

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis: A Guide for Parents and Teachers

by Mark Pike



The Christian Message in Narnia

Good character is for everyone and the *Narnian Virtues Character Education Curriculum* is designed for all schools, whether secular, Christian or of another faith. Yet some will want to know more about the Christian message in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

This short *Guide for Parents and Teachers* is designed to help those who want to know more—for there is far more to this novel than the parallel between Aslan saving Edmund by giving up his life for him and the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross so that sinners might be forgiven.

In the brief explanation of each chapter that follows, there is reference to Christian Scripture, key Christian teachings and also to the Christian significance of the ‘Narnian’ virtues.

There are many similarities between the ‘Narnian’ virtues (love, wisdom, integrity, fortitude, self-control, justice) that are good for everyone and the “fruit of the Spirit” described in the New Testament (Galatians 5: 22–23) that is to be developed as the Holy Spirit enables Christians to become more Christlike.

According to N. T. Wright, this fruit is produced with some human effort and tending (Wright, 2012). For Christians, “God is seen as giving us the essential help, the grace that we need to achieve the goodness commanded by God” (Lickona, 1991: 39).

Yet, in our pilot study (Pike, Lickona and Nesfield, 2016), we observed an interesting phenomenon in one school we visited: Muslim children spoke about

their faith in thinking about and practicing virtues, but the Christian children did not. When discussing self-control as a class, the Muslim young people referred to Ramadan and the self-discipline that fasting required. Yet, afterwards, in the one-to-one interview situation, it was clear that the Christian faith was drawn upon by Christian students in their understanding and application of a range of virtues.

We feel it is important for young people, if they so choose, to bring what they “believe in” to their character development. Consequently, it is important that Christian students should not feel obliged to “secularize” their responses and to leave their beliefs and faith out of their efforts to develop good character.

Cultural Literacy

Some parents and teachers will want to know more about the Christian message in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, not because they wish to support young people in their faith, but simply because understanding the cultural and religious background of a literary work is important in the study of English literature.

Understanding this background can give readers greater insight and enable them to be more perceptive. For instance, students of English literature cannot fully understand and appreciate the poem “A Poison Tree” by William Blake without some knowledge of the events that took place in the Garden of Eden, nor should they read Shakespeare’s play *Measure for Measure* without understanding this quotation from the gospels.

NARNIAN VIRTUES: A Character Education Curriculum based on the novels of C.S. Lewis

Many teachers will want their students to be familiar with the aspects of the Christian story that relate to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* so they can see how this influences the structure of the novel and the events depicted within it.

Not a Christian Allegory?

We need to understand at the outset, though, that C. S. Lewis did not write a story where events correspond, one-to-one, with the Christian story of Creation, Fall and Redemption. Yet there are many similarities. For instance, Aslan (a lion) does represent Jesus (the lion of the tribe of Judah). Lewis imagined a world with talking animals and mythical creatures, such as Mr Tumnus the Faun, and then asked himself what it might look like if God came into that world to rescue it.

Not Just for Christians

The critic Laura Miller makes the point in her book *A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia* that Narnia is not just for Christians. It is entirely possible to read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* without any knowledge of the Christian story and in a secular society some children do so. It is also possible to follow the Narnian Virtues curriculum without any knowledge of the Christian story and to focus on developing the virtues of love, wisdom, self-control, integrity, justice and fortitude. Equally, some children and young people will be seeking to learn these virtues in a distinctly Christian context and will be drawing upon the Christian faith to do so.

Good Character is for Everyone

While a character education curriculum designed to foster virtue based on the work of C. S. Lewis fits with the mission of many Christian schools (Pike, 2010), we understand that many children attending schools with a Christian ethos will not be Christians. Although the *Narnian Virtues Curriculum* is specifically mentioned in *The Fruits of the Spirit: A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education* (2015) and also in *Catholic Character Education* (2018), it is designed for all schools, whether secular, Christian or belonging to another faith. Professor Lickona, the Co-Investigator of the *Narnian Virtues Curriculum* reminds us, "It is certainly possible that having faith by no means guarantees that a person will be good" (2004, p. 57). Equally, we believe good character is for everyone and that it is important to understand the Christian story whether or not one believes it to be true. Christian virtues underpin a just society (Pike, 2013, 2015).

