

# WEEK SIX DISCUSSION GUIDE

MERE CHRISTIANITY | C.S. LEWIS

## THIS WEEK

### Book Three, Chapters 4-6

In the second part of book three, C.S. Lewis discusses the relationship between morality and predispositions. From there, he dives into the thorny issues of sex and marriage.

## ASSESSING THE TEXT

***“Human beings judge one another by their external actions. God judges them by their moral choices (pg. 91).”***

What’s the difference between an external action and moral decision? How do they correlate?

***“I would much rather say that every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself (pg. 92).”***

How do our everyday decisions slowly impact our overall character?

Why is it so easy to make commitments to big moral improvements in our lives but so difficult to alter these seemingly minor decisions?

***“One man may be so placed that his anger sheds the blood of thousands, and another so placed that however angry he gets he will only be laughed at. But the little mark on the soul may be much the same on both. Each has done something to himself which, unless he repents, will make it harder for him to keep out of the rage next time he is tempted, and will make the rage worse when he does fall into. Each of them, if he seriously turns to God, can have that twist in the central man straightened out again: each is, in the long run, doomed if he will not. The bigness or smallness of the thing, seen from the outside, is not what really matters (pg. 93).”***

Why do we have such a difficult time accepting this reality that all sins do the same amount of eternal damage to our souls, regardless of physical consequences?

***“When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him... You understand sleep when you are awake, not while you are sleeping. You can see mistakes in arithmetic when your mind is working properly: while you are making them you cannot see them. You can understand the nature of drunkenness when you are sober, not when you are drunk. Good people know about both good and evil: bad people do not know about either (pg. 93).”***

Have you experienced this? Why do you think it's true?

***“The social rule of propriety lays down how much of the human body should be displayed and what subjects can be referred to, and in what words, according to the customs of a given social circle. Thus, while the rule of chastity is the same for all Christians at all times, the rule of propriety changes... When people break the rule of propriety current in their own time and place, if they do so in order to excite lust in themselves or others, then they are offending against chastity. But if they break it through ignorance or carelessness they are guilty only of bad manners. When, as often as it happens, they break it defiantly in order to shock or embarrass others, they are not necessarily being unchaste, but they are being uncharitable: for it is uncharitable to take pleasure in making other people uncomfortable (pg. 94-95).”***

Why are these distinctions so important to make regarding the categories of sins each of these transgressions fall under?

***“Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it; the Christian rule is, ‘Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.’ Now this is so difficult and so contrary to our instincts, that obviously either Christianity is wrong or our sexual instinct, as it now is, has gone wrong. One or the other. Of course, being a Christian, I think it is the instinct which has gone wrong (pg. 95).”***

What has caused our sexual appetites to grow as uncontrollable as they have?

***“I know some muddled-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, or beauty and our energy. Christianity has glorified marriage more than any other religion: and nearly all the greatest love poetry in the world has been produced by Christians. If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once (pg. 98).”***

What has led to this situation and how do we correct this perception?

***“Finally, though I have had to speak at some length about sex, I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the centre of Christian morality is not here. If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins (pg. 102).”***

What is at the center of our downfall as a human race? Why are we tempted to think sin is?

***“The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union... It means that you must not isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to try to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again (pg. 105).”***

What types of unions take place between two people as a result of sex?

## 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?