

# **The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses Study Guide**

**The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses by C. S.  
Lewis**

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# Contents

<a href="#">The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">The Weight of Glory.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Learning in War-time.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Why I am Not a Pacifist.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Transposition.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Is Theology Poetry?.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">The Inner Ring.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Membership.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">On Forgiveness.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Slip of the Tongue.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>



# Plot Summary

This volume contains nine of C.S. Lewis's sermons. Originally, he gave the sermons to college students in England. He carefully and thoroughly argues each viewpoint, using a careful, almost scientific approach in his arguments. The language of his sermons is that of a highly educated man, which reflects his audience. The combination of these two aspects of the sermons makes some of the arguments complicated and hard to follow.

Lewis, however, continues his reputation for honest and profound observations both of the spiritual and the carnal world. He honestly expresses his own weaknesses in respect to his own devotion.

However, he also gives his advice for dealing with such struggles. The viewpoints of others, such as pacifists and evolutionists, receive the same honest speculation, however. Sometimes, surprisingly, Lewis agrees with parts of the opposition. Quickly, though, he refutes such arguments with his own careful and logical response.

The topics range from war to the afterlife. He never fails to apply his topics directly to his audience. Sometimes he speaks on topics requested by others, and sometimes the topic seems to be of his own choosing. Each sermon exists independently, though. He never refers back to previous sermons within this volume. The time line among the sermons is, in fact, unclear. One assumes they were given in order, but no evidence of this exists.

The reader feels the passion of the speaker, even if the reader doesn't agree with his points. Though Lewis gave the sermons some time ago, their truths apply in a largely timeless fashion to any time and culture. What's more, even in the printed form, the arguments retain much of their impact. Few clues about the speaker's delivery remain.

Lewis offers no apologies for his views about Christianity. In fact, he refutes many other beliefs systems in favor of Christianity. His arguments appear so clearly and concisely that the reader, though he may disagree, may have a difficult time refuting Lewis.

The language of the volume clues the reader in to the period of time the sermons were given: the early twentieth century. Difficulties in understanding Lewis stem not from differing language due to time or space, however.

Instead, Lewis's education may make the sermons difficult to understand. Frequently, he refers to Latin terms while offering no explanation. Often, though, context clues offer help in figuring out the meaning of such statements.



# The Weight of Glory

## The Weight of Glory Summary and Analysis

Lewis begins this sermon by pointing out the progressively negative slant of Christian virtues. He claims that the current virtue of unselfishness should actually be love. Such discussions of semantics frequently appear within Lewis's sermons.

To expand on these thoughts, Lewis points out that Biblical self-denial carries with it the consequence of doing good for others, namely Christ. He then proceeds to point out another contradiction.

Human desires, often thought too strong, are actually too weak, seeking temporary fulfillment due to shortsightedness. For example, one may think that giving in to lust signifies a strong emotion. In fact, one is actually settling for a lesser emotion, lust, instead of the truer emotion, love.

After establishing these principles by refuting common misconceptions, Lewis explores motivations for doing good in the Christian life. Though some motivations seem to be "mercenary," proper motivations, such as love in marriage, are proper and, therefore, acceptable.

Mercenary motivations, however, involve those instances when one does good for selfish reasons, such as being kind to a relative with intent only to inherit something upon their death. Such motivations fail to show love in an unselfish way.

In the case of Christians, however, motivations grow as a believer grows in his beliefs. Lewis first discusses a childlike desire for heaven, in which he imagines heaven in simple and self-pleasing terms.

In maturity, however, a Christian realizes that a biblical view of heaven involves a place where believers praise God; it is not about man's earthly desires. The childlike view is not wrong, however. Rather, it is a necessary step to grow an adult Christian.

The childlike belief of heaven exists, according to Lewis, because men are afraid to explore the unknown. However, Lewis answers skeptics by citing theories of evolution and progressivism. He says such beliefs support the idea that "our real goal is elsewhere."

Furthermore, a man's desire for beauty in this life also provides a clue about the truth of heaven. Man desires beauty because he knows that untold beauty exists somewhere, this being heaven.

Yet, men cannot understand heaven from an earthly viewpoint. This supports the idea also, however. Should a man be able to imagine heaven, it would be no different from earth. Lewis then continues his thoughts about heaven by citing biblical descriptions.



However vague, it says only that men shall be like Christ; they will receive "glory" and be somewhat entertained and fed. Given this, men, theologians and artists attempt to describe heaven in poetry and song, though all attempts seem rather meager.

Returning, then, to the original and childlike view of heaven, Lewis points out that the Bible does promise accolades for believers, coming directly from God. This supports some self-pleasing aspects of heaven; it is not only about praising God. This praise to men appears as a childlike pleasure, however, as a child from a parent, not as a vain, selfish man.

Given all this proof, Lewis moves into his real argument. He asserts that all humanity must face God, to be judged or rewarded. Therefore, man feels a pressure to please God and attain his love. Lewis calls this the "weight... of glory."

Further proof of this exists because the Bible states that negative feelings occur from being banished by God. Therefore, positive feelings, or at least feelings relief, result from his acceptance.

Besides receiving praise from God, heaven also involves beauty, such as no man on earth can imagine. Earthly beauty, especially in the form of visual arts, only hints at the beauty of heaven. There man will not only observe beauty, but also become a part of it.

To support this, Lewis cites texts that describe man's glory in heaven as that of the sun. Such an idea adds value to even the most retched of people on earth, because in heaven they have a beauty on par with God's.

In conclusion, man must strive to see Jesus, therefore God, in others even now on earth, because one day in haven it will be so. He writes, "There are no ordinary people." Finally, he writes that man must have times of play, but they should always maintain a serious outlook, keeping in mind the weight of one's eternal destination.

As is the case with all of Lewis's sermons, the reader must read this sermon carefully, often going over certain passages more times. In fact, as the sermon unfolds, the reader may gain even more insight by going back over previous points and the introduction.

Lewis speaks of a topic many men wrestle with, that of the hereafter and the possibility of heaven. Though Lewis believes, he offers a view rarely offered by popular theologians. Man, Lewis purports, may exist in heaven only to praise the Lord, not to fulfill his every desire, as many people imagine.

However, Lewis points out that not only will man gain pleasure from such exercises, but God also offers the possibility of more because he knows that man cannot imagine, let alone be motivated by such a selfless future.