CHAPTER 1: LUCY LOOKS INTO A WARDROBE AND CHAPTER 2: WHAT LUCY FOUND THERE

Christian Message: We are made "in the image of God." We are made by God as either male or female. We are made to rule and reign.

When Mr Tumnus meets Lucy, he asks if she is a "daughter of Eve." It is important that in Narnia, girls and women are called "daughters of Eve" and boys and men are called "sons of Adam." This is a reference to Genesis, Chapter 1. It shows the exceptional and unique status of human beings as created beings made in the image of God.

The Bible teaches that human beings have a unique status compared to animals and were created to rule and reign over creation. The White Witch, Jadis, is not human and therefore has no right to rule Narnia.

When Lucy meets Mr Tumnus, the Faun, he is working for the White Witch and is supposed to hand over to her any "sons of Adam" or "daughters of Eve." The Witch is evil and wants to kill them because she knows that humans are Narnia's rightful rulers, and she is not. It is because humans are descendants of Adam and Eve that their "birth-right" is to reign and rule over creation.

Biblical Reference:

And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1: 26-27)

Christian Character Virtues: Lucy is known for her truthfulness, honesty and integrity. When Mr Tumnus tells Lucy that the White Witch expects him to kidnap her, Lucy tells him he should not do this. By the end of Chapter 2, Mr Tumnus is showing honesty and integrity by helping Lucy to escape at great personal risk to himself. He realizes he has been wrong, is determined to change and takes action that proves it.

In Christian terms, Mr Tumnus repents. He had been decided upon a wrong course of action and now he turns around and goes in the opposite direction to do what is right and just. It would have been unjust and unfair to kidnap Lucy. Now he shows her kindness and love and they become firm friends. It is also wise for him to do what is right and it is wise of Lucy to try to

escape as soon as possible. She is wise in the way she explains things to him and enlists his help.

Biblical References:

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. (Luke 8:15)

Let us walk honestly. (Romans 13:13)

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just ... think on these things. (Philippians 4: 8)

CHAPTER 3: EDMUND AND THE WARDROBE

Christian message: We are made in the image of God and have great potential for good, especially when we ask for God's help. But we are tempted and also find it easy to go wrong and to give in to temptation.

As well as being “made in the image of God” and having extraordinary potential for good, human beings also find it easy to do wrong. We find it easy to deceive ourselves. Edmund, as a “son of Adam,” sins and joins the wrong side, the side of evil. Human beings are predisposed to sin and have to work hard to resist temptation. In this chapter, Edmund meets the White Witch and joins her.

The Witch is very clever and seduces Edmund so that he does what is wrong. She has taken on human form but she is not human. The right to rule is only promised to humans. This reminds us of the serpent tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent persuades Eve to disobey God.

Biblical references:

The serpent was more subtle and crafty than any living creature of the field which the Lord God had made. (Genesis 3:1)

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3: 23)

Christian Character Virtues: In this chapter Lucy's siblings disbelieve her when she tells them that she has discovered Narnia. Lucy bursts into tears and is very miserable. Here we see Lucy's integrity, honesty, truthfulness, fortitude and self-control. She is a very truthful person. She is routinely honest and truthful and does not tell lies. Also, she does not give into pressure. She has strength and courage, what we call “backbone.”

She does what is right rather than what is easy:

She could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment if she could have brought herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun. Lucy was a very truthful girl and she knew that she was really in the right; and she could not bring herself to say this.

Biblical References:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4: 15)

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4: 25)

I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. (1 Timothy 2: 7)

CHAPTER 4: TURKISH DELIGHT

Christian message: Sin has eternal consequences. Human beings sin if they think they can determine what is right and wrong and do not submit to what God says about what is right and what is wrong.

In this chapter we learn about sin and its evil consequences for human family relationships and community. It is important to understand evil and the White Witch. She appears to be beautiful and deceives Edmund. The Turkish Delight looks beautiful and is delicious, but it is potentially fatal and highly addictive because it is “enchanted.” Anyone who starts eating the Turkish Delight will not stop until they have killed themselves.

