP POST

---

## COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

**Daniel Vestal**

*Coordinator*

**Bo Prosser**

*Coordinator for Congregational Life*

**Rick Bennett**

*Associate Coordinator for  
Congregational Life*

## SMYTH & HELWYS

**David Cassady**

*Publisher & Executive Vice-President*

**Lex Horton**

*Vice President, Production*

**Darrell Pursiful**

*Editorial*

**Leslie Andres**

*Editorial Associate*

**Vickie Frayne**

**Dave Jones**

*Graphic Design*

**Rickey Letson**

*Editor*

**David Brooks**

**Tim Gilbert**

**Rickey Letson**

**Michael McCullar**

**Carol McEntyre**

**Alicia Davis Porterfield**

**Eric Porterfield**

**John Weaver**

*Session Writers*

---

©2006 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 800.352.8741, P.O. Box 450329 Atlanta, GA 31145-0329. All rights reserved.

This study guide is offered as a free resource through a partnership between the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Smyth & Helwys Publishing. Permission is granted to make digital or print copies of this resource as needed for non-commercial use.

*The Chronicles of Namia*, by C.S. Lewis is published by HarperCollins, 10 East 53 Street, New York, NY 10022.

CONVERSATIONS  
AROUND THE  
LAMP POST

A Study Guide to  
*The Chronicles of Narnia*  
for Personal or Group Discussion and Reflection

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<i>Preface</i> .....	5
<i>About the Writers</i> .....	6
<i>Introduction</i> .....	7
<i>Reader's Note</i> .....	8
<i>A Guide to</i> The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.....	9
<i>A Guide to</i> Prince Caspian .....	18
<i>A Guide to</i> The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' .....	26
<i>A Guide to</i> The Silver Chair .....	37
<i>A Guide to</i> The Horse and His Boy.....	51
<i>A Guide to</i> The Magician's Nephew.....	63
<i>A Guide to</i> The Last Battle .....	75

## PREFACE

---

Welcome to the wonderful world of Narnia. C. S. Lewis has given us a wonderful adventure of imagination and faith. There is much to be gleaned from these stories.

This study guide is a gift to you from Smyth & Helwys and the Congregational Life initiative of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. We didn't want Hollywood to be the only voice you hear! We wanted you also to hear the voices of Baptist leaders who have gleaned nuggets of truth from this work. These study guides are not meant to be definitive analyses. Instead, the writers point you in the direction of meaning. Our hope is to enhance your study and let you decide how God may be speaking to you.

Many of us have been fans of *The Chronicles of Narnia* for many years. Others of us have read this long ago and moved on to other writings. Still others of us are encountering Narnia for the first time without having read a page! This is a journey that you all can enjoy as you share your insights together. Perhaps this is a journey that will bring you to a closer relationship with God.

Enjoy this study. Learn from one another. Listen for the whisper of God. These are not just tales of fantasy; there is an abiding faith story woven throughout. Read the *Chronicles*, see the movie, and study together. You'll grow in wisdom and in faith; you'll grow closer to one another and to God. Perhaps, this is what C. S. Lewis had in mind!

### **Bo Prosser**

Coordinator for Congregational Life

### **David Cassady**

Publisher, Smyth & Helwys

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

---

### ***Editor***

Rev. Rickey Letson, Minister to Adults, Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Georgia

### ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***

Dr. Michael McCullar, Executive Pastor, Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Georgia

### ***Prince Caspian***

Rev. Carol McEntyre, Minister to University Students, First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee

### ***The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'***

Rev. Rickey Letson, Minister to Adults, Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Georgia

### ***The Silver Chair***

Rev. Eric Porterfield, Senior Minister, First Baptist Church, Sanford, North Carolina  
Rev. Alicia Davis Porterfield, Chaplain, Quail Haven Village, Pinehurst, North Carolina

### ***The Horse and His Boy***

Rev. David Brooks, Associate Pastor, Zebulon Baptist Church, Zebulon, North Carolina

### ***The Magician's Nephew***

Dr. Tim Gilbert, Chair, Business and Social Sciences Division, Tarrant County College, Hurst, Texas

### ***The Last Battle***

John Weaver, retired from Bellsouth, Sunday school teacher, adult ministries leader, Immanuel Baptist Church, Paducah, Kentucky

# INTRODUCTION

---

Stories are a powerful medium to communicate the Christian message. Jesus himself used this method extensively as he went about the Judean countryside sharing parables as a way of illustrating life in the kingdom of God. Throughout the centuries, from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to Walter Wangerin's *Book of the Dun Cow*, storytelling has continued to be a valuable means for shedding light on that which can seem like looking "through a glass darkly."

Among the most beloved stories that provide allusions to the life of faith are C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. On the one hand, these seven stories are a delight to read for the sheer enjoyment found in traipsing through Narnia. At the same time, they are also extremely insightful in the connections they make to the spiritual life. It is not surprising that their multiple layers of meaning and rich texture have rendered them favorites with readers for decades.

One must be careful, however, when entering the world of Narnia. C. S. Lewis made it quite clear that the books were not to be understood as straight Christian allegory. Instead, Lewis said that Narnia was a supposal. In other words, suppose there was a world like Narnia that actually existed and that was in need of redemption as is our own world. How would God go about doing it? The seven *Chronicles* form Lewis's answer to that question and in so doing, introduce us to a world through which we can quickly find many parallels to our own world worth pondering, savoring, and discussing.

The intention and hope of these lessons are to offer some type of framework and guidance as individuals or groups journey through Narnia. The possibilities for using this resource are limitless. A Sunday school class series, Narnia book club, one-day seminar, discipleship group, movie discussion, or personal study are just a few of the ways these lessons can be helpful.

We hope these lessons provide a starting place for interacting with these wonderfully rich and ageless tales. Enjoy—and long live Aslan!

***Rickey Letson***  
**Advent 2005**

## READER'S NOTE

---

*The Chronicles of Narnia* are ordered in different ways by modern publishers. Some choose to order the books in the sequence C. S. Lewis originally released them. This method numbers the books this way: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader,'* *The Silver Chair*, *The Horse and His Boy*, *The Magician's Nephew*, and *The Last Battle*.

Others have chosen to arrange the books as they occur chronologically in Narnia. This approach suggests the books be read this way: *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*, and *The Last Battle*.

For our study, we have chosen to use the original order, which parallels the release dates of the books.

# A Guide to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

by Michael McCullar

## Synopsis

---

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the best known of *The Chronicles of Narnia* written by C. S. Lewis in the 1950s. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* begins in England during the Second World War as the Germans are bombing London. The four Pevensie children are sent to the countryside by their mother to escape the dangers of war and are taken in by an eccentric professor who lives on a vast estate, complete with a large, rambling house. While playing a game of hide and seek, the youngest, Lucy, hides inside an old wardrobe that is housed in an otherwise empty room. As she steps deeper into the wardrobe, coats give way to snowy branches, and she steps into a new land named Narnia. In her first foray into Narnia, she meets Mr. Tumnus, a Faun who purports to be a friend but who secretly serves Jadis the White Witch. Very soon the realities of Narnia become clear as we see the evil grip of the White Witch who decrees it to always be winter but never Christmas. Mr. Tumnus decides he will not betray his new friend; rather he will help her return home and betray the White Witch.

An ancient prophecy tells of the day that four human children will enter Narnia and begin the war that will rest control from the White Witch, ultimately saving Narnia from evil. After Lucy returns to England through the wardrobe, she tells her siblings of the new land,

but no one believes her. Later her brother Edmund, a moody malcontent, accidentally discovers Narnia for himself, only to meet up with the White Witch who entices him with sweet candy and hot drink. He is bewitched by his own selfishness and recruited to deliver his brother and sisters over to the dark side. While promised a royal role with subordinate roles for his siblings, the real intent of the witch is to kill the children to quell the prophecy and remain in power.

Later as all four Pevensie children enter Narnia, the unlikely quest to save Narnia begins with a little help from a bird and two talking beavers. Mr. Beaver tells the children that the White Witch has arrested Mr. Tumnus for high treason and he is imprisoned in the ice castle. The Beaver then tells the children of the only hope for the Faun and Narnia, Aslan the Lion, the ultimate power of good who created Narnia. Still under the spell of the White Witch, Edmund deserts his siblings and seeks the witch. He still thinks he will be rewarded, but his selfish error will carry a huge price for all in Narnia.

What follows is a classic story of good versus evil that contains Christian symbolism throughout. Aslan gives himself up to save the life of Edmund, while Peter, the oldest brother, leads an inferior army against the bloodthirsty hordes led by the White Witch. Aslan is brought back to life according to the prophecy that the just who give up their life for another will be resurrected. With the power of his resurrection, Aslan returns to defeat the evil control of the White Witch. Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy take the thrones of the new Narnia and peace reigns once again.

## Christian Symbolism in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

---

### THE TRINITY

It is quite easy to see the characteristics of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit in Aslan the Lion. In the prequel to *The Lion,*

*the Witch and the Wardrobe, The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan spoke Narnia into existence. He breathed life into the animals and gave them speech with his breath. He also breathed new life to those turned into icy stone by the White Witch. We also see Aslan as transcendent, well beyond time and space. He enters and leaves at his own will; he is ageless, and is seen as both terrible and good. By terrible it seems Aslan was frighteningly powerful, much as we see God in the Old Testament. This isn't an insult to God, merely a recognition of his awesome and absolute power. Aslan was not seen as a tame lion (and he certainly was battle ready), but above all, he was good and just. As the narrator explains, "People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now"

One can also see Jesus in Aslan's substitutionary death to atone for Edmund's treachery. Aslan must walk the final distance alone at night. He must face the ridicule and mockery of those who serve evil. He hears the White Witch say he is dying for no one and that evil would win and rule Narnia forever. But, just as with Jesus, Aslan's death is not final. We also see the resurrection of Aslan in glory and power, and it's hard to miss the point of his saying "It is finished" as he slays the White Witch.

## SELF-INDULGENT NATURE OF SIN

Scripture teaches that each person is born into a life of rebellion, or sin, against God, and this rebellion defines much of humankind's existence. Early on, God gave people a say in the matter by providing choice. This ability to choose presents a constant struggle—one in which the battlefield is mostly within each individual. Sin is at its very root a form of self-indulgence. This very human malady can be easily seen in Edmund, the Pevensie child who is never at peace. . After accidentally entering Narnia, Edmund encounters the White Witch, the evil power behind Narnia's perpetual winter. She is threatened by human children because the ancient prophecy says that four children will one day free Narnia from her grip. Her only hope is to draw the children into her lair and kill them, and with Edmund she has a perfect foil. Unaware of the White Witch's true intentions, he sells out for the promise of a kingship and a few bites of Turkish

Delight. The Witch appeals to Edmund's self-indulgent nature with the simplest of rewards—and all of Narnia pays a price for his weakness. The New Testament frequently describes the selfish nature of sin and the fleeting rewards found in the rebellion. Lewis was fond of the term “moral health” to define the level of rebellion and self-indulgence in one's life. Both the New Testament and this book teach that it takes a power greater than ourselves to overcome the daily presence, power, and penalty of sin.

## BETRAYAL

The theme of betrayal is central to most morality plays in history, and it is truly central to this story. Edmund's weaknesses and moral frailties assist him in the eventual betrayal of his siblings, and for what gain? Turkish Delight! When the White Witch informs the imprisoned Faun Tumnus that Edmund betrayed them all for sweeties, she is declaring how easy it is to prey on a person's weakness for gain. Was Edmund simply bewitched? Did he really know what he was doing? Surely he loved his brother and sisters more than sweet candy, warm drink, and the hope for a future lofty position. No, he most likely did not know the true gravity of his indulgence. Even though he was new to Narnia and knew nothing of the prophecy or of the White Witch, his ignorance does not matter in the slightest. Edmund was at the crossroads of decision and made his choices based on innate weakness and self-indulgence rather than on moral thought. He caved to his selfish side and took the easiest, sweetest road possible. It was Edmund first and second, and all else were relegated to the long queue. This was the birth of betrayal, and its life was played out as he later traveled to the White Witch and told her where to find his siblings. The New Testament also deals with betrayal; even there it matters little what the base intents were. Peter was at one moment ready to die for Christ and soon after betrayed him three times. Did Judas really turn on Jesus, or did he believe he was actually helping him? It doesn't matter because betrayal is unalienable, and once it is done, it is done. Intent doesn't change the act. Betrayal almost always comes with a heavy price.

## FORGIVENESS

The themes of forgiveness resonate throughout the latter portions of this book. After Edmund realizes all the damage he has done and realizes he will soon die (for such little gain), he is rescued by Aslan's soldiers. Upon arising, Peter, Susan, and Lucy see Edmund standing on an outcropping of rock speaking with Aslan. They return to where the other siblings stand, and Aslan instructs them to speak no more of the past and what Edmund has done. It is apparent that Aslan has forgiven Edmund of his weakness, self-indulgence and the resulting treachery, and that the other Pevensie children must as well. There is no additional penalty to be paid for his transgressions. The powerful Aslan has provided for forgiveness, and he is the model to be followed. The New Testament also provides a model of forgiveness in the teachings and actions of Jesus. He was willing to forgive both those who sinned without knowing the extent of their transgressions and, those who sinned with a full awareness of their actions. Forgiveness is portrayed as being universal and permanent and open to each and every person. In Scripture, one cannot work to gain God's forgiveness; it is simply given by grace. Plus, this grace-based-forgiveness is to be shared. Once it is provided to an individual by God it must also be applied in that person's dealings with others. Thus Aslan provided Edmund with grace, and the same was required of Peter, Susan, and Lucy. Forgiveness is a gift that isn't earned, but when given, must also be given away.

## REDEMPTION THROUGH SACRIFICE

Edmund's betrayal of his siblings and subsequently all of Narnia held grave consequences. Succumbing to the White Witch to the point of seeking her out upon his return bound him to the dark side of her magic that ruled Narnia. At the very least, one life would be required and who knew how many other lives would be eventually lost due to his betrayal. The embedded magic that the White Witch served required that the life of the traitor must be taken upon the great stone table. In an act of great sacrifice, Aslan negotiated with the White Witch to give himself up for the traitorous Edmund. It is easy to see the symbolic similarities of the Passion elements of Christ and the sacrificial death of Aslan, but readers must use caution at this point. A

direct correlation is difficult to make as Christ's sacrifice was for all people, and in this story Aslan died for only Edmund. Since Lewis stated that one shouldn't strive to find strict allegory, we should be fine with the subtle symbolism here and rejoice in the power of love and sacrifice. Just as a new Christian is redeemed and justified through the sacrifice of Jesus, Edmund became a new person due to the atoning act of Aslan. Any traces of the former Edmund vanish and we see him later given the title of "King Edmund The Just." The New Testament also teaches that redeemed lives also hold promise for greater living. Thanks to the redemptive act of Jesus we too can reach our kingdom potential.

