

# MERE CHRISTIANITY STUDY GUIDE

A Bible Study  
on the C.S. Lewis Book *Mere Christianity*



**By Steven Urban**

A Study Course for a Thinking Faith

*God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers...Anyone who is honestly trying to be a Christian will soon find his intelligence being sharpened: one of the reasons why it needs no special education to be a Christian is that Christianity is an education itself.*

C.S. Lewis  
*Mere Christianity*

**Mere Christianity Study Guide**  
**A Bible Study on the C.S. Lewis Book *Mere Christianity***  
**A Study Course for a Thinking Faith**

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Version 2

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# THE AUTHOR



Steven Urban graduated from the University of California with a degree in Psychobiology before going on to receive his medical doctorate at New York Medical College. He completed his residency training in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Johns Hopkins and was awarded an NIH Fellowship in Stroke Research at the University of Maryland. Today he is a double-board certified Psychiatric Interventional Pain Specialist. He lives with his wife and son near Nashville, Tennessee.

Steve who is a native of Southern California, was not raised in a Christian home. While attending UCLA, his life was “interrupted” by a sensation he had never experienced before or even knew human beings could experience. Had that been the end of it, the sensation may have been dismissed as a mere fluke or some twist of the brain, but the sensation returned again and again. As a Psychobiology undergraduate student, he began to search out what caused these sensations. Along with his scientific inquiries he also began to read histories, biographies, and treatises on psychology, world religions and theology. He even traveled overseas and spent time in a Tibetan monastery in Nepal. Eventually Steve read a book written by a man which would forever change his life.

The man was C.S. Lewis and in his *Surprised by Joy*, Steve discovered a person who experienced his same sensations, yet did not forsake the use of reason and rational inquiry. The book was the final instrument that led to Steve’s realization that Christ was who He claimed to be.

After the four years leading to his conversion, Steve sought out several people and sources to help him deepen his relationship with Christ. Here again C.S. Lewis proved to be an invaluable guide. In *Mere Christianity*, Steve found a wonderful expression of Romans 1-8 leading the believer from compatibility to intimacy with Christ.

# FOREWORD



**D**uring World War II, C. S. Lewis delivered a series of radio broadcasts on the BBC in England. At the time of the broadcasts the outcome of the war was still very uncertain. People needed hope. Many tuned in to see what this Oxford scholar might have to say. Later the talks were published as the book *Mere Christianity*. Since its publication thousands of thoughtful people have found their way to a faith in Christ that makes sense. Included among these is Dr. Francis Collins, the scientist who broke the Genome, and also Charles Colson, President Nixon's chief of staff, and later founder of Prison Fellowship. *Mere Christianity* is for the thinking person. But the book appeals to the heart as well. In fact, it appeals to the whole person. It is not a surprise that this should be so. In his literary criticism of his friend and fellow Inkling, Charles Williams' Arthurian Poems, *The Arthurian Torso*, C. S. Lewis said, "The first problem in life is how do you fit the stone [the Reason] and the shell [the Romantic longings of the heart]?" Lewis himself came to believe that Christianity did this best. In fact, after his long spell as an atheist, Lewis's first Christian book was titled, *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism*. He wrote to show that Christianity was a holistic faith that reconciled head and heart. This is because faith in Christ is a reconciling faith. It reconciles those estranged from God into a robust relationship with God. It gives the resources to make possible reconciliation of broken relationships with others. In fact, it provides the means to repair the ruins within one's own life. It sets the believer on the course of reconciling the soul and body as well as the head and the heart.

Lewis is known for his ability to open wardrobe doors into magical worlds where the themes of reconciliation are made accessible through children's stories like the Narnian Chronicles; written for children but very readable for adults. So too, one is grateful when someone comes along and opens a wardrobe door into an enriched understanding of Lewis's books. This is what one encounters in Dr. Steven Urban's *Mere Christianity Study Guide: A Bible Study on the C. S. Lewis Book Mere Christianity*. With all of the diagnostic skill of a physician, Urban offers fresh insight on this Christian Classic making Lewis's thought all the more accessible for those who long to better understand Lewis and his ideas. Urban makes the book come alive with valuable applications for spiritual growth and maturity. In fact the book could be titled: C. S. Lewis's Spiritual Formation for Mere Christians. Urban is right to suggest that Lewis's book is not merely a work in Christian Apologetics and defense of the faith. Its themes are far richer than that. Lewis

is concerned not only that the faith is defensible but it is also transformational. This fact is certainly developed by Dr. Urban.