The Turkish Delight reminds us of the fruit from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden with which the Serpent tempts Eve. The promise of the Serpent in the garden is that if they eat the fruit, humans will be like God—they will decide for themselves what is good and evil. The Witch promises Edmund that he will become a prince and then King of Narnia. Edmund wants to be King and make his own rules. The irony is that Edmund is destined to become a King anyway, to sit on a throne at Cair Paravel (although he doesn't know it). Man's destiny is to be conformed to the image of God—yet Satan tempts and says, “Ye shall become like gods”).

Temptation and addiction determine our view of the world. Sin enslaves, puts us in bondage and alters our judgment. This chapter also shows us the consequences of sin in broken-down relationships,

conflict between children and within the family. Edmund admits to Lucy that Narnia exists but denies it to Susan and Peter. Edmund becomes a liar; his face is red and he is miserable. At the end of the chapter we read that Edmund is feeling very sick. Human beings are sick with sin and need a cure. Lewis starts with sin and evil before we get to Aslan and the solution later on.

Biblical References:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods. (Genesis 3:5)

Christian Character Virtues: In this chapter we learn about virtue by seeing Edmund's vices instead of virtues—and how they get him into trouble. After meeting the White Witch Edmund lies to Lucy and pretends he doesn't even know who she is. Edmund is deceitful and dishonest. He also has a chip on his shoulder and harbors a grudge. Edmund is proud and wants to be in charge rather than being bossed around by Peter.

Edmund shows a lack of self-control because he will do anything now to get more Turkish Delight, even betraying his sisters and brother to the Witch. He is also very unwise to trust the Witch to believe what she says.

Biblical References:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Encourage the young men to be self-controlled. (Titus 2:6)

CHAPTER 5: BACK ON THIS SIDE OF THE DOOR

Christian Message: You can only be really happy and thrive by following God and doing what's right—even if it's difficult.

There is a biblical principle here that doing what is sinful and wrong (and disobeying God) makes us miserable, just like Edmund. Although Lucy is miserable too (for doing what is right), things do get better eventually for her. But, things just get worse for Edmund while he is committed to the White Witch.

We read in the Bible that sometimes it will be hard to stand up for what is right, to believe and trust in God, but that God will be with us and give us strength and fortitude to overcome our trials and tribulations. Peter and Susan also show the wisdom to seek advice

from Professor Digory Kirk (a “kirk” is the old name for a church) about whether Lucy or Edmund is telling the truth. The professor challenges them and helps the children to see more clearly. First of all, he establishes that Lucy is known for her truthfulness and honesty (far more than Edmund). Her testimony is therefore considered to be trustworthy.

The Professor also challenges the children's view of reality. Although we don't learn this in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in another Narnia novel, *The Magician's Nephew* (which tells what happened before the events of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), we read about the Professor's adventures in Narnia when he was a boy exploring with his friend Polly. While God is not against reason, it is also true that spiritual encounters often cannot be rationally explained. The Bible tells us that there are indeed other places to live than in our world.

Biblical References:

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4: 18)

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household?" (Luke 12: 42)

Christian Character Virtues: In this chapter Edmund is “becoming a nastier person every minute” because of the effects of sin, his addiction and his pride in wanting to be superior to others (especially Peter). Edmund feels physically “sick” and he is “sulky” and “annoyed” with his sister who knows she is right. He decides “to do the meanest and most spiteful thing he could think of,” which is to let his sister down by lying about the existence of Narnia.

Even though Lucy “sticks to her story” and does not deny the existence of Narnia, she is very miserable and upset because of Edmund's dishonesty and lack of integrity. Lucy shows considerable integrity and fortitude.

Biblical Reference:

Godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Timothy 6: 6)

CHAPTER 6: INTO THE FOREST

Christian Message: God teaches us to strive for justice and protect and help the weak.

Peter, Susan and Lucy decide to fight for justice and to seek to help the victim, Mr Tumnus. Susan needs some convincing initially when Lucy says they must stay and try to do something for Mr Tumnus. Susan says it isn't "fun" and it isn't "safe" in a Narnia tyrannized by the White Witch, and she is quite right. Despite this, they do their duty to fight for justice and stay to help despite the personal risks.