# Learning in War-time

## Learning in War-time Summary and Analysis

Lewis begins this lecture by questioning the value of higher learning in the face of such serious and uncertain times as world war two. He compared such practices of higher learning to the legend of Nero fiddling while Rome burns.

However, Lewis points out that in the face of a belief in a literal hell, Christians must always consider such a question of value of time in higher education. Therefore, he points out that for a man to claim that he cannot achieve learning during wartime is a man that operates not under rational thought, but under emotion.

Moreover, Lewis points out that a form of war always exists in human society and always will. Therefore, there must be a way to continue learning in the midst of war and strife. In fact, Lewis points out that many big ideas occur precisely at such times. Books such as War and Peace support this notion.

This occurs because one's mind must always be occupied. Lewis suggests, "If you don't read good books, you will read bad ones." Furthermore, Lewis offers that a man is never asked to live for his country, by giving up other pursuits; he only must die for his country, should he be called upon to do so.

To further emphasize his claim, Lewis points out that the New Testament writer, Paul, encouraged Christians to go on with their lives and jobs, as long as they glorify God in their actions.

Therefore, Lewis offers that any act offered humbly to God benefits a man. Conversely, any act done in any other manner is sinful. What's more, actions done to God are equal, regardless of their magnitude. One must only use one's own talents to his greatest ability, with a humble attitude.

What's more, at their heart, all desires have a proper function. Lewis cites Thomas Aquinas as proof that sexuality exists, not because of sin, but because it serves a purpose. Therefore, an exercise of any talent must be used, and in that, used for God. Any other use necessitates the removal of such a temptation.

Returning to matters of war, Lewis points out that the enemy, the heathen, continues to study in time of strife. Therefore, Christian nations must continue to better both their military and their intellectuals. Study serves another purpose, in that reflection on the past allows for learning from one's mistakes and improving in the future.

What's more, any man's pursuits will include time of boring duty, when one feels as though one's uses are not serving a purpose. Lewis uses the example of a new priest who must lead a choir, a task much simpler than he dreamed to perform. Therefore, a scholar must beware of their enemies to proper use of his talents.



The first enemy is excitement, in that outside excitement, such as war, can distract the scholar from the work at hand, his duty. Next, he must avoid frustration, in that some tragedy could prohibit him from completing his task. Lewis points out that no true intellectual has enough time; he must do as much as he can of as long as he is able.

The final enemy is fear, which paralyzes the scholar due to the uncertain future. Lewis assure his listeners that no man is truly ready to die. However, a man can take this opportunity to prepare for his death and afterlife. In calling for such actions, the fear associated with war affirms Christian beliefs.

The reader may be surprised by Lewis's position of taking the lesser evil. Such a viewpoint differs from the black and white belief system of many preachers. Bravely, Lewis tackles an often avoided gray area, with some success. He offers both practical examples and scriptural support for his viewpoints.

Often, Lewis points out how the secular world reinforces the Christian view of the spiritual world. Man's fear of dying signifies the existence of an afterlife, especially one involving the Christian God.



# Why I am Not a Pacifist

## Why I am Not a Pacifist Summary and Analysis

Lewis begins this sermon with a prescription for deciding right and wrong. Lewis offers that a man should follow his conscience, in internal pressure, rather than his own judgments. This is because often men are wrong in their judgments of the mind, though most men may be wrong in different ways. He then offers an example of Reason.

To judge something as true or false, a man must decide on the facts first, then intuit the results of the actions and finally, arrange the facts to produce true proofs. However, falsehoods will lead to a false outcome, regardless of the honesty of the intuition employed to come to the result.

In addition, some people willfully decide to avoid an obvious inference in order to avoid a personally unacceptable result. Furthermore, many people adopt beliefs based on the words of an authority figure, not due to their own knowledge and reasoning.

To Lewis, this type of acceptance is acceptable. In order for this to work, however, human beings must be trained from an early age, even before they enter school. Ultimately, though, that which people decide is morally acceptable must have an absolute authority that uses an objective process.

Therefore, when one uses such tests, based on testable facts, one finds that war does serve a purpose, though it cannot solve all of humanity's problems. Furthermore, one cannot help all of mankind, so one must choose the most worthy cause, one that benefits the most of society.

Lewis admits that he supports choosing the lesser of two evils, as this works better than doing nothing. He goes further by saying that oppression, not death, is the worst fate for mankind.

When considering the side of pacifism, Lewis points out that wars continue, allowing an attitude of pacifism to cripple that society. The most effective answer to war is a specific approach, not universal, such as world peace or world health. Lewis also points out the fact that decades of war-fighting defenders allow pacifists to remain so. Lewis thus feels indebted to continue this tradition.

Moreover, due to his religion and the evidence of it, Lewis fails to agree with the premise, new in his time, that each generation improves upon the previous, much like a machine. Continuing in the vein of religion, Lewis points out that all of Christianity's history supports war. In fact, Christ himself never spoke explicitly against it when the topic arose.





In reference to biblical passages that admonish one to "turn the other cheek," Lewis offers that certain allowances exist, and that the rule applies to the individual. War, on the other hand, applies to the whole of society.

Lewis reminds the audience to read the context of the passage and, not stopping here, to consider all the teachings of Christ, not just the narrow view of a pacifist, or any other belief. In doing on, one must employ the rational and objective tests previously discussed.

While Lewis supports war for the reasons listed above, he admits that no rational man likes war. In losing, he points out that no absolute proof exists for war, that no man would choose it if a better choice existed. In the end, it is simply the lesser of two evils.

Once again, Lewis offers the lesser of two evils. Because he addresses men who study theology, he addresses harder topics than a typical preacher. He assumes these men have already considered the average topics and so instead tackles harder questions. In war time, many religious people emphasize pacifism. In fact, some sects are founded on this difference in doctrine.

Lewis makes it clear why he does not agree. He points out various times of war in the Bible, his main textbook for all his sermons. He points out that God often endorsed war to accomplish his means.

He also mentions times from more recent history that support the need for war. The lust for power, both a contemporary and Biblical theme, always exists. Because of this, war is always necessary.

# Transposition

## Transposition Summary and Analysis

In this piece, Lewis discusses spiritual gifts, specifically the gift of tongues, or the ability of one to speak in a language that he does not understand. Lewis offers the history of the tongues phenomena, which first occurs in the first century church at Jerusalem.

The talent, Lewis says, was necessary to quickly spread the doctrines of Christianity throughout the world. However, with the canonization and publication of scriptures, the use of tongues ceases to exist in modern times.