Urban developed this study of *Mere Christianity* while teaching an adult Sunday school class. Over some time he developed the curriculum. Now, his treatment of *Mere Christianity* provides a valuable resource for the Church at large. All over the world Christians have studied *Mere Christianity* in Sunday schools and small groups around the globe. But never has such an in-depth study of the book been developed and made transferable for others to use while teaching from this classic text. Urban has served well all who want such an aid to enhance their own teaching. I have been studying C. S. Lewis for 44 years. I have taught Lewis courses and lectured about Lewis for 34 years at 58 university campuses in 11 different countries around the world. Urban's study of *Mere Christianity* is the best I've seen. It pleases me to see he is making his own study of Lewis available to others. You see, I've known Steve for over 35 years. My own grasp of Lewis was deeply influenced by things I learned from Steve while I was still in graduate school. It is high time others can have the privilege of gaining from his many years study of Lewis. I recommend the book for all who take their faith seriously and want to grow to be all they can be in Christ.

Jerry Root, PhD

Editor of *The Quotable C.S. Lewis*

Consulting Editor of *The C.S. Lewis Study Bible*



# AUTHOR'S COURSE NOTE AND STUDY FORMATS



C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* is now well over a half century old and has sold millions of copies around the world. Yet despite its recognition as a “classic,” there is surprisingly little available today in terms of a serious study course that *delves into the depths* of each chapter and in turn into Lewis's thoughts. I have sought here to remedy that.

To follow Lewis's thinking from what our common human notions of right and wrong imply about the universe to the necessity of becoming something like a “new species” of men and women, I first took the Preface and 33 chapters of *Mere Christianity* and organized them into a variety of different study course options (see **Study Formats** on the following page). Then, for each chapter, I wrote questions and cited the specific paragraph(s) from which those questions were drawn (e.g., para. 2 or para. 4-7, etc.). A few questions are opinion-based but most require reading and thought to grasp Lewis's main points and ideas. The questions are also intended to facilitate small group discussions as the discipline of expressing one's thoughts often helps to sharpen and solidify one's understanding. Finally, **Appendices for 'Further Up and Further In'** were added at the end to supplement and further clarify certain topics. The course can be completed singly by an individual, but I strongly recommend that he or she periodically discuss what is learned with another person.

I would also encourage you to visit [www.MereChristianity.org](http://www.MereChristianity.org). This website has been created to offer you an opportunity to participate in open discussion on the book and study. In addition, you will also find an **Answer Guide** to the questions found in this study.

While broaching topics like other religions, morality, evolution and sex, it is unlikely that everyone will persistently see eye to eye. This can potentially cause the question-generated discussions to become rather lively. It is advisable, therefore, that the discussions be conducted in a spirit of good will, keeping in mind that the primary aim of the course is not to address the *presence of difference* within contemporary Christianity, but rather the *absence of depth*. The course is specifically intended for those seeking to deepen their understanding of God by nurturing the *thinking faith that alone is pleasing to Him*. This is not some special faith: it is the faith commanded in Scripture, exhibited by the apostles and other New Testament followers of Christ, and seen in many subsequent generations of Christians. It will require putting on one's thinking

cap and putting forth mental effort—the kind of effort Christ sought when He spoke in parables and asked difficult questions.

For more information on C.S. Lewis and background on the actual writing of *Mere Christianity*, I strongly recommend *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*, by Walter Hooper, 1996, pp. 1-126, 303-328.



