



WHAT  
C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE  
CHRISTIANS  
STUDY GUIDE  
BELIEVE

*(Book Two of Mere Christianity)*

*by*  
C.S. LEWIS



INCLUDING A  
SIX-PART VIDEO SERIES

*with Andy Bannister*

JOEL S. WOODRUFF

**A C.S. Lewis Institute Study Guide to  
What Christians Believe  
(Book 2 in Mere Christianity)  
by C.S. Lewis**

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A CSLI Press Publication



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## Discipleship with C.S. Lewis

Most of the content of this Study Guide previously appeared in *Discipleship with C.S. Lewis: A Guide to Mere Christianity for Small Groups and Mentoring Relationships*, by Joel Woodruff (CSLI Press 2020).



I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

— John 10:10b

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## HOW TO USE THIS CSLI STUDY GUIDE

C.S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity* is one of the most influential Christian books of the twentieth century. It was based on a series of radio broadcasts given by Lewis during World War II and is divided into four books. Book 2, titled "What Christians Believe," is the subject of this study guide; it was also published as a separate book titled *What Christians Believe*. Lewis outlines in an engaging manner the foundational teachings of "mere Christianity" that come out of the apostles' teaching from the Bible and are summarized in the Apostles' Creed. Appendix A of this study guide includes the Apostles' Creed as a reference.

This study guide, with accompanying videos, is written with a view toward practical Christian discipleship of heart and mind. It will help participants develop an understanding of the biblical teachings behind Christian beliefs. It is designed for small groups and mentoring relationships but could also be used for individual study.

*For Seekers, New Believers, and Mature Believers:* This study is ideal for seekers (those interested in exploring Christianity), new believers, and even for mature believers who will find Lewis's approaches to talking about the Christian faith especially applicable to the world we live in today.

### **Books Needed:**

- *This CSLI Study Guide*
- *The Bible*
- *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis

or

- *What Christians Believe*, by C.S. Lewis

(If you use *Mere Christianity*, we will be using Book 2: "What Christians Believe," which is the second of four sections in *Mere Christianity*.)

## Video Lectures

- Found by scanning the QR codes in this CSLI Study Guide
- or by going to the course located at:



**One-on-one or small-group approach:** This study is designed for one-on-one or small-group study. In a one-on-one approach, it is suggested that an experienced follower of Christ walk through this study with a seeker or person newer to the faith. This would allow open discussion of questions that may arise.

Another method would be for a more mature Christian to take two or three others through the study together. This allows for a wider range of questions and discussion as each person contributes a unique perspective. It also can provide energy to group dynamics.

Small groups could also use this study, with one ongoing facilitator or a leadership that rotates among group participants.

The study includes seven sessions. The first session is introductory and addresses the story behind *Mere Christianity/What Christians Believe*. The other six sessions include the study of one or more biblical passages, readings from *What Christians Believe*, engaging video lectures by Andy Bannister, and study questions and action steps to apply what you've learned.

We suggest that for Session 1, participants watch the welcome video and first teaching video together and also read and discuss the article "The Story Behind the Writing of *Mere Christianity/What Christians Believe*."

For subsequent sessions, we suggest that each person complete the Bible study, watch the video, read the chapter from *What Christians Believe*, and write out answers to the questions, *before* meeting together, typically at a home. The questions and answers can be used as a guide for discussion of the material. This would be followed up by addressing the Action Steps and Memory Verses.

*Alternative approach.* Another approach would be to include these things in the group meetings, i.e., Bible study, watch video, read the chapter from *What Christians Believe*, and discuss the questions. This would be followed by addressing the Action Steps and Memory Verses. As part of this approach, participants could read out loud the Bible passages and text from *What Christians Believe*.

We encourage groups to begin and close the discussion time in prayer, asking God to reveal His truth. The study will be more effective if each person writes down at least one action point to work on in the coming week.

**Facilitator/Leader Guide:** A brief facilitator/leader guide can be found in the appendices. Among other things, the guide provides several sample ways of organizing the group meetings.

**How the Bible is used in this study:** This study selects biblical passages that address the key themes of Christian belief and practice discussed in *What Christians Believe* (Book 2 of *Mere Christianity*). C.S. Lewis believed in the authority of the Bible as God’s Word revealed to humankind. He once wrote to a friend, “What we are committed to believing is whatever can be proved from Scripture.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus Lewis would want the reader to study the Bible as the ultimate means of learning and applying God’s truth to our lives. Participants in this study are encouraged to study the Bible and find other passages that would deepen and highlight the truths discussed in *What Christians Believe*.

**Summary for each session:** Each study session (other than the introductory session) includes some “Concluding Observations” on the key points addressed in both the Bible passage and the writing of C.S. Lewis. This section can be used as a means of outlining and reviewing what you’ve studied.

**Bible memory verse(s) for each session:** Each study session (other than the introductory session) closes with a suggested Bible memory passage. By your taking time to memorize these verses, God’s Word will

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, 1945 letter to Lyman Stebbins, quoted in James Como, “C.S. Lewis’ Quantum Church: An Uneasy Meditation,” in *C.S. Lewis and the Church: Essays in Honour of Walter Hooper*, ed. Judith Wolfe and Brendan N. Wolfe (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 98.

be stored in your mind and heart. One way to memorize is to write out the verses on note cards or sticky notes. Place these in places frequented throughout the day (the bathroom mirror, car dash board, office wall, etc.). By repeating one verse over the course of a week and chewing on it (meditating on it), you will come to understand it more deeply. Repeat passages out loud as you start your discussion time together. This study uses the English Standard Version, but you may use any preferred version for memorization.

**For more on C.S. Lewis:** To learn more about the life and faith of C.S. Lewis, visit the website of the C.S. Lewis Institute: <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/c-s-lewis-life-works/>.

There you may download a free e-book on Lewis, *C.S. Lewis: A Profile in Faith*.

Lewis's spiritual autobiography, covering his childhood through his conversion to Christianity as an adult, is titled *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*.

Once Lewis became a disciple of Jesus Christ, he used both reason and imagination to communicate his faith to others through a variety of books, including children's fiction (*The Chronicles of Narnia*), science fiction (*The Space Trilogy*), and Christian apologetics works, such as *Miracles*, *The Problem of Pain*, and *Mere Christianity*.

Lewis died on November 20, 1963, the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Lewis thought he'd be forgotten as an author within a few years after his death. He would be surprised to know that he is better known as an author today than ever before. His books continue to sell millions of copies each year, and a number of his fiction works have been turned into movies and dramatic productions stage. His life story has also been the subject of numerous books, movies, and academic works.



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**Session 1**

Introduction: The Story Behind  
*Mere Christianity/What Christians Believe*

## Suggested Format for Session 1

**Fellowship Time:** Enjoy coffee/tea/beverages and snacks.

**Facilitator Starts Meeting:** Go through the books and approach necessary to most effectively enjoy and engage in this study of *What Christians Believe*.

