



30 MEDITATIONS
ON THE WRITINGS *of*
C. S. LEWIS

PERRY BRAMLETT, RUEBEN P. JOB
NORMAN SHAWCHUCK

LEADER GUIDE

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Writings of C. S. Lewis

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by VICTORIA REBECK

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Introduction

Many people know C. S. Lewis through his thought-provoking apologetic *Mere Christianity* or his beloved children's books on the fantasy world of Narnia. Rueben P. Job, Perry Bramlett, and Norman Shawchuck, the authors of *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis* called him “one of the most trusted and read Christian authors of the past hundred years, and perhaps the most effective Christian apologist (‘defender of the faith’) of the twentieth century. Some call him the man who helped make Christianity intellectually respectable, the apostle to the skeptics, and a Christian for all people.”

30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis is a personal devotional guide, which provides readers thirty days of Scripture passages, quotes from Lewis, and reflections on Lewis's writings on various topics of Christian faith. This six-session leader's guide offers a way to use the devotional book in a group study.

Basic Expectations

- **Reading assignments.** Participants are to read two or three assigned essays a week (which they

may read as part of their own devotional time) from *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*. Gathering as a group, readers delve into the topic and learn from each other's perceptions and experiences.

- **Respectful group interaction.** The study group should be a safe place where participants agree to speak honestly and respectfully, to listen without interrupting, and to honor the time so that each participant who wishes to speak has the opportunity to do so. A group of six to twelve people may be optimal, as it allows time for all to share their thoughts.
- **Length of sessions.** The leader should uphold the agreed-upon time frame for the meetings (we suggest ninety minutes).
- **Bibles.** Encourage participants to bring their copy of *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis* and a Bible to each session. Bring some extra Bibles to group meetings for those who may not have brought one.
- **Optional prayer journals.** Invite those participants who choose to make notes or keep a prayer journal of their thoughts and questions about the readings to bring these with them to the group meeting. Others may prefer to make notes in the margins of the devotional book.

Process

Each session contains the following elements:

- **Session Goals.** These provide purpose for the discussions.
- **Reading and Reflecting Assignments.** Participants should read the listed material from the devotional in advance of the session.
- **Centering Prayer.** This short liturgy helps participants calm their minds and spirits and center their attention.
- **Review of the Session's Readings.** Highlights of each devotional essay are reiterated briefly as a reminder for participants.
- **Wisdom from C. S. Lewis and Biblical Insights.** These are drawn, for the most part, from the devotional book.
- **Questions for Discussion.** Prioritize the questions that the group will find most engaging.
- **Closing Prayer.** Suggested prayer to send the participants into the world to practice what they have learned in the study.

Session Topics

- **Session 1—Seeking God.** Participants will consider, from a compassionate viewpoint, the

experience of avoiding and separating from God. They will gain more comfort with honest doubt as a contributor to growth in faith.

- **Session 2—Finding God.** Salvation can be experienced as a daily occurrence. Participants will learn about Lewis’s conversion and how salvation continues to shape us throughout our lives.
- **Session 3—Growing Close to God.** Participants will be challenged to see God not as a very separate “other” but as the Creator/Parent who interacts with us.
- **Session 4—Meeting God in Community.** A relationship with God is nourished both in individual and group encounters. Participants will consider Lewis’s thoughts on meeting God with others and how to keep their hearts open during worship.
- **Session 5—Healed by God.** We come to God with our burdens of grief and sorrow. Participants will explore how seasons of pain and times of joy and serenity bring forth spiritual maturity.
- **Session 6—Shining the Light of God.** As they ponder Lewis’s thoughts on the risks of discipleship and Christ’s commission to proclaim good news, participants will consider how to practice these in their own lives.

Meeting Environment

- Meetings should take place in a quiet space, with no interruption.
- Participants should silence their phones.
- Arrange seating in a circle, possibly around a small table used as an altar.

Materials You Will Need

- A candle (can be battery operated) for use during the opening prayer time.
- Other relevant visual elements for the altar table, as desired.
- Pens for taking notes in the devotional book or a notebook.
- Optional flip chart for highlighting discussion comments.
- Extra Bibles for those who may not have brought one to the meeting.

Lewis's writings prompt deeper thinking and openness to ways in which God is revealed to us in our everyday lives. Examining these in a trusted group can encourage participants to confront difficult theological debate with courage and can build spiritually supportive relationships among members.



Session 1

Seeking God





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Learn from C. S. Lewis’s avoidance and ultimate acceptance of a relationship with God.
- Integrate into their spiritual growth their own efforts to avoid God.
- Develop compassion for those who doubt or feel distant from God.

Reading Assignments

At least one week in advance of this session, the leader should make sure that all participants have a copy of *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Before this session, participants should read the chapters “Running from God” and “Faith” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Beginning the Series

This is the first time the group will meet together. Welcome participants. Introduce yourself and ask them

to introduce themselves. Tell them of your interest in exploring with them C. S. Lewis's observations on Christian faith.

Let them know the length of each session (ninety minutes may be optimal) and that sessions will move in this order:

- Centering Prayer
- Review of Session's Readings
- Wisdom from C. S. Lewis
- Biblical Insights
- Questions for Discussion
- Closing Prayer

Group Covenant

Remind the participants that when groups engage in discussions of faith, the gathering should be a safe place for honest and gracious sharing.

Either provide copies of the covenant (below) to each participant, or have it written on a flip-chart page or poster board so that participants can refer to it each session.

Ask the participants to agree to this covenant. Would they add anything? Ask them to read the list aloud together.

- We agree to speak honestly and respectfully.
- We will share from our own experiences as we feel comfortable doing so.