Given this, Lewis calls the movement of tongues that arose in his time "gibberish." He compares the two occurrences to a skeptic's disbelief of true love over lust, because they produce the same result. The "modern" tongues movement of Lewis's time offers what appear to be men speaking in different languages, without the same results as those in the bible.

In the case of love, Lewis offers that in abject joy and abject sorrow, the human feels a simpler gut-wrenching feeling. If the proof applied to the previous examples of tongues and love is applied to this newest example, one would then conclude that joy and anguish are the same. However, a rational man knows that to be false. Therefore, Lewis proclaims this argument untrue.

Lewis's argument then moves to the broader topic of man's attempts to describe the immortal world through mortal means. Lewis offers that when a literary passage from a developed language is translated to a primitive one, one must, of necessity, simplify the passage. The same exists with the immortal, he claims. Man attempts to explain the unexplainable and always falls short.

Lewis then makes two points about this reduction. Man's ability to understand a simplified version depends on his knowledge of the "higher medium." Lewis uses the example of an orchestral piece reduced to a piano score. A listener only understands the intricacies if he previously heard the orchestral piece.

In another example, Lewis asks the reader to imagine a man living in a two-dimensional world; he would not comprehend our three-dimensional one. Further examples emphasize this point. Art, for instance, only represents what we already know about the world. Therefore, one's body translates, or transubstantiates, an emotion into a lesser feeling, which may occur as the same feeling for multiple and opposite emotions, such as a gut reaction to both joy and pain.

Lewis now returns to his original discussion of the evidence of God or a spiritual realm that cannot be measured in an earthly sense. Lewis offers that, simply because one's world is too simple to offer proof for the difference between lust and love does not mean



that no difference exists. In fact, man, Lewis offers, knows enough of the existence of a spiritual world to know that he falls short of it.

From this, Lewis proceeds to a discussion of childlike faith, that, in its simplicity, seems crude, but actually comes the closest to realizing the truth about Heaven due to its simple belief. Lewis uses as example the fact that man cannot understand "infinite good." What's more, man accentuates the negatives in life, such as calling something "unselfish" instead of charitable. This returns to the argument set forth in the introduction. In this sense, Lewis offers that man does not comprehend Heaven because he possesses earthly, under-developed senses, which cannot yet comprehend the sensory life of the hereafter.

Lewis now constructs an elaborate fable of a woman who gives birth to a son in a prison with only an overhead glimpse of sky. By way of education, she draws the outside world in pencil and he comprehends, until she tells him that in reality, pencil lines do not exist. The son then loses his connection to the real world.

Lewis points out that a paradox exists, that one must believe in what is not real, the pencil lines, in order to have some vision of reality. Lewis says, "Our natural experiences (sensory, emotional, imaginative) are only like he drawing, like penciled lines on flat paper."

Therefore, Lewis suggests that if man's lesser experiences exist, then a higher reality must exist just as a landscape painting fails to exist without the artist first having some experience seeing such landscapes.

Yet Lewis points out that one must be a believer to understand much about the higher world. Otherwise, people only become more animalistic. Lastly, Lewis points out that such beliefs allow for other doctrines, such as bodily resurrection.

Once again, Lewis returns to the topic of heaven. Though one already knows that Lewis believes in such a place, Lewis now tries to explain why humans have such a hard time imagining such a place. He uses various tactics in this, including a somewhat Biblical trait, the parable, by sharing the story of the woman and her baby.

As was the case with the first sermon, the reader must employ careful and repetitive readings in this sermon. It constantly builds and refers back to itself. Lewis closes with the argument that, without an afterlife, humans become less empathetic and more animalistic.

Modern readers must reflect on this thought in their own time. Given modern social conditions, one may agree or disagree. Such points of theology often appear in this type of ambiguity.



# Is Theology Poetry?

## Is Theology Poetry? Summary and Analysis

Lewis opens the sermon by stating that the topic is not one of his choosing. He then defines theology as "the systematic series of statements about God and about man's relation to Him which the believers of a religion make." Furthermore, he offers that not every belief system has theology. Greek myths, for example, do not share a universal theology.

Lewis begins by asking if theology only offers the value of poetry. Poetry, Lewis says, satisfies man's imagination. If theology exists only as poetry, Lewis offers that it is poor poetry, because it lacks drama and detail.

The lack of fantasy fails in theology where the myths and fairy tales serve to arouse one's imagination. Lewis describes that one's enjoyment of fantasy differs from one's enjoyment of nonfiction, and if one believes one's theology, one must call it nonfiction.

A textbook description of history and an epic poem about history both offer enjoyment to the reader, but enjoyment of differing types. Finally, Lewis offers that while some theological truth may seem poetic to a believer, it offers no such enjoyment to a nonbeliever.

Therefore, theology cannot be merely poetry. Alternatively, one cannot disbelieve theology simply because it possesses certain poetic elements. Furthermore, theology is not false simply because it shares poetic and thematic elements with other false ideas.

Similar to the previous topic, Lewis offers that of necessity, theology uses symbolism to explain ideas that do not exist in man's current world. Early Christianity, however, appears more mythical than that of current time. Lewis offers that this is due not to falsehoods, but unrealized potential. His example is that of men with a nut he has not yet cracked.

Lewis digresses into a comparison between theology and science, stating that "long before I believed Theology to be true I had already decided that the popular scientific picture at any rate was false." Therefore, he offers, one does not believe theology due to a lack of exposure to science and other belief systems. He then refutes evolutionary thought of his time by pointing out what he deems a circular reasoning.

He states that an evolutionist believes in the inevitable progress of nature and that a man comes from a simple celled embryo. However, Lewis points out that that embryo can only exist from two fully formed humans. Even in the industrial revolution, all machines devolve from the more complicated machine of man's mind.

Now, Lewis describes his path to Christianity. After rejecting science, he turns to religion. In considering religions, he feels the teachings of Christ cannot be ignored. In

closing, Lewis fails to fully return to the question of poetry, but he defends his belief in Christianity with the statement "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

The reader may end this sermon with some confusion over the topic and the reason for it. Theology and poetry rarely exist in the same circles in modern culture. Even under such odd conditions, the question offers some insight into what theology is. It offers the most insight for a skeptic or agnostic, as Lewis points out, because a believer sees enough value in theology without this argument.