Review “How to Use This CSLI Study Guide,” at beginning of this Study Guide and discuss the meeting dates, times, and formats for the future. (The Facilitator/Leader Guide in the appendices provides several sample ways of organizing the group meetings as well as other relevant information.) Briefly discuss the homework to be done *before* the next session, e.g., the Session 2 Bible study, video, book reading/questions.

**Group Introductions:** Take some time to introduce one another to the group using these questions:

- 1) Where were you born and where do you live now?
- 2) What is one of your favorite books and why?
- 3) What brought you to this study?

**Watch Welcome Video (3 minutes)**



**Watch Video Talk: “*What Qualifies C.S. Lewis to Talk About Christianity?*” by Dr. Andy Bannister (16 minutes)**



Read the following article and discuss:

### **The Story Behind the Writing of *Mere Christianity/What Christians Believe***

As bombs were falling on London, and the air Battle for Britain was being waged between the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force, the British people again confronted the horrors of war. Prime Minister Winston Churchill took to the microphone and via radio inspired his nation to fight valiantly against Hitler's forces to preserve all that they knew to be good and true. Even so, the British government knew that the destruction, death, and sorrow of World War II were taking its toll on the morale of its people. The nation needed some spiritual encouragement. War tends to surface the deeper questions of life and God, questions that can lead to despondency or hope. So the search was on: Who could provide real answers in a compelling fashion to the spiritual questions of a nation? The directors of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) turned to an Oxford literature professor named Clive Staples Lewis, better known as C.S. Lewis.

Lewis soon became the second-best-known radio voice on the BBC, after Churchill. Lewis's broadcast talks gave hope to the British people as he shared spiritual insights in a down-to-earth way. He had served as an infantry officer in World War I, been wounded, and knew the nightmares of war firsthand. Wartime caused him to struggle with the meaning of life. He had deep spiritual questions; for more than a decade after the First World War, he explored the worldviews of various philosophies, atheism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and finally came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ provided the most rational and fulfilling answers to the spiritual questions of life. His personal experiences, sharp intellect, understanding of philosophy, religion and the classics, his Irish gift of storytelling, his love for God and the people of his nation—all enabled him passionately to use these radio broadcasts (1942–1944) to share with listeners of all classes and backgrounds the essentials of “Mere Christianity.”

These radio broadcasts are now known in book form as *Mere Christianity*, and include *What Christians Believe* (Book 2 of *Mere Christianity*) which is the focus of this study. These broadcasts and writings were shaped in the midst of wartime. Lewis knew that war sharpens our focus on the ultimate realities of life. Whether one's nation is at war

or not, Lewis noted that the Christian life is lived in “enemy-occupied territory” and that disciples of Jesus are engaged in a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. For this reason, *What Christians Believe* identifies the enemies to faith in Jesus Christ, gives a rational defense for Christianity, and encourages people to thoughtfully consider the claims of Jesus Christ.

If Lewis were alive today, he would be surprised to learn that *Mere Christianity* was named the most influential Christian book of the twentieth century by *Christianity Today* magazine. This reflects the book’s effectiveness in presenting the essence of Christianity to millions of people since its publication in 1952. Many have come to faith in Christ by reading its well-reasoned arguments for the Christian faith. Our hope is that in going through this study on *What Christians Believe* you will take the time to consider the rationale for putting one’s hope and trust in Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What people or books have most influenced your current worldview or thoughts about religion and God?
- 2) How would you describe your current position when it comes to your religious beliefs or lack thereof?
- 3) What do you hope to get out of this study?



Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be a word without meaning.

—C.S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, chapter 1

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**Session 2**  
**Rival Understandings of God**

## Questions to Explore

- 1) Does God exist?
- 2) If God exists, what is God like?
- 3) If a good God made the world, why has it gone so wrong?
- 4) How does the idea of justice (some things are just and others unjust) refute the atheist's idea that life as we know it is the result of random chance?

## Bible Study

Read Genesis 1:1–2:3.

Genesis chronicles the creation of the world and humankind by God. It reveals clues to the nature of God, the meaning of life, and reality as we know it today on this earth. It provides an essential foundation to understanding the Christian faith. Answer the following questions based on your reading of Genesis 1:1–2:3:

- 1) According to the Bible, does God exist? If so, what words are used to describe God? What is God like?
- 2) What can you know about God from what God does?
- 3) What can you know about God from what God says?
- 4) God's creation of the world is described as being over a period of seven intervals or days. What does this imply about the nature of God, the One who created the world?
- 5) What is the relationship between matter—the created physical world—and God?
- 6) How are men and women described after they are created? What does this imply about their relationship to the Creator in comparison to the rest of creation?

**Watch Video Talk “The Varying Ideas About God” by Andy Bannister (18 minutes)**



Answer the following questions in response to the video:

- 1) In his talk, Andy Bannister looks at five characteristics of the God of the Bible “that form the heart of who the Bible says that God is”: (1) He is a God who’s relational. (2) He is knowable. (3) He is holy. (4) He is love. (5) He is a God who has suffered. How are each of these characteristics significant with respect to a person’s relationship with God?
- 2) Bannister points out that there are major, major differences between the world’s religions, e.g., between Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. How is this relevant to answering people who claim that various religions are all equally valid paths to God?
- 3) At the end of his talk, Bannister presents a challenge. He says: “I think the God of the Bible doesn’t allow us to get away with easy answers like, ‘Well, you can just believe in God. It doesn’t matter which God.’ It matters entirely. Not all gods are the same. The differences really, really matter. And the God revealed in Jesus is a God like no other. And the challenge to us then is what are we going to do when we’re faced with that God? Are we going to walk away and ignore Him? Or are we going to respond to what He’s already done for us in and through Jesus Christ?” What are your thoughts on this challenge?

## **Study of *What Christians Believe***

Read *What Christians Believe*, chapter 1, “The Rival Conceptions of God.” Answer the following questions in response to your reading:

- 1) What is the first major division of humanity in regard to belief in God? Is this a correct observation of the world today? Why or why not?

- 2) Think of someone you know who is an atheist—a person who believes there is no God. How would this person support belief that the world is senseless, random, and without ultimate meaning?
- 3) How did the ideas of just and unjust, right and wrong, eventually lead C.S. Lewis to believe that the atheistic viewpoint is too simple for explaining reality as we know it?
- 4) How would you communicate to a friend in your own words the idea that just and unjust; right and wrong; fair and unfair are pointers to the existence of God?
- 5) What is the second major division of humanity in regard to belief in God?
- 6) Think of someone you know who is a pantheist—a person who believes that everything is God and that God is not different and separate from all created things including human beings (forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, or New Age spirituality). How do you think this person would defend belief that God is beyond good and evil? What are the implications of this belief?
- 7) What does the Christian idea of God say about God's relationship to the created world and to human beings? What are the implications of this?
- 8) What do the implications of the Christian idea of God—that God is good and not evil—have on our understanding of the world?
- 9) Lewis summarizes the Christian view of reality: "For Christianity is a fighting religion. It thinks God made the world—that space and time, heat and cold, and all the colours and tastes, and all the animals and vegetables, are things that God 'made up out of His head' as a man makes up a story. But it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again." Does Lewis's view of

reality square with the biblical story as found in Genesis? Why or why not?