## RESURRECTION

It's hard to miss the beauty of Aslan's resurrection glory as Susan and Lucy are walking away disheartened. The ancient prophecy read correctly allowed for the death of an innocent in the place of the guilty, and in Aslan we see the ultimate innocent. Just as with Christ who knew no sin, Aslan sacrificed himself, realizing he would return. The stone table upon which Aslan was killed was broken with a great upheaval and moments later the newly resurrected Aslan is framed with glorious light as he stands between the two pillars. To accentuate the newness of resurrection, Aslan's mane is restored and he is returned to his former regal state. Jesus too was made whole again in his resurrection, but in his case it was a spiritual wholeness. His post resurrection form was a spiritual body that exhibited a new level of glory and majesty. However, while it's easy to get wrapped up in the elements of new forms and bodies, the true power of the resurrection was the defeat of death and sin. Lewis was greatly influenced by Sister Penelope, an Anglican nun who wrote *Windows on Jerusalem: A Study in the Mystery of Redemption* (London: The Pax House, 1941) 52. Sister Penelope described the idea of "ransom" found in Hebrews and Romans as the price one pays for another's freedom. She saw Christ opening himself up on the cross to the "whole flood of the world's evil," yet holding on and remaining himself. She concludes with, "Before the Cross, the Enemy, who had thought to gain all, stands at last weaponless and empty-handed." This view sums up evil in this world and in the imaginary land of C. S. Lewis's Narnia.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

---

**1. Contrast the “never ending winter” in Narnia enforced by the White Witch with our world of evil and sin.**

*The contrast would be humankind’s sin condition that separates from God, also seen as darkness in the New Testament.*

**2. In what ways does the White Witch fit into our theology of Satan or the Devil?**

*She stands in direct opposition to the person and character of Aslan. She also personifies all the negatives and evils of Narnia.*

**3. Cite characteristics of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit found in Aslan, the Lion of Narnia.**

*Aslan is seen as supreme in power, scope and example. His breath alone holds power. He is widely worshiped and anticipated. He came back to life and defeated the White Witch.*

**4. In what ways do Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie contribute to order and peace in Narnia?**

*In mostly unintentional ways, as they slowly evolve into the “saviors” of Narnia as the ancient prophecy predicted.*

**5. Contrast the betrayal by Edmund with the Christian theology of sin.**

*Sin is seen as “missing the mark” set by God and also as selfishness in contrast to selflessness. Edmund gave in to his selfish appetites.*

**6. In what ways does the White Witch use Edmund’s selfishness to her advantage?**

*She played to his weaknesses to advance her nefarious goals.*

**7. What can we learn from Aslan's forgiveness of Edmund's treachery?**

*Grace is merciful as Edmund owned up to his failures, was forgiven, and given a place of honor. His siblings were told to forgive him as well. This defines grace as found in the New Testament.*

**8. Contrast Aslan's sacrificial death and resurrection with the passion events of Jesus.**

*The allegory and symbolism are strict. Aslan paid the price for a traitor. Jesus paid the price for all traitors. It took both death and resurrection in both cases.*

**9. In what ways are Aslan's statement, "It is finished," similar theologically to the same words uttered by Jesus on the cross?**

*Evil's grasp and total power needed to be broken in both cases by a Godly act of power, love and grace.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with Children

---

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is first and foremost a children's book. C. S. Lewis was a fan of the classic fantasy writings for children, and his initial work on the Narnia series was heavily influenced by his early reading. Add to this his expertise in Christian theology and you have an incredibly rich and thorough series that is, at the very least, both child-friendly and filled with Christian symbolism. So as you spend time with your children discussing this book, try to allow the story to be the main focus. Most children aren't yet savvy to abstract ideas like allegory and symbolism. To them it's simply a great story. They will, however, be open to discussing Aslan's power and majesty and similarities to God. The "Edmund issues" of selfishness, anger, and weakness could also be teachable moments for children. Plus, Edmund's willingness to turn against his family for something as simple as candy is a life-lesson for any age. If the child is old enough, you may wish to explain how Aslan's coming back to life is the same thing Jesus did for each of us.

At the very least *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is a simple tale of great good versus awful evil. Inside this morality play is a fabulous story complete with battles, talking animals, a wicked witch, fantastic characters, adventurous children, and a kingly lion. It is best to not over-theologize the book or movie. Allow the story to be simply what it is, provide children opportunity to express their thoughts and understandings, and go from there.

# A Guide to *Prince Caspian*

*by Carol McEntyre*

## Synopsis

---

Hundreds of years have passed in Narnia since High King Peter ruled from Cair Paravel. Yet, in England only a year has gone by since Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie stumbled out of the wardrobe and back into the land of “Spare Oom.” While waiting for the trains that will take them back to boarding school, the children are once again drawn back to Narnia by some magical force. Upon returning, they discover that everything has changed.

After murdering King Caspian the Ninth, conniving King Miraz now rules Narnia. The true king, Prince Caspian, has gathered a small army of Old Narnians, those who lived in the land when the trees walked and the animals talked. The children soon learn that the magical force that brought them back to Narnia was the sound of Queen Susan’s magic horn. Prince Caspian sounded the horn in hopes that King Peter, King Edmund, Queen Susan, Queen Lucy and maybe even Aslan would come to his aid.

The children set out with the help of Trumpkin, the dwarf, to find Aslan’s Howl, the mound where Aslan was once sacrificed on the stone table. On the way, they discover that Aslan is once again “on the move.” Lucy is the first to see Aslan, but Peter and Susan refuse to believe her. Their unbelief leads them straight into the arrows of Miraz’s army. But guided by Lucy’s faith in Aslan, they are eventually able to follow the Lion to Aslan’s Howl. With each step in the right

direction, Aslan becomes more visible to the other children and to Trumpkin until each of them is able to see the Lion.

When the children arrive at Aslan's Howl, they discover that doubt and fear have taken hold of the Old Narnians. The dwarf Nikabrik urges Prince Caspian to call on the evil powers, which were used by the White Witch to defeat Miraz. However, before disaster strikes, Peter challenges Miraz to single combat and inspires the Old Narnians to once again face the enemy. Once Miraz is defeated by Peter, Miraz power-hungry generals Glozelle and Sopespian mount an attack against the Old Narnians. Yet, the battle is barely underway, when the Telmarine warriors flee in terror at the sight of walking trees headed their way. With the help of Aslan, and the Kings and Queens of old, the battle is won!

The Telmarines who were loyal to Miraz are then given the opportunity to stay in Narnia or to move through a magical doorway, created by Aslan, to another land. King Caspian takes his place as the true ruler of Narnia. The Giants, Dwarfs, Fauns, Talking Beasts and Walking Trees are once again at peace in the land, and the Pevensie children say good bye to their beloved Aslan and return to England.

## Christian Symbolism in *Prince Caspian*

---

### ASLAN AS GUIDE

In the *Chronicles*, Aslan's followers are often called upon to face battles and take dangerous voyages. In those instances, Aslan is frequently depicted as the one who guides them to safety. In *Prince Caspian*, the children find themselves lost in the woods on the way to Aslan's Howl. They have already encountered a hungry bear, and they know that Miraz's warriors are searching the woods for the Old Narnians. At their moment of peril, Aslan appears to Lucy and leads the children to safety. Although Christians today might not be asked to make a journey to Aslan's Howl, we too face battles and dangerous voyages. We endure hardships like cancer, divorce, or the loss of a loved one.

Yet, Jesus promises us that he will not leave us orphaned, but will send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit to care for us. As Aslan guided the Pevensie children, Christ guides us through the Holy Spirit. The Comforter offers help in the form of a still small voice, the embrace of a concerned friend, or the coincidence that could not have happened just by chance. Although Christ guides through life's obstacles, we have to be willing to follow. This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life illustrated in *Prince Caspian*: we are utterly dependant on God and at the same time responsible for our own life. Aslan guides the children to the battle, but he does not fight it for them. Like the Pevensie children, sometimes we have to confront the danger of the woods, but God assures us that we are not alone.

## TRUST

Of all the Pevensie children, Edmund's character changes the most throughout the *Chronicles*. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he is seen as sullen, selfish, and dishonest. Now a year later, in *Prince Caspian*, the extent of Edmund's spiritual healing becomes evident. When Lucy tells her siblings that she has seen Aslan, Peter and Susan refuse to believe her. Edmund on the other hand says:

When we discovered Narnia a year ago...it was Lucy who discovered it first and none of us would believe her. I was the worst of the lot, I know. Yet she was right, after all. Wouldn't it be fair to believe her this time?

Edmund begins to trust, believing in what he cannot see. Later in the story, the children heed Lucy's advice and begin following Aslan, even though Lucy is still the only one who can see him. Soon, Edmund is able to see Aslan as well. Throughout Scripture, God calls his followers to trust in what they cannot see. God asks Abram to move from Haran to a "land I will show you." Without knowing the outcome, God tells Moses to go back to Egypt, where he is wanted for murder, and demand that Pharaoh let the Hebrew people go. Spiritual growth comes when we are able to step out on faith and trust God to lead us. Can you trust God enough to act, even before you see the evidence that it will work? Although filled with doubt, the Pevensie children eventually trust Lucy enough to follow her and are rewarded when

each of them is able to see Aslan again. Do you have that kind of faith?

## RIGHTEOUSNESS

The mouse Reepicheep makes his first appearance in *Prince Caspian*. He is a valiant mouse who appears before Prince Caspian, ready for battle. When Dr. Cornelius suggests that someone must make the arduous journey to Cair Parvel to see if King Peter has arrived, Reepicheep is the first to volunteer. Reepicheep represents someone of noble character, someone who is righteous and worthy of admiration. He is a mouse, and Caspian struggles not to laugh when Reepicheep volunteers for the army. But Reepicheep proves anyone can find a place to serve. C. S. Lewis once said, “Anyone in our world who devotes his whole life to seeking Heaven will be like Reepicheep” (David C. Downing, *Into the Wardrobe* [Hoboken NJ: Jossey Bass, 2005] 47). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be blessed. Simply put, righteousness means right living or virtuousness. In our culture where anything goes, right living is not necessarily looked upon with much admiration. But C. S. Lewis thought it valuable and created Reepicheep to embody all the characteristics of a life of integrity. Although our inclination toward sin keeps us from living perfectly, it is possible with God’s help to live a life of integrity: to be honest in one’s business dealings, to be loyal to one’s family, and to be a devoted follower of Jesus. We can become like Reepicheep and thus, more like Christ would have us to be.

## CHILDLIKE FAITH

Throughout the *Chronicles*, Lucy, the youngest of the Pevensie children, is depicted as being close to Aslan. She is the first to discover Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and in *Prince Caspian* she is the one who sees the lion again for the first time. Lucy has the kind of childlike faith that Scripture admonishes each of us to strive toward. Jesus told his disciples that unless they became like little children, they would never enter the kingdom of heaven. When Aslan appears to Lucy in the woods, she does not approach him cautiously. She does not stop to consider if he is a friendly lion or not. She runs

to him. Lewis writes, “She felt her heart would burst if she waited a moment.” Lucy embraces Aslan, and kisses him. Her devotion to Aslan is unrivaled—she loves him and showers him with affection. Is it possible for us to show this kind of devotion to God? Lucy reminds us that sometimes we need to throw caution to the wind and simply love God. As adults, we can be jaded and overly cautious with our hearts, but when we come to Jesus like little children, we find a loving father ready to heal our brokenness and mend our hearts. Let us follow Lucy’s example and be wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus. Lucy also reminds us our relationship with God is a two-way street. James 4:8 says, “Draw near God and He will draw near to you.” Aslan chooses to reveal himself to Lucy first and not to the other children, yet from the beginning she is the one who is quick to believe and trust in him. When we come to God with a childlike faith, we find God is also moving toward us. In addition to Lucy, Prince Caspian also exhibits a childlike faith. When Caspian’s nurse tells him about Old Narnia, he embraces the stories. Even after Miraz warns him not to utter another word about talking beasts and the great Lion, Caspian continues to believe. Caspian expresses faith, while Miraz is filled with disbelief and anger. Miraz refuses to believe in Aslan and tells Caspian that lions do not exist. He is calloused and selfish; it is as if he is incapable of believing in Aslan. If Miraz were to admit that the Lion existed, he would be forced to confront his sinful nature. By pretending Aslan is not real, Miraz can go on being king of his life. We too ignore God’s promptings, preferring to do what we want instead of what God would have us to do. Miraz reminds us of the need to confess our selfishness and submit to God’s authority.

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection\*

---

- 1. Peter and Susan have a difficult time seeing Aslan when he appears. Do you have to believe in God before you can see God?**

*It does seem easier to see where God is working in the world when you believe in God and are looking for His handiwork. For example, many Christians see the reflection of God's glory in the mountains, trees, and birds. Some Christians find it hard to believe that someone could look at nature and not believe in God. Yet, people enjoy nature all the time without considering the Creator behind it.*

- 2. Why is Lucy able to see Aslan when the other children and Trumpkin cannot?**

*Lucy is depicted as someone who has tremendous faith. Aslan probably revealed himself to Lucy first because she is looking for him.*

- 3. How does Trumpkin reflect the Christian image of a “doubting Thomas”?**

*Like Thomas, Trumpkin refuses to believe in Aslan until he has seen him with his own eyes.*

- 4. Describe a time when God asked you to trust His leading even before you saw evidence that His plan would work out.**

*For example, when God called me to go to seminary, my husband and I moved a thousand miles from home without having found jobs in our new town.*

- 5. Does God grow “bigger” in your mind the longer you know Jesus?**

*As children, we believe that God is like a parent. If we are good, God rewards us and if we misbehave, God punishes us. As we grow older, we*

*realize that God is not that simple. The more we know about God, the more mysterious God seems.*

**6. How can Reepicheep inspire each of us to make a contribution to the kingdom of God in the world?**

*When we feel like we have nothing to contribute, Reepicheep reminds us that everyone has worth in the kingdom of God. Whether you work behind the scenes as a volunteer at a soup kitchen or you are the pastor of a mega church, your work is important.*

**7. How does Christ offer us real help when we face trials?**

*Sometimes we assume that Jesus only provides emotional support in times of trial. However, God also sends help in the form of an unexpected pay raise, just as one's old car breaks down.*

**8. What does childlike faith look like?**

*Children have fewer emotional barriers than adults. They are more trusting and open to others. Those with childlike faith would be more willing to surrender their lives to God's will, because they trust God wholeheartedly and are less afraid of being hurt.*

**9. In what way have you tried to be king of your own life as Miraz did?**

*Most of the time, Christians know what God wants them to do in a given situation, but pride, greed, or selfishness keeps them from being obedient to God.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *Prince Caspian* with Children

---

*Prince Caspian* is a wonderful story of courage and belief. Children are sure to be taken in by the images of the talking bear, Bugley, and Trumpkin the dwarf. As you talk with children about *Prince Caspian*, remember how in his letter to Timothy, Paul urged him not to allow people to look down on him because of his youth. Children can be leaders. Reepicheep is a mouse, but he contributes to the battle against Miraz. Although he is small, Reepicheep rushes to fight the Telmarines; many a soldier hopped on one foot that day because of Reepicheep's sword. Remind children that even though they are young, they can still set an example for others with their behavior and attitude. They can be kind to the child in their class everyone else picks on. They can have a good attitude on the baseball field and show good sportsmanship even when their team loses. *Prince Caspian* also reminds us that children can be devoted to God in their own way. Lucy is the youngest of the Pevensie children, yet she is also the one who seems to be closest to Aslan. Although children usually cannot grasp metaphors, you can talk about how much Lucy loves Aslan. And you can talk to your children about what it means to love Jesus.