However, Lewis strays slightly from the topic at the end in his effort to emphasize the value of pure theology. One may wonder why he feels this way, given his audience of theology students. Then again, perhaps, given his audience, he felt no need to return to the original topic, for reasons cited above. The reader must also remember that these sermons were given orally, and, therefore, the usual plot diagram is sometimes lacking.



# The Inner Ring

## The Inner Ring Summary and Analysis

This sermon begins with an excerpt from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. He explains his purpose of offering moral wisdom of a classic, not popular, nature. The example from Tolstoy represents the character's discovery of hierarchies in society, specifically the military. Varying social dynamics offer different circle of influence and acceptance. However, one is not born with the knowledge of how these circles work.

What's more, each circle consists of more exclusive circles. Whereas a man may gain admittance to a college, he then learns of academic societies of which he is not yet a part. Lewis says that all men naturally desire acceptance of such selective societies, even those who look down on men in certain societies and desire themselves to be a part of a different group.

What's more, Lewis points out that a man rarely recognizes the depth of his desire to admittance into certain societies. Man would rather be admitted to an undesirable position within the society than left out altogether. There also exists peer pressure to join such groups.

However, Lewis points out that such pressure are not, by definition, negative. With a quote by Byron, Lewis explains that though death by old age is not immoral, the desire of to gain a higher estate is.

Likewise, sometimes one's desire to admittance causes one to leave the company of true friends for the acceptance of important people. One then pushes friends further away by bragging about one's newfound acceptance. Man acts this way because he hopes for some personal gain.

While Lewis asserts that such greed exists as a permanent part of the human condition, he does not feel it is a positive part. The greed is often accompanied by a desire for the forbidden. Furthermore, the more may not be a single, clear moment of truth, where one becomes a "scoundrel." It may be a trivial word or a habit of such. Contrarily, to do the right thing may cause one's expulsion from the desired circle.

The moral question, then, lies in one's desire for admittance. Admittance for its own sake is not a moral reason to join a group. One must gain something else by participating. Joining a musical group, therefore, provides aesthetic pleasure, but of necessity excludes those who do not play, and for whom there is no place.

When one develops a habit of examining one's motivation and acting accordingly, one finds a new desire rising, yet the exclusiveness remains. Lewis purports, "The invisible line would have no meaning unless most people were on the wrong side of it."



In conclusion, avoiding all "inner rings" and circles that exist for their own sake ensures an admittance into the most desirable circle of all, that being the circle of the most accomplished craftsman of one's trade. Other people within this circle benefit one, not threaten one as the greedy members of other circles. Lewis closes by saying that only rings built on friendship provide true happiness.

The Inner Ring covers a topic still important to young people today, as well as people of all ages to some degree. Lewis is, essentially, addresses peer pressure. The reader realizes that young people continue to struggle as their historical counterparts did. Lewis offers to those people that abstinence from any sort of social exclusivity for its own sake offers a very worthwhile reward.

This sermon dwells the longest on the introduction. For much of the sermon, it seems that some people will always be drawn to social circles for the wrong reasons. Such language offers little hope to the audience. Lewis, perhaps, assumes person responsibility, though it is never explicitly stated.

In closing, the sermon comes full circle quickly, by encouraging the young men of the audience to seek friendship for its own sake, which were the basis for the relationships one had, before being drawn away by the draw of power and peer pressure.

In this, the theme of the lust for power returns. Not only peer pressure, but the lust for power draws men from their true friends and to those whom from whom they want to gain more power, by membership or by dominance over.



# Membership

## Membership Summary and Analysis

This sermon discusses the relationship between religion and society. First, Lewis assures the reader that religion is not simply a solitary action. Because the New Testament describes the church as a body, Lewis asserts that religion is very much related to man's relation with others. Moreover, in Lewis's time, people rarely find themselves alone.

This gets in the way of a person developing himself or herself in the way the great minds of the past did. Because of advances in technology during the time of Lewis, man never finds himself alone, without influence of the news of the outside world. Given this, Lewis describes the average person as "starved or solitude."

However, religion does not exist in solitude. A person who waits for solitude to peruse religion, according to Lewis, is listening to a ploy of the enemy. Yet, one's religion does not benefit from excessive business, though some business is necessary. Lewis states, "All may have to be a little hungry in order that none may starve."

However, the absence of evil does not equate with good. Lewis compares his assumption to a person who enjoys canned fruit more than fresh. Though the canning allows for the enjoyment of fruit that is out of season it is not actually healthier than fruit fresh from the orchard. With that, Lewis enters the real discussion of membership.

This word, he claims, was stolen by secular society from the Christian dialogue. In the bible, it describes the church, in which everyone has different but important roles. However, in society, members are looked upon as the same. Finally, this new definition creeps into the church, making Christians ordinary and without identity. Lewis points out that members of family inherently have different roles and titles. Lewis likens the church more to a family or, as the biblical example puts it, a body in which each person plays a different, unique and important role.

Next, Lewis explores the fact that God promised to love each person the same. This seems to contradict the diversity of the body. First, Lewis explains democracy is necessary because of the sinful nature of mankind, in which power corrupts anyone in authority. God, however, lives above such sinful nature.

His love stems, then, from his own nature. This, as Lewis quotes the Apostle Paul, proves God's divine nature. Finally, God's love is equal, not due to man, but due to the inherent nature of God.

Given one's membership to the body of the church, Lewis offers that a man must die to himself. This offers a paradox, however, as the church will be immortal. Man will only gain his immortal identity by sacrificing his selfish desires to become a part of the whole.





One's context, Lewis states, defines one's identity. From a biblical view, man has no other value. Only once he find his rightful place in the church does he feel valuable to society. In closing, no "collective mass" inherits eternal life, but an entirely "new creature" unknown to secular society.

One may begin this sermon with the assumption that the subject may go along with that of the previous sermon. However, the membership this refers to deals with the semantics of that very word. Lewis argues against the change in semantics related to this term. Such an argument may be foreign to a man who does not often read theology. However, word meaning often appears in such sermons.

Lewis continues on to the value of an individual, which he feels occurs to a lesser degree in his society. Considering the faceless and valueless views that followed the industrial revolution, Lewis's topic gains credibility.

This is a topic that gains ground even after Lewis's time, in the emphasis of self-worth in education. Yet, in Lewis's time, the idea was a new one and seems to contradict the selfless ideals of the Bible. However, Lewis offers that God's love gives each soul value, and one's talents give one individuality.