# Study Formats



## Study Format: One Course of 12 Lessons

- |                                   |                                |                                    |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 1 | Preface, Book 1: Chapters 1& 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 7  | Book 3: Chapters 7 & 8         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 2 | Book 1: Chapters 3, 4 & 5      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 8  | Book 3: Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 3 | Book 2: Chapters 1 & 2         | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 9  | Book 4: Chapter 1, 2 & 3       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 4 | Book 2: Chapters 3, 4 & 5      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 10 | Book 4: Chapter 4, 5 & 6       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 5 | Book 3: Chapters 1, 2 & 3      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 11 | Book 4: Chapter 7, 8 & 9       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 6 | Book 3: Chapters 4, 5 & 6      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 12 | Book 4: Chapter 10 & 11        |

## Study Format: Three Courses of 4 Lessons

### First Course:

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 1 | Preface, Book 1: Chapters 1& 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 2 | Book 1: Chapters 3, 4 & 5      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 3 | Book 2: Chapters 1 & 2         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 4 | Book 2: Chapters 3, 4 & 5      |

### Second Course:

- |                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 1 | Book 3: Chapters 1, 2 & 3       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 2 | Book 3: Chapters 4, 5 & 6       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 3 | Book 3: Chapters 7 & 8          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 4 | Book 3: Chapters 9, 10, 11 & 12 |

### Third Course:

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 1 | Book 4: Chapter 1, 2 & 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 2 | Book 4: Chapter 4, 5 & 6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 3 | Book 4: Chapter 7, 8 & 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 4 | Book 4: Chapter 10 & 11  |

## Study Format: One Protracted Course of 33 Lessons

- |                                    |                   |                                    |                         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 1  | Preface           | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 18 | Book 3: Chapter 7       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 2  | Book 1: Chapter 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 19 | Book 3: Chapter 8       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 3  | Book 1: Chapter 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 20 | Book 3: Chapter 9       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 4  | Book 1: Chapter 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 21 | Book 3: Chapter 10      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 5  | Book 1: Chapter 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 22 | Book 3: Chapter 11 & 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 6  | Book 1: Chapter 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 23 | Book 4: Chapter 1       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 7  | Book 2: Chapter 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 24 | Book 4: Chapter 2       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 8  | Book 2: Chapter 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 25 | Book 4: Chapter 3       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 9  | Book 2: Chapter 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 26 | Book 4: Chapter 4       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 10 | Book 2: Chapter 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 27 | Book 4: Chapter 5       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 11 | Book 2: Chapter 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 28 | Book 4: Chapter 6       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 12 | Book 3: Chapter 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 29 | Book 4: Chapter 7       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 13 | Book 3: Chapter 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 30 | Book 4: Chapter 8       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 14 | Book 3: Chapter 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 31 | Book 4: Chapter 9       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 15 | Book 3: Chapter 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 32 | Book 4: Chapter 10      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 16 | Book 3: Chapter 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 33 | Book 4: Chapter 11      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson 17 | Book 3: Chapter 6 |                                    |                         |

# INTRODUCTION

## WHY A “THINKING” FAITH?



*“But we have the mind of Christ.”*

1 Cor. 2:16

Remember the old joke that asked, “What do you call someone who graduates at the bottom of the class in medical school?” The answer? “A doctor.” But you probably wouldn’t ever seek out that doctor to become patient, would you? Similarly, “What do you call someone who walks down a church aisle, makes a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and then never does anything to go on further and higher in their knowledge of Christ, their love for God or their walk in the Spirit?” The answer? “A Christian.” And similarly, you probably wouldn’t ever seek out that shallow, in-name-only Christian to *be with*—much less *be like*—would you?

Probably not, or you wouldn’t have chosen to read this book.

Not long after my own conversion, I was asked by a seasoned church member how I had become a Christian. I told him about an *intrusion* that occurred one day in my life, unsolicited, unexpected and unexplainable. The intrusion was a *sensation* I had never experienced before and which, I truthfully never knew human beings could experience. To make matters more confusing, the sensation returned...and then again and again—well over 200 times I estimated—I told the listener before going on to briefly recount my four year search to understand it.

Being a Psychobiology undergraduate student at the time, I was soon able to dismiss epilepsy, a brain tumor, bipolar disorder or some prankster with drug-dipped darts and began to broaden my enquiry. I took it upon myself to entirely read the major texts of most of the world’s foremost religions—including the Bible. I also read a number of histories, biographies and philosophical, psychological and theological works. I became convinced that my experiences were neither uncommon nor limited to any one race or class of people but, for reasons unclear to me, they were simply not spoken about.<sup>1</sup> Then I was introduced to a man who would forever change my life.