Here we are given a vivid scene of what evil (the White Witch) can do. Mr Tumnus' home has been wrecked; the door is hanging off and his possessions are strewn across the floor. This vandalism is malicious—even the picture of his father has been "slashed into shreds with a knife." Mr Tumnus' only "crime" has been associating with a human (a "daughter of Eve") and helping Lucy by protecting her and keeping her safe.

There is much in the Bible about the importance of a just society and the duty of Christians to work for a just society. In the Old Testament, the prophets challenged injustice. In this chapter we see that the consequences of sin affect human beings and also the natural world. In the New Testament, Paul describes the state that nature is in as a consequence of sin and describes it as "groaning." The whole creation is subject to suffering. As long as Narnia is under the spell of the Witch it will be winter (as her hold weakens, spring comes and the thaw begins).

Biblical References:

O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice. (Ezekiel 45:9)

We know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain. (Romans 8: 19-23)

Christian Character Virtues: As a result of aligning himself with the Witch, Edmund sees everything wrongly. His judgment is impaired. His priorities are all wrong. When the Robin comes to help them he mistrusts this creature and does not believe the bird is a dependable guide. He also mistrusts the Beavers and his own brother and sisters. He does not want to listen to those who are on Aslan's (God's) side. Instead, he

trusts the Witch who is Aslan's (God's) enemy. He has the wrong friends. Edmund has made a decision to see the Witch as good and Aslan as evil. As a result of being on the wrong side Edmund tries to disrupt good plans and cause the wrong decisions to be made. He tries to get everyone to focus on their hunger (their appetites) rather than rescuing Mr Tumnus. He is only thinking about himself rather than helping other people and he shows his selfishness rather than love and kindness for others.

Biblical Reference:

Woe to the that call evil good and good evil. (Isaiah 5: 20)

CHAPTER 7: A DAY WITH THE BEAVERS

Christian Message: Everyone knows God exists and human beings have an inner longing that only God can satisfy.

Edmund tries to spread mistrust about Mr Beaver (who is trustworthy). On the way to the Beavers' home, he sees the Witch's Castle in the distance and starts thinking about Turkish Delight (his appetites) and being King of Narnia. He wants to be in charge rather than be directed by Peter.

Once inside the Beavers house, the children hear the name Aslan for the first time. At the mention of the name, Edmund feels terrified. Yet Peter feels brave, Susan smells perfume and hears wonderful sounds and Lucy has the feeling she has at the beginning of the school holidays. Edmund's reaction is fear because he has allied himself with the Witch. The children respond in different ways, either being attracted or repelled by the name "Aslan," according to their spiritual disposition, the spiritual direction in which they are inclined.

Elsewhere C. S. Lewis makes his argument for Christianity based on longing—this deep longing for something that cannot be satisfied in this world is taken as evidence that we were made for another world and for God.

Biblical Reference:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as

God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1: 20-22)

Christian Character Virtues: Here Edmund is alienated from his siblings. Rather than enjoying their company and that of the Beavers, in his heart he has separated himself from them. He is in bondage to the Witch and to his appetites. He does not exercise self-control and is being manipulated by the Witch. He does not show appreciation and loving kindness and is a traitor, betraying his family and siding with evil. He is arrogant and proud and does not want to listen to advice. He wants to be in charge and to decide for himself what is good and evil rather than submitting himself to the right order of things.

Biblical Reference:

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16: 18)

CHAPTER 8: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER DINNER

Christian Message: If anyone tries to overcome sin on their own, they are doomed to fail. Only God can save sinners. God is sovereign but always good.

In this chapter, Mr Beaver explains that Edmund has “gone to her, to the White Witch. He has betrayed us all.” Peter wants to come up with a plan to rescue Mr Tumnus but Mr Beaver tells him this is futile. Only Aslan can save him. We cannot rescue ourselves from sin. Deliverance from the Witch’s spell only comes through Aslan.