- We will not speak for others or correct or judge what they say.
- We will listen without interrupting.
- We will not attempt to “fix” others’ expressed problems.
- We will honor the time so that each participant who wishes to speak has the opportunity to do so. We will honor the leader’s request to finish our comments so another can share.
- We will make sure that others have opportunities to speak. Also, we will respect others’ decisions not to speak.
- We will pray for each other between meetings.

Introduction to Lewis

Using material from the introduction of *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*, tell participants some highlights from Lewis’s life. You may want to mention the following:

- Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast.
- He lived most of his adult life in Oxford, England, where he was a scholar.
- He wrote thirty-eight books on subjects such as history, Christian science fiction and fantasy, children’s books, and theology.
- He came to faith as an adult and wrote about his conversion.

- He married later in life and wrote about his grief when his wife died.
- His best-selling books include *Mere Christianity*, a Christian apologetic; *The Screwtape Letters*, an imagined correspondence between a devil and another who is his protégé; and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of fantasy / Christian allegory novels for children.
- Any additional information that you believe will interest the participants.
- You might ask participants if they have read any of Lewis's works, and if so, what they thought of them.

Now, start the study session. Because of the time you spent orienting the participants to the study, you will want to keep the discussion briefer this session in order to close on time.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts

of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read aloud the following Scripture passages: Psalm 139:7-12; Jonah 1; and Matthew 17:14-21.

Give participants a minute or two to consider prayerfully the Scripture passages.

Prayer for Illumination

Your word is a lamp that lights our way, our God. No matter how far we run, your light will shine upon us and lead us back to you. May our lives reflect your light to the world. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

In their introduction to *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*, the authors tell us,

Though baptized into the Church of Ireland, [Lewis] lived outside the faith for many years before he first became a believer in God (a theist), then a committed disciple of Jesus Christ. He had kept his distance from the church for over two decades, and during this time became friends and colleagues with

materialists and unbelievers of all stripes. When he finally became a Christian, he knew firsthand what it was like to be immersed in non-Christian culture.

For this session, we read the chapters “Running from God” and “Faith” from *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*. Writer Norman Shawchuck says, in “Running from God,” that “Lewis was a runaway seeking escape from God” until he became a Christian in 1931. There are a lot of ways in which even Christians may be, in effect, running from God. We may ignore God’s speaking to us through Scripture, through the examples of others, or through “a sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:12 NRSV). Perhaps we rationalize why we need not follow Christ’s teachings to feed the hungry, care for the ill, or provide safety and dignity to those whom society shuns or oppresses.

From the oldest sections of Scripture, we learn stories of people, including the faithful, who ran from God: Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden, Jonah trying to escape God’s call to him to warn the people of Nineveh, and the prodigal son’s journey away from responsibilities—and love—of home and family. These are just a few examples.

While we may not be fleeing God on our feet, we may be running away in our hearts and minds, Shawchuck says.

Rueben P. Job, in his essay “Faith,” notes that Lewis

was not content with “glib or easy answers,” particularly when it came to faith. “To enter this journey of faith, as Lewis did, was to be assured of challenge, struggle, and reward,” Job says.

Many of the stories of faith found in the Gospels have to do with miracles. In the stories of healing, such as the one we read today about the disciples’ failure to heal a child with epilepsy or in the familiar story of Jesus’s invitation to the disciples to follow him as he walked on water, “Jesus was seeking more than intellectual assent to the reality of God’s existence,” Job says. “Jesus was seeking the radical trust that comes from consistent experiences of living with God in obedience and trust day after day.”

The call to have faith is no facile request. It takes courage. Faith puts us to the test, into frightening or overwhelming situations we would not be able to manage without trust in God. Apart from radical trust and obedience, “we may miss the blessed inheritance that is ours as children of God and may end our journey of faith as triflers with life’s most precious gift,” Job says.

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

It has been admitted throughout that man has free will and that all gifts to him are therefore two-edged. From these premises it follows directly

that the Divine labour to redeem the world cannot be certain of succeeding as regards every individual soul. Some will not be redeemed.¹

To believe that God—at least *this* God—exists is to believe that you as a person now stand in the presence of God as a Person. What would, a moment before, have been variations in opinion, now become variations in your personal attitude to a Person. You are no longer faced with an argument which demands your assent, but with a Person who demands our confidence.²

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes on the questions or affirmations the quotes may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) Jonah 1 and Matthew 17:20.

Invite participants to discuss the following (or other) questions.

Questions for Bible Study

1. What do you suppose would make Jonah run away from God's instructions?
2. Have you ever felt that God was calling you

- to do something that seemed too difficult or frightening?
3. Tell about a time when you had to do something for which you did not have the courage or strength. What happened that motivated you to take on the task anyway?

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes that we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remind participants that they have agreed not to judge or “fix” the other participants’ comments.)
2. Lewis says that “some will not be redeemed” by God. Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Under what circumstances might a person “not be redeemed”? What do you think that may say about God’s love?
4. Tell about a time when you felt distant from God. How do you feel about that experience? Did that sense of distance change? If so, what brought about that change?
5. Lewis was an academic and was accustomed to rigorous debate about truth. He asked God and Christian friends some hard questions.

What hard questions do you have for God? (Questioning God does not mean we are disobedient or lack faith. Honest doubt can help us grow in our relationship with God.)

6. Faith can be a choice to accept doctrines and statements, or it can be an experience of relationship. Lewis characterized belief in God as something more than “variations in opinion.” “You are no longer faced with an argument which demands your assent, but with a Person who demands our confidence,” he said. In what ways is your faith shaped by doctrines or belief? Or by your relationship with God? Do these teach the same or different lessons about who God is?
7. Jesus makes great demands and promises great blessings from having faith. What does faith mean to you? If you had “radical trust” in God, how would that change you or your life? How might it change the world?
8. What helps you grow in faith? Give examples.

