

C.S. LEWIS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pre-written ice breaker titles on pieces of paper
- Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: BOOK TITLE CHARADES

Ahead of time, write down on pieces of paper an assortment of C.S. Lewis book titles that the teens will act out, and place them in an opaque container. One at a time the teens select a piece of paper and have up to one minute to silently act out the words that make up the title. The rest of the teens try to guess what is being acted out.

- The Problem of Pain
- Out of the Silent Planet
- The Silver Chair
- Surprised by Joy
- The Four Loves
- The Screwtape Letters
- A Grief Observed
- They Asked for a Paper
- The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe
- The Weight of Glory
- Till We Have Faces
- The Last Battle

FOR GROUPS OF FOUR OR MORE DIVIDE THE GROUP INTO TEAMS AND KEEP SCORE (TEAMS GUESS FOR THEIR OWN TEAMMATES' PERFORMANCES).

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: A STORY WORTH TELLING

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- If you were to write a book, what kind of book would it be?
For example, its genre, title and topic? What would the message of your book be?

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- C.S. Lewis once wrote, *“It certainly is my opinion that a book worth reading only in childhood is not worth reading even then”*. What do you think he meant? Do you agree?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Writing may not be our “thing” but we all have a story worth telling, a message worth communicating, especially if our own stories have been caught up in the larger story of the Gospel. Some of us may be more at home communicating through poetry or fiction, through biography or even a graphic novel, but each one of us can tell our story in a way that is unique and which God can use to reach out to others with messages of beauty, truth, hope, etc.*
- *Lewis was getting at the idea that a really good story conveys something of lasting value. A good children’s book is one that can still delight us and offer us insights when we are adults, something which is very true of the books that he himself wrote for children.*

THE LESSON: A GIFT FOR EXPLAINING THE UNEXPLAINABLE

Lessons 13-42 follow a slightly different format from previous lessons. The story of the saint being studied is interspersed with verses from scripture that provide added perspective. You may prefer to read the lesson text aloud together as a group, or ask the teens to read it silently to themselves.

“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”

(Psalm 139:16)

Clive Staples Lewis, or “Jack” as he preferred to be called, was born in 1898 in northern Ireland to parents who had a great love of reading, which they passed on to Jack and to his older brother Warren. Jack was an atheist in his youth, and like many of his peers, he was swept up in the events of World War I (1914-1918), and deeply affected by his experiences in uniform.

Jack had many intellectual gifts, but the one that tied many of the others together was his ability to tell stories – the sort of stories that conveyed deeper meaning. When his schooling was finished Jack took a position teaching at Oxford, and with some of the other fellows there formed a writing club. They called themselves “the Inklings” and they would share pieces of their writing with one another to gain criticism and encouragement. One of the other Inklings was a man named J.R.R. Tolkien, a devout Roman Catholic, who would go on to write the famous “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. It was partly in response to Tolkien’s witness that Jack came to faith and went on to find a spiritual home in the Church of England.

“Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

(Romans 15:21)

During World War II (1939-1945), Jack gave a series of radio talks seeking to explain the basic teachings of Christianity – without getting into any of the distracting areas that can cause disagreement among believers. Eventually these talks would be published together under the title “Mere Christianity”. This, together with many of the other books written by Jack, are called “apologetic” (which we get from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning “an explanation”) – not because they are “apologizing”, but because they explain and defend Christian belief.

In Jack’s apologetic works, his brilliant use of simile and metaphor is on full display – as, for example, when he wrote that, “When you argue against [God] you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all: it is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on” (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*). Jack’s gift for

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explaining profound truth creatively is also manifest in his fictional work, and especially his children’s books, “The Chronicles of Narnia”. In the Narnia series, children from the world we know travel to the imaginary land of Narnia and encounter the Christ-figure Aslan, a talking lion, who on one occasion tells them that he is also to be found in their homeland: “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there” (Lewis, *Dawn Treader*).

*“He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.”
(Psalm 126:6)*

Jack was in his 50s when he began to correspond with Joy Davidman Gresham, the woman he would marry six years later. They had only a brief four years of married life together before she died of cancer, prompting Jack to share his experience of loss in the book “A Grief Observed”, in which he wrote:

“Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask – half our great theological and metaphysical problems – are like that”.

Throughout his life, Jack used his remarkable gifts to explore and share his faith with honesty, intelligence and ingenuity. His work has been instrumental in bringing many people to belief in Christ, as well as in building up those who already believe. Jack died in 1963 (too late to be considered for inclusion in our Prayer Book’s calendar of saints), but his legacy remains strong among Christians of every denomination to this day.

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: BRITANNICA.COM, “C.S. LEWIS” | CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM, “C.S. LEWIS: SCHOLAR, AUTHOR, AND APOLOGIST” | C.S. LEWIS, “A GRIEF OBSERVED”, “MERE CHRISTIANITY”, “SOMETIMES FAIRY STORIES MAY SAY BEST WHAT’S TO BE SAID”, AND “THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER” | WIKIPEDIA.ORG, “C.S. LEWIS” AND “C. S. LEWIS BIBLIOGRAPHY”.)

Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What are some of the different opportunities and methods that Jack used to share the Gospel?
- What evidence can you find that God was at work in Jack’s life?
- What can we learn from Jack’s example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Jack had the opportunity to explain and defend the Christian faith on radio and through “apologetic” works. He also shared his faith through children’s literature, adult fiction, and a book exploring his experience of grief.*
- *Jack was an atheist in his youth and spent many years away from God before he came to faith. None of that experience was wasted, because it would later all contribute to helping him better explain and defend the faith. Jack meeting up with Tolkien was providential, as the relationship helped to bring him to faith. The “Inklings” group was also one that God used to help Jack become a better writer, a skill which would enable him to tell the best story in many different ways. Even his brief marriage and the sadness that followed his wife’s death was something that Jack was able to transfigure into a way to tell people about God.*
- *We can seek to emulate Jack’s passion to share the Gospel. Like him, we can place our skills, our experiences and our creativity in God’s service to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

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PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY "AT-HOME CHALLENGE" IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Jack that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen.

Discuss your reflections with a friend or a group of friends, and together commit to a concrete action you can take this week.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Jack, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.