- 10) How would you state the Christian view of reality in your own words to a friend?

## **Action Steps**

- 1) If you believe God made the world, write down right now one action step that you could take each day in the coming week to acknowledge God as the One who created you and created this world. For instance, you could start a “thank-you note” to God and add to it each day. You might take a daily walk, observe the created world, and talk to God about it. Use your creativity and be intentional.
- 2) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## **Bible Memory Verse**

*“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”  
(Genesis 1:1).*

## **Concluding Observations on Genesis 1:1–2:3 and Chapter 1 of *What Christians Believe***

When describing humanity as a whole, Lewis sees two primary divisions. The first is between the majority of humankind who believe in some kind of God or gods and the minority made up of materialists or atheists who do not believe in God. The second division is with regard to the kind of God or gods people believe in. Pantheists (Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers) believe God is beyond good and evil. They believe that the universe is God (everything is one) and is animated by God. God is impersonal to the pantheist. The goal is oneness that can come only when diversity and human individuality is eradicated into the great Oneness.

Monotheists (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) believe that God created the world and is separate from His creation. They believe that God is good and that the world, animals, plants, and human beings were created as good. Human beings are distinct from the rest of the creation; they are created in God's image. The Christian believes that something has gone wrong in the world in opposition to God and His goodness and that God is in the process of redeeming human beings and the world. This is the starting point for the Christian worldview.

One clue to the meaning of the universe is the understanding that we all have some knowledge of right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and unjust. Built into this understanding of right and wrong is the assumption that at least one part of reality—the concept of justice—is full of meaning. Thus the atheist who states the world is senseless or without meaning is caught flat-footed.



Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.

—C.S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, chapter 2

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**Session 3**  
**The Problems of Sin, Satan, and Evil**

## Questions to Explore

- 1) How do we explain the problem of evil?
- 2) Who is the devil, and what is he trying to accomplish in the world?
- 3) Why is the concept of spiritual warfare important to understanding reality?
- 4) What is God's response to evil?

## Bible Study

Read Genesis 2:4–3:24.

In Genesis 2 we learn that people are created for relationship with God and one another. Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, are designed to complement each other, to have offspring, to work in the Garden of Eden, and to care for it. They are given power and freewill to make decisions and choices on their own. For instance, they determine the names of the animals and all other living things. They are given one command, which they can choose to follow or disobey, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (vv. 16–17). Adam and Eve at this stage in history are “naked and unashamed,” indicating that they are in perfect relationship with God and each other.

In Genesis 3 we learn how evil, the devil (disguised as the serpent), and human sin enter the world. Answer the following questions based on your reading of Genesis 2:4–3:24:

- 1) How does the serpent when speaking to the woman distort God's word in Genesis 2 and call into question the goodness of God?
- 2) How do the created human beings rebel against their Creator? Why is their rebellion an affront to the goodness

and justice of God?

- 3) Why do Adam and Eve hide from God? What does this signify?
- 4) How does God demonstrate that He is just yet also merciful in the way He deals with Adam and Eve?
- 5) How does God deal with the devil/serpent? What is prophesied about the fate of the devil in Genesis 3:15? How does this give hope to humankind?
- 6) How do we know that God, who is good, will defeat evil in the end?
- 7) Describe in one to three sentences the relationships between God, humankind, and the devil in this post-Edenic world, the world as we know it after sin entered the world through Adam and Eve.

Read Revelation 12:7–17, which might be described as the fall of Satan, the devil. Then answer the following questions based on your reading:

- 1) Who is Satan?
- 2) How do the angels/demons that choose to rebel against God leave heaven?
- 3) What are Satan and his demons (fallen angels) doing on earth? What is their goal?
- 4) What is the final destiny of Satan and his demons according to Jesus?

**Watch Video Talk “The Problem of Evil and Suffering Explored” by Andy Bannister (12 minutes)**



Answer the following questions in response to the video:

- 1) Andy Bannister says he thinks there are three huge questions that we can ask about life and purpose and such things: (1)

Is there a God, and what is God like? (2) What's gone wrong with the world? (3) What's the solution to the mess and brokenness we see in the world? What do you think about these questions? Are they the ones you would ask about life and purpose?

- 2) Bannister points out that when human beings see injustice or pain or something wrong with the world, it is instinctive for all people to ask the question why: Why has that happened? What is the challenge atheists have in answering that question? If we live in a godless universe, is there a way the universe is supposed to be?
- 3) Bannister states: So one of the things I appreciate as a Christian is—the Bible is deeply, deeply honest about what's gone wrong with the world. What's going wrong with the world is not simply that human beings aren't clever enough or wise enough or smart enough, such that, with enough science or technology or economics, we can sort out the problems of the world, but something is far deeper, something far more fundamental has gone wrong. We are rebels. We are in a state of rebellion against the God who created us. And what we need is help putting that right. We cannot do it on our own. What are your thoughts on that statement?

## Study of *What Christians Believe*

Read chapter 2, “The Invasion,” in *What Christians Believe*. Answer the following questions in response to your reading:

- 1) Why does the “Christianity-and-water” idea, or what we would call today “liberal Christianity” that leaves out the hard biblical teachings on sin, hell, the devil, and redemption, not hold up against reality?
- 2) Why is dualism, the idea that good and evil are two independent equals (i.e., Taoism, yin and yang) undermined by the concept of justice—that there really is an absolute standard of good?

- 3) Who is the devil, and what is he trying to do in the world?
- 4) Why is it important to be aware of the devil's work in the world?
- 5) Name some ways by which people make light of the devil.
- 6) In the preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." Do you agree or disagree with Lewis's assessment? If you agree, how and where do you see the devil receiving too little or too much credit in the world today?

## Action Steps

- 1) Write down right now at least one action step you could take to becoming more aware of—and thwarting—the evil in the world and in your own behavior. For example, you can plan ahead—if you catch yourself thinking evil thoughts about someone, you can act to change those thoughts, pray for the person, and ask God to help you exhibit love. Or if you have read in the news of a horrific crime, such as sex trafficking, you identify and financially support an organization that is fighting that evil.
- 2) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## Bible Memory Verse

*"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).*

## **Concluding Observations on Genesis 2:4–3:24, Revelation 12:7–17, and Chapter 2 of *What Christians Believe***

The reality of evil in the world is difficult to explain. Atheism is too simple in that it denies the categories of good and evil. Liberal Christianity, what Lewis calls “Christianity-and-water,” focuses on the goodness of God and writes off the devil, demons, hell, supernatural forces, miracles, and other hard teachings as old-school ideas that lack credibility in our modern, scientific understanding of the world. This view simplifies things with a naïve hope that somehow a good God will make everything right again without any consequences for evil in the world. It promotes God’s love without understanding the holy love of God that needs to eradicate sin, evil, and hatred for true redemption to occur.

Dualism, the idea of two equal forces—one evil and one good—the Taoist view, fails to offer hope. In this schema God is not the ultimate victor; good will never triumph over evil.