# A Guide to *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*

by Rickey Letson

## Synopsis

---

*The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* is the third work released by C. S. Lewis in his beloved *Chronicles* series. First published in 1952, the book is also the second of the Prince Caspian trilogy along with *Prince Caspian* and *The Silver Chair*. The story introduces us to Eustace Clarence Stubb, a cousin of the Pevensies. Edmund and Lucy have come to stay for a time at the Stubb residence while their parents and older sister, Susan, are on a trip to America. It is while at the Stubb home that Edmund and Lucy return with Eustace to Narnia through a picture in Lucy's bedroom.

Once in Narnia, the three children instantly find themselves treading water from which they are rescued by the crew members of the ship *Dawn Treader*. On board, Edmund and Lucy are reunited with their old friend Caspian whom they had helped ascend to the Narnian throne on a previous visit to the magical land. Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace learn that Caspian and his crew have embarked on an epic voyage to search for Seven Lords who once ruled Narnia with his father. Caspian's father was deposed by the evil Miraz who is also Caspian's uncle. As a way of ridding himself of the Seven Lords as well, Miraz sent them off to explore the Eastern Seas beyond the Lone Islands. The seven were never heard from again.

When Caspian became king, he swore to Aslan that once peace had been restored to Narnia, he would set sail for a year and a day to either find his father's friends or to learn of and avenge their deaths. The Seven Lords were Lord Revilian, Lord Bern, Lord Argoz, Lord Mavramorn, Lord Octesian, Lord Restimar, and Lord Rhoop.

Over the course of the adventure, Caspian, the crew and the three children make numerous stops among the Lone Islands. In their travels, they overthrow the evil Gumpas, who is governor of the Islands, encounter dragons, visit a land where dreams come true, battle a sea monster, and learn the fate of the Seven Lords they are seeking.

Among the most significant aspects of the story is the transformation of Eustace. As the novel opens, Eustace is hard to get along with, self centered, and cantankerous. When the *Dawn Treader* visits a mountainous island after running low on fresh water, Eustace wanders off from the rest of crew and comes face to face with a real, fire-breathing dragon. After falling asleep in the Dragon's lair, Eustace awakens to find that he has been transformed into a dragon too. Eustace's rebirth as a human being also signals a significant rebirth in his outlook on life, attitude, and personality.

The story begins to draw to a close with the visit of the *Dawn Treader* to the island known as the World's End. There the group discovers the three final Lords locked in a type of eternal sleep while seated at an elaborate banquet feast called Aslan's Table. Ramandu, a mysterious figure who lives on the island, explains that the spell the lords are under can only be broken if members of Caspian's crew sail to the World's End, or as near the end as possible, and there leave a least one member of the company behind.

Thus, the final leg of the journey begins with a remnant of the crew sailing to the edge of the World. There they leave behind the bravest member of the crew, the mouse named Reepicheep, one of the most intriguing characters of the book. It is at the end of the World, as well, that Aslan informs Edmund and Lucy that they will not be returning to Narnia.

A reluctant Caspian does return to Narnia to continue his reign as king. Caspian does not return alone, however, as Ramandu's daughter will become his wife.

Aslan appears throughout the voyage. As in the other *Chronicles*, his ways and appearances are mysterious and unpredictable. Yet, his guidance for and support of those on the side of good is constant and overwhelming.

## Christian Symbolism in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*

---

### JOURNEY

Faith is not meant to be static. Rather, as Jesus with the disciples, the call of faith is the invitation of our Lord to "follow me." In other words, being a believer means embarking with Jesus on an epic journey. Not every day means an encounter with a fabulous new land or exciting new opportunity, but, along the way, those who are receptive and open to the Holy Spirit's movement will certainly encounter places, people, and experiences that they would have never experienced on their own.

At its very core, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* is a journey just as the title suggests. Movement, discovery, uncharted territories, and unexpected figures and experiences litter almost every page of the tale. Caspian gave himself over to the trip of a lifetime, and, as a result he and his companions did things that they never would have done otherwise. Certainly there were troubling aspects and uneasy moments along the way, but in the end the voyage was worth the temporary setbacks and difficult occasions.

We live in a day where folks are often reluctant to give themselves over to the journey that Caspian and his shipmates embarked upon. In terms of the current Christian culture, comfortable surroundings with

little change are often preferred to setting sail on an unpredictable adventure. Yet, if you read the New Testament carefully, what you find are ancient mariners, much like Caspian, ready to sail to the ends of the earth as they followed the calling that had seized their lives.

It is significant to point out that *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* is also the account of small journeys within a larger journey. The overarching journey is the trip to discover the whereabouts of the Seven Lords. Within this trip are smaller personal journeys: There is the journey of Eustace to gain a true picture of himself and be transformed. There is Reepicheep's journey to finally fulfill a prophecy that has haunted him since his childhood. And, there are the travels of Caspian as he comes to understand what it means to be king.

There are always journeys within the journey. The path of following Christ abounds with side roads that lead to meaningful relationships, occasions for participation in social change, and the chance to discover deep truths. Needless to say, such side roads are always amazing journeys in and of themselves.

## CONVERSION/TRANSFORMATION

As previously mentioned, one of the most moving aspects of the story is the change within Eustace. As the book opens, the very first line of the story describes this cousin of the Pevensies in a rather interesting way, "There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it." From the very outset, the reader is meant to understand that Eustace has problems to overcome. As the story unfolds, we understand that Eustace is arrogant, hard to get along with, pessimistic, and uncooperative. Some readers get the feeling that there is little hope for the boy.

In Narnia, though, all things are possible. In Eustace's case the transformation comes as he reaches the dragon's lair and becomes a dragon himself. In a scene very reminiscent of Paul's own conversion in Acts, when the scales begin to fall off of Eustace's body as he is changed back into a boy, it is as if the scales also fall from his eyes and he at last sees himself for what he truly is. At that very moment, Eustace's behavior and outlook on life begin to change completely.

Two things are worth noting here. First, what happens in Eustace's life is the same opportunity that God offers to each of us. No matter how bad or reprehensible our lives might be, through the power of God, we too can be changed just as completely and as mysteriously as Eustace was. This is not to suggest, however, that we do not have a role to play in the change. After all, Eustace had to choose to live in the light of what happened to him in the Dragon's cave. But, it is to suggest that there are and can be the life changing encounters in our lives with God in which our lives are forever transformed. Often times, we walk away from those moments never to be the same again.

Second, the change in Eustace sheds significant light on the reality of what can happen when we come face to face with our true selves. One could easily say that Eustace really wasn't transformed into a dragon. Rather, for the first time in his life, Eustace came to understand that he had been a dragon all along. When he made this discovery, he came to the recognition that he never wanted to act in such a way again. Parallels to Paul once again come to mind. When the Risen Christ meets Saul on the Damascus Road, Saul is brought face to face with his real self: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" For the very first time, Saul recognizes that he is not honoring God by persecuting those who claimed Jesus was the Son of God. Rather, Saul faces the reality that he is persecuting followers of the true, resurrected Lord. This truth of who he really is changes Saul and his life forever.

Likewise, transformation often begins in our lives when we meet our true selves. Be it through the words of a friend, reading the Scripture, or an unexpected encounter with God, meeting our real selves face to face is often overwhelming. Many times, we, like Eustace and Paul, don't like at all what we see. Because of the revelation, we are overwhelmed by the real need to change ourselves and our lives.

## RESPONSIBILITY

If you are not careful, you can breeze through the concluding chapter of *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* while missing one of the more pivotal and meaningful moments in the story. As the crew reaches the World's End, King Caspian decides that he will join Reepicheep in sail-

ing on and that he will not return to Narnia and to the throne. What ensues is a scene in which the entire crew and Aslan help Caspian to understand that this plan is not a possibility. He is the king of Narnia. Even if he wants to go further and extend the adventures, he cannot. It is his responsibility to return to the throne and continue his reign as king.

All of us, like King Caspian, reach moments in our lives when we want to shirk our responsibilities. Whether the pressure has grown too intense at the office, life at home has become unbearable, or the call of Christ and the Church have simply become too demanding and we are ready to check out, all of us know such moments and feelings. The call of the Scriptures echoes the call of the crew of the *Dawn Treader*; true character is found when we are willing to persevere and remain faithful even in the face of those difficult occasions when we are ready to throw up our hands and run as fast as we can in the opposite direction (Philippians 3:12-14).

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection\*

- 1. Do you think adults would have likely noticed the changes in the picture of the sailing ship? Or is this something that only children like Lucy, Edmund, and Eustace would have noticed?**

*Many would say no. Adults often fail to exhibit imagination, unreserved faith, and limitless boundaries that are so important to Narnia and quite a part of childhood. But, one could argue from the other perspective as well.*

- 2. How did you feel about the reason for King Caspian's voyage? Was this a noble reason for such a journey in your opinion?**

*It says a lot about Caspian's respect and love for his father that he would want to make such a voyage. It also shows his own personal bent toward adventure. It does, however, seem like a long time to be away from home, especially when you are the king.*

- 3. Of all the islands that are visited in the story, which is your favorite? Why?**

*Answers will vary.*

- 4. Were you surprised by the change that takes place in Eustace? Why do you think C.S. Lewis chose to a dragon for Eustace's transformation?**

*Certainly one could argue from either perspective here. On the one hand, Eustace certainly seems hard hearted and hateful in the early chapters of the novel and gives no indication of a willingness to change. On the other hand, the very fact that Eustace was summoned to Narnia may be seen as a tip-off that change was on the way. After all, who can forget what happened to Edmund in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe?*

*Dragons certainly personify evil and seem to be only a given to exist in a world such as Narnia.*

**5. What attributes would you ascribe to Reepicheep? Was he your favorite member of the *Dawn Treader* crew or did someone else stand out in your mind? If so, why?**

*Without a doubt, Reepicheep's admirable courage, daring, and undaunted confidence in himself despite his size make him a favorite. Numerous other characters will certainly strike chords with different readers, though.*

**6. What is the meaning of Aslan's Table?**

*In some ways, the Table reminds one of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in which "a table is prepared." It is certainly also a symbol of rest and refreshment for these lords who gave their life to fight on the side of good.*

**7. Describe Ramandu. What mysterious characteristics does he possess?**

*Among others Ramandu is said to be a star and he ages backward rather than forward. In other words, as he grows older, he actually gets younger.*

**8. Why do you think the spell placed on the three lords could only be broken if a member of the crew was left to sail onward?**

*In a sense, it is yet another way of signaling that the virtues of courage and faith are needed to overcome evil.*

**9. Were you surprised by King Caspian's desire not to return to Narnia? What do you think was behind this wish?**

*Caspian's plan certainly does seem unbecoming of a king. At the same time, it shows his humanity and again illustrates the value he places on adventure and conquering the unknown.*

**10. At the end, we are told that Edmund and Lucy will not be returning to Narnia as they are getting too old. Why do you think Narnia is only accessible by human children?**

*One of the things that all of the Narnia books seem to do is connect real faith with characteristics indicative of childhood. This seems a very biblical idea. After all, it was Jesus himself who said that one must "become as a child" in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* with Children

---

When discussing the *Chronicles* with children, one must be careful not to make too many metaphorical leaps or to try to analyze symbols too deeply. At the same time, one certainly does not want to miss the opportunity to make the connection between faith and this wonderful work of fantasy. Thankfully, all three major themes already discussed should be easily understood by children. Here are a few more thoughts on adapting the discussion for such occasions.

### JOURNEY

Parallel Caspian's journey with a trip you and your children have been on. Where did Caspian go? What did he learn? What unexpected things happened along the way? Likewise, where did you go on your memorable trip? How long were you gone? What types of things did you learn?

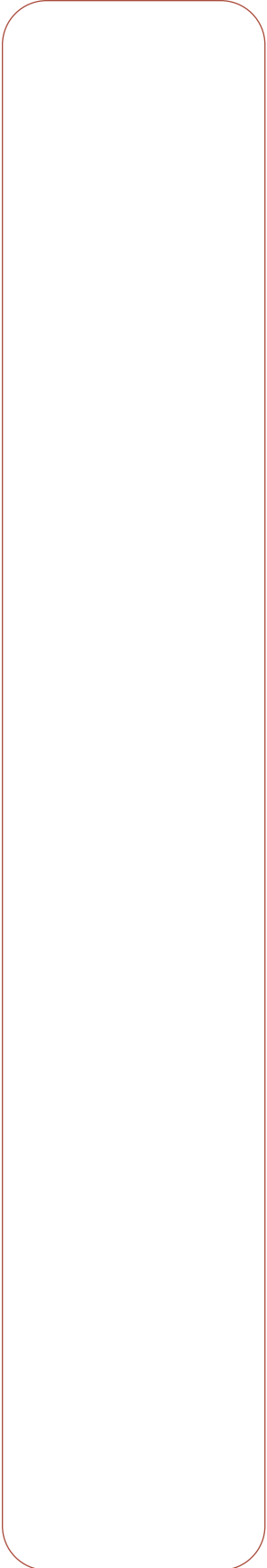
Discuss with your child the fact that Jesus invites us to go on a trip with him, too. We are called to follow Jesus as his children. That means that throughout our lives, Jesus will lead us to amazing places and teach us important things. Being a Christian is not about standing still. It is about moving, going, and doing just as Caspian did on his trip.

### CHANGE

Ask children if they thought Eustace would change. Did they like the scene with the dragon? Why do they feel Eustace decided to act better after that event? Following Jesus means that he wants us to change as we do what he asks of us and what the Bible tells us to do. Like Eustace, when we realize we are acting like an evil dragon, we need to realize that God expects us to act and live differently.

### RESPONSIBILITY

Ask your children what they think Caspian's responsibilities were as king. Was he thinking of his responsibilities when he wanted to travel



on with Reepicheep rather than go home? What kind of responsibilities do they have at home? What kind of responsibilities do they have as God's children? Do they think their parents and God expect them to remember their responsibilities and to live accordingly?

# A Guide to *The Silver Chair*

by Eric and Alicia Porterfield

## Synopsis

---

Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb share a regrettable characteristic: they are both targets of school bullies. But Scrubb knows of a world far from the bullies' power. As the bullies approach, Jill and Scrubb cry out to Aslan and find themselves in the presence of the great Lion. So begins *The Silver Chair*, a story of friendship, trust, and the triumph of good over evil.

Jill and Scrubb think they have invited themselves into Narnia but soon learn they have been summoned for a specific task. Aslan gives Jill their instructions: find King Caspian's missing son, Prince Rilian, and bring him home. Aslan gives Jill four signs to guide them: 1) Eustace will meet an old friend when he sets foot in Narnia. If he greets that friend at once they will have good help on their quest. 2) They must journey to the north of Narnia until they come to the ruined city of the ancient giants. 3) In that ruined city they must find a message on a stone and do what the writing tells them. 4) The first person they meet who asks them to do something in Aslan's name will be the lost Prince.