This man, of course, was C.S. Lewis and my introduction came through one of his writings, albeit not *Mere Christianity*, but a “suffocatingly subjective” autobiographical cousin, *Surprised By Joy*. In the book, Lewis recounted his early life and thought up to the time, when as a don at as Oxford University, he experienced his own conversion. The man I met in Lewis was one who had, without psychotropic intoxicants or austere, exotic religious practices (both of which were common in the literature of my college days), encountered my same recurring experiences of “Joy”

(as he called them), had rationally struggled with many of my own questions, but who, in the end, abandoned neither his *experiences* nor his *reason*. It was then that Lewis brought me to a significant realization: if the experiences I was having were not mere random twists of the brain, then they must be purposeful and, as I began to suspect, their purpose was none other than that of *bait*—I had unwittingly been lulled into a trap. For “Joy” was not a sensation of fulfillment and therefore an end in itself.

As Lewis described, “It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton’s ‘enormous bliss’ of Eden...comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation, of course, of desire; but desire for what?...and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing that had just ceased...[it was an] unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction...[and therefore doubtful that] anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world.”<sup>2</sup> Yes, an intense, enormous, unsatisfied and *desirable* desire, but a desire for what?

When I came to see that merely desiring a desire was not the same as seeking to find and be fulfilled by the desire’s object, two things occurred.

First, several hypothetical explanations espousing goals of obtaining some state of mind, like happiness or pleasure, fell away. A practical though crude analogy may be helpful: Imagine a boy, shipwrecked on a deserted island, who begins to go through puberty and start having new desires he has never experienced before—are the desires simply for producing an aroused state of mind or are they for some specific object yet unknown to him? While not meaning to be dismissive, it seemed to me that the overriding objective of many Eastern Religions and certainly all the emerging Western drug philosophies of that time were, therefore, akin to mental masturbation.

Second, if the object of the desire actually existed, what might it be or be like relative to other known human categories of desire? Was it a desire for something like food or drink or new shoes? Or was it a desire for something more, a desire for another living being? The latter produced a problem: could the object I so inconsolably longed for possibly be inconsolably *longing back* for me? I was entering terrain that was no longer safe.

As though I had been asleep, I suddenly awakened to the fact that I had not initiated this quest I was undertaking. Like a fish in pursuit of a smaller fish that unexpectedly sees a larger fish coming after itself from behind, I now found myself as less the predator and more the prey, as less the ‘seeker’ and more the ‘sought.’ Frightened yet still longing, as in the early bloom of new love, I knew I was no longer dealing with either the imaginary or innocuous but a living being, real and, apparently, relentless. I found I had entered into intellectual “checkmate”—to again use Lewis’s own description—and there was no *honest* way out. I finally conceded, “If something is there, if you are there, show me.”



The *possibility* of the existence of a real, living, *desiring* supernatural God continued to haunt me for a few more weeks. Finally one bright snowy day, following neither an invitation nor an alter call, I walked out of a small church in Idaho astonished by the collision of desires that had just taken place and *knowing* Christ was who He claimed to be. *Believing Him had not made Him real; but because He was real and knowable, I believed Him.*

After hearing my account, the man who inquired about my conversion looked at me and incredulously replied, “You mean you did all that when the only thing you had to do was go from your head down to your heart?!”

Two things disturbed him. First, he was of the mindset that it should not have taken me four years to be converted—it could be done in the time it took to get in an elevator on one floor and get out on another. Apparently the lengthy conversions of Augustine, Martin Luther and C.S. Lewis had no place in his view of Christianity.

Second, the journey from one’s head to one’s heart was a statement about *epistemology* or knowledge or thinking. By it he did not mean “knowledge plus” or a “knowledge that surpasses our human reason.” Indeed, for him it meant that *belief was the ability to give up the need to know; faith meant no longer having to think.* In other words, going from your head to your heart meant leaving your head behind, not having both.