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud (or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not

a time for each person to offer their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, pages 877–78.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

Our loving God, we are in awe that you forgive us even when we separate ourselves from you or your people. Because we experience your love, we humbly pray for ourselves, our friends and family, and people in nations around the world.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can be representatives of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussion. Remind them of the readings for the coming session.

Offer a sending forth, such as: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Encourage participants to exchange signs and words of peace with each other as they leave.

Be sure to extinguish the candle.



Session 2

Finding God





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Encounter various ways to understand the concept of salvation.
- Engage their conversion as a lifelong process.
- Pay attention to ways that their lives are being transformed through the conversion process.

Reading Assignments

Before this session, participants should read chapters “Salvation” and “Conversion” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

Use this sample or another of your choice:

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read the following Scripture passages: Psalm 25:6-10; Luke 2:27-35; and Acts 9:10-19.

Give participants a minute or two to ponder these passages.

Prayer for Illumination

You know our thoughts and our hearts, Creator. You extend mercy and new life when we turn to you. Let our words and thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord, because you are our mighty rock and protector. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

Rueben P. Job, in his essay on “Salvation,” says that “the doctrine of salvation ‘freely given’ is perhaps the most difficult of the Christian doctrines for modern Ameri-

cans to understand or appreciate. After all, part of the American mythos is the belief in individual agency, that people should pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and be the masters of their own fates.”

From this observation, he notes that a faith community may understand salvation in a collective sense or in an individual sense. Culture can have a significant influence on this understanding. Job notes that because the people of Israel experienced themselves as the collective children of God, they were aware that they had sinned as a community and that God offered salvation to the faith community as a whole when that community as a whole repented and turned back to God.

He also relates a bit about Lewis’s experience of conversion. In conversation with friends, such as the author J. R. R. Tolkien, he wrestled with demanding questions about the existence of God. In October 1930, he began to attend morning chapel—not yet claiming faith, but hoping the experience might awaken a faith that was asleep inside him. Further, Lewis’s brother, Warren, to whom Lewis was very close, was also starting to accept the claims of Christianity. These honest conversations and caring relationships with friends and family were among the influences that birthed Lewis’s faith in Christ.

Reflecting on “Conversion,” Perry Bramlett says that Christians think of “salvation” in different ways. Many think of it as something they “have,” due to their choosing

to put their faith in Jesus. They might see this as a transaction between God and themselves: a confession of faith guarantees avoidance of hell after death. Yet salvation can be understood as our lives of discipleship, the ways in which we live and act upon our faith, springing from our relationship with God.

Unlike a one-time experience of confessing one's faith, conversion is a process, Bramlett says. "A converted person is a soul under construction," he observes. "As we respond to God in faith, God graciously and lovingly transforms us." Conversion, he says, is about growth, commitment, discipleship, and following Jesus.

Lewis experienced conversion as lifelong growth as a follower of Jesus. He examined the ways in which he had been motivated by ambition and pride and made efforts to turn his life over to God's guidance. Bramlett relates this wisdom from Lewis: the real business of a Christian is not to succeed, but to do right and "leave the rest to God."

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

[Jesus] came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has—by what I call "good infection." Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.¹

Conversion requires an alteration of the will, and an alteration which, in the last resort, does not occur without the intervention of the supernatural.²

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes on the questions or affirmations that the quote may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) Luke 2:27-35 and Acts 9:10-19. (Explain that the Luke passage tells of Simeon, an elderly man of faith who was waiting for God's salvation of the people of Israel, and how he saw that fulfilled when he met Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in the temple.)

Questions for Bible Study

What do you think Mary and Joseph thought when Simeon picked up their baby and said, "because my eyes have seen your salvation. You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples" (Luke 2:29-31)?

What do you think that Simeon meant when he said, "This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35)? How would Jesus cause people to stand? to fall?

The Acts passage tells how God sent Ananias to meet Saul and heal Saul's blindness. Ananias hesitated because Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians was well known. Is there someone in your life who treats you poorly, but with whom you must have a cordial relationship? Tell how you attempt to deal with that challenge.

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes that we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remember, we have agreed not to judge or "fix" the other participants' opinions and experiences.)
2. If you committed your life to Christ as an older child or an adult, tell about that experience.
3. Lewis says that the whole purpose of being a Christian is to be a "little Christ." What do you think he means by that? How might you see yourself being a "little Christ"? What would you need to do to develop your ability to be a "little Christ"?
4. Lewis says that conversion does not happen "without the intervention of the supernatural." What do you think he is talking about? Do

God and the person both have parts to play in the person's conversion? Explain why you believe this and if you have experienced this in your own life as a disciple of Jesus.

5. Tell how people, teachings, experiences, and places influence your salvation. For instance, did you read something that helped God seem real to you? Do you know someone who lives out Christian faith in a way that inspires you?
6. The word *salvation* comes from Middle English to identify the Christian concept of saving the soul from the consequences of sin; in addition, it draws upon the Latin words *salvatio* and *salvus*, which indicate meanings of good health, free of injury, safe. Do you see a relationship between the concept of saving of one's soul from the consequences of sin and the idea of health? If so, explain.
7. In what ways might we experience God's salvation? Is it only about avoiding the punishment of hell? Or might it play out in different parts of life?
8. John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, explained God's grace in terms of "prevenient grace" (God's grace comes into our lives before we know to accept it), "justifying grace" (God's grace to forgive us and to reclaim us as God's children), and "sanctifying grace" (God's

grace to continue to form us to be more like Jesus). How do you see Wesley's understanding of grace in your understanding of salvation and conversion?