They miss the first sign when Scrubb fails to recognize King Caspian, whom he knew in the previous Narnia story, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader.'* Consequently, Jill and Scrubb miss out on Caspian's help. But help comes from other sources. Glimfeather the owl befriends them and invites them to a "parliament of owls." Though the owls choose

not to accompany them on their journey north, they know someone who will. The owls take them to Puddleglum the Marshwiggle, a creature with webbed feet, long, skinny legs, and a penchant for seeing the worst in every situation. Puddleglum proves to be an indispensable member of the team, providing uncommon guidance and wisdom.

On one occasion Jill and Scrubb reject Puddleglum's advice, with disastrous consequences. Told by the "Lady of the Green Kirtle" that the giants of Harfang will provide them hospitality, the children ignore Puddleglum's warnings, forget their quest, and focus instead on warm beds and good food. Aslan does not forget them however, and appears to Jill in a dream to get them back on track. Jill soon realizes that she and her friends are the main course for the giants' feast and leads their escape.

Their escape leads them to the Underworld, fulfilling the third sign, the writing on the ruined city, "Under Me." They soon discover Prince Rilian, who has been enchanted by the Lady of the Green Kirtle (Queen of the Underworld). Rilian does not know his true identity and blindly follows the Queen except for one hour each night. In that hour, he knows who he is, so the Queen ties him to a silver chair until the hour passes.

The travelers free Rilian from the chair, breaking the spell. Then they kill the Queen when she takes the form of a serpent. As the Underworld falls apart, Scrubb, Puddleglum, and Prince Rilian escape the destruction, and soon find their way back to Narnia.

With their quest complete and calling fulfilled, Jill and Scrubb find themselves back in school; only this time, Aslan comes too. He stays long enough to end the reign of the bullies and transform the life of the school, just as Jill and Scrubb have helped transform life in Narnia.

## Christian Symbolism in *The Silver Chair*

---

### THE LIVING WATER

Soon after Jill arrives on Aslan's mountain, she finds herself face to face with the Lion. She is thirsty and the only thing standing between her and a stream is Aslan. She is thirsty *and* afraid. What will the Lion do to her? After a long wait Aslan says, "If you're thirsty, you may drink." Jill doesn't trust him. She says, "Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I do come?" Aslan replies, "I make no promise." Jill drinks, and her thirst is satisfied, but Aslan does something extraordinary to Jill. He calls her to a quest, the completion of which will change her forever. Above all, Aslan calls her to trust his love and guidance.

Human beings were created with a thirst for our Creator. As Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Yet we try to satisfy our thirst without reference to the One who offers us Living Water. Perhaps we share Jill's fear. We know that if we drink, God will "do" something to us. Our fears are well-founded, for with the Living Water comes the call to service and trust. Jill's question at the stream reflects our wish that God would satisfy our thirst on our own terms. Her trust in Aslan in fulfilling her task challenges us to drink deeply from the Living Water Jesus offers *and* embrace all that God wants to "do" in us, for us, and through us in the process.

### THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

At the beginning of the book, Jill, feeling isolated and afraid, weeps alone behind the school gym, the victim of bullying. Eustace Scrubb, another solitary figure, intrudes upon her solitude. But he understands her pain—he, too, is an outsider, often bullied by this same group. He "sensibly" offers her a peppermint to ease her tears and an alliance of sorts is formed as they bond through shared suffering and the shared secret of his experience of another world. Jill wonders for a moment if he is pulling her leg about this Narnia talk. But she chooses to trust him and soon they find themselves together trusting the name of

Aslan enough to call upon him, thus beginning their wondrous journey. In the same vein as Ruth and Naomi, the two outsiders risk trusting one another—and Aslan—tasting the blessings of true community.

Later, this community expands as Jill and Scrubb meet others who will help them on the quest. Again, the risk of trust is involved as they take the owl Glimfeather’s advice to refrain from telling Trumpkin about their quest and then rely on the Owl Parliament’s advice to turn to an unknown Marshwiggle for help. Puddleglum, the Marshwiggle, becomes an integral part of the community, willing to trust Glimfeather and the name of Aslan enough to join these children on their quest. Interestingly, Puddleglum is a bit of an outsider himself within the Marshwiggle community because of his “bobance and bounce and high spirits.” The three outsiders are forced to learn to work together and trust one another with their very lives, as well as to trust Aslan. In the end, their bonds of community and trust are so strong that they are willing to die in their attempts to carry out their quest, echoing the dedication of Christ himself, the disciples, and martyrs throughout Christian history.

Further, it should be noted that Prince Rilian cannot free himself, but must rely on Aslan and specifically the community—brothers and sisters whom he has never even met. Once they have freed him from the Queen’s spell, the travelers must work together to escape the Underworld. In a telling moment, Rilian is tempted to explore the Land of Bism that lies beneath the Underworld, to explore a new world as his father did. But he hesitates when Puddleglum reminds him of the need to see his father; in that hesitation, the chasm leading to Bism closes. The call of community and the bonds of family seem to be stronger than the appeal of adventure and personal glory.

## THE UNDERWORLD

The idea of an Underworld is prevalent throughout mythology, with perhaps the most familiar tale being the Greek story of Orpheus and his failed quest to rescue his wife Eurydice from Hades. Lewis scholar David C. Downing notes that early Christians embraced these stories as “true myths, universal stories that point to genuine spiritual truths,”

believing that Jesus descended to the Underworld between his death and resurrection (*Into the Wardrobe* [Hoboken NJ: Jossey Bass, 2005] 52) as evidenced in the words of the Apostle's Creed, "he descended into hell." Lewis seems to rely more on the mythological images of a vast, dark Underworld rather than Miltonian images of a fiery hell in *The Silver Chair*. In Lewis's story, silent Underworld, animals and people can accidentally fall into the dark land or be forced there, trapped until the end of time, but it does not appear to be somewhere one goes after death.

Further, rather than being ruled by Satan himself, this Underworld is ruled by a beautiful Queen, who is part serpent, an archetypal figure known as a "lamia" (Downing, 52-53). The serpent imagery clearly echoes the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who used his own form of logic and charm to encourage Adam and Eve to turn from God. The Queen is determined to take over Narnia by surprise, emerging from underground with her army of Earthmen, aided by her captive, Prince Rilian. Notably, even the Earthmen are captives, unwilling slaves and soldiers, stolen from their home underneath the Underworld, the Land of Bism, an exciting world of vibrant colors and growing jewels. In contrast, the Queen's Underworld is a reality all her own, with no reminders of Aslan, or light, colors, or sun—even the Earthmen's torch lights are not true light, described as "gray with a little blue in it." But the Queen forgets that there are many ways Aslan can descend into her world, namely through the brave faithfulness of his followers, however small and weak they may seem.

## THE SEDUCTIVENESS OF SIN AND EVIL

When Jill, Scrubb, and Puddleglum meet the Green Lady, she is all beauty and charm. Even her horse is "so lovely that you wanted to kiss its nose and give it a lump of sugar all at the same time." She wears a "dazzling green" dress, a symbol of her serpent alter-ego, and speaks in a "voice as sweet as the sweetest bird's song." After their arduous journey across the wastelands of the north, the children are delighted to see such an enchanting stranger and reveal to her they are looking for the ruined city of the giants. Jill almost reveals all about their quest, but Puddleglum, by nature more suspicious than the

children, stops her, making clear he does not trust the lovely lady and her silent knight. The embodiment of evil, the Green Lady presents herself in all things appealing, echoing the age-old idea of the seductiveness of evil. From addictions to adultery, evil rarely reveals its ugly serpent-side until after the enchanting side has successfully captured its prey. After all, if evil had no enchanting appeal, it could attract no prey.

Later, when they are trying to escape the Underworld, the Queen, though initially very angry, tries to seduce them into staying. She throws magic powder on the fire to cloud their thinking and begins to play a mandolin of sorts whose thrumming music deepens their enchanted state. She employs her lovely voice to gently and charmingly try to convince them that her reality is the only reality. Jill resists enough to remember Aslan, but it is Puddleglum who endures the pain of a burned foot to smother the fire and break the Queen's spell. It is only then that the Queen's serpent side emerges and she actively tries to kill them. Until then, they were being killed with kindness, as it were.

### OUR PARTICIPATION/COMPLICITY WITH EVIL

The Lady appears to have the travelers' well being in mind when she sends them to Harfang, instructing them to tell the giants she has sent to them "two fair Southern children for the Autumn Feast." Her double entendre is not realized until the travelers discover the giants' recipes for man-pie and the unappealing marshwiggle. But before they even arrive at Harfang, the destructiveness of the Queen's advice begins to show as Jill and Scrubb are only able to focus on the promised comforts of Harfang's warm beds and delicious food. So distracted, they ignore their surroundings and silence Puddleglum's observations that the landscape resembles a ruined city, thus missing the second sign. When Puddleglum asks Jill about the signs, she disguises her frustration with her own forgetting by lashing out at him. Ironically, as they hurry on, the children are rushing toward their own destruction, forgetting everything else in the process.

The silver chair itself can represent our complicity with evil. Under the Queen's enchantment, Prince Rilian becomes his own worst enemy, participating fully in his own imprisonment underground. Rilian claims the Queen has saved him from an evil enchantment and is protecting him in her underground kingdom. Ironically, she has told him that *he* is the one who turns into a serpent and must be restrained nightly in the handsomely crafted silver chair during his hour of insanity and metamorphosis. In reality, that hour is the one time he remembers who he is. During that hour of sanity, the horror of his captivity is made all the worse by his knowledge that some part of him voluntarily participates with her evil plan. His tale parallels an addict's cycles between denial and realization of his true problem. We are reminded of the Apostle Paul's description in Romans 7:15, "for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

## THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Even in the midst of human complicity with evil and the darkness of the Underground, Aslan is still at work, though largely unseen. Though ten years have passed since Rilian's disappearance Aslan has not forgotten him and provides for his escape. Like the Israelites, Rilian might have cried "How long, O Lord?" (Psalm 13). Yet also like the Israelites, he is eventually able to return home because Aslan has heard his cry and responds. The Queen may have crafted an Underworld all her own, but still, Aslan finds a way to send his blessings in the deep, recalling the words of Psalm 139, "if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there."

Even though the children seem to miss all the signs, Aslan finds ways to help them on their journey. With the first sign, Scrubb is supposed to speak to an old and dear friend in Narnia and then will have "good help." But he doesn't recognize his old friend King Caspian and misses the sign. Yet in a sense, perhaps Aslan provides "another way" when Scrubb sees another "old and dear friend" in Jill and they receive "good help" from one another. Then when they don't recognize the ruined city, Aslan comes to Jill in a dream to reveal the writing "UNDER ME." Though she can't remember the dream upon waking, Jill and the others simply have to look out her perfectly placed

window to see the words. Later, when chased by the giants, Puddleglum just happens to jump into a hole that leads them to the Underworld. When it is time to escape the Underworld, the Earthman Golg shows them the way to the Queen's final digging just under the soil of Narnia. In each instance, Aslan was at work, never foiled by the travelers' mistakes and sins or by the Queen's machinations. They were never on the quest alone; Aslan was with them every step of the way, working to bring the quest to fruition.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion\*

### 1. What might the scene where Jill admits to Aslan the reason Scrubb fell from the cliff tell us about confession and forgiveness?

*Jill is reluctant and a bit evasive when answering Aslan's questions, but he is so direct that she finally has to admit that she was showing off at the edge of the cliff. He is direct and stern (but not angry) and accepts her confession graciously, simply saying, "That is a very good answer, Human Child. Do so no more." This answer echoes Jesus' admonition to "Go and sin no more." In the midst of our reluctance to admit our sins, God is willing and ready to hear us, willing and ready to forgive and encourage us to turn away from repeating our sins. God takes our sins seriously and invites us to take His grace seriously, too.*

### 2. What might Aslan mean when he tells Jill that he called her and Scrubb to Narnia, not the other way around?

*Aslan tells Jill that they would not have been calling to him if he had not been calling them first, echoing John 15: 16 where Jesus says "You did not choose me but I chose you." This is another reminder of God's providence and prevenient grace. We may think we are in charge or that we direct our own spiritual lives. Yet God is always calling to us, shaping us in ways we cannot always see. Before we know what we need or want, God is reaching out to us, knowing us far better than we do ourselves.*

### 3. What can we learn from Aslan's instruction to Jill, "Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia"?

*In the "mountaintop" experiences of our lives, we may sense God's nearness and hear God speaking to us quite clearly. But in the valleys and plains of daily living, we may find it harder to hear God or sense the Spirit's movement. Other things distract us from God, from work to family life to the busyness of our technologically driven lives. Yet, just as Aslan came to Jill in a dream, God can come to us in unexpected ways, reminding us of the presence of the One who is always closer than we think.*

#### **4. How does Puddleglum's negative outlook affect the children and shape their behavior?**

*In addition to giving the book some humorous turns, Puddleglum's negativity seems to spur the children to think more positively. This is especially true about his prediction of the inevitability of fighting among themselves on the journey. When they begin to quarrel, he remarks the fighting has begun and the children immediately stop fighting. The children sometimes become exasperated with Puddleglum's dire predictions, but his gloomy outlook tends to inspire them to take an opposite approach.*

#### **5. Where in scripture do we find unexpected heroes such as Jill, Scrubb, and the very unlikely Puddleglum?**

*Numerous answers could be offered. Some highlights might include Moses the murderer who struggles with a stutter problem, Rahab the prostitute who saves the Israelite spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21), David the youngest son and shepherd, almost forgotten when Samuel came to look over the sons of Jesse (1 Samuel 16). One might also consider Esther the beautiful queen who had to hide her Jewish heritage from her king's right-hand man, Haman, and who risks her life to save her people. Mary the mother of Jesus could also be an option: the young, poor, unknown Jewish girl who is willing to take the risk of bearing the Son of God.*

#### **6. How might the Green Lady's appeal parallel the temptations of our modern commercialism and materialism?**

*We are constantly bombarded with sophisticated, slick advertising campaigns in all forms of media that encourage us to be dissatisfied with ourselves, our lives, and our possessions. The approach of the campaigns vary, but they are all carefully crafted to use the allure of beauty, power and sex to promise a peace and satisfaction that they can never deliver. Like the Green Lady, the products and their ads are not all they seem.*

#### **7. How does the Green Lady's behavior at the bridge echo Satan's behavior in the Wilderness Temptation scenes from Scripture?**

*In the Wilderness temptations, Satan comes upon Jesus when he is weak and tired, just as the Green Lady meets the travelers when they are tired from their arduous Northward journey. Satan plays upon Jesus' human weakness: hunger, the need to prove himself as the Son of God, and the desire for power. The Lady perceives the children's weakness: their desire for comfort and food on this long, frightening journey. Like Satan, she presents these offerings as if she has their best interests at heart. But also like Satan, her goal is to destroy them.*

