

Dear fellow pilgrims,

Last week we explored a number of important aspects of the original broadcast "preface" for Lewis's talks in 1941 and the written version of that preface, which was published in 1942 in the initial written collection of the talks that preceded the publication of *Mere Christianity* as we know it today. That early preface is of enormous importance in the framing of Lewis's whole mission with the broadcasts and the book, and there is much we can learn from it today in terms of how we approach living out and sharing our faith.

Lewis realized that connecting with his audience right away was key to earning the right to be heard, and he is quite deliberate in how he goes about inviting them in, much like Jesus's "Come and see" approach early in John's Gospel. He deliberately establishes a tone and approach and connection of deep humility which is quite disarming, using (remarkably) very few words, and with a great opening line:

"It's not because I'm anybody in particular that I've been asked to tell you what Christians believe. In fact it's just the opposite." Lewis lays down straight off why he is a relatable and trustworthy guide. He makes clear he writes as a layman, not a clergyman, and as someone who understands the ordinary person's point of view. He cites the fact that he was an atheist for many years and only recently converted to Christianity, framing himself as a beginner who can still see the difficulties of belief and what it looks like from the outside. He makes clear that he will be focusing on those things on which all Christians agree and makes clear that those things, if true, are of world-shattering importance.

Perhaps what is even more remarkable about Lewis's preface is what is missing from it: there is no condescension, no condemnation, no superiority, no judgment, and no moralism. Instead, we see humility, empathy, plain speaking, and someone who has been changed by becoming a Christian.

In a public letter written in 1951, Lewis expressed his understanding of his task in the following words: "When I began [writing apologetics], Christianity came before the great mass of my unbelieving fellow-countrymen either in the highly emotional form offered by revivalists or in the unintelligible language of highly cultured clergymen. Most men were reached by neither. My task was therefore simply that of a translator--one turning Christian doctrine into the vernacular, into language that unscholarly people would attend to and could understand. ...If the real theologians had tackled this laborious work of translation about a hundred years ago, when they began to lose touch with the people (for whom Christ died), there would have been no place for me."

I believe there are a number of hugely important lessons here for us who are 21st century believers as we seek to invite others to consider the Christian faith:

- ◆ Live out passion for the Good News of the Gospel and those for whom Christ died
- ◆ Consider how we are perceived by non-believers and proactively seek to be winsome
- ◆ Seek to emulate the approach of humility and empathy
- ◆ Build bridges
- ◆ Position ourselves as fellow seekers
- ◆ Focus on what truly matters—the heart of the Gospel rather than moralism
- ◆ Do the groundwork (Lewis did an entire series to "prepare the ground" before he ever got to the Gospel)
- ◆ Understand that meaning and purpose and experience are important, not just rational argument

This week we will engage the 1952 Preface, so looking that over before class may be of help. I've attached below the materials from last week and links to the video and audio recordings of last week's class, so if you missed out, you can catch up.

Here is the link for class tomorrow, Wednesday, November 18, at 7:15 p.m. ET--please feel free to share the link with any friends who may be interested: <https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

It is such a privilege to be on this journey with you, and I look forward to "seeing" you on Zoom tomorrow evening!

Further up and further in,
Brian+

Music link from last week (please note music starts at 1:38:41)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIEQakyZtdI>

Video link for last week's class:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgkXzA3BGtk>

Audio link for last week's class:
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/mere-christianity-timely-truth-for-a-hurting-world/id1537579476>
<https://www.stphilipchurchsc.org/mere-christianity-/episode/2020-11-11/episode-3-origins-lewiss-on-air-introduction-and-the-1942-preface>