



These studies will best work if you can show the two videos: **Shadowlands** and **The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe**. Participants certainly need to have seen the videos or read the books recently. If they have then you can use the “read” sections to remind them of the section to which the study refers. Practice setting up the videos beforehand, especially where the segment is tricky to find.

These notes may help you with the trickier questions!

### Week 1

#### Film clip 1: Narnia - Living in a cold world

Start: Chapter 4 beginning - going towards Mr Tumnus' home.

Finish '... warmer now than I've felt in 100 years. Now go.' Lucy goes from lamp-post to wardrobe.

Or read:

Lucy has gone through the wardrobe for the first time and met Mr Tumnus the faun, who takes her to his home for tea and sardines. He explains that in Narnia it is 'always winter but never Christmas'. He tells her of the good old days and plays his pan pipes. The music and the images of dancing figures in the flames bewitch her and she falls asleep. She wakes to find the fire gone and Mr Tumnus sobbing, and explaining that he was planning to kidnap her. However, he takes her back to the lamp-post, telling her that the White Witch might even now know about her. 'Even some of the trees are on her side.' He says he is glad to have met her. 'You've made me feel warmer than I've felt in 100 years.'

#### In what ways might belief in a personal devil damage or strengthen the way we live our Christian life?

*Any discussion of the Devil might easily stray into a discussion of the occult or witchcraft. If this happens, try and include in the discussion subtle everyday temptations as well as dramatic supernatural happenings.*

##### a) Damage the way we live out our Christian life?

- *allowing people to blame their failings on an outside influence and thereby excuse themselves.*
- *seeming so irrational and archaic as to compromise intelligence.*

##### b) Strengthen Christian living?

- *making people realise that there is a much bigger spiritual battle going on, of which they are part.*
- *making people realise that they are always being tempted in subtle ways and therefore need to take special care to pray for God's help and guidance.*
- *making people unite against a common enemy, rather than automatically blaming and mistrusting each other.*
- *making people believe that evil is an outside force to be resisted rather than just 'human nature'.*

### How does Lucy show humanity to Mr Tumnus?

- *by trusting him*
- *by being interested in his home, his father etc.*
- *by lending him her handkerchief.*

**Think of one small touch of warmth and humanity from another, recently or in the past, that has made a difference to your life.**

Allow 1 minute for reflection. Suggest that people close their eyes as they reflect. This then gives you as leader the opportunity to set up the next video clip, selecting the right scene and leaving it on pause. (Don't forget to mute the TV sound first!)

Film clip 2: Shadowlands - Living in the 'shadowlands'

**Start:** Chapter 2 beginning - Lewis and Warnie in cafe.

**Finish:** '... I almost don't know what to say to you.' Warnie: 'Good Lord.'

Or read

Lewis and his brother Warnie meet Joy Gresham for the first time in a cafe. They are nervous about having their safe bachelor world interrupted. Joy begins to challenge Lewis who says he enjoys a good fight. 'Yes, but how long since you lost?' Later they take her on a tour of the colleges. She tells him how impassioned she was with the cause of the Spanish civil war: 'Wasn't everyone?' Lewis says he 'must have been otherwise engaged at the time'. He tells her about the custom of May Day singing, acknowledging that he has never actually seen it. Joy asks, 'Do you go round with your eyes shut?'

**In what ways does this imply that Lewis might be insulated from real experience and not living life to the full?**

- *He is easily embarrassed by meeting with a woman/American.*
- *He doesn't want Joy to disrupt his routine existence.*
- *He might not be comfortable with debates that he cannot win.*
- *The passionate Communist/Fascist debate of the Spanish Civil War seems to have passed him by.*
- *He has never bothered to see the May morning ritual, despite living in Oxford for many years.*



## Week Two

Film clip 1: Shadowlands - Living with the unattainable

Start: Chapter 1 - after credits - long shot of Oxford at dawn, then exterior of college building.

Finish: after '... got to catch my train.'

Or read

Lewis is giving a tutorial about the medieval tale of a lover's search for a perfect rosebud hidden in a walled garden. He contends that it is all about 'unattainability'. 'The most intense joy lies not in the having but in the desiring. The delight that never fades, the bliss that is most eternal, is only yours when what you desire is most out of reach.'

We next see Lewis in a pub with his academic colleagues who are mildly teasing him about his Narnia tales. The clergyman present comments that the imagery is Christian, but Lewis corrects him, 'No, Harry. It is what it is. It's just magical.' Lewis begins to describe going through the wardrobe into the snowy world of Narnia: 'a gateway to a magical world'.