**8. What might Jill and Scrubb's experience of being in the "E" of "Under Me" indicate about the difference between God's vision and our human vision?**

*The children fall down into the "E," but are too close to the letter—literally in it—to see it. This points to fact that we are often so limited in our vision that we cannot see the bigger picture. Further, because of the Green Lady's cruel suggestion, the children are focused on the comforts of Harfang, not Aslan's signs. So distracted, they cannot imagine that they are right in the middle of the sign itself. God sees the bigger picture and may even put us right in the middle of it. But our human finitude and sinfulness may keep us from seeing what is right there under our feet.*

**9. Where else in Scripture does God speak to people in dreams as Aslan spoke to Jill? Do we still trust our dreams as a possible way God may speak to us today?**

*Again, many examples could be offered. God spoke to Joseph through dreams and gave him the gift of interpreting dreams (Genesis 37:5-11; 40-41). God also spoke to Ananias in a vision/dream and told him to go to Saul/Paul to baptize him (Acts 9:10-19). Some people may be able to recount an experience of God speaking to them or a loved one through a dream. Others may feel reluctant to trust such dreams. Perhaps this could be an area where the gift of community could be uplifted, meaning that one could offer a dream and its possible interpretations and have Christian brothers and sisters offer feedback and support.*

**10. How does the travelers' "muffing" of the signs reflect our human finitude and sinfulness—and God's graciousness?**

*Although several signs were "muffed," Aslan was still able to work so that the quest for Prince Rilian was not defeated. As humans, we will always have a tendency to make mistakes and miss the signs God wants us to see. But with others' help and the providence and grace of God, we may yet do what God wants us to do.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

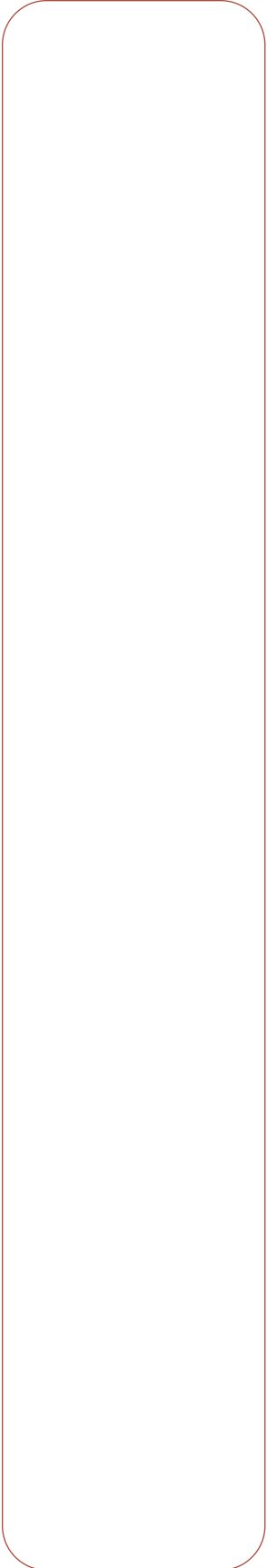
## Discussing *The Silver Chair* with Children

While children may not grasp some of the larger theological themes or literary allusions in the book, they can certainly identify with Jill and Scrubb and many of their experiences. Many children can immediately sympathize with Jill and Scrubb's experience of feeling like outsiders at their school. From there, invite the children to think about outsiders joining together and trusting one another. Also vivid is the scene on the cliff: Jill's showing off, Scrubb's attempt to save her, his ensuing fall, and her resultant feelings. Most of us can identify with the temptation to show off and feelings of guilt about the negative results of such behavior. Touching on such topics as God's grace, confession and forgiveness, and our responsibilities as Christians, discuss Aslan's willingness to save Scrubb and then to engage with Jill, hear her confession, and entrust her with a most important task.

Children might also be able to reflect on the appeal of the Queen of the Underworld as she first appears to Jill, Scrubb, and Puddleglum. One could ask a child reader if he or she trusted the Lady of the Green Kirtle as the children did or whether they shared Puddleglum's suspicions. As the story unfolds at Harfang, children might be invited to revisit their initial impressions of the Green Lady. You might also discuss Aslan's dream visit to Jill and ask why he chose to communicate with her this way and why she was crying in the dream.

The Underworld offers much for discussion. Lewis describes the Earthmen as looking sad. Children could be asked why he included this detail and why they might be sad. Prince Rilian's behavior is intriguing, especially his defense of the Queen and the revelation that he was the Silent Knight they met earlier. Children could be asked whether they believed his version of the story of why he is in the Underworld. And Puddleglum's willingness to harm himself to save them all brings up issues about our willingness to do the same and Jesus' willingness to die for us.

Inviting children to wonder about the story and identify with the characters could provide excellent opportunity for discussion. With an adventurous quest at its core and numerous themes woven through-



out, the story can be read on many different levels. But perhaps one of the lasting lessons of the book for children and adults alike is that children (and adults) can do wonderful things, in spite of our mistakes, when we trust and follow Jesus.

# A Guide to *The Horse and His Boy*

by David Brooks

## Synopsis

---

*The Horse and His Boy* was published in 1954 as the fifth of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. The story takes place in the golden age of Narnia when the Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—now grown, rule as kings and queens. Calormen, a country that lies to the south of Narnia, across the Great Desert, is the setting for the beginning of the story. In Calormen, beside a coastal creek, lives a poor fisherman, Arsheesh, and his adopted son, Shasta. Arsheesh treats Shasta more like a slave than a son, forcing Shasta to wash and mend nets, cook meals, and clean the cottage. Often, Shasta receives a beating from Arsheesh when the old fisherman's mood turns sour. The adventurous side of the story begins soon after a Tarkaan or great lord of Calormen arrives from the South on a beautiful and majestic stallion. By eavesdropping on a conversation between Arsheesh and the Tarkaan, Shasta discovers two things. First, the Tarkaan desires to purchase Shasta from Arsheesh as a slave. Second, Arsheesh is not Shasta's true father. While pondering the import of these two realities in the presence of the Tarkaan's stallion, Shasta is astonished to discover that the horse can talk. The horse, named Bree, was kidnapped as a foal from the forests of Narnia and sold as a war horse in Calormen. Quickly, Bree and Shasta set out, seeking to fulfill their mutual dreams of escaping Calormen and heading for Narnia and the North.

Along the way, in the midst of being chased by lions, Shasta and Bree meet Aravis, a Calormen Tarkheena or noblewoman, and Hwin, another talking horse from Narnia. Discovering that Aravis and Hwin are also escaping to Narnia and the North, the four decide to journey together. Their path takes them first through the Calormen capital of Tashbaan, but not without complication. The party is split up when Shasta is mistaken for Corin, son of King Lune of Archenland, and Aravis is recognized by another Tarkheena who nearly exposes the foursome's plan for escape.

Shasta, Bree, Aravis, and Hwin eventually regroup at the Tombs of the Ancient Kings on the far side of Tashbaan, but not before Shasta and Aravis acquire valuable information for their journey. As the mistaken Corin, Shasta learns from a group of Narnians visiting Tashbaan, including Queen Susan and King Edmund, that the only way to complete the journey across the Great Desert is to travel northwest instead of due north. The northwest track delivers travelers to a fertile valley with a flowing river that can refresh weary pilgrims who would otherwise be overwhelmed by the dry heat of the desert. While secretly listening in on a conversation between the Tisroc (King) of Calormen, Rabadash (the Tisroc's son), and the Grand Vizier, Aravis discovers Rabadash's dreadful plot to overthrow King Lune of Archenland and invade Narnia to take Queen Susan captive as his wife. With no time to spare, the reunited escapees make for the North with a newfound mission to head off Rabadash and warn King Lune before it is too late.

Shasta, Bree, Aravis, and Hwin do indeed arrive in Archenland in time to warn King Lune, thanks to the northwest route, the hospitality of the Hermit of the Southern March, and the prodding of a fierce lion who is later revealed as Aslan himself, the creator and ruler of Narnia. In time, the four escapees are encountered by Aslan and are amazed that in various ways Aslan had guided and protected them along their journey. Meanwhile, King Lune, the Archenlanders, and their Narnian allies defeat Rabadash and his army. In the end, Shasta learns that his true identity is that of Cor, son of King Lune and twin brother of Corin; Rabadash remains defiant and is duly punished; and Aravis eventually marries Cor. Following King Lune's death, Cor and Aravis

reign as King and Queen of Archenland, and they are frequently visited by their Narnian equine friends, Bree and Hwin.

## Christian Symbolism in *The Horse and His Boy*

---

### DIVINE GUIDANCE

Shasta's escape from Calormen was marked by challenge after challenge. When his spirit is at its lowest and self-pity finally envelops him, Shasta discovers someone or something walking beside him. Shasta is frightened, continuing to walk for several minutes, not knowing the identity of this strange thing or person and wondering if his mind was playing tricks on him. When Shasta finally whispers, "Who are you?" the unwelcome fellow traveler replies, "One who has waited long for you to speak."

This mysterious figure is, of course, Aslan, the High King above all kings. As Shasta shares the woes and dangers of his journey, not the least of which were the lions and wild beasts, Aslan patiently explains that there was only one lion, and that lion was none other than himself. Aslan was the lion that caused Shasta and Aravis to come together in their escape, the cat that comforted Shasta at the tombs, the lion that drove the jackals away from Shasta, and the lion that prodded Bree and Hwin to run faster in order to reach King Lune in time. "And I was the lion you do not remember," Aslan tells Shasta, "who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."

Again, Shasta asks, "Who *are* you?"

What follows is one of the most profound descriptions of the High King Aslan in all of the *Chronicles*:

“Myself,” said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again “Myself,” loud and clear and gay: and then the third time “Myself,” whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it. (*The Horse and His Boy*, C.S. Lewis (NY: HarperCollins, 1994) 176.

Shasta’s encounter with Aslan contains at least three Biblical parallels. First, Aslan’s response to Shasta’s inquiry about the strange visitor’s identity is reminiscent of God’s response to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). God instructs Moses to return to Egypt to set the Israelites free from captivity. In reply, Moses asks, “Who shall I say has sent me?” God responds, “Tell them, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Second, Aslan’s triple self-identification as “Myself” is an allusion to the Triune God of Christian faith. Each time Aslan identifies himself as “Myself,” he does so in distinct ways, loosely reflecting the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Finally, in this encounter with Aslan, Shasta experiences what Biblical scholars might label a theophany—an appearance of the divine to human beings. Theophanies in the Bible are commonly accompanied by fire, light, earthquake, or thick darkness. As Aslan is revealed to Shasta, the High King is accompanied by a “shining whiteness” and a “golden light” that emanates from him. The narrator states, “No one ever saw anything more terrible or beautiful.” Such terrible and beautiful radiance caused Shasta to slip out of his saddle and fall at the feet of the Great Lion.

The One whom Shasta worships, the High King Aslan, has been Shasta’s lifelong guide and protector, even though Shasta came to this realization retrospectively. Through *The Horse and His Boy*, C. S. Lewis effectively reminds readers that the Christian journey of discipleship is always under the guidance of a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At times, it may prove difficult to recognize such divine guidance, but when Christians willingly speak with God, God can reveal points along the journey in which God has been present and leading. If we are seeking that presence and guidance, perhaps God, like Aslan, is waiting for us to speak.

## BEARING WITNESS

While in the city of Tashbaan, the four escapees are forced to pause in their journey to make way for a party of Narnians passing through the streets. It is this party that mistakes Shasta for Corin and takes Shasta from his friends. Before Shasta is taken, however, he observes some noticeable differences in these Narnians as compared with typical Calormenes. In addition to differences in physical appearance and dress, the Narnians seemed to carry themselves with a certain joy and mirth. They laughed and shared in lively conversation with one another. One was whistling. “You could see,” Lewis writes, “that they were ready to be friends with anyone who was friendly and didn’t give a fig for anyone who wasn’t. Shasta thought he had never seen anything so lovely in his life.”

Why were the Narnians so different from the Calormenes? Lewis does not give his readers a direct answer, but could it be that the Narnians’ joy and loveliness was a natural result of having been in the presence of Aslan? Without even realizing it, the Narnians were making a favorable impression on Shasta. They were bearing witness to a relationship with a High King that resulted in friendliness, hospitality, and loveliness. They were living as Aslan would live.

The word “Christian” literally means “little Christs.” Christians are those whose lives can be favorably compared with the life of Christ. The world should look at Christians and wonder about the source of our grace, hospitality, and friendliness. Can there be a more effective means of bearing witness to the Christ?

## THE SIN OF PRIDE

Two characters in *The Horse and His Boy* struggle with sin of pride: the Narnian stallion Bree and the Calormene Prince Rabadash. Their pride leads both to their downfall.

Throughout the journey to Narnia and the North, Bree constantly ridicules both Shasta and Hwin for their more humble ancestry and behavior. Bree is also insulted by the plan to have his tail cut and be

disguised as a packhorse so that the foursome can make their way through Tashbaan. Even after Bree's doubts about Aslan are proven unfounded when Aslan appears to Bree in flesh and blood, Bree struggles to overcome his pride. Such pride causes Bree to be gripped by anxiety as he finally enters Narnia, wondering if talking horses roll in the grass. Just in case, Bree has a good roll, but then enters Narnia looking "more like a horse going to a funeral than a long-lost captive returning to home and freedom." One can only assume Bree would continue to struggle with unhealthy pride once within the borders of Narnia.

Prince Rabadash's arrogance is clear in the way he demands that his father, the Tisroc, allow him to invade Archenland and Narnia, even at the risk of his own death and the demise of Calormen. Rabadash's pride is most evident in the final chapter of the book when, as a prisoner, he foolishly refuses to agree to his conditional freedom offered by King Lune and Aslan. Rabadash curses his captors and blasphemes Aslan to his face. The result is a rather comical transformation of Rabadash from a Calormene prince to a braying donkey. He had become Rabadash the Ridiculous.

To his credit, Bree seems to repent of his arrogance when encountered by Aslan. It wasn't long, however, before Bree's vanity resurfaces and his entry into Narnia is likened to a funeral march. On the flipside, Rabadash plainly refuses to humble himself in the presence of the High King. Both characters' actions serve as reminders of the need for repentance. Sometimes, Christians blatantly sin against God and a soul-searching, action-taking period of repentance needs to take place. At other times, worn-out, pet sins surreptitiously resurface, and we must repent of such sins once again. Either way, there is a High King whose breath (spirit) restores us and offers us grace.

### TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN, MUCH IS EXPECTED

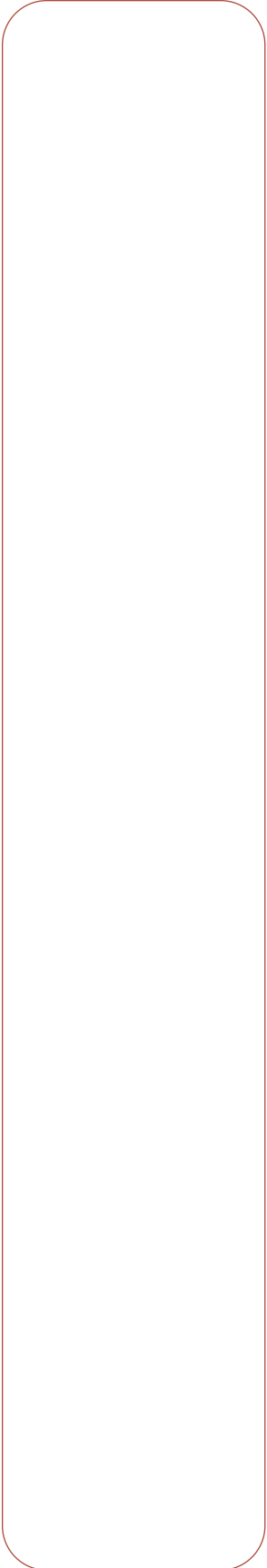
In the end, following a grueling trek across the Great Desert, it is Shasta who must complete the final leg of the journey to Archenland to warn King Lune of the danger of Rabadash. The narrator explains

that Shasta considers this task cruel and unfair. “He [Shasta] had not yet learned,” explains the narrator, “that if you do one good deed your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one.” Such wisdom squares with Jesus’ teaching when he said, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Luke 12:48b, NRSV). The path of discipleship does not provide many opportunities for Christians to “rest on their laurels.” Followers of Jesus can receive joy immeasurable when instead of asking, “What’s in it for me?” they ask, “What’s next?” A contemporary preacher of the gospel put it this way: “What the Bible tells us over and over again—what our lives tell us—is that the only reward for doing God’s work is doing God’s work. Period” (Barbara Brown Taylor, *Bread of Angels* [Cambridge MA: Cowley Publications, 1997] 27).

## LIVE YOUR LIFE, NOT SOMEONE ELSE’S

As Aslan takes the opportunity to reveal his identity and actions to both Shasta and Aravis, he offers these words of wisdom: “I tell no one any story but his[/her] own.” Shasta and Aravis were curious about Aslan’s actions toward other people. In his wisdom, Aslan tells them not to be anxious about the details of others’ lives. This is not an advisement to neglect the needs of others and be content with a selfish life. After all, Aslan was the figure in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* who willingly gave up his own life for the life of the traitor, Edmund Pevensie. Instead, Aslan is simply encouraging Shasta and Aravis to live their own lives. Be the person that God has created you to be.

In his book, *Glad Reunion*, John Claypool notes that there is a tragic character in the Old Testament whose inability to accept who he was and what he was supposed to do under God eventually led to his own death (Claypool, *Glad Reunion: Meeting Ourselves in the Lives of Bible Men and Women* [Nashville: Word Publishing, 1985] 80-87). The character is Saul, the first king of Israel. When Samuel approached Saul to extend the call of God, Saul declared that he was not fit for such duty. In effect, Saul rejected an opportunity to become the



person God intended him to be. For the rest of Saul's reluctant reign as king, his insecurity with his own life resulted in poor decisions and jealousy. Saul needed to hear God say to him, "I tell no one any story but his own. Be the person that I have created you to be." These are words that we all need to hear and obey.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion\*

### 1. How does Shasta's journey from Calormen to Narnia and the North compare to the journey of Christian discipleship?

*Shasta's journey is one of self-discovery. His desire to know his origin and identity compels him to leave his familiar surroundings in Calormen. His travels are filled with challenges, dangers, and setbacks. Eventually, his risky journey results in the discovery of his father and his homeland. Shasta learns that he is Cor, the elder of King Lune's twin sons. In the end, Cor inherits the throne of his father and fulfills his intended role. The journey of Christian discipleship is also one of self-discovery, marked by trials and challenges, cross-bearing and costliness. It is a journey in which we seek to discover our calling and our identity in Christ.*

### 2. In what ways does Aslan provide guidance and protection along the journey? In what ways does Aslan encourage the four escapees? Compare your answers to the guidance, protection, and encouragement that God offers.

*Guidance – Aslan guided Shasta and Aravis to come together in their escape from Calormen.*

*Protection – As a friendly cat, Aslan protected Shasta from jackals during the night that Shasta spent alone at the Tombs.*

*Encouragement – As Aslan reveals himself to the four main characters, he lovingly recounts his presence to them along the journey. He invites Shasta, "Tell me your sorrows." He promises joy to Hwin. He removes Bree's doubts. He explains to Aravis why he attacked her. He tells Hwin, Bree, and Aravis, "Be merry, little ones."*

### 3. Are there other attributes of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit that you notice in Aslan?

- *Comfort to Shasta at the Tombs.*
- *When Aslan appears to Bree, the exchange is strikingly similar to the resurrected Jesus' appearance and conversation with Thomas.*

- *Aslan is very gracious and merciful with Rabadash. Aslan embodies love of enemy toward Rabadash.*
- *Aslan evokes awe and reverence from anyone in his presence.*

**4. Why did Aslan attack Aravis as she neared the gate of the Hermit of the Southern March? Compare this action of Aslan to your experience of God.**

*Aslan plainly tells Aravis, "The scratches on your back, tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your step-mother's slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her. You needed to know what it felt like." Discussion of this question may revolve around whether or not Aslan's action is an accurate depiction of the nature of God.*

**5. At various times throughout the story, characters respond in conversations by saying, "To hear is to obey." Discuss the meaning of such a response. How can Christians live in ways that make this response more of a reality in our lives as we relate to God?**

*Obedience does not always follow a request or command from God. We know the good we ought to do, but we do not always do it (see Romans 7). This question might cause groups to brainstorm about ways individuals can help one another to obey God more faithfully.*

**6. Contrast Shasta with Aravis. Contrast Bree with Hwin. What can we learn from their differences?**

*Both Bree and Aravis struggle with arrogance and pride. They both have noble blood which causes them to look down upon the more humble Shasta and Hwin. Aravis was reluctant to treat Shasta with dignity when she met him. Shasta was a trusting person, willing to believe Bree's stories of Narnia and the North.*

**7. What role does luck play in the journey from Calormen to Narnia and the North? Is there validity to the idea of luck in the Christian life?**

*In chapters 10 and 12, Lewis offers pointed commentary on the notion that luck has anything to do with life. In both instances (Aravis's conversation with the Hermit and Shasta's inner dialogue) luck is downplayed in favor of Aslan's providential presence and work.*

**8. What can we learn from the way the Narnians are noticeably different from the Calormenes? How are you living differently from the world around you?**

*As discussed in the "Christian Symbolism" section above, a possible reason for the noticeable difference in the Narnians is their association with Aslan. Christians' holiness or "differentness" should be noticed by the world. Such holiness should cause others to wonder or ask about the reason for the difference. This is an effective means of bearing witness to Christ.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *The Horse and His Boy* with Children

---

*The Horse and His Boy* is a fascinating story that children will enjoy. C. S. Lewis masterfully depicts the imaginative lands of Calormen, Archenland, and Narnia that are miles away from the ordinariness of daily life in North America. Help children to pay attention to the details of Tashbaan, the Great Desert, and the mountainous Archenland. Such an exercise can help children notice the details of their own locale and the beauty it may hold.

The journey of Shasta, Bree, Aravis, and Hwin to Narnia and the North will appeal to a child's sense of adventure. Along the journey, Shasta meets new people and makes new friends, skills in which parents and teachers can help children to grow. Shasta's example of relating to new and different people, such as Aravis, Corin, and the Pevensie siblings, can inspire children to recognize, respect, and appreciate the unique qualities of others.

Along the path to Narnia and the North, Shasta is confronted with various challenges. One of those challenges is the need to decide between right and wrong. For example, he could have taken the easy way out and traveled by boat to Narnia under the disguise of Prince Corin. Instead, Shasta chose to do the right thing and meet his friends at the Tombs, knowing he would have a difficult trek across the Great Desert. Children are faced with making decisions between right and wrong every day and can learn from Shasta's story.

Adults can also allow children the opportunity to discuss the elements of good versus evil within the story. What qualities in the "good" characters should we imitate? What faults do the "evil" characters possess that should we avoid? Give children the opportunity to contribute their own insights about this tale and what it can teach us about life and God. Discovering ideas on their own can empower children to venture out and trust that they have been equipped and enabled to journey the path of Christian discipleship under the guidance of the High King.

# A Guide to *The Magician's Nephew*

by Tim Gilbert

## Synopsis

---

*The Magician's Nephew* is the sixth book written by C. S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The book serves a crucial role because it “shows how all the comings and goings between our world and the land of Narnia first began.” The tale begins with two children, Digory Kirke and Polly Plummer, who become friends during summer break from school. Since it was one of the wettest and coldest summers in years, they decide to explore the roof space connecting their row of houses. They decide to follow the roof space to the last house in the row to discover if rumors that it is “haunted” are true. They miscalculate the distance and accidentally find themselves in the study of Digory’s strange Uncle Andrew who fancies himself a magician.

Uncle Andrew tricks Polly into touching a magic ring that causes her to vanish. Digory’s uncle explains that Polly cannot return unless Digory follows her, because she does not have a companion ring that will allow her to return. Digory decides he must follow Polly and help her return if he can. Putting on the ring, Digory suddenly finds himself in a wood that is located between the worlds, a kind of cosmic depot. Digory finds Polly and persuades her to explore other worlds connected to the wood, which Polly reluctantly agrees to do.

They are transported to a world that is very old and appears to be without life. After some exploration they discover a hall full of life-like figures that appear to be under some kind of enchantment. They discover a bell and hammer at the end of the room. Against Polly's wishes Digory picks up the hammer and strikes the bell. The result is that Queen Jadis (the White Witch) is brought back to life. She tells them the story of how the dead world, Charn, came to be the way it is and questions them about their world. She then demands that they take her to their world. They think this is a bad idea, but the Queen manages to hold onto them as they try to escape, and ultimately all three wind up back in our world.

They find themselves back in Uncle Andrew's attic study with the White Witch who then leaves with Andrew. Polly decides to go home but promises to come back and help deal with the witch as quickly as she can. Meanwhile, Andrew winds up as the witch's slave as she tries to take over our world. Fortunately for Uncle Andrew and Digory, her magic doesn't work in our world. While Uncle Andrew and the witch are away, Digory comes up with a plan to return Jadis to her world. In the meantime, Polly has been forced to stay in her room for two hours because her parents were unhappy with her explanation of where she has been. When the witch and Uncle Andrew return in a cab outside the house, Polly and a crowd of onlookers show up to watch the proceedings.

A fight ensues at the lamp post and Digory and Polly use the magic rings in an attempt to return Jadis to her world. They find they are successful but that Uncle Andrew, the Cabby, and his horse, Strawberry, have been transported as well. Events in the wood between the worlds lead them to be transported to another world, a world of Nothing where there is strange music all around them. There they observe the birth of the world of Narnia as Aslan the Lion sings it into existence. The witch wanders off on her own and Uncle Andrew gets chased by some of the animals that Aslan has created. Strawberry takes Digory to meet Aslan; Polly and the Cabby follow along.

Digory makes it to Aslan and admits he is responsible for bringing the witch into Narnia. Aslan brings the Cabby's wife to Narnia, and crowns them King Frank and Queen Helen, the first king and queen of Narnia. In an attempt to give Digory a chance to undo the evil he has brought to Narnia, Aslan sends him on a mission to the lands beyond the edge of Narnia to retrieve an apple from a garden that grows there and return it to Aslan. Polly decides that she should go with Digory and, after agreeing to help them, Strawberry is transformed into a winged horse and his name changed to Fledge.

When they arrive at the walled garden, only Digory goes in. There he finds the tree he was sent to discover, a tree covered with huge silver apples. Though tempted to eat it himself, he puts it away in his jacket. As he turns to leave, he finds the witch present in the garden as well. She tries to convince Digory to take the apple, use the rings, and return home to give the apple of life to his sick mother. He is deeply tempted, but in the end he refuses and returns to Aslan with the apple. The apple is planted and a tree for the protection of Narnia springs up. After the coronation of King Frank and Queen Helen, Aslan grants Digory a very important desire.

Upon returning from Narnia, Uncle Andrew, Polly, and Digory discover that despite their adventures in Narnia no time has passed in our world. Polly retrieves the rings to be disposed of as instructed by Aslan and Digory takes the gift Aslan has given him to his ailing mother, and as Lewis writes, here ends this story, but begins all the others.

## **Christian Symbolism in *The Magician's Nephew***

---

### **THE CREATION**

When Digory, Polly and the others first arrive in the darkness of what will become Narnia, they believe they have come into a world of

“Nothing.” But soon they hear a deep Voice singing. That Voice turns out to be Aslan, the Lion, singing Narnia into existence. Aslan, the Christ figure in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the Son of the Great King across the sea, represents God’s presence at creation. Readers may be reminded of John 1:1-5:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

Aslan’s voice is soon joined by other voices singing in harmony with him. The children discover that it is the voices of the heavenly bodies—stars, planets, and constellations that all come into existence at once, reminiscent of Job 38:1-7:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me if you have understanding.  
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?  
On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone  
when the morning stars sang together  
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

The shaping and filling of the earth follows with the creation of plants, grass, trees, and animals. All of this seems to roughly follow the Genesis 1 order of creation. At this point, Aslan selects from among the animals a group who will become the Talking Animals of Narnia. It appears that Narnia is originally made for them and they are treated with respect and dignity given to their human counterparts even after King Frank and Queen Helen are crowned the first king and queen of Narnia. They are subjects of the king and queen even as the human descendants of the king and queen will be.

## THE GARDEN OF THE SILVER APPLES

It might seem that the connection here is that the garden is the Garden of Eden. But there are several clues that Lewis has something else in mind here. First, the garden with the silver apples is not part of Narnia, but lies beyond its boundaries in the far West. It is a Garden protected by a high wall meant only to be entered by the gates of gold that face due East. Among all the lush foliage inside the garden grows a tree that produces huge silver apples that give eternal youth to all who consume them. From this description, it seems that Lewis has in mind here the Garden of the Hesperides from classical Greek mythology. The Garden of the Hesperides was the orchard of Hera, Queen of the Greek pantheon. It was planted from the fruited tree branches that Gaia gave Hera as a wedding gift when she was married to Zeus. The Hesperides were nymphs who were the daughters of Atlas and were given the task of guarding the garden and its life-producing apples. Hera did not trust the nymphs as they occasionally plucked the fruit for themselves, so she placed a never-sleeping, hundred headed dragon named Ladon as an additional safeguard. According to most of the ancient stories, this Garden grew at the far Western end of the world.

Retrieving apples from this garden was one of the labors given to Heracles that he succeeded in accomplishing. In that story, Heracles successfully delivers the apples without eating any of them himself, even though he was an aging hero who was not immortal. We can see that Lewis weaves this story with the Genesis account of the fall of humanity to illustrate how Aslan acts to protect Narnia from the evil that has entered it.