I respectfully chose to just smile back at him because, as a young believer, I lacked both the confidence and experience to express what was truly inside me: “Yes, sir, and had I not met with so many superficial clichés like your own, it perhaps wouldn’t have taken me four years to come to Christ!” In my subsequent 35 years as a Christian, I have never forgotten that conversation inasmuch as I have been reminded of it time and time again by many other well-meaning but otherwise misinformed Christian men and women.

Inherent in the Biblical notions of faith and grace is a trustworthy transference of merit that is necessary to become right with God: as the insufficiency of one’s own efforts is humbly recognized, it gives way to the sufficient efforts of Christ on one’s behalf. However, this is not an end but a beginning and a point of paramount confusion. Somehow today *grace* has too often come to be used as a synonym for the *absence of volitional effort* while *faith* has come to be used as a synonym for *mental cruise-control*. “I can’t earn my salvation” has given way to “I don’t have to do anything about my salvation and spirituality.” And, “I can’t see God but only believe in Him” has given way to “I don’t have to learn or know anything more.” But neither of these views is Biblical and therefore neither will foster a growing, confident relationship with God. Many Christian writers—from New Testament times clear up to today—have addressed this: “Faith is not opposed to knowledge; it is opposed to sight. Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning.”<sup>3</sup>

The paucity of brothers and sisters in Christ who work at thinking through their faith is the ‘open secret’ of Christianity today. This does not mean a scarcity of Christians with specialized Ph.D.s; it means a scarcity of ordinary lay Christian individuals who understand that their faith must be mentally disciplined beyond merely hearing a weekly sermon or attending a Sunday School class. We have not been left with, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul but *with little to none of your mind.*”

The issue is this: because we as Christians have failed to think as our Lord did and as His apostles did and as many succeeding generations of Christians also did, because we have failed to recognize, cultivate and exercise the *mind of Christ* that indwells every Christian, Christianity today is no longer the *thinking faith* it was intended to be. Because we have not *set our minds* as such, we have slipped from the loving path of God’s leading, we have become distracted from His call to godliness, and we have failed to progress along His planned transformation from “statues”—as Lewis called us—to *real* sons of God. The result has been devastating. Rather than being distinct within this world due to God’s indwelling presence, we have become indistinguishable from it. Rather than being spouses, parents, workers and citizens of honor, prudence, integrity, endurance and courage, we have become superficial, dishonest, lazy, greedy and ‘cool’. Rather than being pleasing to our God, I fear we have become a plague.

I wish that these observations were mine alone, but unfortunately they are not; the problem is not endemic but pandemic and has spread throughout today’s education, culture (society) and *church*. The resulting affect upon Christianity has been mind numbing. For a clearer picture of this, please refer to **Appendix 1**. We now live in what is probably the most *anti*-intellectual era in the history of Western civilization. By this, I do not mean *non*-intellectual as in a humanity that has somehow *lost* its capacity to think and discern between true and false or real and sham. I mean *anti*-intellectual as in a humanity that has *chosen against* the exercise and use of that capacity. Like someone choosing to close his eyes because he has lost confidence in the existence of *light*, humanity appears to be choosing to close its mind because it has lost confidence in *truth*. The resulting *shallow-thinking* has become the new “norm” in education, culture and the church. Consequently, reason, well-informed character and conviction within Christianity have given way to feelings, fads and infatuations.

Superficial Christians are the product of a superficial Christianity. Superficial Christianity is an inanimate monument with everything carved out in stone that keeps feeding the mind of its adherents *lifeless* life applications. Instead of fostering *living thought* it freezes it. For “If Christians cannot communicate as thinking beings, they are reduced to encountering one another only at the shallow level of gossip and small talk. Hence [today’s] modern problem—the loneliness of the thinking Christian.”<sup>4</sup>

Deep Christians are *thinking* Christians. They reject all calls to forfeit the cultivation of their minds just because the “Christian mind is too provocative, too dangerous, too revolutionary [and



if] nourished, if fed fat on the milk of the word, it would perhaps collide so violently with the secular mind which dominates our comfortable and complacent set-up that we Christians shall find ourselves, mentally at least, persecuted again.”<sup>5</sup> Rather, the thinking Christian knows that, “Wherever men think and talk, the banner will have to be raised. Not, of course, for the purpose of pursuing a ceaseless propaganda campaign, but for the purpose of pursuing clarity and integrity. Not that we should convert, but that we should be understood. Not that the Christian mind should become the immediate and overwhelming vehicle of all truth to all men, but that the Christian mind should be recognized for what it is: something different, something distinctive, something with depth, hardness, solidity; a pleasure to fight with and a joy to be beaten by.”<sup>6</sup>