True Christian faith, on the other hand, believes that God is good and any created beings in opposition to God are evil. These evil forces, however, are not equal to God and in fact are quite inferior to the awesome, holy, loving God who created the world. The devil is a real creature, a fallen angel in rebellion against God, who entered the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve and lead them away from God to join with him in rebellion against God our Creator. When Adam and Eve chose to listen to the serpent (the devil) and disobey God’s loving commands, they opened the door for sin and evil to enter the human sphere. The earth is now “enemy-occupied territory,” as the devil, his demons, and sinful human beings wreak havoc, bringing about sin, suffering, and acts of evil. God in His goodness, however, has responded by sending His Son, Jesus, into the world to redeem it. Christians, those who have responded to the loving grace of God through Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, are now fighting with God’s help to stop the devil, his evil forces, and human sin and to share the good news of Christ that saves human beings from the lies and traps of this evil world and the devil.



Free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating.

—C.S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, chapter 3

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**Session 4**  
**God's Response to Sin,  
Satan, and Evil**

## Questions to Explore:

- 1) Why did God create human beings with potential to sin and do evil?
- 2) How did the devil go wrong and steer human beings to do wrong?
- 3) Why have so many attempts to find meaning in life failed?
- 4) What did God give to human beings to recognize the problem of sin and give them signs of hope?
- 5) What is God's response to sin?
- 6) Who does Jesus claim to be?

## Bible Study

Read Mark 2:1–12. Answer the following questions based on your reading:

- 1) Why did people come to see Jesus?
- 2) What did the friends of the paralytic man believe Jesus could do for their friend?
- 3) What was Jesus's response to the faith of the friends of the paralytic man?
- 4) Why were the scribes shocked by Jesus's statement, "Son, your sins are forgiven"?
- 5) Who is Jesus clearly claiming to be by His words and actions?
- 6) What is the response of the crowd to Jesus's healing of the paralytic man and His pronouncement that He had forgiven the man's sins?
- 7) After reading this passage, do you believe Jesus's claims about Himself? Why or why not?

**Watch Video Talk “Who Is Jesus? Is He Mad, Bad, or God?” (14 minutes)**



Answer the following questions in response to the video:

- 1) Andy Bannister observes that while some people try to claim that Jesus is just another religious leader, Jesus stands head and shoulders above all other claimants. What are some of the ways in which Jesus is different than Muhammad, Buddha, and other religious leaders?
- 2) In his talk, Bannister quotes one of C.S. Lewis’s most famous paragraphs:

*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (Mere Christianity, Book 2, “What Christians Believe”)*

What do you think about Lewis’s argument (sometimes called the Trilemma)?

- 3) In his talk Bannister suggests that listeners read through Mark's Gospel. If you haven't read the book of Mark recently (the second book of the New Testament), would you like to read it now (or listen to it on audio)?

## **Study of *What Christians Believe***

Read *What Christians Believe*, chapter 3, "The Shocking Alternative."

Answer the following questions in response to your reading:

- 1) If God is good and has absolute power, how can anything happen that is contrary to His will?
- 2) Why did God give human beings free will, the ability to choose between doing good or evil, if it makes evil choices possible?
- 3) How did the "dark power," "the prince of this world," "the devil," or "Satan," go wrong?
- 4) What sin did Satan teach the human race?
- 5) What is the result of searching for happiness outside of God and His will?
- 6) What is God's response to humankind's repetition of Satan's sin and evil?
- 7) Some claim that Jesus was a great moral teacher but not God. Why is that possibility untenable based on Jesus's statements and beliefs about Himself?
- 8) According to Lewis, Jesus leaves us with three options. He is a lunatic, a liar, or Lord. Some have added a fourth category of a legend. Who do you think Jesus to be? Why is this perhaps the most important question of all?

## Action Steps

- 1) Write down ways in which you can actively thank and praise God for His response to evil through the life and work of Jesus.
- 2) Think about how you might share the good news about Jesus and what He has done for us with a friend or colleague. Write down some of your thoughts and continue to reflect on how to communicate this to others.
- 3) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## Bible Memory Verse

*“‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.’ And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (Mark 2:10–12).*

## Concluding Observations on Mark 2:1–12 and Chapter 3 of *What Christians Believe*

The question many struggle with this is this: If God is all-powerful and good, why would He create angels and human beings with the power to do both good and evil and thus allow sin, suffering, and evil to enter the world? Lewis argues that God created His higher creatures with the potential to voluntarily be united to Him. In other words, He gave humankind and angels free will to love God and one another. They are not machines without any control over their own destiny but, rather, beings able to experience the happiness and joy that comes from a mutually chosen loving relationship. The better a creature is, the smarter, the freer, and the stronger it will be with the potential for great glory or great

misery. Satan fell when he succumbed to the sin of pride, wanting to be greater than God and in control. He shared this sin with the human race. The end result is a lack of fulfillment and meaning in life. So people try all kinds of means to find happiness outside of a relationship with God. As Lewis explains, “Out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.”

By God’s grace, He gave humans a conscience; they at least know that some things are good and others evil. This becomes apparent in all cultures, which share stories that point to God and a desire to be restored to life after death. God also initiated His rescue plan for humankind immediately after sin entered the world; then through the Hebrew nation, He prepared the world for its savior—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When Jesus entered His ministry as described in the Gospels, He claimed to be able to forgive sin, something only God could do. He proved this by exercising his supernatural powers in which He was able to heal disease, cast out demons, preach with authority, as well as proclaim words of forgiveness over people who put their faith in Him.

When considering the person of Jesus, who is clearly a historical figure, men and women must determine whether He was a liar, a lunatic, a legend, or truly Lord—the all-powerful God of the universe come in human form to save us from our sin. He doesn’t give us the choice of accepting Him as merely a great moral teacher.



The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start.

C.S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, chapter 4

**5**

**Session 5**  
**God's Rescue Plan for Humankind**

## Questions to Explore

- 1) What did Jesus come to earth to do?
- 2) What did Jesus accomplish through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension?
- 3) How can we understand the concept of atonement?
- 4) How do I know if my sins have been forgiven through Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the cross?

## Bible Study

The apostle Paul in the book of Romans sheds light on God's rescue plan for humankind through Jesus Christ. Read the following verses from the book of Romans that have been described as "the Roman Road" and answer the questions that follow.

Romans 3:10–12, 23:

- 1) Are human beings good enough on their own to be in relationship with God? Why or why not?
- 2) Who is in need of salvation?
- 3) How are we sinners both by nature and by choice?

Romans 6:23:

- 1) What are the consequences of sin?
- 2) Knowing this, how serious should we take the sin in our lives and in the lives of others?
- 3) What is the gift that is offered to sinners?
- 4) What does it cost us to get the gift of salvation?

Romans 5:8:

- 1) How do we know that God loves us?
- 2) How does the fact that He loves us, even though we have rebelled and sinned against Him, make you feel?
- 3) How would you describe God's rescue plan for human beings?
- 4) What did Jesus Christ do to make salvation possible for human beings?