In short, one must dutifully seek to perform God's will for one's life, because no one else can do this for someone else. Furthermore, a man should never look to the duties of another, either in addition to or instead of his own duties. Lewis cites the Apostle Paul, who likens the church to a body. It would be ludicrous for the ear to desire to be a foot. Without the ear, regardless of how small in comparison to the body, the whole body would be without hearing. Likewise, any functional body of humans must have varying types of people. Such differences do not devalue the person. Instead, they place more value, in the way that a skilled worker earns more than a general laborer.



# On Forgiveness

## On Forgiveness Summary and Analysis

Lewis begins by pointing out that many people blindly believe aspects of the Christian faith. For instance, many people recite the apostle's creed without a thought to the word or meaning. If this is the case, why do Christians believe in forgiveness? Largely, Christians believe that God forgives without exception.

However, Lewis states that few people seek true forgiveness. Instead, they seek for God to accept this excuse for their sin. Other times, a believer takes partial blame, but offers an excuse for the ultimate outcome, sin, and the supplicator fails to actually ask for forgiveness from the Almighty.

Lewis tells the listener that excuses, rarely useful in real life, also get nowhere with God. He has heard them all before. Here Lewis uses a doctor's visit as a metaphor. If a patient suffers from a broken arm, explaining to the doctor that every other body part is OK is a waste of precious time. Ultimately, man's excuses stem from some element of unbelief. Man feels God will not accept him without an excuse.

Some people resist the idea of forgiveness because they cannot excuse the wrongs done to them. Lewis assures these people that forgiveness does not excuse past sin or allow for that sin in the future.

Instead, forgiveness calls for man and God to forgive the inexcusable. This becomes hardest with one's closest friend, because forgiving one major sin proves easier than forgiving the volume of little day-to-day sins. However, one puts this in perspective by remembering one's own volume of sin before God.

After several sermons of deep and confusing topics, Lewis offers a very relatable topic in forgiveness. He points out that bitterness towards others often prevents one from forgiving others. However, God forgives a believer in a way that mere mortals cannot understand.

Lewis often points out that much of man's unbelief stems from his limited brain capacity, in comparison with God's omniscience. Forgiveness is just one of these examples. Heaven is also described in this way, in other sermons.

The topic of forgiveness speaks to any person, regardless of their religious tendencies. This may be the most universal of all the sermons in this volume. Every person must realize that bitterness over a past wrong hurts only the one holding the grudge.

Lewis agrees with this, pointing out that forgiveness does not excuse a wrong action, only realizes one from its grasp. While often people believe that bitterness hurts the one who hurt them, the truth is it actually injures their own soul.



Lewis offers, though, that if one accepts the tenants of Christianity, one realizes the volume of sin that God forgives in each person. In the opinion of Lewis, forgiving others becomes easier when one realizes that God forgave men. What's more, God forgives over and over, just as men are often weary to do to their fellow man.

# Slip of the Tongue

## Slip of the Tongue Summary and Analysis

In opening, Lewis admits that he preaches this sermon of himself as much as to the students present. In a Sunday night prayer, Lewis slipped up in a prayer and asked to pass through eternal things to gain temporal, instead of the other way around. He alludes to the Freudian implication of such a statement and proceeds to discuss the unfortunate truth in such a slip.

Men often become cautious about becoming too holy, because their religious convictions could hinder the fun they desire for life. This way, they are not willing that their religion inconvenience their pet sins.

Furthermore, men sometimes feel that it is better not to repent than to repent and promise to forgo such sins in the future. In addition, men fear that in receiving forgiveness they will feel convicted to forgive their fellow man, as is laid out in the Lord's model prayer.

For instance, a man may commit a crime against another on a Saturday evening, because he feels the conviction of the next day's sermon may prohibit his intended actions. Man shows much knowledge about the will of God in doing so, without showing any willingness to actually live it out in the way God apparently intends for him to do.

Instead, men look for the minimum involvement in religion, much as they approach taxes. They can easily find examples of religion taken to dangerous excesses and claim this as their reason for keeping themselves moderately dedicated. Lewis points out the folly in such actions. Men ought to fully devote themselves to God, for their own good, as well as the greater good of their society.

However, man sacrifices the blessing of God with these attitudes. Lewis states "He cannot bless us unless He has us." God, according to Lewis, does not want man's best time or the bulk of man's time, but all of the man. Thus, Lewis continues his theme of total surrender to God, regardless of the loss to the individual or the discomfort it may cause.

No other cause, no matter how noble, will equate to total dedication to God. Only God can end this inherent habit to moderate oneself. Yet, not acting on God-given impulses of surrender, according to Lewis, is a man's greatest sin.

This collection ends with this short sermon. Lewis offers many common feelings that men have, though they are seldom admitted in public. Lewis shows a little about his personality. He speaks candidly with the students and offers them his own shortcomings.



This sermon challenges the reader or listener to be honest about his own commitment to his future and his relationship with God. Lewis makes a final plea for believers to be completely committed to their religion and their God.

Good preachers often use their own faults to help their constituents. A man assumes that, if he, as a man of God, struggle sin an area, those to whom he preaches struggle also. What's more, in admitting his own weaknesses, from time to time, a preacher gains the trust and respect of his congregates, because they see him as more human, as they are.



# Characters

## C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis, better known as an author, especially of children's fantasy books, also wrote prolifically on matters of serious theology. What's more, he gave numerous academic sermons on various topics that concerned the students of his day.

Lewis picks his topics from various sources. He speaks about current events, especially the subject of war and fighting. He also speaks on topics others request of him, though such sermons often drift to other topics that Lewis prefers.

Finally, he uses a common convention of preachers, by preaching on the subject with which he struggles himself. When he feels himself resisting true surrender to God, he preaches a touching and honest sermon on the topic.

As the author of the sermons, Lewis's personality comes through, despite the formal tone of his speeches. What's more, he offers his own opinions, but is careful to support them with various examples from history and theology.

Throughout this collection of sermons, Lewis offers a little about his own history. He explains his own conversion and why this conversation disproves much of the scientific thought of his day. Thorough careful logic, he considers most science to be unbelievable. In contrast, he finds Christian theology to be irrefutable.

He shows his concern for his audience in the passion that flows through his sermons. He also shows interest in their happiness and future success. He responds to the reactions of his audience and states their reaction to his points. Thus, he encourages them to be honest about their own feelings and respond to God accordingly.

To Lewis, God is a very real being. Lewis encourages a sincere devotion to his God, including total surrender and honest prayer. He incorporates God into every aspect of life, not only the obviously religious, but the mundane. He believes God cares not only about the church, but also about the individual and the country.