9. When you review your life, how do you see that you have been in a process of conversion? Has that conversion been a straight path of growth? Or not? Describe your experience.
10. Bramlett says, "Lewis's conversion to theism, or belief that a god exists, took about a dozen years or so." How long has your conversion taken? Are you converted, or are you still being converted? Explain.
11. Tell about how your faith and life have been transformed through conversion.

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud (or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not a time for each person to offer their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 877–78. Write your own if you wish.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known

to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

Our loving God, we humbly accept your mercy and your steadfast love toward us. Because we experience your love, we humbly pray for ourselves, our friends and family, and people in nations around the world.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can be representatives of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussion. Remind them of the readings for the coming session.

Offer a sending forth, such as: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Invite participants to express to each other signs and words of Christ’s peace and love

Remember to extinguish the candle.



Session 3

*Growing Close
to God*





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Learn how to incorporate prayer and Bible reading in their daily lives.
- Adopt a posture of listening for God when they read the Bible.
- Consider the possibility of meeting with a spiritual director.

Reading Assignments

Before this session, participants should read the chapters “Devotional Life,” “Prayer,” and “Spiritual Direction” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

Use this sample or another of your choice:

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights that you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read the following Scripture passages: Psalm 119:89-93; Matthew 6:5-6; and Acts 8:26-38.

Give participants a minute or two to ponder the Scripture passages.

Prayer for Illumination

You show us the path of life, through your Holy Spirit. You draw us close and teach us. May our eyes and hearts open to you as we seek to rest in your presence. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

Lewis was committed to a practice of daily Bible reading and prayer. He sometimes used the Book of Common Prayer, which contains the liturgy of the

Church of England. He even read the New Testament in its early Greek form, Perry Bramlett explains in his essay “Devotional Life.”

Someone once said that reading the Bible is both praying and listening. Lewis approached his daily Bible reading with a willingness to listen for whatever God might be saying to him personally, through Scripture. What he found there deepened his understanding of who God is. He also discovered examples of how Christians should treat others, adopting Jesus’s love and acceptance for all people as the foundation. Further, regular Bible reading and prayer should be pursued with humility. He encouraged his readers to seek the Bible’s overall message and not to use verses to try to win theological arguments or doctrinal battles (still a temptation for Christians today!).

Norman Shawchuck, writing about Lewis’s practice of prayer, admits that the daily discipline requires a commitment from us. “I must constantly discipline myself to pray daily, whether I like it or not,” he says. “Always God is there, waiting, murmuring, ‘What took you so long?’ I sense that our meeting time is as important to God as it is to me.” Lewis reinforces that understanding. “[God] has infinite attention to spare for each one of us,” Lewis said. “You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man in the world.”¹

In the practice of spiritual direction, a person of faith meets regularly with another one who is known for wisdom and compassion. The spiritual director, or spiritual companion, is not simply a wise teacher or counselor, says Perry Bramlett in his essay on the subject. The spiritual director should be caring, encouraging, kind, and trustworthy.

Lewis began meeting weekly with a spiritual director beginning in late 1940. He experienced the value of confessing and wrestling with faith in a safe relationship with another person. He was in a difficult time in his life when he pursued spiritual direction. He was writing *The Screwtape Letters*, which required him to “think like evil.” He worried about his brother, Warren, and the danger Warren faced as a soldier during World War II. Also, he participated in debates about the war, which antagonized some of his friends. Demanding times call for a spiritual friendship—and good times do as well, to nurture and strengthen our souls for the difficult times.

Lewis essentially acted as a spiritual director when meeting with his students, when writing his books and preparing talks, and in letters to the many who sought his counsel through correspondence with him. Like Lewis, “we must be willing to share our whole self with the person we are directing, and this includes our struggles, doubts, and fears,” Bramlett says. “This takes courage, but it will bring us closer to each other, and this closeness will ultimately give birth to community and real spiritual health.”

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

It is Christ Himself, not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him. . . . But we must not use the Bible (our fathers too often did) as a sort of Encyclopedia out of which texts (isolated from their contexts and not read with attention to the whole nature and purport of the books in which they occur) can be taken for use as weapons.²

God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel. He has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass. You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man in the world.³

One must get over any false shame about accepting necessary help. One never *has* been “independent.” Always, in some mode or other, one has lived with others, economically, intellectually, spiritually. . . . We are members of one another whether we choose to recognise the fact or not.⁴

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes on the questions or affirmations that the quote may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) Matthew 6:5-6 and Acts 8:26-38.

Questions for Bible Study

1. Have you observed public prayer being used to show off one's piety or as an opportunity to preach? Have you found yourself doing that?
2. Why do you think that Jesus was distinguishing from public and private prayer? Do you know of other stories about Jesus in which he contrasts the piety of the proud with that of the less privileged?
3. In what ways may Phillip have been a spiritual director to the Ethiopian eunuch?
4. The story of Phillip's teaching the Ethiopian traveler comes after a story about Simon, someone who had used witchcraft and wonders to amaze people but later came to faith. Simon tried to pay the apostles to give him the power of invoking the Holy Spirit. He receives in exchange the apostles' harsh criticism and

call to repentance. Why do you suppose the writer of Acts puts these stories together? How would you compare and contrast these two stories?

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remember, we have agreed not to judge or “fix” the other participants’ opinions and experiences.)
2. Do you take time for private prayer every day? If so, what form does your prayer time take (how, where, and what do you pray for)?
3. If you don’t have a regular prayer time, does the practice interest you? If so, what do you think you need to motivate you to practice this?
4. Are you willing to take on daily prayer in the days before the next session and let us know how it went?
5. What do you believe are the purposes of prayer? How have you experienced these in your life?
6. What different forms of prayer do you use?

