

WEEK FOUR DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

THIS WEEK

Book Two, Chapters 4-5

Lewis concludes his arguments from book two in the final two chapters, this time dealing with Jesus' second coming, the human condition, and how we can know him more fully.

ASSESSING THE TEXT

“The central Christian belief is that Christ’s death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter (pg. 54).”

Why is it important for us to understand the difference between these essential doctrines vs. non-essentials as Lewis does here?

What goes wrong if we try to make the theories of atonement or other doctrines essential that aren't really essential?

What goes wrong if we take a core doctrine and demote it to something non-essential?

“A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works: indeed, he certainly would not know how it works until he has accepted it (pg. 55).”

Why is it so difficult for many to accept Christ without having answers to these hard-to-answer questions?

“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 (pg. 55).”

What makes Christ's death unique in that it could 'disable' death itself?

“Now what was the sort of ‘hole’ man had gotten himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor – that is the only way out of our ‘hole.’ This process of surrender – this movement full speed ahead – is what Christians call repentance (pg. 56).”

How is this 'possession of self' attitude sinful?

How does this realization that we don't belong to ourselves change our behavior?

“It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death (pg. 57).”

Do you agree or disagree with Lewis’ definition of repentance here? Why or why not?

“But the same badness which makes us need it, makes us unable to do it. Can we do it if God helps us? Yes, but what do we mean when we talk of God helping us? We mean God putting into us a bit of Himself, so to speak. He lends us a little of His reasoning powers that is how we think: He puts a little of His love into us and that is how we love one another (pg .57). ”

Is trying to live the Christian life apart from the power of the Holy Spirit any better than the unrepentant man who lives by his own code? Why or why not?

What is the danger in trying to live out the Christian life on our own?

“In the same way a Christian can lose the Christ-life which has been put into him, and he has to make efforts to keep it. But even the best Christian that ever lived is not acting on his own steam – he is only nourishing or protecting a life he could never have acquired by his own efforts (pg. 62-63). ”

Do you agree or disagree with Lewis’ statement that a Christian can lose the Christ-life that is put into him? Why or why not?

Do you think Lewis is advocating that you can lose your salvation?

NOTE: For more information about eternal security and what Scripture has to say about it, see the Grad Resources Statement of Faith in the back of this packet.

“Christians are Christ’s body, the organism through which He works. Every addition to that body enables Him to do more. If you want to help those outside you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ who alone can help them. Cutting off a man’s fingers would be an odd way of getting him to do more work (pg. 64). ”

What do you believe you personally add to the Church?

How can your life and knowledge as a graduate student add to the Church?

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?