Deep-thinking Christians are not the by-product of some *super-Christianity* or *Christianity plus*; they are simply believers transformed by a greater and greater awareness of being possessed with the mind of Christ coupled with a recognition that the mind of Christ is not just off to the side sputtering in some corner. As Lewis put it, “God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers...Anyone who is honestly trying to be a Christian will soon find his intelligence being sharpened: one of the reasons why it needs no special education to be a Christian is that Christianity is an education itself.”<sup>7</sup>

What then are we to do? Our options run between “Stay low to keep the status quo” and “Let’s get a big bunch of people going on this.” Whereas the first of these extremes denies the very power God has placed within us, the latter overinflates that power so as to run ahead and leave God behind, as Israel did at Ai.

The correct, God-ordained option is one of those wonderful, biblical paradoxes. Wherein primarily taking care of oneself goes against our commanded evangelical sensibilities about going into and caring for the world, recall this fact about Paul’s evangelism: “The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and...it continued to increase” *only after* the brethren had taken the new convert Paul and “sent him away to Tarsus.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed Paul had been bringing the gospel to others, but a decade and some years later, he had learned to take enough care of himself to bring others not merely *the gospel*, but *the gospel incarnate*. In later years, he would write to the Corinthians, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”<sup>9</sup>

The paradoxical best way to love our neighbor is to love them as we love ourselves; and the best way to love ourselves—within God’s Spirit, love, grace and will—is to work with what He has enabled us to work with the best—*ourselves*. This means training our minds, disciplining our thinking and *exercising the very mind of Christ within us*. It is *this* mind that knows how deeply it is loved; and it is this mind that knows how deeply it can love others.

The best and most authentic evidence of true Christianity is a Christian; and, unfortunately, the worst evidence is the same. We evangelicals may have sold ourselves a false bill of goods by making our first priority *evangelism* instead of making it what Christ declared it should be. It is precisely at this point that *Mere Christianity* enters the picture. To some, *Mere Christianity* is an appetizer; to others it is an apologetic; and to still others it is an affirmation: but to all, especially at this hour, it should be seen for what it actually is—the acknowledgment of *what Christianity actually is*. “It is quite right,” Lewis wrote, “to go away from [the words of the Bible] for a moment in order to make some special point clear. But you must always go back. Naturally God knows how to describe Himself much better than we know how to describe Him.”<sup>10</sup>

C.S. Lewis and *Mere Christianity* are not substitutes for Christ and Scripture, but they are, for a moment, enormously helpful in making some special points clear as we transform from being creatures inhabiting a universe haunted by a-right-and-wrong-that-we-fail-to-live-by into being “new men.” Subjecting ourselves to reading, thinking about and discussing these points—the way Christ taught and trained His disciples—will, one may trust, serve to bring us not only *back to* but also *‘further up and further in’* to Christ and Scripture. Put differently, thinking with the mind of Christ will make us think more like Christ and thinking more like Christ will make us more Christ-like: “This is the whole of Christianity...the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.”<sup>11</sup>