Here there is an exciting atmosphere of hope and the anticipation of salvation as the children learn that Aslan is on his way. Mr Beaver quotes a few “messianic prophecies” (those foretelling the arrival of a Messiah or Saviour), such as “Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight”. Especially important for the children is this one: “When two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve sit in those four rooms, then it will be the end not only of the White Witch’s reign but of her life.” Peter, Susan and Lucy want to know about Aslan. They want to know who he is and what he is like. Aslan is the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-sea. Aslan is in relationship with his father just as Jesus is in relationship with God the Father. The Emperor represents God the

Father and shows God’s transcendence and greatness. Aslan’s arrival in Narnia is like God becoming man in Jesus (the Incarnation) when he becomes present with his people.

Susan is nervous about meeting Aslan and what Mr Beaver tells her is not entirely reassuring: “Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King I tell you.”

Biblical Reference:

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25: 9)

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1: 21)

Christian Character Virtues: Peter, Susan and Lucy learn to trust and have faith in Aslan as rescuer and savior. They have hope of a Saviour.

Biblical Reference:

Putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

CHAPTER 9: IN THE WITCH’S HOUSE

Christian Message: As human beings we deceive ourselves. We are sinners and sin deceives us. Our pride is foolish and is potentially fatal.

Edmund hurries to the Witch’s house to betray his siblings. He is increasingly affected by sin. Edmund’s sinful desires lead to a wrong perception of truth. He convinces himself that the Witch is not really evil. As human beings we can talk ourselves into things and decide to believe what is untrue. Sometimes we listen to what we want to hear and not the truth. Edmund is bitter and resentful towards his siblings and he thinks about how he will put Peter in his place.

Edmund is disrespectful and blasphemous. He sees a statue of a lion and maybe thinks that the Witch has turned Aslan to stone. Stupidly he draws a mustache on the lion’s face with the stub of a lead pencil. Edmund is mocking God. He is dangerously close to losing his life and everything good even though he doesn’t know it.

Biblical Reference:

He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20)

Christian Character Virtues: Again, here we learn about virtues by seeing their opposing vices demonstrated by Edmund. Edmund is disrespectful and a traitor. We should be loyal and show respect where it is due.

Biblical Reference:

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:21-23)

CHAPTER 10: THE SPELL BEGINS TO BREAK

Christian Message: God's act of salvation and overcoming sin carries with it a duty. We ourselves should be active and involved in fighting evil and sin in the world. God gives us the gifts we need to fight sin and evil. The disciples of Jesus, those who followed him, had miraculous healing ministries and those who follow him today are called to bring healing.

Mr and Mrs Beaver and the children flee the dam. They meet Father Christmas who gives them Christmas presents. These "gifts" or "charisma" enable the children to fight the Witch by helping them to use their unique abilities and talents. Father Christmas gives Peter a sword and a shield to help him fight. He gives Susan bow and arrows and a horn that brings help when it is blown. Lucy's gifts from Father Christmas are a dagger and a bottle of cordial that heals the wounded. She has the gift of healing wounds, both physical and emotional.

C. S. Lewis wrote an essay about why he was not a pacifist and he fought for his country and was wounded in France. He makes it clear that Christianity is not a pacifist religion. Using force can be necessary and effective. We need to fight sin in our own lives and in our world.

Biblical Reference:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Christian Character Virtues: Receiving gifts is important and the children humbly and gratefully receive the gifts given and desire to use them wisely and well.

Biblical Reference:

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11)

CHAPTER 11: ASLAN IS NEARER

Christian Message: When Christ comes into the world he brings light which dispels the darkness of the world, and Christians celebrate this at Christmas. The coming of Christ is like the coming of spring after a long winter.

We know that Aslan is getting closer because of the melting snow which is a sign of the Witch's weakening power. Edmund and the Witch are on her sledge which is slowed down by the thaw. On the journey, they meet a happy group of animals who are celebrating Christmas. The Witch is so angry that they have been given Christmas presents that she kills them by turning them into stone. Before she does so, she tells them that if they deny Father Christmas has been giving them presents she will not punish them but a young squirrel declares the truth: "He has - he has - he has!"

This is the first time in the story that Edmund has felt sorry for someone besides himself. At the beginning of the chapter he is completely self-centered, but even though he has been hit hard on the face by the Witch, he cares more about someone else's suffering than his own.

The fact that the Witch hates the celebration is important. She seems to say it is wasteful to celebrate the coming of Aslan and this reminds us of the time a woman pours expensive perfume on Jesus and his disciples say that it is a waste. Jesus tells his disciples that they will always have the poor with them and that the woman has done something beautiful.