(Examples include interceding for others, asking God for something you need, meditating, and listening for God.)

7. In this session, we read another story from Acts about one of the first Christians teaching another about Christ. Is there someone in your life who has come to you seeking spiritual advice? Without betraying confidence, tell us about that experience. What is it like for you?
8. If you meet with a spiritual director, share with us what is that experience like for you.
9. If you are interested in meeting with a spiritual director, what would you like for that relationship?
10. What benefits have you experienced in both praying alone and praying with a trusted friend?

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud (or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not a time for each person to speak aloud their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 877–78. Write your own if you wish.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

Our loving God, we turn to you in prayer, trusting that you will hear us and seeking to listen to you. Because we experience your love, we humbly pray for ourselves, our friends and family, and people in nations around the world.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can be representatives of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussion. Remind them of the readings for the coming session.

Offer a sending forth, such as: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Invite participants to express to each other signs and words of Christ’s peace and love.

Remember to extinguish the candle.



Session 4

*Meeting God
in Community*





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Identify how they can practice their faith with other Christians.
- Look for God’s grace when they take Holy Communion or participate in the Baptismal Covenant.
- Establish spiritual friendships for growth in faith.

Reading Assignments

Before this session, participants should read the chapters “Worship,” “The Church and Sacraments,” and “Friendship” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

Use this sample or another of your choice:

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights that you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read the following Scripture passages: 1 Chronicles 16:23-29; Luke 22:14-16; and John 15:12-15.

Give participants a minute or two to ponder the Scripture passages.

Prayer for Illumination

We are not alone; in God's creation, we live in relationship to God and all of God's children. Help us to be vulnerable to God and each other, to find friendship with God and God in our friends and neighbors. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

You might wonder why this study has grouped worship, sacraments, and friendship in one session. The

common thread is the body of Christ: We worship with other Christians, who make up the body of Christ. We meet God when together we partake of Christ's body in Holy Communion. And, in our honest and compassionate friendships with others in the body of Christ, we see a glimmer of the image of God.

Worship, Perry Bramlett tells us, derives from the Old English word *worþshīp*, and entails meanings such as reverence, acts, rites, ceremonies, extreme respect, and devotion. Worship is not “‘mere’ ritual,” he points out. When we worship, we must prepare to encounter the awesome power of God.

Lewis did not always appreciate worship services. He disliked judgmental sermons and the discordant singing of hymns. But as he matured in his faith, he came to realize that God sought, in worship, our genuine selves. God perceives our attitude and intention. If the worshipers and musicians play or sing a hymn poorly but with an attitude of love and service, then God embraces it. Lewis likens this to a child giving a parent an “intrinsically worthless” present—what the parent values most is the loving intention of the giver.

There are many styles of music in churches, and most worshipers have their preferences. This was true of Lewis as well. What he learned—and what we might learn from him—is that differing tastes in music and hymns could lead to a lesson in exercising spiritual humility and love. He recalled observing a “charwoman in the next pew”

who loved all hymns and was probably a better Christian than he was. “Good taste in music, he declared, ‘was not necessary to salvation.’”

During worship we partake of the sacraments, which are an important part of worship. Lewis did not often write or speak about the sacraments, however. One reason is that he was concerned about the divisions among churches caused by different understandings of sacraments and Christians’ failure to respect other views.

Further, in his book *Letters to Malcolm*, he acknowledged that he didn’t understand rationally how the taking of wine and bread helped him or how it related to the Christian community. But he knew that the Book of Common Prayer stresses that the regular partaking of Communion, approached with integrity, enables a person to identify with Jesus. As he grew older, he came to appreciate Holy Communion. He discovered that his soul was often refreshed and nourished through Communion. He also knew that another sacrament, baptism, did not in itself prove that one is a follower of Christ. He did recognize it as a way, at least in part, that a Christian could identify with, and thus witness to, the life of Christ.

Communion connects us not only to God but also to God’s people. The relationship among God’s people is often expressed as siblings or as Christian friendship. God’s gift of friendship demonstrates that humans are not made to be solitary but are meant to live among others—and, we might say, with God.

Lewis wrote about friendship in a number of his books. He believed that Christian friendship is the highest of all friendships. Christian friends are united by their common salvation, and in seeking what is good and beautiful and true in each of us, God reveals Godself. The unity of Christian friends in God-centered relationships is an integral part of the church universal, Lewis believed.

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

No Christian and, indeed, no historian should accept the epigram which defines religion as “what a man does with his solitude.” It was one of the Wesleys, I think, who said that the New Testament knows nothing of solitary religion. We are forbidden to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Christianity is already institutional in the earliest of its documents. The Church is the Bride of Christ. We are members of one another.¹

Our life as Christians begins by being baptised into a death; our most joyous festivals begin with, and centre upon, the broken body and the shed blood.²

It seems no wonder if our ancestors regarded Friendship as something that raised us almost above humanity. This love, free from instinct, free

from all duties but those which love has freely assumed, almost wholly free from jealousy, and free without qualification from the need to be needed, is eminently spiritual. It is the sort of love one can imagine between angels.³

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes on the questions or affirmations that the quote may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) 1 Chronicles 16:23-29; Luke 22:14-16; and John 15:12-15.