Romans 10:9–10, 13:

- 1) What does it mean to confess with one's mouth that Jesus is Lord?
- 2) What does it mean to believe in one's heart that Jesus is Lord?
- 3) How can we call upon the Lord?
- 4) What is the means for a person to be saved?

Romans 5:1; 8:1, 38–39:

- 1) What are the benefits of salvation for the person who surrenders and puts his or her trust in Jesus Christ?
- 2) How do these benefits manifest themselves in a follower of Jesus's life?
- 3) How is God's love made known through His rescue plan for humankind?

**Watch Video Talk “How Can I Experience Forgiveness and Peace?” by Andy Bannister (15 minutes)**



Answer the following questions in response to the video:

- 1) In what ways is there a contradiction between justice and mercy?
- 2) How are justice and mercy reconciled when Jesus came, God in the flesh, to go to the cross, to die on our behalf, to take onto Himself the punishment that should have been ours?
- 3) When we consider Jesus hanging on the cross, what does it tell us about how serious sin and our rebellion is? What does it tell us about how much God loves us?

## **Study of *What Christians Believe***

Read *What Christians Believe*, chapter 4, “The Perfect Penitent.”

Answer the following questions in response to your reading:

- 1) Assuming that Jesus was and is God in human form, what was His purpose for landing on this enemy-occupied world? What did Jesus come to do on earth?
- 2) Who is “the perfect penitent”? In this chapter Lewis wrote, “The central Christian belief is that Christ’s death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start.” And, “We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed.” Is Lewis correct about this being the central belief of Christianity? Why or why not? How would you describe the central belief of Christianity in your own words?
- 3) What is “the hole” that human beings have gotten themselves into and are unable to get out of on their own?

- 4) Observing the world around us, what indicators can we see that would back up Lewis's idea that all human beings are sinful and have rebelled against God?
- 5) The atonement, "at-one-ment," is the idea that Jesus has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven as a result of His death on the cross and resurrection, which conquered sin, Satan, and evil. Name and explain some theories that people have used to communicate or explain the idea of the atonement.
- 6) Do any of these atonement theories help you? If so, which one(s) and how?
- 7) How does Lewis counter the people who discount Jesus's sufferings and death by saying, "if Jesus was God as well as man . . . 'it must have been so easy for Him'"?
- 8) Have you accepted what Jesus Christ has done on your behalf through His death and resurrection and asked Him to be your Lord and Savior? Why or why not?

## Action Steps

- 1) If you haven't surrendered to Jesus, would you like to do so now? If the answer is yes, you can do so by praying from the heart the following prayer. You may want to pray it out loud along with your study partners. "Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner. I know that my sin deserves the punishment of death. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for my sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead. I want to turn from my sins and trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. Thank You for the forgiveness of my sins and the gift of eternal life that I can now receive through faith in Jesus's name. Amen." By confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you have now entered into a new life and relationship with Jesus Christ. You are now a disciple of Jesus and are on a lifelong journey of love for and obedience to your Lord and Savior. It is important for you to share what you have done with a friend, such as the

person walking with you through this study.

- 2) Write down right now at least one action step following your discussion.
- 3) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## **Bible Memory Verse**

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

## **Concluding Observations on “the Roman Road” and *What Christians Believe*, Chapter 4.**

The apostle Paul in the book of Romans clarifies the reality of the human condition. We are all sinners and have been separated from God, our Creator. The consequence of our sin is death, both physical and spiritual. For human beings to be saved from death and for this relationship with God to be restored, we must admit that we are sinners who have turned away from God through our sinful words, thoughts, and actions. We must repent of our sins, die to ourselves, and by grace, through faith, place our trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. When we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord, we are given the gift of eternal life with God.

The good news is that while we were sinners, God in His love and mercy, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin, to take on human flesh, live a perfect life, and then die for our sins, taking upon Himself the consequences of our sin. He atoned for our sin, took our place on the cross as our substitute. He then conquered sin, death, and the devil through His resurrection from the dead.

The Bible gives several analogies to help us understand this amazing work of grace on our behalf. He redeemed us, ransomed us, and saved us. The doctrine of the atonement is one to continually reflect upon in a spirit of gratitude and praise to God.



A Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.

—C.S. Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, chapter 5

6

**Session 6**  
Finding New Life in Christ

## Questions to Explore

- 1) Once a person surrenders to Christ as Lord, how does that person become more like Jesus?
- 2) What should a Christian do?
- 3) What is the fate of those who never had the opportunity to learn of Jesus?
- 4) Why isn't God invading the world and conquering the devil with overwhelming force?

## Bible Study

Read Acts 2:37–47. Background: Jesus had told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until He sent the Holy Spirit to empower them to proclaim the good news and make disciples locally and globally. At the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples; Peter stood up in the midst of the crowd and told them how God had fulfilled His promises and plan for the salvation of many as foretold through the Hebrew Scriptures: Through signs and wonders, Jesus of Nazareth had attested to His power as God's Son. Crucified by the people in Jerusalem, He had died and after three days risen from the dead. Peter told how he and the other disciples had witnessed the resurrected Christ and worshiped Him as Lord and God. Upon hearing this news, many in the crowd responded by asking how they could be saved. This passage follows Peter's evangelistic sermon.

Answer the following questions based on your reading of Acts 2:37–47:

- 1) What did those who were “cut to the heart” by Peter's message ask?
- 2) What was Peter's answer to their question?
- 3) What is repentance?
- 4) What is baptism?

- 5) Read Romans 6:3–5. What does baptism symbolize?
- 6) To what were the new disciples of Jesus devoted, leading to their growth?
- 7) Where can we read and study “the apostles’ teaching”? Why is it important for a follower of Jesus to seriously study this teaching?
- 8) Why is it important to “fellowship” and spend time with other followers of Christ?
- 9) Why is it important to “break bread” and celebrate the Lord’s Supper, also known as Communion or the Eucharist, as a follower of Jesus?
- 10) Why is it important to pray to God as a regular part of the Christian life?
- 11) What else did the disciples of Jesus do as part of their obedience to Jesus?
- 12) How are their attitudes described by Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles?
- 13) What was the by-product of the lives of the early Christians?

**Watch Video Talk “What’s Next if I Choose to Follow Jesus?” by Andy Bannister (15 minutes)**



Answer the following questions in response to the video:

- 1) Andy Bannister cites an illustration by C.S. Lewis that is included in the following quotation: The Christian “does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a greenhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book 2, “What Christians Believe.” What

do you think about this statement? How is it relevant to how we live the Christian life?

- 2) Andy Bannister identifies three things that will help us grow in the Christian life: (1) praying, (2) reading the Bible, and (3) getting plugged into a local church. Why are each of things important?
- 3) Would you like to get started with one or more of the three things identified in the previous question, or renew and enhance what you're already doing? If so, what do you plan to do in the next several days/weeks?

## **Study of *What Christians Believe***

Read *What Christians Believe*, chapter 5, “The Practical Conclusion.”