Biblical Reference:

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:5)

Christian Character Virtues: Edmund realizes in this chapter that the Witch is evil, indicating that he is

growing in wisdom which enables him to see what is true and good, and what is the opposite. He is admitting to himself that he was wrong about the Witch. He is showing integrity.

An important part of integrity is not engaging in self-deception, such as telling ourselves that something is true or right when deep down we know that it is wrong. For the first time, we see Edmund showing concern for others when he feels pity for the group of animals that the Witch turns to stone. Previously he has been selfish and greedy, thinking only of himself. Now he is thinking of others' suffering even while he is suffering himself—feeling cold, miserable and afraid. Important aspects of the virtue of love are caring for others and being selfless, and Edmund is starting to show that he is developing this trait.

Biblical Reference:

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10).

CHAPTER 12: PETER'S FIRST BATTLE

Christian Message: We need to confess and repent our sins in order to receive God's forgiveness.

This is an important chapter because here we see Peter owning up and accepting responsibility when he and his sisters come face-to-face with Aslan for the first time. They seem to realize Aslan knows everything about them, but when Aslan asks "where is the fourth?" and Mr Beaver explains he has gone to the Witch, Peter says that his anger towards Edmund helped him go wrong. Later in the chapter although Peter does not feel very brave (in fact he feels sick with fear) he still fights the wolf sent by the Witch and manages to kill it.

Biblical Reference:

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Proverbs 28:13).

Christian Character Virtues: Peter has the humility to own up. He is truthful when he first meets Aslan and doesn't try to hide anything. Peter acts justly and shows fairness. Responsibility, like respect, is a key part of the virtue of justice. In the life of virtue, taking responsibility for one's actions and their consequences is clearly very important indeed. In explaining his

brother's lapse and betrayal of them, Peter admits to Aslan, "That was partly my fault, Aslan. I was angry with him and I think that helped him to go wrong." This public admission by Peter shows that he acts justly and accepts responsibility. When he kills the wolf, he is brave and shows genuine courage even though he does not find this fight easy. Courage (an aspect of fortitude) is the habit of overcoming fear when facing physical danger or social pressure to do what's wrong. Here we see a physical struggle, but for many, the struggle to be brave and courageous will be to fight social pressure or peer pressure or media pressure.

Biblical Reference:

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6).

CHAPTER 13: DEEP MAGIC FROM THE DAWN OF TIME

Christian Message: God forgives us when we repent and we should forgive others. There is an eternal law that "the wages of sin is death" and as we are all sinners, we all need forgiveness.

In this chapter Aslan forgives Edmund and brings him back to his family. Edmund says he's sorry to each of them and they all forgive him and love him. But Edmund has had a narrow escape. He is rescued from the clutches of the Witch just as she is sharpening her knife in order to kill him. After Aslan has rescued Edmund, the Witch comes to see Aslan and tells him that Edmund is a traitor and that according to the deep Magic that the Emperor put into Narnia at the very beginning (which is written on the stone table) traitors belong to her and she is entitled to kill them.

Biblical Reference:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

Christian Character Virtues: Included in the virtue of love is forgiveness. To forgive is to show love. It is the habit of letting go of anger or resentment toward others who have caused us an injury of some kind (even while holding an offender accountable for his action). It is especially important to understand that love is a decision/action and not just doing what we feel like.

Sometimes we have to choose to love and to forgive someone (like Edmund) who has behaved badly.

Here we see the forgiveness (an aspect of love) of the Pevensie siblings when they say “that’s alright” after Edmund has said “I’m sorry.” We also see Aslan’s love for Edmund in that he keeps the conversation they have as a private matter. There is respect in correction, rather than humiliation. Further, Aslan tells the other children that they shouldn’t talk to Edmund about what is in the past—they shouldn’t hold a grudge and should let bygones be bygones.

Biblical Reference:

Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying “I repent,” you must forgive them. (Luke 17:4)

CHAPTER 14: THE TRIUMPH OF THE WITCH

Christian Message: Even when it looks like evil and sin triumph, they don’t win in the end. Christ Jesus rescues us and saves us from sin when we repent.