Questions for Bible Study

1. What aspects of worship does the song in 1 Chronicles express? Open your Bible to those verses so you can review it.
2. Do you find those aspects of worship in the services at your church?
3. Tell about a time when you encountered God in worship.
4. What do you know about Passover? (The Jewish observation of Passover, which takes place in the spring, commemorates the story of the Israelites' departure from ancient Egypt to

start their journey to the land God had promised for them.)

5. What connections do you see between Pass-over, which the Luke passage depicts Jesus observing with his disciples, and Jesus's impending apprehension and execution?
6. In the passage from John, Jesus talks about the meaning of his friendship with and among the disciples. What does this kind of friendship require of us? Do you experience this friendship with Jesus? Explain.

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes that we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remember, we have agreed not to judge or "fix" the other participants' opinions and experiences.)
2. The church talks about sacraments as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace. What does that mean to you?
3. The term *sacrament* comes from the Greek word *mysterion* and the Latin word *sacramentum*. These terms can mean "hidden." Some churches' liturgies call Communion a "holy

mystery.” As we learned, Lewis struggled with finding a rational explanation for how the taking of wine and bread helped him or how it related to the Christian community. How do you understand Communion to be important to the church and its members? In what way do you think it is a mystery?

4. What do you find meaningful about taking Communion? Does taking Communion reveal God to you, or enable you to sense God’s presence? Explain.
5. Baptism is not only a blessing from God but also the exchange of promises that the baptized and church members exchange. Can you recall any of these promises? What helps you to keep them?
6. Tell about friendships you have with people of faith. What do you value about these friendships? What do you do to keep the friendship healthy?
7. How have you perceived God in your friendships and relationships with Christians?

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud (or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they

would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not a time for each person to offer their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 877–78. Write your own if you wish.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

Jesus, our Savior, deliverer, and friend, trusting in your compassion and honesty, we draw near to you in all that we are in our innermost being. Because we experience your love, we humbly pray for ourselves, our friends and family, and people in nations around the world.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can represent to others your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussion. Remind them of the readings for the coming session.

Offer a sending forth, such as: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Invite participants to express to each other signs and words of Christ’s peace and love.

Remember to extinguish the candle.



Session 5

Healed by God





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Gain comfort with the reality of sorrow in life.
- Find opportunities in grief for spiritual growth.
- Cultivate spiritual qualities of joy and serenity in their lives.

Reading Assignments

Before this session, participants should read the chapters “Grief,” “Joy,” and “Serenity” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

Use this sample or another of your choice.

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights that you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read the following Scripture passages: Psalm 23:1-3; Luke 22:39-42; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

Give participants a minute or two to ponder the Scripture passages.

Prayer for Illumination

God, in your wisdom and power you created us. On this earth we experience dark nights of grief and hopeful dawns of serenity. Show us your face, we pray, in our grief and in our joy. Grief, joy, life, death—all are of one piece. May we take your hand as we walk the many landscapes of life. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

No one gets through life without experiencing grief, Norman Shawchuck reminds us in his essay on the topic. Even Jesus, the Son of God, experienced profound sorrow. His agonized prayer on the Mount of Olives as he asked God to remove the suffering he would soon face (Luke

22:41-42) is a cosmic example of this. Many people of faith who have gone through the darkness of grief attest that God accompanies us into and out of sorrow. Jesus, fully God and fully human, experienced the depths of the human condition and tasted the bitterness of human miseries. Because of this he serves as a model for our responses to grief.

Friends and family of a person suffering with grief sometimes try to comfort their loved one with well-meaning platitudes like, “Be happy that she is in heaven with God. You will see her again someday.” This belittles the reality of the pain that the mourner feels and provides no consolation.

Lewis was well acquainted with grief. After the death of his wife, Helen Joy Lewis, he expressed poignantly his thoughts and emotions about this loss, particularly in *A Grief Observed*. In many notebooks he recorded his anguish. By acknowledging his grief and engaging it, he gained deeper understandings of life and of death. And he learned to trust in God.

Lewis also pursued joy for much of his life, though he experienced it most when he was not trying. In his essay on joy, Perry Bramlett explains that Lewis perceived joy as a longing or a desire. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis tells of several experiences of joy from his childhood, and these experiences filled him with longing. For example, Lewis spoke of standing near a flowering currant bush and being seized with a

desire for something he could not describe. This desire was deeper than what he experienced in his day-to-day existence.

As he embraced Christian faith, Lewis began to understand that these unquenchable longings were “arrows shot from the bow of God.” Joy, he believed, was the “serious business of heaven.”

As Lewis came to understand it, joy is an awareness that we hold a desire that nothing in time and space, in earth, or from a created being can satisfy. The one thing that can ultimately satisfy our longing for joy is God.

Bramlett continues this conversation in his essay on serenity, or what might be called “settled satisfaction.” It goes deeper and further than mere happiness. Few things can deliver settled satisfaction.

Lewis’s inner quest for settled satisfaction began to dominate his thoughts. His search for joy in poetry, music, or nature did not produced the hoped-for satisfaction. His life changed after he found a copy of George MacDonald’s *Phantastes* in a railway bookshop. In this fairy-tale adventure, MacDonald gives the sense of the “holiness of the ordinary”; that is, all experiences and all meaning comes from God.

Central to serenity is the practice of gratitude for life, the created world, and all their wonders. Lewis noted that when one deliberately tries to plan or experience joy, nothing happens. Serenity cannot be grasped. We can, however, practice stillness and gratitude. Someone wrote

that Lewis finally learned to know God because he had a childlike heart, and that over time, he learned to wait on God, to trust God, and to celebrate God when God showed himself. This is a worthy practice to emulate.

