

WEEK FIVE LEADER'S GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

THIS WEEK

Book Three, Chapters 1-3

Lewis turns his argument to the nature of Christian morality and what the marks of a Christ-follower should be.

B3, CHAPTER ONE: THE THREE PARTS OF MORALITY

There is a story about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was the sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it' (pg. 69).

In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine (pg. 69).

Morality, then, seems to be concerned with three things. Firstly, with fair play and harmony between individuals. Secondly, with what might be called tidying up or harmonizing the things inside each individual. Thirdly, with the general purpose of human life as a whole: what made was made for: what course the whole fleet ought to be on: what tune the conductor of the band wants it to play (pg. 72).

You may have noticed that modern people are nearly always thinking about the first thing and forgetting about the other two (pg. 72).

If somebody else made me, for his own purposes, then I shall have a lot of duties which I should not have if I simply belonged to myself (pg. 74).

But if Christianity is true, then the individual is not only more important but incomparably more important, for he is everlasting and the life of a state or civilization, compared with his, is only a moment (pg. 75).

B3, CHAPTER TWO: THE 'CARDINAL VIRTUES'

There is a story about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was the sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it' (pg. 69).

Prudence means practical common sense, taking the trouble to think out what you are doing and what is likely to come of it (pg. 77).

...Christ never meant that we were to remain children in *intelligence*... (pg. 77)"

He wants a child's heart, but a grown-up's head. He wants us to be simple, single-minded, affectionate, and teachable, as good children are; but He also wants every bit of intelligence we have to be alert at its job, and in first-class fighting trim (pg. 77).

If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you, you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all (pg. 78).

Temperance is, unfortunately, one of those words that has changed its meaning. It now usually means teetotalism. But in the days when the second Cardinal virtue was christened, 'Temperance,' it meant nothing of the sort. Temperance referred not specially to drink, but to all pleasures; and it meant not abstaining, but going the right length and no further (pg. 78).

One of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up. That is not the Christian way. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reasons – marriage, or meat, or beer, or the cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning (pg. 78-79).

Justice means much more than the sort of thing that goes on in law courts. It is the old name for everything we should now call 'fairness'; it includes honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises, and all that side of life (pg. 79).

And **Fortitude** includes both kinds of courage- the kind that faces danger as well as the kind that 'sticks it' under pain. 'Guts' is perhaps the nearest modern English (pg. 79).

The point is not that God will refuse you admission to His eternal world if you have not got certain qualities of character: the point is that if people have not got at least the beginnings of those qualities inside them, then no possible external conditions could make a 'Heaven' for them – that is, could make them happy with the deep, strong, unshakable kind of happiness God intends for us (pg. 81).

B3, CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL MORALITY

But, of course, when they ask for a lead from the Church most people mean they want the clergy to put out a political programme. That is silly. The clergy are those particular people within the whole Church who have been specially trained and set aside to look after what concerns us as creatures who are going to live for ever: and we are asking them to do a quite different job for which they have not been trained. The job is really on us, on the laymen. The application of Christian principles, say, to trade unionism or education, must come from Christian trade unionists and Christian schoolmasters: just as Christian literature comes from Christian novelists and dramatists – not from the bench of bishops getting together and trying to write plays and novels in their spare time (pg. 83-84).

In the passage where the New Testament says that every one must work, it gives us a reason 'in order that he may have something to give to those in need'. Charity – or giving to the poor – is an essential part of Christian morality: in the frightening parable of the sheep and goats it seems to be the point on which everything turns (pg. 86).

I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard

common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charities expenditure excludes them (pg. 86).