## God

Lewis refers to God as an infinitely wise, divine being that inhabits heaven. He is someone who the believer, the Christian, should include in every aspect of life. Prayers are not to be something done in passing or out of duty, but something to be directed honestly and heartily toward God in order to gain knowledge of the almighty and thus learn his intended direction for that believer.

Man's purpose is to worship God. Though many immature Christians believe heaven to be a place where man gains his heart's desires. Lewis points out that this has little



Biblical basis. Lewis believes that God allows such an idea in order to motivate a person to become a believer.

However, upon some spiritual maturity, one realizes that one's purpose, in this life and the next is to praise God. Once in heaven, the believer will have no selfish desires and desire only to offer himself to God wholly.

Man must trust in God's power and wisdom in all his daily activities. Man should not only trust God with his eternal soul, but with his every day activities and his plans for the future.

In addition, man should be open to change his plans based on God's leading. Lewis believes that every believer can know God's will for his own life. He does not feel this is a mystery that someone one should seek advice from a spiritual adviser on earth. Careful and consistent devotion towards God will reveal to a person his own spiritual destiny.

God commands man to be concerned for his fellow citizens. Though not expressly, Lewis seems to support the common Christian tenant that evil exists because God gave man free will. Due to the abuse of power, man chooses to do evil things. In this way, God allows war, so that those innocents of society will not be taken advantage of by those who may abuse their power.

Men should seek a lifelong relationship with God in order to enjoy a fully productive and satisfied life. Though Lewis speaks of spiritual maturity, he never infers that any man "arrives." Men must always grow in their relationship to God, until they go into the hereafter.

## **Students**

As his audience, Lewis assumes the students have a great deal of knowledge about history and theology. He refers to these topics often. He also refers to topics of importance to the students at this time, such as war and friendship. The population of the university values Lewis's viewpoints, as is evidenced by their request that he speaks on specific topics.

## **Scientist**

Lewis identifies himself as a former scientist. He explains that, when considered logically, he cannot accept the scientific thoughts of his day. He does not dismiss all scientific theory out of turn, but insists that it follow the same logic to which he applies to everything else.



## Apostle Paul

Lewis quotes the Apostle Paul, or St. Paul, more than perhaps any other biblical writer. Paul wrote a majority of the New Testament of the bible

## Pacifist

Lewis defines a pacifist as some one that opposes war under any circumstance. Though Lewis would prefer a world without war, he maintains that war is necessary to prevent the abuse of power.

## H G Wells

Lewis refers to the writings of H G Wells in the sermons "Is Theology Poetry?" He cites this as an example of contemporary scientific ideas. He offers that such writings can be poetic. They are not, by virtue of their poetry, either true or false. However, in this instance, Lewis calls the scientific writings of Wells "the finest myths which human imagination has yet produced."

## D M S Watson

Lewis refutes the theory of evolution as something lacking in logic. He quotes Watson, who claims that scientists believe evolution only because they cannot humanly account for the possibility of divine creation.

## Stickman

Lewis uses this common metaphor to try to explain heaven. A stick man living in a two dimensional world cannot conceive of a three dimensional world, just as an earthbound human cannot conceive of a divinely inhabited heaven.

## Woman in Prison

A fable of a woman who gives birth to a son in a hole of a prison, with only a glimpse of sunlight to prove the existence of the outside world, also illustrates man's struggles to understand heaven. The woman may draw pencil drawings of the outside world for her son, but when she tells him that the pencil lines do not exist in nature, he fails to understand the reality of the landscapes. In this way, artists attempt to represent the actual world, but must rely on lesser mediums to represent the actual reality.





# Objects/Places

## Reason

Lewis refers to ideas such as Reason in a proper sense. He assumes that they are ideas with which his audience is already familiar. He uses arguments such as Reason and Logic to support his various ideas.

## War

Lewis gives his sermons in a time contemporary with the second world war. He maintains that war is a necessary evil, to protect those who cannot protect themselves and correct abuses of power.

## Heaven

Lewis takes a view of heaven not common even among Christian texts. He offers that man's time in heaven will not necessarily be for his own supreme enjoyment, but the enjoyment of the Almighty. Such a view, Lewis admits, fails to draw people to the theology, however, so he allows for the common belief that men will find their heart's desire in eternity, because Lewis believes that, once man enters this place, his desire will be in tune with God's.

## Science

This topic, unlike many in Lewis's writing, does not receive a great deal of definition. Lewis believes most older scientific theory but regards new scientific ideas with much speculation. He offers some authority in this thought process by citing his own time in scientific study, before his conversion.

## Bible

Lewis quotes the bible specifically often, as evidence for his theology. However, he discusses little about biblical authority in this collection.

## Poetry

Lewis attempts to answer the question of the poetry of his theology. He concludes that while theology may be poetry, it is much more. What's more, theology does not offer the best examples of poetry.

## **Art**

Lewis uses art to illustrate the reality of heaven. Just as the artist uses inferior mediums to illustrate the grandeur of reality, the theologian refers to lesser feelings that man knows in order to explain the unexplainable reality of the hereafter.

## **Sun**

Lewis uses the sun as a metaphor of God. He states that "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

## **Theology**

Lewis assumes that the reader and listener understand that theology is defined as the basic beliefs of the Christian faith.

## **Oxford**

Lewis gives these sermons to the student body of Oxford University in England.



# Themes

## Superiority of Theology

To Lewis, no knowledge supersedes the knowledge that comes from God, chiefly through the Bible. He explores literary and collegiate knowledge, historical knowledge, scientific theory and others, but finds them all lacking. What's more, he points out their shortcomings, when compared to theology in such a concise way that the listener or reader can easily agree with Lewis's logic, even if they fail to agree with his theology.

Lewis does not discount other views without careful consideration. He offers that science and other belief systems offer some merit, as long as they agree with Christian theology. In his own life, he describes his journey towards Christianity, after some time in the study of science and other disciplines.

He describes his careful consideration of all world views he knew of. He explains that none made logical sense in the way that Christianity does. Finally, he admits that he knew he must do something with the knowledge of Jesus and God. He points to Jesus first as a historical person, who must have been true or crazy.

The facts of the material Lewis cites precludes a notion that Jesus Christ was crazy. Therefore, Lewis claims he felt no response to be responsible but the surrender to the beliefs of Christianity.