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. . . . At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me.¹

All joy (as distinct from mere pleasure, still more amusement) emphasizes our pilgrim status; always reminds, beckons, awakens desire. Our best havings are wantings.²

The thing I am speaking of is not experience. You have experienced only the want of it. The thing itself has never actually been embodied in any thought, or image, or emotion. Always it has summoned you out of yourself. And if you will not go out of yourself to follow it, if you sit down to brood on the desire and attempt to cherish it, the desire itself will evade you.³

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes

on the questions or affirmations that the quotes may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) Psalm 23:1-3; Luke 22:39-42; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

Questions for Bible Study

1. Psalm 23 is one of the most popular and quoted psalms, appreciated for the gentle ways it describes God's protection. Many have memorized it. Tell about a time when you felt God's guidance into peace and serenity.
2. Before he was arrested and condemned to death, Jesus prayed that God would "take this cup of suffering away" from him (Matthew 26:39). How do you imagine the story continuing had God granted Jesus his request?

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes that we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remember, we have agreed not to

- judge or “fix” the other participants’ opinions and experiences.)
2. Lewis speaks of grief as feeling like fear, with its flutters in the belly and restlessness, like having one’s head muddled with drink and like “an invisible blanket between the world and me.” Tell about one of your experiences of grief, sorrow, or loss. How did that feel?
 3. Writer Parker Palmer, in his book *Let Your Life Speak*, tells of falling into a deep depression. Friends offered feeble encouragement and gradually disappeared from his life. One friend, however, visited regularly. He did not speak much, but he massaged Parker’s feet. This is the ministration that most comforted him. What has helped you when you experience sorrow, grief, or depression? What would you like people to know about how to show care for others in such situations?
 4. In what ways did you notice God’s presence (or absence) while you were enduring grief?
 5. What has helped you to emerge from a time of grief or sorrow? What did you learn from the experience?
 6. Lewis spoke of joy as being unquenchable longings, as “arrows shot from the bow of God.” Some people think of it as being akin to awe or wonder. What gives you joy? Where

have you seen God in those times you have experienced joy?

7. Do you practice gratitude? How do you go about this? What is the relationship between joy and gratitude, from your experience? (If you are interested in adding this practice to your life, you can find some suggestions at <https://gratefulness.org/resource/how-to-practice-gratitude>.)
8. While many seek happiness, some pursue serenity. Happiness is a gift we can have for fleeting moments, but we cannot make it happen. Serenity can be achieved through an acceptance of “the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference,” as theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote (and Alcoholics Anonymous teaches). It is not an emotion but an equanimity in facing the ups and downs of life. Do you seek serenity? What helps you to attain it?
9. Do you think there is a relationship between grief and joy? Explain, and use a personal example if you can.

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud

(or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not a time for each person offer their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, pages 877–78. Write your own if you wish.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

God of mystery, we thank you for our lives, with its joys, beauty, sorrows, and discouragements. Remind us that your guidance and healing power work through the good and the painful times in our lives. Keep us mindful of others as we pray.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can be representatives of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussion. Remind them of the readings for the coming session.

Offer a sending forth, such as: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

Invite participants to express to each other signs and words of Christ’s peace and love.

Remember to extinguish the candle.



Session 6

*Shining the Light
of God*





Session Goals

The conversations and activities in this session will equip participants to:

- Understand Christian discipleship as both a source of comfort and call to take risks.
- Develop their own authentic approach to sharing their story of faith.
- Allow their lives to be open to change and transformation.

Reading Assignments

Before this session, participants should read the chapters “The Risk of Discipleship” and “Evangelism” in *30 Meditations on the Writings of C. S. Lewis*.

Centering Prayer

Invite participants to center their spirits and hearts for this time of worship.

Light the candle.

Opening Prayer

Use this sample or another of your choice.

God who gave us minds for seeking truth, we ask your blessing our time of listening for you in the thoughts of your servant C. S. Lewis, in the Holy Scriptures, and in the insights that you give each of us. Most of all, we pray for the Spirit to guide us to love and respect each other as members of the body of Christ. We pray this in the name of our teacher and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture

Read the following Scripture passages: Psalm 19:1-4; Matthew 16:24-26; and Luke 5:17-25.

Give participants a minute or two to ponder the Scripture passages.

Prayer for Illumination

We are united in Christ, sharing in his suffering and new life. Give us courage to take risks for the way of Christ and gratitude to share the good news. Amen.

Review of the Session's Readings

“Many perceive conversion as having nothing whatsoever to do with the quality of one’s life,” observes Perry Bramlett in his essay on “The Risk of Discipleship.” “Often the church, tacitly or explicitly, has encouraged

this. But to take Jesus seriously also requires us to develop a passion for our own character.”

It is common for Christians to think of new and abundant life in Christ as something that starts after the death of their earthly lives. But as one preacher said, “Eternal life begins now.”

When a person decides to trust Christ for forgiveness of sins and new life, that person agrees to follow the way of Christ (as it is called in the Book of Acts). In Jesus’s many parables and teachings, he describes how people of faith are to live: they are to be generous, caring, and humble and to put the needs of the poor, ill, and disregarded over their own. This is a new lifestyle for most of us, and when we practice it, we participate in healing a broken world.

Lewis understood that conversion meant not only the promise of heaven in the afterlife but also a transformation of our lives. He goes as far as to say that without a change in our actions, our conversion is largely imaginary.

Bramlett compares the phrase *born again* with the experience of physical birth. “A mother knows the risks of giving birth,” he says. “But in spiritual re-birth or conversion, the new Christian is not often told of the risks.” To practice love, forgiveness, compassion, and justice is to swim against the tide of our societies. The powerful who gain dominance on the backs of others do not care for this kind of disruption of business as usual. We know that

Jesus faced danger when he cared for the “least of these” and spoke truth to power (Matthew 25:40). Yet, this is what births new life.