Answer the following questions in response to your reading:

- 1) How was Jesus able to undergo the perfect surrender and humiliation and in so doing provide the means of salvation to all who put their trust in Him?
- 2) What is the next step for the new Christian believer?
- 3) How do we begin to live like Jesus Christ?
- 4) How does the “Christ life” grow in us and spread to others?
- 5) What does it mean to believe something based on the authority of Jesus? Why is it important for the follower of Jesus to trust Jesus’s authority and obey His commands?
- 6) What is the role of baptism, faith, and the Lord’s Supper in the Christian’s life? Why are they important to a Christian’s spiritual life? C.S. Lewis defines a Christian as “not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him, all the

time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out.” Do you agree with this definition? Why or why not?

- 7) How does a Christian become good?
- 8) Why does God use physical matter such as bread, wine, and water to help us grow spiritually?
- 9) What is the only means by which a person can be saved, forgiven, and receive eternal life? What implications does this have for the Christian in the way one shares one’s faith?
- 10) What happens to those who have never had the opportunity to hear of Christ? What is C.S. Lewis’s response to this question?
- 11) Why isn’t God invading the world and conquering the devil with overwhelming force today?
- 12) Lewis states that Jesus will come again at the end of the world; when He does, “it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side.” What is your response to this description of the return of Christ?

## Action Steps

- 1) At the end of this chapter, Lewis says, “Now, to-day, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever. We must take it or leave it.” What is your response to this challenge from Lewis that we must make the choice to surrender to God now or possibly miss the opportunity?
- 2) Write down right now at least one action step in response to this

session. For example, if you've decided to surrender your life to Jesus, you may decide to pursue baptism at a local church or partake in the Lord's Supper regularly at a local church.

- 3) Set aside five minutes daily, preferably first thing in the morning, to read a passage of Scripture and pray. Ask the Lord to guide you in establishing a daily devotional time.
- 4) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## **Bible Memory Verse**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

## **Concluding Observations on Acts 2:37–47 and Chapter 5 of *What Christians Believe***

When someone receives by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins, that person is a new creation. The Christian is called to live like Jesus and to look like Him in the way he or she talks and lives. Why don't new Christians suddenly live perfect lives? Although we have been declared righteous through the work of Christ on our behalf, when we are born again we are like newborns who must grow up and gradually mature. So the Christian life is one in which we begin to look more and more like Jesus as we allow the “Christ-life” and the Holy Spirit to work within us daily. God has given us some helpful disciplines that are means of grace for us to grow. These include worshiping regularly with other Christians, being baptized, participating regularly in the Lord's Supper, prayer, and service to one another.

Some people ask questions such as, what about the people who have never heard the gospel—what does God do with them? Lewis advises us to act on what we know. We know that no one comes into a relationship of reconciliation with God without believing in Jesus Christ. So let's focus on sharing the good news and leave the answers to questions that

are unknown for God to handle and reveal in His time.

Some ask why God is taking His time in redeeming the world. Lewis hints that it may be a result of God's patience and grace to give more people the opportunity to repent and believe the good news. He also warns that it would not be wise to put off a decision about God, as we never know when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.



When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.

—C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, preface

**7**

**Session 7**  
**Finding Your Place in the Church**

## Questions to Explore

- 1) What is the original meaning of the name Christians?
- 2) What is “mere” Christianity?
- 3) Why is it important to find a local church community with which to get involved?
- 4) How are we to treat other Christians in other denominations?

## Bible Study

Read Hebrews 10:19–25. Answer the following questions based on your reading:

- 1) In this passage, whom is the writer of Hebrews addressing? Why is this important to know?
- 2) Who is able to enter into the presence of God? Does this include you? Why or why not?
- 3) What did Jesus do that enables us to enter into the house of God? Describe in detail His work on our behalf.
- 4) What is expected from us in order to enter the house of God?
- 5) What enables us to remain firm in our faith in Christ without wavering? Why is it important to remind ourselves of this as we live out our faith over the years?
- 6) What are we commanded as Christians to do regularly with one another?
- 7) Have you been stirred up, or spurred, to love and good deeds by other followers of Jesus? If so, describe. If not, why do you think that is?
- 8) Why is it important for Christians to meet together regularly? What benefits do we gain from meeting together?

- 9) What dangers are there for the Christian who fails to meet regularly with other Christians for prayer, fellowship, worship, and service?
- 10) The writer of Hebrews addresses some who call themselves “Christian” and have stopped meeting together. How would you encourage people like this today to get involved in a local church to pray, worship, and fellowship with other Christians?
- 11) What and when is “the Day drawing near”? What are Christians to be doing to prepare for this “Day”?
- 12) Have you been meeting regularly with other Christians? If not, what steps can you take to change this pattern? If yes, describe how meeting together with other followers of Jesus has affected your life.

*Note: This session does not include a teaching video. The final teaching video of this Study was “What’s Next if I Choose to Follow Jesus?”, which was part of the previous session.*

## **Study of *What Christians Believe***

Read the preface to *What Christians Believe* (or the preface to *Mere Christianity*). Answer the following questions based on your reading:

- 1) What does Lewis present as the goal or purpose of his radio broadcasts and eventually the book *Mere Christianity*?
- 2) How does Lewis define “mere” Christianity?
- 3) Why does Lewis avoid speaking about disputed matters of doctrine among Christians in this book? Are there times when it is all right to discuss disputed matters of doctrines with other Christians? If so, when and how should we do that?
- 4) How does Lewis define the word Christian?

- 5) Why is it important to Lewis that the definition of Christian be tied to its original meaning as found in the New Testament?
- 6) What definitions of the word Christian have you encountered that do not align with the definition as found in the New Testament and used by Lewis?
- 7) Lewis describes “mere” Christianity as the hallway of the church (all those who have accepted the apostles’ teaching—the beliefs that have been common to all Christians at all times in human history since Christ walked the earth). Why doesn’t Lewis give any advice about denominations (the rooms that extend off the hallway)?
- 8) Why does Lewis encourage Christians not to remain in the “hallway,” where they would have no commitment to a local church, that is, one of the rooms off the hallway?
- 9) What recommendations does Lewis give for finding the kind of church that will help you as a Christian to grow and be fruitful?
- 10) Once you’ve chosen a local church or denomination, what should your attitude and actions be toward those in other congregations and denominations?
- 11) Have you experienced the unity that comes from worshiping with Christians from different denominations? If so, describe the experience and the relationships.

## Action Steps

- 1) Have you found a congregation of Christians with whom you can pray, worship, and serve? If not, what steps can you take this week to begin looking for a local church that upholds the authority of the Bible and the truth of the apostles’ teaching? If yes, in what new ways might the Lord be leading you to get further involved in your local church?

- 2) Take time to pray for two or three other Christians whom you know personally. Consider how you might encourage them this week with a call, a note, or a meal together.
- 3) Commit to praying daily and asking God to show you His truth and wisdom.