**Is this statement true and why? 'The most intense joy lies not in the having but in the desiring.'**

*Augustine said 'You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.'*

*Our entire consumerist society only works on the premise that people are never satisfied - that as soon as they have what they desire, they begin to desire something else.*

**Do you find it hard to think in terms of 'storing up treasure in heaven'?**

*What does Jesus mean by the statement? Are we talking about spiritual 'Brownie points' or something a little deeper and more complex?*

Film clip 2: Narnia - Living with the unbelievable

Start: Chapter 7, beginning, 'Peter, wake up.'

Finish: after 'You're a family, aren't you? You might just start acting like one.'

Or read

Lucy has returned to the wardrobe, followed by Edmund who has met the White Witch. On their return, Lucy is relieved she now has someone else to back up her story, but Edmund denies having been to Narnia: 'You know what little children are like these days. They don't know when to stop pretending.' Peter tells the Professor of Lucy's story: 'Logically it's impossible.' 'What do they teach them these days?' mutters the Professor, suggesting that 'If she's not mad and she's not lying, then logically you should believe her.'

**Why do you think Edmund denied his experience of Narnia?**

- *he didn't want to give away what he had been doing - meeting the White Witch.*
- *he was too proud to admit an experience he had scorned previously.*
- *he wanted to look good in Peter's eyes.*
- *he wanted to get at Lucy.*

**What do you think are the things most responsible for people leaving the Christian faith?**

*The interesting question is whether others or ourselves really make an effort to understand the Christian faith and reconcile it with reason, or just depend on vague feelings.*



### Week Three

Because the first clip comes a fair way through the DVD chapter, ensure you have it set up and ready on pause, before the group starts - or preferably even before they arrive.

Film clip 1: Shadowlands - The purpose of suffering

Start: Chapter 1 a fair way through, after scene in pub, at beginning of Lewis addressing meeting, before 'Yesterday I had a letter ...'

End: after '... the blows of the chisel make us perfect. Thank you.'

Or Read

Lewis gives a lecture to a hall full of women, referring to an incident where a bus had ploughed into a column of young Royal Marine cadets. He quotes a correspondent: 'Where was God? Why didn't he stop it? Isn't he supposed to love us? Does God want us to suffer?' Lewis surmises, 'What if the answer is yes? I'm not sure that God particularly wants us to be happy. I think he wants us to love and to be loved. I think he wants us to grow up. I suggest that it is because God loves us that he gives us the gift of suffering ... Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. We are like blocks of stone out of which the sculptor carves perfect forms of men. The blows of his chisel which hurt us so much are what make us perfect.'

**What do you think to the this statement: All the great religions were first preached and long practised in a world without chloroform.**

*You may need to remind the group that chloroform was one of the first and most primitive anaesthetics and that we now live in a world where anaesthetics, sophisticated painkillers and antibiotics have eliminated even more pain and suffering than Lewis envisaged.*

Film clip 2: Narnia - The purpose of sacrifice

Start: beginning of Chapter 17 - Susan and Lucy see Aslan ascending to the stone table.

End: after 'The great cat is dead!'

Or read

The White Witch has confronted Aslan and told him that, according to their laws, the traitor, Edmund, must die. But after the Witch and Aslan have talked in private, Aslan emerges to say that 'she has renounced her claim on the son of Adam'. That night Lucy and Susan wake to see Aslan padding off. They follow and watch as Aslan approaches the stone table and evil mutant creatures shave him, bind him and haul him on to the stone table. The Witch scorns his apparent weakness: 'Did you honestly think you could save the human traitor? ... Tomorrow we will take Narnia for ever. In that knowledge despair and die.' The knife plunges in and Aslan is killed.

**What similarities did you notice between this episode of Aslan's death and the story of the death of Jesus in the gospels?**



#### Week 4

Film clip 1: Narnia - The gift of a purpose

Start: Chapter 11 some way in - children running from sled.

End: Father Christmas leaves.

Or read

As the ice begins to thaw, the children meet with Father Christmas, who tells them that hope is weakening the Witch's power. He gives them gifts - for Lucy a phial of healing medicine and a dagger for protection; for Susan a bow and arrow, 'Trust and it will not easily miss', and a horn to call for help; for Peter a sword and a shield. 'They are tools, not toys, bear them well and wisely. Long live Aslan and merry Christmas.'

