

WEEK THREE DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

THIS WEEK

Book Two, Chapters 1-3

Book two moves to the discussion of who God is. In these first three chapters, Lewis discusses the application of right and wrong in the context of the Gospel message.

ASSESSING THE TEXT

"If you are an atheist you do have to believe the main point in all religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all those religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the church (pg. 35)."

Is this an argument you think you could use with an atheist? Why or why not?

"But of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong (pg. 35)."

Do you ever struggle with the exclusivity of Christianity Lewis mentions here? Why or why not?

"Reality, in fact, is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe in Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up. But, in fact, it is not the sort of thing anyone would have made up. It has just that queer twist about it that real things have. So let us leave behind all these boys' philosophies – these over-simple answers. The problem is not simple and the answer is not going to be simple either (pg. 41-42)."

How can our attempts to oversimplify our theology become a problem? What traps could we fall into?

"I do mean that wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way. You can be good for the mere sake of goodness: you cannot be bad for the mere sake of badness (pg. 44)."

How should this understanding impact our view of evil behavior and those who commit it?

Can you think of a real-life example of this concept?

"To be bad, [Satan] must exist and have intelligence and will. But existence, intelligence and will are in themselves good. Therefore he must be getting them from the Good Power: eve to be bad he must borrow or steal from his opponent. And do you now begin to see why Christianity has always said that the devil is a fallen angel? That is not a mere story for children. It is a real recognition of the fact that evil is a parasite, not an original thing. The powers which enable evil to carry on are powers given it by goodness. All the things

which enable a bad man to be effectively bad are in themselves good things – resolution, cleverness, good looks, existence itself (pg. 44).”

What makes a particular use of a good thing ‘evil’?

How can our talent or love for knowledge be diminished into something that’s less than God-honoring?

”One of the things that surprised me when I first read the New Testament seriously was that it talked so much about a Dark Power in the universe – a mighty evil spirit who was held to be the Power behind death and disease, and sin... It thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel (pg. 45).”

How does Lewis’ emphasis on a ‘Dark Power’ better explain the fallen human condition?

How does this set the stage for Christ?

”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 (pg. 46).”

As followers of Christ, how do we take part in this campaign of sabotage?

How can we, as graduate students, play a role in it?

”The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first – wanting to be the centre – wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan: and that was the sin he taught the human race (pg. 49).”

Can selfishness be adequately explained as the root of all sin? Why or why not?

Where does your own selfishness typically lead you towards sin?

”Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other... God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing (pg. 50). ”

What does our society often try to find happiness in?

What often results from our attempts to replace God with someone or something else?

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?