

WEEK ELEVEN DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

THIS WEEK

Book Four, Chapters 7-9

After all of Lewis' discussions on theology and Christian morality, he adds a significant clarifying point – we aren't the ones who are responsible for our own change. It's Christ who does it in us.

ASSESSING THE TEXT

"Men are mirrors, or 'carriers' of Christ to other men. Sometimes unconscious carriers. This 'good infection' can be carried by those who have not got it themselves. People who were not Christians themselves helped me to Christianity. But usually it is those who know Him that bring Him to others (pg. 190)."

How do we unconsciously mirror or carry Christ to those around us?

"We begin to notice, besides our particular sinful acts, our sinfulness; begin to be alarmed not only about what we do, but about what we are (pg. 192)."

Why is this distinction between 'doing' and 'being' so important to understanding our identity in Christ?

"On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth (pg. 192)?"

What raw actions or emotions 'pops out' of you before you can cover it?

What do they reveal about your own character?

"After the first few steps in the Christian life we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our souls can be done only by God (pg. 193)."

What is the danger in attempting these changes by our own efforts?

"I have been talking as if it were we who did everything. In reality, of course, it is God who does everything. We, at most, allow it to be done to us (pg. 193)."

What practical steps can be taken to allow God to transform you?

"The more you obey your conscience, the more your conscience will demand of you. And your natural self, which is thus being starved and hampered and worried at every turn, will get angrier and angrier. In the end, you will either give up trying to be good, or else become one of those people who, as they say, 'live for others' but always in a discontented, grumbling way – always wondering why the others do not notice it more and

always making a martyr of yourself... The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good... I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours (pg. 196-197).'"

How is the complete surrender of yourself different than obeying Christian morality based on your own conscience?

"The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self – all your wishes and precautions – to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are all trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call 'ourselves', to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be 'good' (pg. 197-198).'"

What about this complete surrender is easy? What about it is difficult?

"In the same way the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose (pg. 199).'"

If you were to give the Church today a grade on this overall task, what would you assign it? Why?

"On the one hand, God's demand for perfection need not discourage you in the least in your present attempts to be good, or even in your present failures. Each time you fall He will pick you up again. And He knows perfectly well that your own efforts are never going to bring you anywhere near perfection. On the other hand, you must realize from the outset that the goal towards which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself, can prevent Him from taking you to that goal (pg. 203).'"

Do you agree with Lewis that we can prevent God from moving in our lives? Why or why not?

Do you find this quote encouraging or discouraging? Why?

"We may be content to remain what we call 'ordinary people': but he is determined to carry out a quite different plan. To shrink back from that plan is not humility: it is laziness and cowardice. To submit to it is not conceit or megalomania; it is obedience (pg. 204).'"

Why do we tend to put this high pursuit in such negative terms?

BRINGING IT HOME

How does this section of the book better help you defend the principles of Christianity?

How can others in the group pray for you?

Who in your life can the group pray for that might need to hear this message?