## THE ORIGIN OF "EVIL" IN NARNIA

As sin entered our world through human action, so evil enters Narnia by human action as well. Through his own selfish inquisitiveness, Digory brings Jadis back to life in her own world and ultimately is responsible for her presence in Narnia. As in all of his stories, Lewis reminds the reader that all the choices we make have consequences. Digory leads a reluctant Polly on an exploration of other worlds using the magic rings made from the dust of Atlantis. In this case, Digory's selfish inquisitiveness overrides Polly's hesitancy. In the great hall of

Charn, Digory's stubborn insistence to ring the bell, even though both Digory and Polly feel the place is under an enchantment, causes the unexpected consequence of bringing Jadis back to life. Once it occurs, the consequences of the act become uncontrollable and ultimately lead to the witch entering Narnia, an act that will produce evil fruit far into the future.

Digory is finally able to face Aslan and admit that he is at fault for bringing Jadis into Narnia. When Aslan asks if he is ready to act to undo the wrong he has done, Digory tries to dodge the question. When he finally says, "yes," he remembers his dying mother and asks Aslan to help her. Aslan comforts him, but sets him to the task of retrieving the apple from the Garden in the Western Wild. It is here that the myth of the Garden of the Hesperides is mixed with the Genesis story of the temptation. When Digory arrives at the garden he finds this inscription on the gate:

Come in by the gold gates or not at all,  
Take of my fruit for others or forbear,  
For those who steal or those who climb my wall  
Shall find their heart's desire and find despair.

He enters, easily finds the tree, picks the fruit, and puts it in his jacket pocket. But before he does so he looks at it and smells it. Once the fruit is put away a terrible thirst and hunger come over him, and he longs to eat the apple. He ponders the idea that since he has already picked a fruit for others he could pick one for himself. He is able to overcome this desire by looking up and seeing a bird who is watching him. The narrator also says that he would not have taken it because the rule "Do not steal" has been instilled in him well as a child.

The real challenge occurs as he turns to leave and discovers that the witch has climbed the wall, taken fruit and eaten it herself. He flees, and the gates close after him, but the witch vaults the wall and follows him. The witch challenges him with one last temptation. She tells him about the magic properties of the fruit...it is the apple of youth, the apple of life. Jadis tempts him not to take the apple to Aslan, but to use the rings, return home and give the apple to his

ailing mother. A long verbal struggle between the witch and Digory ensues in which she tries to use his love for his mother to get him to disobey Aslan. In the end, the witch makes a fatal mistake by trying to get Digory to leave Polly behind. Digory's commitment to Polly as the friend that first set him on this adventure allows him to escape and complete the task Aslan has given him.

Digory returns the apple to Aslan, who has Digory throw the apple toward the river to plant it. From it a tree grows that produces the life-giving fruit. Aslan states that as long as the tree grows it will be a protection for Narnia from the witch. (One wonders if Lewis had another tale in mind to explain how the tree was destroyed and how the White Witch came to power and brought the hundred year winter to Narnia!?)

All of these ideas are woven together to remind the reader that all our actions have consequences and of the importance of carrying out the tasks that God gives us to do.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion\*

### 1. Why is it significant that the rings Uncle Andrew creates are made from the dust of Atlantis?

*According to Plato, Atlantis was a continent that lay beyond the “pillars of Heracles” west of the Mediterranean. The continent originally flourished under a peaceful government that also included the surrounding islands. They had a rich commerce and were far advanced in knowledge. But the Atlanteans became corrupt and arrogant, so that Atlantis was destroyed by the gods who submerged the island without a trace in a day and a night. It seems significant that Uncle Andrew works his mischief with the magic rings made from the dust of this other world that seems to be a symbol of the arrogant misuse of power in the face of the gods.*

### 2. How does the character of Uncle Andrew reflect the problem of human pride and “scientific technology” that is often used irresponsibly in our world?

*Anyone who has read widely in Lewis’s fiction will find the character of the “scientist” who is arrogantly concerned only with the advancement of “knowledge” without any concern for those involved in its outcomes. The character of Weston in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* and the organization of N.I.C.E. in *That Hideous Strength* reflect this viewpoint. In the *Chronicles* it is represented by those who run the “experimental” schools that the children in some of the stories attend. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, Uncle Andrew reflects this view, showing no concern for the guinea pigs he has used to test the rings, both animal and human. He also demonstrates the mind set he observes the fecundity of the new world of Narnia and plans how he can use it to make a fortune for himself.*

### 3. What is the symbolic significance, if any, of the “wood between the worlds”?

*The wood between the worlds seems to be a place outside of any time and space, a perfect, peaceful place where those who are good appear to be at ease and peace, so much so that they can forget where they are if they are not careful to remember. But it is also a place where those who are evil feel miserable,*

*like the witch who feels ill there. Perhaps it is closer to the “real” world in a Platonic sense than the other worlds and as such those who are more like its nature find themselves at “home” and those who are evil find it to be a place of misery. There are also echoes of Lewis’s picture of heaven in The Great Divorce present in this description of the “wood between the worlds.”*

#### **4. How does the creation account of Narnia parallel the Genesis account? How is it different?**

*The story parallels the Genesis account in the general order of the creation of things—nothingness—stars, planets, constellations—the shape of the earth, grass, plants, trees—birds and animals. The story begins to differ with the setting aside of the Talking Animals who seem originally to be what Narnia was created for. There is no creation of Adam and Eve. Humans appear to be introduced only when Digory and Polly draw their group into Narnia using the rings. Only then are the Cabby and his wife, who is brought to Narnia by Aslan, crowned King Frank and Queen Helen.*

#### **5. What is the significance of Aslan’s response to Digory’s first request for Aslan to help his critically ill mother?**

*“My son, my son...I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another.”*

*Aslan makes this statement after he has asked Digory if he is ready to undo the wrong he has done to Narnia in bringing Jadis into that world. When Digory says, “yes,” his thoughts ultimately turn to his ailing mother, and he asks Aslan to give him something to cure his mother. In asking this he looks into Aslan’s face and is astonished to see tears in the Lion’s eyes, tears so great that Digory feels that Aslan is really sorrier about his mother than even Digory is. Aslan’s statement reflects the knowledge that in this new world only Aslan and Digory know the true weight of grief and because of that they must care for one another. It is a gentle reminder in the story that Christ cares about us and those we love far more than we do.*

#### **6. What is the significance of Aslan’s statement to the children: “You need no rings when I am with you”?**

*The rings represent the arrogant power of humans and are at the heart of much of the trouble that occurs in the story. But the truth is that Aslan is the Son of the Great King, and the real power behind all of the worlds. Aslan does not need rings, wardrobes, pictures, or any other thing to draw the children to Narnia or to send them home again. It is Aslan in the end who can open a door to the worlds with a simple command.*

**7. What was the witch's "reward" in eating silver apples in the garden?**

*Digory sees that the witch has eaten the fruit in the garden and remembers the last line of the inscription on the gate, "For those who steal or those who climb my wall shall find their heart's desire and find despair." The witch has done both; she has climbed the wall and has stolen the fruit and eaten it. Digory said she looked stronger and prouder than ever, even triumphant. Yet her face had become deadly white, white as salt. In eating the fruit she received life and youth, but found no joy in it. In finding eternal youth and life, she condemned herself to a living death.*

**8. Is Christian symbolism in *The Magician's Nephew* less pervasive than in other books of the *Chronicles*?**

*This is a question for each reader to decide. I found that this book had less openly Christian symbolism in it than most of the other *Chronicles*, and yet it brought to life the understanding that all of our choices have consequences, sometimes consequences we cannot control. In the end, however, Digory learns from his mistakes and obeys Aslan's command.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *The Magician's Nephew* with Children

---

As numerous commentators have reminded us, *The Magician's Nephew* is a fairy tale. While it has a great deal of symbolism for adults, particularly some classical Greek myth, in its most basic reading, it is the story that answers many “origin” questions about Narnia just as Genesis does for the Christian. If you have begun your interest with *The Chronicles of Narnia* by reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, then help your children look for the answers to the following questions in *The Magician's Nephew*.

- 1. Where did the Talking Animals of Narnia come from?**
- 2. Who is the White Witch?**
- 3. How did she get to Narnia?**
- 4. Where did the lamp post that stands in the forest in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* come from?**
- 5. Who is the Professor in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*?**
- 6. Why does the wardrobe have special qualities?**

This will allow children to focus on the story and have some fun in answering these questions.

*The Magician's Nephew* is a great opportunity through story to teach children about making good choices and how there are often uncontrollable consequences to our decisions. It can also help teach them about taking responsibility for our actions. Be very careful in interpreting Aslan's giving of the apple to Digory to take home to heal his mother. It would be good to remind them at this point that it is a fairy tale and that, as most fairy tales do, it has a happy ending. Discussing Aslan's reaction when Digory first asks him for help for his mother

would be more important. Aslan understands and shares Digory's sorrow, as Jesus has promised us he will do.

In the end, *The Magician's Nephew* is a great story that sets the stage for all the great stories in the *Chronicles* that follow! It really is "the beginning of all the others"!

# A Guide to *The Last Battle*

by John Weaver

## Synopsis

---

The final novel of C. S. Lewis's seven-book saga, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, is *The Last Battle*, written in 1956. Although *The Last Battle* may be read and enjoyed as a stand-alone work, it is best appreciated after having read the first six books. *The Last Battle* is a fantasy written for children, but may be enjoyed by readers of all ages and understood on more than one level. The young reader will experience the fantastic kingdom of Narnia. Unicorns, centaurs and a menagerie of other creatures, many capable of thought and speech, will capture the imagination. The more mature reader will find Christian undertones paralleling the life of Christ and his gospel. But whether the readers is young or old, they will see that all who find themselves in the kingdom of Narnia must play their part in the final and greatest battle between good and evil, between the true and the false. In *The Last Battle* all but one from our world, who answered the call to help Narnia in troubled times, return. Their return provides a sense of closure for the series, and for the earlier stories.

Unlike most of the other books of the *Chronicles*, which begin in our world, *The Last Battle* begins in the kingdom of Narnia by Caldron Pool. An ape, whose name is Shift, and a donkey named Puzzle find a lion skin washed into the pool from over a waterfall. Shift, clever, calculating and self-absorbed, sees an opportunity for power. He manipulates Puzzle, who is easily controlled, into donning the lion skin and pretending to be Aslan, creator of Narnia and son of the Emperor-

over-Sea. Aslan is absent and has not been seen for many years. Soon, through the deception of Shift, the populace of Narnia begins to believe the false Aslan is the real thing. Even as they are being sold into slavery to the Calormenes, enemies of Narnia who worship the god Tash, no one dares to question the legitimacy of the false Aslan.

Then, Tirian, the true King of Narnia, and his friend Jewel, a unicorn, realize the extent of the deception and send for help, but rashly fight the Calormenes before help arrives. When they try to enlighten the denizens of Narnia they learn that everyone is too frightened to abandon their faith in the false Aslan or have begun to lose their faith in Aslan altogether. Tirian and Jewel naively surrender to the Calormenes and become bound prisoners. Discouraged in his captivity, Tirian calls on the real Aslan to save Narnia. His prayers are answered when Eustace and Jill, children from our world, are drawn into Narnia where they set Tirian free. Tirian then disguises and arms his two new friends and himself. Plans are made to rescue Jewel from Stable Hill, where the Calormenes and Shift hold him captive. Fulfilling their plans, Jewel is rescued. The false Aslan, Puzzle the donkey, is also taken and is repentant for the part he has played.

Tirian learns that the god Tash and a Calormene army have invaded and occupied Narnia. Believing Narnia lost, Tirian, the children and others determine to return to Stable Hill to expose Shift's deception. When they arrive at Stable Hill their plans are foiled by Shift's cleverness. Shift has proclaimed that Tashlan inhabits the stable, which gives the name to the hill. Tashlan is the new name for a god that is a combination of Tash and Aslan. Shift invites Narnians, one at a time, to go into the stable to see Tashlan face-to-face. When Tirian sees one Narnian resist Shift and the Calormenes, he makes an attack with his comrades, calling on all Narnians to join him. Only a few answer the call. A battle ensues. Hard pressed and overcome, Tirian and his band end up in the stable. The Calormene god Tash is in the stable but is driven away by a strong, calm voice invoking the name of Aslan and Aslan's father, Emperor-over-Sea. Tirian sees seven Kings and Queens, all with crowns, wearing glittering clothes. One of the Kings is Eustace and one of the Queens is Jill. Tirian is introduced to the others who were all prominent in the earlier stories.

Now, for the first time, Tirian realizes that even though he entered a stable, he is now standing in a beautiful pastoral setting. Strangely though, a few feet away is the doorway through which Tirian and the band had entered. Through the doorway can be seen Stable Hill and the Calormenes. Tirian is told “the stable is larger inside than it is outside.” Finally, at last, Aslan appears and speaks to the gathering. Aslan beckons unto himself the remaining creatures that believe in him. He then calls for an end of time. Everything outside the doorway ceases to exist. With his faithful followers about him, Aslan now leads all present “further up and further in.”

Jewel the unicorn declares, “I have come home at last... This is the land I have been looking for all my life!” Eventually, at the highest point, golden gates are reached. Inside the gates are many surprises. All learn that the shadowlands—the old Narnia and the old earth—have all passed away. All present have passed through death and are now in the real Narnia. The old time is over as Lewis writes, “the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is morning.” It is “the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

## Christian Symbolism in *The Last Battle*

---

### DECISION FOR CHRIST OR ANTI-CHRIST

Aslan, “no tame lion,” in his goodness and power is representative of Christ. Shift, the ape, can be seen as a type of anti-christ as he indulges himself by creating a false Aslan. But, all blame cannot be laid at the feet of the ape. The confusion and discord caused by Shift is possible because Aslan is only a name to many of the people of Narnia. They know nothing of, or have forgotten, Aslan’s history and character. It is because of this ignorance that they can be made to believe that Aslan has commanded behavior that is incompatible with

his love for Narnia. Behind Shift and the false Aslan is the god Tash, a type of Satan, who can only be dealt with by the real Aslan himself. The inhabitants of Narnia eventually must choose in whom they will believe, or, if they will believe at all. Lewis parallels real life as he deals with the nature of belief. Some, like Tirian, believe in Aslan. Others, such as those allied with Shift, motivated by fear and ignorance, are deceived by false truths. Some believe only in their own greed and ambition; Ginger the Cat and the Tarkaan officer are examples. Still, there are others, such as the Dwarfs, who recognize the false Aslan for what he is, but instead of rallying to the real Aslan reject all belief, concerned with only themselves and their kind. Ultimately, there are consequences for everyone when Aslan and truth are revealed.

## THE END OF TIME

As the ‘shadow land’ or old Narnia passes away, the children and Narnians who love Aslan are called into Heaven, the new Narnia. Lewis portrays eternity as a world where Aslan rules. Death is no more, and friends of Narnia from across the ages come together for their ultimate destiny.

Free will reigns in *The Last Battle*. Those who accept Aslan are welcomed into this new land. Those that reject him are turned away. Two examples illustrate this point.