## **Bible Memory Verse**

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

## **Concluding Observations on Hebrews 10:19–25 and the Preface of *What Christians Believe***

The original, New Testament meaning of the word *Christian* refers to a person who is a disciple of Jesus Christ and accepts the doctrines and teaching of the apostles as found in the Holy Scriptures. It is important to focus on the unity that followers of Jesus from different denominations have through their mutual relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. The writer of the book of Hebrews assures true followers of Jesus that their sins have been washed clean by the blood of Christ through His redemptive death and resurrection. Their hearts are clean in the sight of God. The great Priest, Jesus, makes it possible for us to enter with confidence into the presence of God. Therefore we must hold on to our faith and live with hope. In response to what Christ has done for us, we should meet regularly with other Christians to worship together and to spur one another toward love and good deeds. C.S. Lewis speaks of “mere” Christianity as those essential teachings of the apostles that unite all true Christians (as defined in the New Testament) regardless of denomination. Lewis wisely counsels Christians to find a local church to belong to and get involved in, gaining and giving the benefits of being among the community of saints. He recommends finding a church that teaches biblical truth and reflects the holiness of God in actions and words. When we differ in secondary teachings or practices from other Christians, we should pray for them and love them as brothers and sisters in the family of God.



## Appendix

### The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is not in the Bible, but it was developed by the early church to summarize the apostles' teaching. It is used by historically orthodox Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. It was the creed that C.S. Lewis used as the basis for his understanding of the apostles' teaching that helped shape the themes in book 2 of *Mere Christianity*, "What Christians Believe."

#### The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

\* the universal church made up of all true Christians throughout history



## Appendix

### Facilitator/Leader Guide

#### What Approach?

##### *One-on-One Discipleship or the Triad/Quad Approach*

Probably the most effective use of this study would be through a one-on-one approach or with a small group of three to four people (a triad or quad). In most cases, it is best to have one person serve as the leader or group facilitator. However, the program is set up so a group of peers could go through the program and share the leadership throughout the study.

##### *Small Groups*

Another method would be to use this resource with a small group. In this case, the facilitator should ensure that everyone in the group is engaged, has the opportunity to participate, and is receiving the encouragement and exhortation needed to get the most out of the study.

##### *Plan Well*

**P-L-A-N:** Before you begin, take time to plan by reading this leadership guide and the study guide introduction. Then begin the steps of planning:

**P—Purpose:** Know the purpose of the *What Christians Believe* study program—that you and your friends will experience an authentic approach to exploring what C.S. Lewis called “mere Christianity.” Determine how you can best communicate the purpose of this study with the people you are going to invite to participate.

**L—Logistics:** Determine the logistics of:

**When:** When will you meet (date, time, for how long)?

**Where:** Where will you meet (home, church, workplace)?

**What:** What will you need to do to prepare the place for the weekly meetings (seating, lighting, room temperature, beverages, snacks, childcare, removal of distractions)?

**Who:** Who will take care of the various planning pieces? Don't be afraid to delegate. People like to contribute and actually become more committed when they play a role in the group, even if it's just preparing refreshments or setting up chairs.

**Possible roles for a small group include:**

Leader

Assistant Leader

Hospitality Coordinator

Childcare Coordinator

Facilities Coordinator

**A—Activities:** The *What Christians Believe* study program has a suggested activity plan for different types of groups. If you have time to meet for a meal, or even dessert, the fellowship over food can help build relationships and thus enhance the overall experience. Below are a few suggested formats. The 90- to 120-minute weekly sessions are the ideal. If time is of the essence, a 60-minute session can be used, although it restricts group discussion.

## Sample for One-on-One, Triad, Quad, or Small-Group Study Activities

(Total: 90 minutes)

|             |                                                                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 minutes: | Social Time                                                                    |
| 5 minutes:  | Introduction of Topic and Prayer                                               |
| 30 minutes: | Discuss Bible Study Questions                                                  |
| 30 minutes: | Discuss Video Talk and <i>What Christians Believe</i> Questions & Action Steps |
| 15 minutes: | Closing: Recite Memory Verse & Prayer Time                                     |

## Dinner and Study Model

(Total: 120 minutes)

|             |                                                                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 40 minutes: | Simple Dinner and Social Time (pizza, salad, drinks and desserts or a potluck) |
| 5 minutes:  | Introduction of Topic and Prayer                                               |
| 30 minutes: | Discuss Bible Study Questions                                                  |
| 30 minutes: | Discuss Video Talk and <i>What Christians Believe</i> Questions & Action Steps |
| 15 minutes: | Closing: Recite Memory Verse & Prayer Time                                     |

## Sunday School Class or Workplace Model

(Total: 60 minutes)

|             |                                                                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 minutes:  | Introduction of Topic and Prayer                                               |
| 20 minutes: | Discuss Bible Study Questions                                                  |
| 20 minutes: | Discuss Video Talk and <i>What Christians Believe</i> Questions & Action Steps |
| 15 minutes: | Closing: Recite Memory Verse & Prayer Time                                     |

Take time each week to plan out the meeting activities, so things flow smoothly. **Always start and end on time.** People will get discouraged if the meetings extend beyond the announced time or start late. If you desire, you can end the formal meeting on time and give people the option to stay later to fellowship, pray, and talk. But always give people the opportunity to end at the scheduled times.

*N—Needs:* Be attuned to the needs of the participants. As you pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your planning process, He will help you determine the needs of your particular group and what your responsibilities are in meeting those needs.

In his book *Destination Community*, Rick Howerton suggests some key questions to pray about as you prepare for each meeting:

- Is there:
- Someone to pray with?
  - Someone needing counsel?
  - Someone to encourage?
  - Someone to hold accountable?
  - Something to celebrate with someone?
  - Something to learn?
  - A need to be met?
  - A call to be made?
  - A conflict to be resolved?

## **Pray about and Recruit Participants**

The second task of the leader is to pray about and recruit the participants. Ask the Lord to lead you to the right people. Who can benefit from participating in the study? Then begin inviting secular friends and neighbors or others who know Christ and might like to learn more. Don't be disappointed if some say, "No, thank you." Persevere and keep on inviting until you get a committed small group together.

Jim Collins, author of the modern leadership best seller *Good to Great*, notes, “Great endeavors are accomplished best when the right people are in the right place doing the right thing.” As you pray and ask God for His will regarding the make-up of group, He can arrange the right people in the right place doing the right thing.

A personal invitation or a phone call is the preferred method of communication; an impersonal e-mail might be overlooked or missed.

Bobb Biehl uses the following saying in his book *Mentoring*: “Don’t hesitate—initiate.”

Here are some questions you should be prepared to answer when recruiting participants. Try to formulate an answer that would satisfy you as a potential participant.

Be prepared to answer the following questions when recruiting a potential participant:

- 1) How much time each week will it take for me to prepare for and do the study?
- 2) How long will the study last—how many weeks, how many hours per session?
- 3) What kind of homework is involved?
- 4) Does it cost anything?
- 5) Do you have to know a lot of Bible or be able to pray out loud to be in the group?
- 6) How many people will be in the group?
- 7) What are we going to do in the meetings?
- 8) Who else is coming?
- 9) Do you provide childcare?
- 10) Can I leave midway through the study if I find it’s just not for me?