Therefore, if following Christ is risky, how can we present it as good news? That hope of transformation of ourselves and of a broken world is one that many crave and are willing pursue even if there is risk involved. Like Christians, they consider the risks worthwhile if they make their lives meaningful. And there is no more compelling evidence than our own experience.

“One of the important features of the Christian faith is that Jesus’s story is can be expressed in words by almost anyone, just as it can be expressed through the life of a believer,” Bramlett notes in his essay on “Evangelism.” Sharing good news does not entail treating people like impersonal souls or pressuring them with guilt trips. Christians need not conclude that those hard-sell tactics are evangelism. Instead, our genuine care and respect for others and the truth of our own stories of transformation in Christ (and how our actions prove them) are the most genuine and convincing ingredients of evangelism.

We use our own talents in our evangelism. Lewis, a thoughtful scholar and articulate writer, was called a “teaching evangelist.” What you love to do and are good at are your best vehicles for sharing the best thing that happened in your life.

Wisdom from C. S. Lewis

Read aloud these quotes from Lewis.

If conversion to Christianity makes no improvement in a man's outward actions—if he continues to be just as snobbish or spiteful or envious or ambitious as he was before—then I think we must suspect that his “conversion” was largely imaginary; and after one's original conversion, every time one thinks one has made an advance, that is the test to apply. Fine feelings, new insights, greater interest in “religion” mean nothing unless they make our actual behaviour better.¹

But of course our anxiety about unbelievers is most usefully employed when it leads us, not to speculation but to earnest prayer for them and the attempt to be in our own lives such good advertisements for Christianity as will make it attractive.²

Invite participants to take a little bit of time (perhaps two minutes) to ponder these, and perhaps to take notes on the questions or affirmations that the quote may evoke for them.

Biblical Insights

Reread aloud (or invite one or two participants to do so) Matthew 16:24-26 and Luke 5:17-25.

Questions for Bible Study

1. Jesus's teaching that his followers "must say no to themselves" and "lose their lives" can sound severe and self-destructive (Matthew 16:24-25). What do you make of this instruction? Why was Jesus so harsh?
2. Tell about a time when you took a risk for your beliefs and values. What led you to take the risk? Did it seem worthwhile?
3. Those who observed Jesus's forgiving and healing a paralyzed man talked with each other about how amazing it was. What might make this conversation qualify as evangelism?
4. Share with the group a story of something amazing, wonderful, or life-changing you have experienced. Did you perceive God's grace and love in this experience?

Questions for Discussion

1. When you pondered the Lewis quotes that we reflected upon earlier, did they raise any questions for you? If you are willing to do so, share some of these questions for group discussion. (Remember, we have agreed not to judge or "fix" the other participants' opinions and experiences.)

2. In what ways do you find that your life is different because of your choice to follow Christ?
3. In the Book of Acts, those who gave their lives to Christ were said to be part of the Way. How would you describe the Christian life as being a “Way”?
4. What risks do you think you may need to take for the sake of living a faithful life?
5. Can you see yourself as a “good advertisement for Christianity,” as Lewis says? In what way?
6. Each of us meets and relates to others in different arenas: home, work, school, social life, neighborhood organizations, volunteer work, etc. The people in those places have varying life experiences and perspectives. Describe a person or group of people from one of these arenas. What would make your Christian faith sound like good news to them?
7. You may know someone who has rejected their faith because they experienced hurt at the hands of the church. How do you express God’s love to that person?
8. Consider the abilities and interests that give you satisfaction and for which you have talent. In what ways might these be vehicles for sharing your good news?
9. In the coming weeks, how might you intentionally practice evangelism with integrity?

Closing Prayer

Close with a bidding prayer. Explain that at certain times in the prayer you will invite people to speak aloud (or silently in their hearts) a name or place for which they would offer prayer. Because of time restraints, this is not a time for each person to offer their own complete prayer.

You may find an example of a bidding prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, pages 877–78. Write your own if you wish.

Remind the group not to raise names of people known to others in the congregation who have not given permission or have not shared their prayer request publicly.

A Sample Bidding Prayer

Jesus, you transformed the lives of those who sought your mercy and grace. We, too, can be transformed when we recommit to being the compassionate, humble, courageous, and just people and communities we were created to be. Give us the strength each day to face risk for your name's sake and the love needed to tell our faith experiences to others. We humbly pray for ourselves, our friends and family, and people in nations around the world.

We pray for these family members:

We pray for these friends:

We pray for those who suffer or are in trouble:

Shining the Light of God

We praise you for these reasons for giving thanks:

We pray for these concerns of our communities:

We pray for the church's mission and its leaders:

We pray for needs around the world:

With confidence in your love, we offer these prayers to you and each other, the body of Christ. Show us how we can be representatives of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Thank the group for their contributions to the discussions over the last few weeks.

Offer a sending forth, such as: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Invite participants to express to each other signs and words of Christ's peace and love.

Remember to extinguish the candle.



Notes

Session 1. Seeking God

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 119.
2. C. S. Lewis, “On Obstancy in Belief,” in *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 26.

Session 2. Finding God

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 138.
2. C. S. Lewis, “The Decline of Religion,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 221.

Session 3. Growing Close to God

1. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1993), 428.
3. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131.
4. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to An American Lady*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 111–12.

Session 4. Meeting God in Community

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 158.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1958), 52.
3. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 77.

Session 5. Healed by God

1. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 5.
2. Clyde S. Kilby, ed., *A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1968), 26.
3. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 152–53.

Session 6. Shining the Light of God

1. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 207.
2. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 428.