### ***The Cost of Pride***

The Dwarfs having seen Shift’s trickery become disillusioned and skeptical. They proudly proclaim to Tirian “the Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.” Even later inside the stable, with an opportunity of acknowledging Aslan, they refuse to see beyond themselves. Again, proudly they assert, “Well, at any rate there’s no Humbug here. We haven’t let anyone take us in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.” Sadly, Aslan says, “You see, they will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out.” The Dwarfs have the opportunity to leave the dingy, dark, smelly stable and enter a brighter land, to become something more

real. Yet, they will not relinquish their prideful squalor or their images of themselves. They cannot get past their pride.

### ***The Gift of Grace***

By contrast, we have Emeth, a fierce but virtuous Calormene whose devotion to truth gains him admission to the new Narnia, even though he was a worshiper of Tash. Even his name speaks of his character for Emeth in Hebrew means truth. In his mercy and grace, Aslan does not reject Emeth because of the failure of his culture. Emeth's error is his vision of what God looked like and not knowing his correct name. Even Moses had to be told that God is the great I AM. Emeth's story of salvation by grace is reminiscent of the thief on the cross who was told by Christ, "this day thou wilt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). It doesn't say that being good gets one into Heaven. It does say that no matter if one has mistaken mental images about God, one who has surrendered their will and turned to God in obedience and love will not be rejected. Lewis, through the character Emeth, describes salvation by faith through grace and not by works. God/Aslan is doing the saving. We are also reminded by Lewis that it is not ours to know whom God will save by His sovereign will. Emeth's words speak for themselves as he faces Aslan:

Then I fell at his feet and thought, surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion...will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him. Nevertheless, it is better to see the Lion and die than to be Tisroc of the world and live and not to have seen him. But the Glorious One bent down his golden head...and said, "Son, thou art welcome." ...Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days. "Beloved," said the Glorious One, "unless thy desire has been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek."

### **IMITATING CHRIST**

As Christians, the more we imitate Christ, the more Christ transforms us and becomes a part of us. The more love and honor we manifest, the more Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Christ welcomes those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick. He, as Aslan does, says "that all such service done for the least of his brethren is accounted as service done to him."

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection\*

### 1. What is Shift the Ape's motivation for creating a false Aslan?

*Shift is self-absorbed, lazy, and greedy. He is willing to do whatever it takes to gain his ambitions.*

### 2. Why do so many of Narnia's inhabitants follow Shift and the false Aslan?

*They know little of Aslan and therefore fear him. Others are coerced by force.*

### 3. Why is it important for children from our world to go to Narnia's aid?

*The two worlds are connected, and it is Aslan's plan that they ultimately be drawn together. It is also conducive as a metaphor for inclusive faith with those much different in appearance.*

### 4. What are the Dwarfs' motivations for not helping Tirian and refusing to be taken in?

*The Dwarfs are prideful and self-absorbed. They are interested in immediate gratification and cannot see past the moment.*

### 5. What is the significance of the stable door and there being more room on the inside than on the outside?

*The stable door is a portal and is suggestive of an earlier stable that was the portal for Christ. It is also suggestive that the kingdom of God is not bounded by physicality.*

### 6. Why does Aslan welcome Emeth to the New Narnia after Emeth served Tash?

*Aslan is extending grace and illustrating that salvation is not by works or even being good.*

**7. What theological concept does Aslan's acceptance of Emeth portray?**

*Salvation by grace through faith.*

**8. How does the new Narnia resonate with your idea of Heaven?**

*It will vary with each person, but ideas of love, harmony, happiness, and eternal life are present. There are also the concepts of reunion with loved ones and the divine presence.*

**9. Why is the idea of a reunion with loved ones in Heaven important?**

*There is the element of hope of a continuing relationship with those we care about. An additional thought is reconciliation that perhaps was not possible on earth.*

**10. Which Christian themes and beliefs are evident in *The Last Battle*?**

*This novel is replete with latent Christian themes and beliefs. Such as the ideas of forgiveness, love, judgment, grace and faith. There are also concepts of honesty and good triumphing over evil.*

*\*Answers are offered merely as suggestions. Each question may certainly be answered in numerous ways.*

## Discussing *The Last Battle* with Children

---

### RESPONSIBILITY

As they are drawn into the kingdom of Narnia, the main characters are no longer children who remain in the background, being seen but not heard, having no impact on the course of events. They are central to momentous happenings and must deal with issues of loyalty, trust, courage, and faith. They become fully engaged and what they do matters—the fate of whole worlds are bound up in the actions of a few. Young readers who have the story read to them, or in reading it themselves, are able to see how the characters deal with these issues. They have the opportunity to see the consequences of decisions and of accepting responsibility for one's actions. As our heroes are faced with the presence of evil, flagrant and nuanced, external and internal, they must recognize and face it directly. The need for self-sacrifice becomes apparent. And, the sacrifices are not just for themselves, but for all Narnians.

### INCLUSIVITY

For some children the story may be only a great adventure with marvelous creatures that can think and talk. But, having a story with animal characters does not detract from the moral and Christian themes. Indeed, many of the mythological creatures found in Narnia place themselves in harm's way by allying themselves with the children. We find them capable of the same emotions and behaviors as the humans. In our diverse culture, as we struggle to embrace those seemingly different from ourselves, we can have no greater metaphor for inclusiveness and cooperation.

Here are some questions for use when discussing the story with children:

**1. Discuss the different personalities of the children as they enter Narnia from our world.**

*The children in this story are Eustace and Jill. They exhibit the characteristics of bravery and kindness. They, for the most part are resolute. Ultimately they become capable of sacrifice, even of themselves.*

**2. What do the children need to learn?**

*The children must learn that love is for everyone; that they are capable and must be responsible. They have to look beyond themselves as they are called upon to make sacrifices.*

**3. Which of the children are you most like?**

*Many children will find a character with whom they identify. They should be asked to reflect on the changes that take place with each child character. Also, they should consider how changes take place in their own lives and draw parallels.*

**4. In what way is Aslan's story like Jesus' story?**

*Aslan is presented as a type of Jesus who came to Narnia as a lion instead of a man. He has the same characteristics and mission as Jesus. Only his form is different.*

# IT'S TIME

... a Journey Toward  
Missional Faithfulness

8

Discover . . .

- **Your Call to Mission**
- **Your Passion for Ministry**
- **Your Relationship with God**

## *It's Time ... a Journey Toward Missional Faithfulness Study Course*



The missional study includes the following resources:

*It's Time! ... an Urgent Call to Christian Mission*

In *It's Time! ... an Urgent Call to Christian Mission*, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Coordinator Daniel Vestal, calls Christians and churches to understand their purpose through the lens of God's missional nature. "God is on mission . . . In love God sends the Savior who in turn sends the Spirit who in turn sends us. . . We are invited to participate in His reconciling and redeeming mission."

For more information and to order call 1.888.801.4223 or visit the CBF Store online: [www.thefellowship.info/itstime](http://www.thefellowship.info/itstime)



### *It's Time Administration Guide*

The *It's Time* Administrative Guide leads church leaders in praying, planning, promoting and organizing the *It's Time* missional study. Timelines, job descriptions, and promotion ideas will help leaders more effectively carry out the study.



### *It's Time Teacher Guide*

*It's Time* Teacher Guide is for teachers and small group leaders facilitating the *It's Time* missional study. A format is suggested for each of the eight small group sessions which include: welcome and gathering, call to prayer, create interest, dig deeper, apply to life, a summary thought, and benediction.



### *It's Time Member Journey Guide*

*It's Time* Member Journey Guide is the student component of the *It's Time* missional study. This resource includes forty days of devotional material divided into eight weeks, space for journaling and reflection, and a guide to sermons preached during the missional study.



### *It's Time DVD*

*It's Time* DVD is a pool of resources for carrying out the *It's Time* missional study. Included on the DVD are: suggestions for carrying out the study, sermons, worship helps, promotion ideas, a retreat and administrative helps.

**H**ow is God calling you to be the Presence of Christ? Designed for individual and small group reflection, the Klesis journey will help you gather the information needed to respond to God's call on your life. The exploration of identity, personality, and giftedness, will bring encouragement and discovery to your journey of faith.

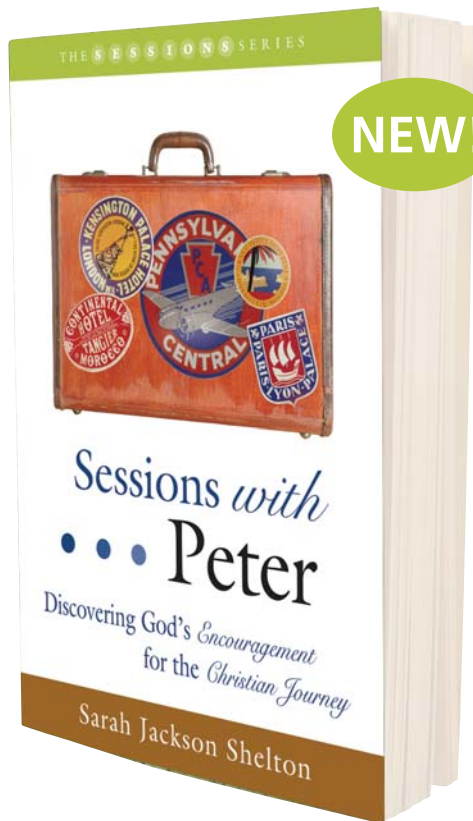


To order Klesis call 1.888.801.4223 or visit the CBF Store online at [www.thefellowship.info](http://www.thefellowship.info)

# SESSIONS

## Series

Series Editor: Michael D. McCullar



### Sessions with Peter: Discovering God's Encouragement for the Christian Journey

By Sarah Jackson Shelton  
1-57312-454-0 • 96 pp/pb

Retail Price: \$12.00  
Your Price: \$9.60

SMYTH & HELWYS

These ten-session studies can be used for seminars or for individual study. They include thought-provoking resource pages full of questions and a bibliography to enhance further study.

**Great for  
Small  
Groups!**

**Quantity Discounts  
Available.**

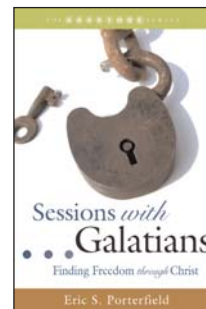
Call  
**1-800-747-3016**  
to save!



### Sessions with Luke: Following Jesus on the Journey to Christian Character

by Timothy W. Brock  
1-57312-449-4  
96 pp/pb

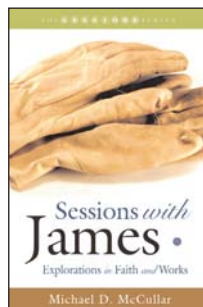
Retail Price: \$12.00  
Your Price: \$9.60



### Sessions with Galatians: Finding Freedom through Christ

by Eric S. Porterfield  
1-57312-126-7  
112 pp/pb

Retail Price: \$12.00  
Your Price: \$9.60



### Sessions with James: Explorations in Faith and Works

by Michael D. McCullar  
1-57312-358-7  
96 pp/pb

Retail Price: \$12.00  
Your Price: \$9.60



### Sessions with Corinthians: Lessons for the Imperfect

by Michael D. McCullar  
1-57312-430-3  
96 pp/pb

Retail Price: \$12.00  
Your Price: \$9.60

Visit [www.helwys.com/sessions](http://www.helwys.com/sessions)

# Great Titles about C. S. Lewis

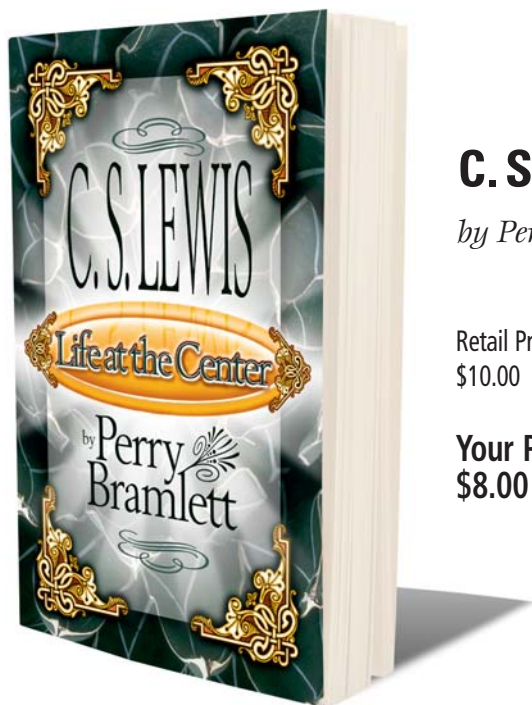
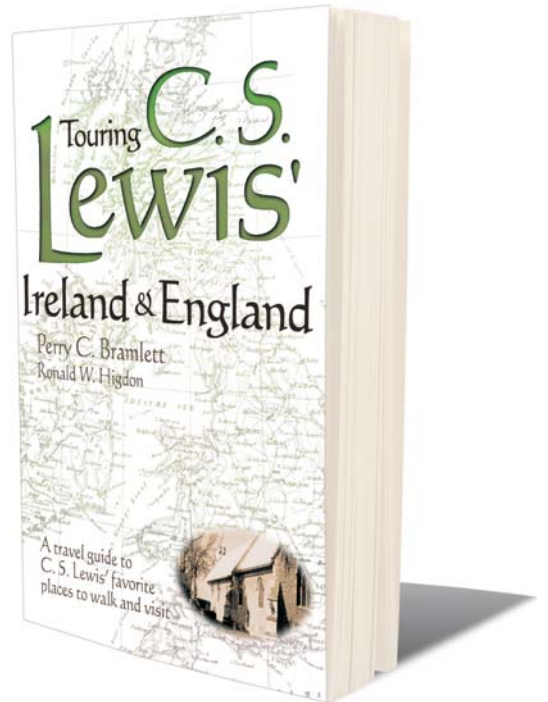
## Touring C. S. Lewis' Ireland & England

by Perry C. Bramlett &  
Ronald W. Higdon

Retail Price:  
\$12.00

Your Price:  
\$9.60

Walk in the footsteps of Lewis and his friends; visit the places where they lived, worked, and worshiped. From their wealth of experience, Bramlett and Higdon provide a historical, geographical, and biographical look at the life of C. S. Lewis. Kathryn Lindskoog, noted Lewis scholar and author, describes this book as “an invaluable guide for sightseers, but also a magic carpet for stay-at-homes...an essential addition to every good collection.”



## C. S. Lewis: Life at the Center

by Perry Bramlett

Retail Price:  
\$10.00

Your Price:  
\$8.00

“Written in clear and cogent terms reflective of Lewis’s own style, this volume describes the devotional dimensions of the Christian apologist’s life: his views on spirituality, prayer, Holy Scripture, and friendship. Reading this engaging work, you will discover nourishment for your own spiritual, intellectual, and moral growth. It will whet your appetite for more of ‘Jack’ Lewis.”

—Henlee Barnette

SMYTH &  
HELWYS

Call **1-800-747-3016** or visit  
**[www.helwys.com/books](http://www.helwys.com/books)** to order.