## Group Size

It is recommended that discussion groups include no more than six people including the discussion facilitator. It is hard to have interactive discussions with groups larger than six. If you have recruited a large group, break up into smaller groups for the discussion time.

## Develop a Group Covenant

Covenants provide a means of providing purpose, balance, and accountability within small-group relationships. If people have knowingly signed a covenant, they are more likely to follow-through on their commitment. As well, the covenant makes it easier for people to give grace and/or lovingly confront someone who is not living up to the covenant.

For example, if someone is regularly missing the group's meetings, the leader of the group can say, "Hey, we've missed you recently. Your contribution to the group is important and necessary for our group to function and grow. What can we do to help you make it to the session next week and fulfill your covenant?"

An agreed-upon covenant needs to take into consideration both the principles and logistics needed to achieve the group's goal. It would be wise to write up your covenant and then distribute copies to everyone in the group. Have the group discuss it and express any concerns or reservations. It can be adapted to meet the needs of the group as long as it doesn't compromise the mission of the program. Key components might include:

- **Attendance:** a commitment to attend the weekly meetings barring an unexpected emergency.
- **Preparation:** a commitment to do the homework and come prepared to the meetings. However, someone who hasn't finished the homework should be encouraged to come anyway so he or she can benefit from the group's discussion and get back on track.

- **Prayer:** a commitment to pray for the group, that the Holy Spirit would help everyone grow spiritually through all the components.
- **Confidentiality:** anything shared in the group must stay in the group and not be shared with others. This is an important part of the covenant, as it builds trust when maintained and allows people to be more open.
- **Openness:** a willingness to share and participate in the discussions.
- **Honesty:** a commitment to being honest and forthright in all relationships within the group.
- **Sensitivity:** a commitment to being sensitive to the needs of others in the group.
- **Love:** a commitment to love those in the group as commanded by Christ Himself.

## Facilitate Discussion

The great thing about this study program is that you don't have to be a theologian or biblical scholar to lead it. You need to be (1) a committed follower of Jesus Christ, who (2) wants to grow spiritually and (3) wants to bring people alongside to grow. Most of the programming is already done for you. However, you will be asked to facilitate the group discussion. You can use the questions from the study to help do this. These questions can be adopted, adapted, or you can use some questions of your own to get people talking. The key is to get others talking rather than doing the talking yourself.

An ask-don't-tell policy is a good approach when leading the discussion around the theme of the week. People should be ready to talk, assuming they have done the Bible study and reading in *What Christians Believe* before coming.

Some things to remember:

- Remember the questions, who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, and how?
- Give people time to answer. Don't answer your own question. Rephrase it if you'd like, but don't be afraid of "pregnant pauses." Someone might be ready to birth an amazing response, but it takes time sometimes.
- Be affirming by using expressions such as "great insight"; "you're on the right track"; "can you expand on that?"; "wow!"
- Repeat responses as a way to get people to continue talking.
- Don't ask yes/no questions. If you do, have people expand their answers.
- Redirect people if they start to get off track. It's all right to politely interrupt and ask them to get back to the question or the main idea of the conversation.
- Don't go off on rabbit trails—topics outside of the focus of the meeting.
- Don't let one person dominate the conversation. Politely ask to hear from others in the group.

## **Start and End on Time**

This point was stated earlier, but it is crucial to maintaining the morale of your group. If you meet the expectations of your group when it comes to the beginning and ending time of your meeting, you'll be trusted with other things later on. Be trustworthy in the little things such as timing, and people will begin to trust you on more important matters. People live busy lives and need to know that they'll be dismissed on time. If you extend beyond the scheduled closing, you may lose people in future meetings. As well, start on time so people show up on time. If you begin starting late, people will begin arriving late. It's just human nature.

## **Model What It Takes to Grow from the Study**

Prepare each week for the group study. In other words, practice what you preach and complete the Bible study, reading in *What Christians Believe*, and working on the memory verse prior to each session.

## **Pray and Enjoy the Program!**

Pray for the members of your group and pray that the Holy Spirit would guide the discussion. Pray that all distractions would be removed during the meeting. Do the work, show up to the group meeting, facilitate the discussion, get to know the participants, and enjoy the program!



The C.S. Lewis Institute was founded in 1976 and endeavors, in the legacy of C.S. Lewis, to develop disciples who will articulate, defend, share, and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life. From its inception, the Institute has been inter-denominational, has worked closely with a variety of churches and sees itself as a servant ministry, assisting churches and pastors in making disciples of Jesus Christ. This takes the form of discipleship programs, area-wide conferences/seminars, pastor fellowships and resources in print and on the web.

For more information on the C.S. Lewis Institute please go to [www.cslewisinstitute.org](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org).

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## NOTES

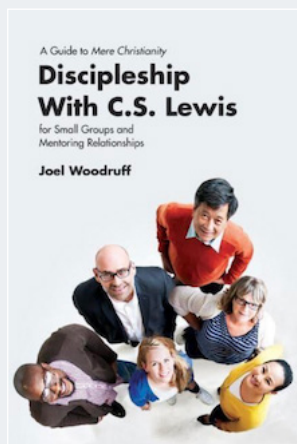
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This Study Guide is excerpted from the book *Discipleship with C.S. Lewis* by Joel Woodruff. You can find out more about that book here:

# Discipleship With C.S. Lewis



For generations, *Mere Christianity* has introduced countless readers to the reasonableness and beauty of the Christian faith. Now, in *Discipleship with C.S. Lewis: A Guide to Mere Christianity*, Dr. Joel Woodruff builds on Lewis's timeless insights to create a practical guide for spiritual growth.

Drawing deeply from Scripture and the remarkable Christian apologetics of C.S. Lewis, this book helps readers move beyond simply understanding Christian beliefs to living them. Whether you are exploring Christianity for the first time, strengthening your own faith, or walking alongside others as a mentor or small-group leader, this guide provides a clear pathway for thoughtful discussion, biblical reflection, and lasting discipleship.

More than a companion to *Mere Christianity*, this book serves as a practical discipleship resource for today's world—helping believers and seekers alike engage both heart and mind as they grow in their knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

## *The Author*

Joel Woodruff is the President of the C.S. Lewis Institute, a discipleship ministry of heart and mind headquartered in Washington, D.C.. He is a graduate of Wheaton College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and holds a doctorate from Nova Southeastern University. He and his wife, Dolly, live in Northern Virginia.

## *Recommendation:*

*Discipleship with C.S. Lewis* is the result of an inspired idea: use C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, as the basis for disciple-making today. Woodruff's book is not only a Christian call to arms, but a training manual for preparing Christians to be battle-ready.

## *Dr. Kevin J. Vanhoozer*

Blanchard Professor of Systematic Theology, Litfin Divinity School of Wheaton College

**Dr. Joel Woodruff** leads the reader through a practical engagement with C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and opens the path for the reader to grapple with the Scriptures which so deeply shaped Lewis's thought. I would heartily recommend it to any desiring a deeper discipleship.

## *Connally Gilliam*

Author of *Revelations of a Single Woman*, U.S. Navigators Staff



“I am [in your world],” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.”

—C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