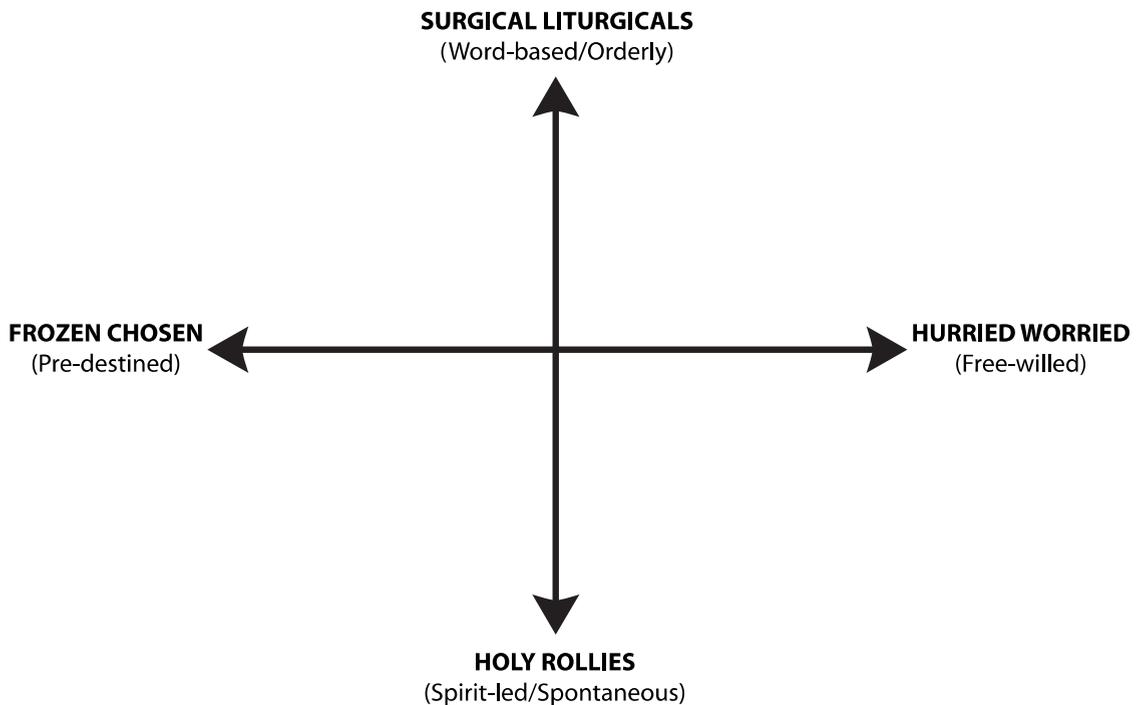


# PREFACE



Lewis begins by stating he is not offering help to anyone hesitating between two denominations or overly concerned about certain disputed matters. His objective is “the defense of what [Richard] Baxter called ‘mere’ Christianity.”

1. Where would you place yourself on the “denomination” chart below? Horizontally, do you lean more toward the Frozen Chosen or the Hurried Worried? Vertically, do you lean more to the Surgical Liturgicals or the Holly Rollies? Mark an ‘X’ where you would locate your beliefs:



2. In *your opinion*, what benefits do you think are obtained from denominations?

3. In *your opinion*, what detriments do you think come from denominations?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What does Lewis mean by a Christianity that is ‘mere’? (para. 8)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How does Lewis use the word “gentleman” to clarify the meaning of “Christian”? (para. 10-13)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. For “extra-credit” and the “extra-curious”, who was Richard Baxter?

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**Discussion Notes**



# BOOK 1

## RIGHT AND WRONG AS A CLUE TO THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE



### Chapter 1: The Law of Human Nature



1. What is it that we can learn from people disagreeing or quarreling? (para. 1-2)
2. What are some of the different names Lewis says this can or has been called? (para. 3)
3. How is the Law of Human Nature different from other laws of nature? (para. 3-4)
4. Why in the past have people called this Rule about Right and Wrong the Law of Nature? (para. 5)

5. On what basis have some denied that the Law of (Human) Nature is known to all men? (para. 6)
  
6. How does Lewis respond to this denial? (para. 7-8)
  
7. Agreeing that Right and Wrong are *real or objective* and not merely a matter of taste, preference or opinion, what is the next point Lewis makes about our human Law of Nature? (para. 9-10)
  
8. Put Lewis's final summary into your own words: (para. 11)

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**Discussion Notes**





- F. Why can't there be one impulse which is always good that is actually the Moral Law? (para. 4,5)
2. **Second objection:** Isn't the Moral Law simply a social convention, learned by education?
- A. List some human conventions you have learned from your parents or society:
- B. What example of a real truth (which exists whether or not it was ever taught) does Lewis cite? (para. 6)
- C. What two reasons does Lewis give for the Moral Law being a reality and not a convention? (para. 7)
- D. What is Lewis's reply to the argument that Moral Law was responsible for witch burning in the past? (para. 8)