In contrast with the arguments of many other experts of Lewis's day, he claims that scientific theories such as evolution contain logical gaps and circular reasoning.

For instance, Lewis points out that evolution claims all systems become more sophisticated and, therefore, complicated. However, Lewis points out that the most complicated of machines comes from a more complicated source, man's brain.

Furthermore, two people must join in order to make one baby, a process that actually points to a retrograde motion. Lewis refers to the common paradox of the chicken and the egg. Evolutionists, he says, point to the complicated chicken from the simply egg. Lewis points out that there must have first been an equally complicated chicken to produce the needed egg.

When disagreements occur, this is when Lewis points out the superiority of his theology. He does not offer this viewpoint without careful arguments, however. He supports each of his views with careful evidence.

Rarely does he seem to expect his audience to take his word on things. He offers quotes from experts, both contemporary and past. He places most value on the knowledge of the past, preferring it to newer and less proven theories of his own time.



## Social Responsibility

Most notably, "Why I am not a Pacifist" expresses Lewis's carefully developed views about one's responsibility within society. In the conclusion of this sermon, Lewis points out that someone's willingness to fight in the past reserves one's right now to express pacifist views. Though he admits that war is not an ideal, it exists as a necessary evil.

Evil exists, according to Lewis, because God gave man free will and man chooses to do evil from his own lust for power. With humans in their current moral composition, this problem cannot be avoided. Therefore, men must choose to do the right thing, to defend those who cannot defend themselves. The result of such actions, regrettably, is war. Evil men, Lewis points out, understand nothing but violence.

However, this theme occurs in other sermons as well. Lewis frequently encourages his students to live in such a way to be to the benefit of himself and his society. Living carefully according to Christian values allows one to achieve this end.

Lewis admonishes the students to carefully choose their friends. He warns them against choosing membership to groups for popularity or power's sake. Such people find themselves very lonely very quickly. However, one who avoids such greedy and selfish groups finds himself in an exclusive group of his true friends, those peers who also avoided wrongful associations.

Lewis's ideas, at first, seem to contradict the common Christian viewpoint of unselfishness. However, Lewis offers the value of a soul depends upon God's value of that person, not the person's innate value in and of himself or herself.

Because everyone is valuable, each man must work to protect his fellow man. He must also be sure to use his own abilities to God's advantage, not his own, because of the great price God paid for men's soul, with his own blood.

## Identity

Lewis encourages his students to seek their identity among things of permanence. He discourages identities based on one's membership to a social circle for its own sake. He also discourages membership in which each member receives the same title. Such actions only feed one's selfish nature, which exists in contrast with one's willingness to seek God's will.

In contrast, Lewis encourages membership in bodies where each member maintains his own valuable identity. He also points out that when one seeks to better himself, he gains access into a circle of one's own peers that also better themselves through careful consideration and study.

Going along with the previous theme, Lewis offers that one should find one's identity in one's belief in God and relationship with God, not in one's achievements or one's status.



Lewis discourages language which equates all members in society as equal and therefore, similar. Though each member of society holds value, a value given by God, each person also possesses unique traits that society needs. By lumping everyone together as the same, society suffers due to the loss of these talents.

Such an idea just begins to appear in Lewis's time, in the form of gender equality. Lewis would disagree with some people in this movement. Though he believes in the value of women and men, he offers that each can give a unique perspective.

If women are treated like men, for instance, they lose their ability to offer anything different from men. Lewis's ideas in this area could apply to equality in any area, such as gender, race or religion.

Lewis uses the example of Family. He likens the church in particular to a family, which consists of mothers, daughters, uncles, et cetera. A family made up on simply fathers would not actually qualify as a family. The being of a family needs all the unique people that make it thus.

The church, specifically, suffers from the type of identity loss that occurs when people are treated with total equality. The Bible likens the church to a body, in which some may be a foot and others an ear. Lewis refers to this passage, written by the Apostle Paul. Paul himself writes that it would be ridiculous for an ear to wish to be a foot.

Applying this to the membership of a church, one should be content and diligent in fulfilling one's own role, without concerning one's self with the roles of others or desiring to be someone else.

## **Lust for Power**

This shortcoming, frequently a theme in the Bible, Lewis's main textbook, causes many problems both on the global and individual scale. Lewis offers that a proper outlook and honest period of self-reflection could prevent much of the destroying lust for power that exists in the world.

The lust for power common in man, in the extreme, causes whole countries to fall under the rule of power-hungry tyrants. Because of this, good men must choose the lesser of two evils and go to war to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Men must also give themselves to periods of study in times of war, to ensure that the brightest minds of the world are those who can protect, not damage the future of humanity.

On a personal level, the lust for power prohibits men from having relationships for the sake of true friendship alone. Men often seek to be part of circles that elevate their social status. They also join such circles because they enjoy the power of superiority over those excluded. Such attitudes damage not only society but also the man practicing them.



Adherence to Christian values inhibits the development of such lust for power. Lewis maintains that only maturity in one's Christian "walk" or beliefs assures that one will not fulfill the lust of the flesh but, instead, act in a loving way towards one's fellow man.

Each individual's role in society plays an important part in one's reaction to injustices. Lewis believes that one must seek to know one's part in order to fulfill it to everyone's benefit. When people become jealous of the roles of others, they begin to lust for power that does not rightfully belong to them.

Lewis simply quotes another writer in pointing out that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Because of this, people have a difficult time grasping the justice of God. Because God cannot be corrupted, by his very nature, he possesses absolute power. A perfect society would look to this rule and none other.

However, a society ruled by man must be a democracy, because power divided among many poses less threat than much power in the hands of one. Confusion and frustration set in when man tries either to impose a God-like power in a man or man's democratic power on the matters of God.



# Style

## Perspective

Lewis uses first person point of view in his sermons. He offers his own carefully constructed viewpoints with support from history and theology. He directly addresses his audience and takes into account their own viewpoints and philosophies, based on their age and education.

His audience consists largely of young, college-going men in Great Britain. Because the sermons are given at a college, Lewis assumes a higher education for his audience.

This perspective works for the material. The use of first person draws the audience into the topic, and the educated tone compliments the audience and causes one to think deeply about the topic.

Careful reading is a must, because of the complex language and complicated nature of the topics. Many of the sermons, however, relate directly to the lives of the young men or apply to human nature in general.

The topics of many of the sermons give them a timeless feeling. Though much time has passed since Lewis gave the sermons, the truths apply to modern society. Readers can appreciate this aspect of the sermons and sometimes may react with amazement at the insight Lewis's sermons continues to offer his readers.