Because the second clip is a bit difficult to find quickly, it might well be worth practising finding it before the meeting starts.

Film clip 2: Shadowlands - the gift of the present moment

Start: Chapter 9 near end (go to chapter 10 and rewind). Car going to golden valley.

End: Joy: '... that's the deal.' They kiss.

Or read

Lewis and Joy have gone to the Golden Valley at a time of Joy's remission from illness. Rain starts and they shelter in a barn. Lewis comments that he is 'not looking for anything else to happen, not wanting to be anywhere else. Here, now, that's enough.' Joy asks, 'That's your kind of happiness, isn't it?' and Lewis agrees that it is. She warns him, 'It isn't going to last, Jack.' He protests that they shouldn't think about it now and spoil the time they have. She claims that 'It doesn't spoil it. It makes it real ... What I'm trying to say is that the pain then is part of the happiness now. That's the deal.'

**Have you ever had an experience where pain and happiness (or joy) have gone hand in hand?**

*Perhaps it would help to unpack both of these words a little.*

**Phil 4:10-13 Is this sense of contentment the same as that expressed by Lewis in the film? If not, what is different?**

*The word 'contentment' has at least two different shades of meaning:*

- *a feeling of deep satisfaction.*
- *a willingness to accept what comes.*

*Explore both or either as appropriate.*



## Week 5

Because the first film clip starts quite a way through a chapter, it is important to have it set up ready before the session starts. Find the right place and leave it on pause.

Film clip 1: Shadowlands - When belief is tested

Start: Chapter 10 funeral car going to cremation, quite a long way in.

End Lewis and Douglas hugging in attic, back view.

Or read

After Joy's death, Lewis meets a clergyman friend who says, 'I thank God for your faith, Jack. Only faith makes sense at a time like this.' Lewis says nothing. Later with Warnie he expresses his feelings that sufferings have no purpose after all. Warnie doesn't know what to say and Lewis responds 'Nothing, nothing to say. I know that now ... Experience is a brutal teacher, but you learn, my God, you learn.' Later when academics are gathering in the common room, the clergyman again utters a platitude: 'Only God knows why these things happen.' Lewis explodes: 'God knows, but does God care?... We're rats in the cosmic laboratory. I've no doubt that the experiment is for our own good, but it still makes God the vivisectionist, doesn't it?... It won't do! It's a bloody awful mess and that's all there is to it.' Later walking home, Warnie tells Lewis that he needs to talk to Douglas, Joy's son. Lewis finds Douglas sitting in front of the wardrobe that he now believes holds no magic. Together they hug and cry.

### **In what ways do people express concern and consolation?**

*Responses in the film clip are:*

*Clergyman: 'Thank God for your faith. Only faith makes sense ... I know.'*

*Warnie: 'I don't know what to say.'*

*Academic: 'Better sooner than later.'*

*Academic: 'All for the best.'*

*Christopher: 'I'm sorry.'*

*Master: 'We're all deeply sorry.'*

*Clergyman: 'Life must go on.'*

*Christopher: 'Anything I can do?'*

*Clergyman: 'Only God knows why these things happen.'*

*Warnie: 'Talk to him' (reminding the grieving person to look beyond their own pain).*

*Lewis: 'It doesn't seem fair' (to Douglas).*

*Lewis: 'That's OK' (allowing Douglas disbelief).*

*Lewis: 'You can't hold on to things, you have to let them go.'*

*A hug and a tear*

Film clip 2: Narnia - When God is absent

Start: Chapter 23 beginning - mermaids, Cair Paravel.

End: Sunset.

Or read

After the grand ceremony where the children have been crowned kings and queens of Narnia, Lucy and Mr Tumnus are out on the balcony of Cair Paravel when they see Aslan at twilight going off over the sand. Mr Tumnus says, 'Don't worry, we'll see him again.' 'When?' asks Lucy. 'In time,' answers Mr Tumnus. 'One time he'll be here and the next he won't. After all, he's not a tame lion - but he is good.'

**Why might God's 'absence' be good for us?**

*Or 'apparent absence' let group members tease that out for themselves.*

**Do you think the Church has tried to 'tame' God?**

*Go back to Lewis's depiction of Aslan and remind that God is much greater than any of us can imagine.*

**Does the idea of a sudden unexpected meeting with Jesus frighten or excite you?**

*Beware of it taking people off at a tangent.*