## Tone

The tone of the volume is consistent throughout, and is formal and educated. The arguments tend to be complex and heavily supported with outside sources. The author assumes that the listener or reader knows a great deal about theology and history already. The formality reflects the conventions of public speaking for the time period.

Even with the formal tone, Lewis offers honest insights into his own thinking. He candidly confesses his own temptations to sin or forsake his faith. He assumes such temptations occur in every person's heart.

Some of the tone may seem foreign to the reader, due to changes in the language since Lewis gave the sermons. American readers may also suffer some confusion because the speaker and his listeners were British. In addition, some readers may suffer confusion when Lewis uses Latin terms with no explanation as to their meaning. However, the truths shine despite these challenges.



## Structure

Each sermon included in this volume is set in its own chapter. The sermons average 20 pages in length, with the whole volume being 192 pages long. The sermons exist independently from one another. Lewis never refers back to a previous sermon within this set of sermons. Each sermon does, however, refer to outside sources such as historical accounts.

Each illustration used in proving one of Lewis's points receives a good deal of space; he explains each point, sometimes metaphors, sometimes historical references, in great detail.

Occasionally he uses Biblical conventions, such as parable. He refers to authors and writers, sometimes contemporary and sometimes historical. He seems to place more credence in time-proven pieces. His main text is the Bible, which he believes to be absolute truth.

Each sermon exists in a typical form, with an introduction, often including a statement of the points and perhaps some occurrence or conversation that sparked the topic for Lewis. Each point then receives some expansion.

Lewis ends each sermon with a conclusion, though he does not always relate back to the introduction and the main idea. Such a deviation reflects the real-time personality of a sermon, versus a prepared, written speech. Yet, one clearly see that Lewis prepares each sermon carefully.





## Quotes

"And yet it is a remarkable thing that such philosophies of Progress or Creative Evolution themselves bear reluctant witness to the truth that our real goal is elsewhere." p. 31

"If Christianity could tell me no more of the far-off land than my own temperament led me to surmise already, then Christianity would be no higher than myself." p. 33

"Apparently what I had mistaken for humility had, all these years, prevented me from understanding what is in fact the humblest, the most childlike, the most creaturely of pleasures—nay, the specific pleasure of the inferior: the pleasure of a beast before men, a child before its father, a pupil before his teacher, a creature before its Creator." p. 37

"In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised." p. 38

"We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it." p. 42

"We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption." p. 46

"The war creates no absolutely new situation; it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it." p. 49

"All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest, and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not." p. 54

"Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered." p. 58

"For we have learned now that though the world is slow to forgive, it is quick to forget." p. 90

"For the men spoke not gibberish but languages unknown to them, though known to other people present." p. 93

"When the job thus flows over into the nerves, that overflow is its consummation; when the anguish thus flows over, that physical symptom is the crowning horror. p. 98



"The attempt to discover by introspective analysis our own spiritual condition is to me a horrible thing which reveals, at best, not the secrets of God's spirit and ours, but their transpositions in intellect, emotion, and imagination, and which as worst by be the quickest road to presumption or despair. p. 106

"Such a faith is deceived, yet, in the deepest sense, not deceived, for while it errs in mistaking symbol for fact, yet it apprehends Heaven as joy and plenitude and love. p. 107

"Out natural experiences (sensory, emotional, imaginative) are only like the drawing, like penciled lines on flat paper." p. 111

"Theology, while saying that a special illumination has been vouchsafed to Christians and (earlier) to Jews, also says that there is some divine illumination vouchsafed to all men." p. 128

"Long before I believed Theology to be true I had already decided that the popular scientific picture at any rate was false." p. 135

"And once you accepted Theism, you could not ignore the claims of Christ. And when you examined them it appeared to me that you could adopt no middle position. Either He was a lunatic, or God. And He was not a lunatic." p. 138

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." p. 140

"In the whole of your life as you now remember it, has the desire to be on the right side of that invisible line ever prompted you to any act or word on which, in the cold small hours of a wakeful night, you can look back with satisfaction? If so, your case is more fortunate than most." p. 150

"...for it is only four or five people who like one another meeting to do things that they like. This is friendship. Aristotle placed it among the virtues." p. 157

"There is, in fact, a fatal tendency in all human activities for the means to encroach upon the very ends which they were intended to serve." p. 162

"Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality." p. 167

"As St. Paul write, to have died for valuable men would have been not divine but merely heroic; but God died for sinners... If there is equality, it is in His love, not in us." p. 170

"Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it." p. 181



"For it is not so much of our time and so much of our attention that God demands; it is not even all our time and all our attention; it is ourselves." p. 189

"With that, a good deal of what I had been thinking all my life fell down like a house of cards. I suddenly remembered that no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child— not in a conceited child, but in a good child— as its great and undisguised pleasure in being praised." p. 36

"The moment we do so we can see that every Christian who comes to a university must at all times face a question compared with which the questions raised by the war are relatively unimportant. He must ask himself how it is right, or even psychologically possible, for creatures who are every moment advancing either to heaven or to hell to spend any fraction of the little time allowed them in this world on such comparative trivialities as literature or art, mathematics or biology." p. 48

"May we not, by a reasonable analogy, suppose likewise that there is no experience of the spirit so transcendent and supernatural, no vision of Deity Himself so close and so far beyond all images and emotions, that to it also there cannot be an appropriate correspondence on the sensory level?" p. 115

"Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers each night "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us." We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God's mercy for ourselves. There is no hint of exceptions and God means what He says." p. 182



## Topics for Discussion

Choose one of Lewis's viewpoints and refute it, even if you agree.

What does Lewis say about human nature in "A Slip of the Tongue?"

Describe Lewis's views on war. Explain.

Explain one theology that you did not understand before reading this collection.

Can you judge the reaction of Lewis's audience to his sermons? Why do you think he does or does not include this?

What advice does Lewis give regarding choosing one's friends?

According to Lewis, why do people struggle with forgiveness?

What does Lewis say about the afterlife and how does this vary from conventional views?

What would Lewis say about the current political situation, based on these sermons?

Describe how Lewis structures his arguments.

Explain Lewis's beliefs about self-worth and how they compare with the traditional religious view.

What topic would Lewis speak about in a college in modern times?

Compare and contrast Lewis with a current public speaker.

Has reading this volume changed any of your beliefs? Describe.