This is the chapter in which the Witch kills Aslan who gives himself willingly as a sacrifice and is hurt and humiliated before his death. They muzzle him, spit on him and shear his mane. The parallel here is to Jesus’ passion, the time leading up to his death. Aslan is in a quiet and melancholy mood and as he is quietly leaving, Susan and Lucy comfort him (unlike the disciples who fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane). They put their hands on Aslan’s mane to comfort him and give him support so that he will not feel so alone. They don’t understand as he leaves them and goes to the Witch and her ogres and evil spirits.

This is Jesus’ atonement and sacrifice for Edmund. Aslan complies with the Deep Magic (the law that says innocent blood must be shed for the redemption of sin). When Aslan announces to the Pevensie children that the Witch has “renounced the claim on your brother’s blood,” it is because he has agreed to take Edmund’s place and to die instead of him. Any traitor who decides to follow the Witch is her legitimate prey and belongs to her to kill. Aslan has agreed to give his life up for Edmund.

Just before the killing we read, “The Witch bared her arms as she had bared them the previous night when

it had been Edmund instead of Aslan”. The Witch was about to kill Edmund the previous night by cutting his throat as he had voluntarily joined her side against Aslan. Now Aslan is taking the place of Edmund.

Biblical Reference:

But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:15).

Christian Character Virtues: There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for another. Another way of putting this is “Who would you be willing to take a bullet for?” In other words, who would you sacrifice yourself for? Of course, there are smaller sacrifices as well as this ultimate sacrifice of giving one’s life. The focus virtue here is love as Aslan sacrifices himself to save Edmund’s life. Even though the sacrifice is painful, he goes through with it out of love for Edmund, even though Edmund is referred to as a traitor and has not been particularly lovable.

Biblical Reference:

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins Committed beforehand unpunished. (Romans 3:25)

CHAPTER 15: DEEPER MAGIC FROM BEFORE THE DAWN OF TIME

Christian Message: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law. He has given himself as a sacrifice once and for all for the forgiveness of sin.

This chapter tells the story of Aslan’s resurrection. The two girls, Lucy and Susan are at the stone table and when the dawn breaks they notice mice nibbling through the ropes that bind Aslan to the table. They move away from the table and then hear a loud noise. When they look around Aslan is not that the stone table is cracked down the middle into pieces. The girls wonder if the enemy has taken his body. Then they see Aslan alive with a new mane. They are frightened and think Aslan might be a ghost. Then Aslan tells them that he is alive and explains the Deeper Magic.

This is like Jesus showing himself to his disciples after his resurrection. The Old Testament Law is like the Deep Magic from the dawn of time that says innocent blood

must be shed to purchase redemption and forgiveness. The Gospel of the New Testament is the Deeper Magic. Just as the Law's power which led to death is broken and the curtain in the temple torn in two from top to bottom, so the stone table (which has the Deep Magic engraved on it) is cracked in two.

Biblical Reference:

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:36-39).

Christian Character Virtues: Love is the habit of acting selflessly, for the good of another; the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of another. The well-known example given was: *There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another.* What Aslan has to go through for Edmund shows how much he loves him.

Biblical Reference:

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).

CHAPTER 16: WHAT HAPPENED ABOUT THE STATUES

Christian Message: Jesus rescues sinners from Hell. He breaks the power of Satan and sets captives free. He gives new life and redeems us. We cannot save ourselves. However hard we try to be good, we will never be perfect and sinless and go to Heaven unless we are forgiven by God

This chapter relates to the descent of Jesus into Hell. Aslan goes to the Witch's house which is full of stone statues of creatures she has killed. These statues are symbols of death and sin. Lewis sees redemption as new life, and Aslan breathes life into the statues and restores them. One of them is Lucy's friend, Mr Tumnus. After this, Aslan joins the battle and leads the fight against the Witch.

The parallel here is what Jesus did between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, between the cross and the resurrection. He descended into Hell and preached to those who were there.

Biblical Reference:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits — to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. (1 Peter 3:18-20)

Christian Character Virtues: Peter, Edmund, Susan and Lucy and the good creatures of Narnia fight against the Witch and her army, however the final act of defeating evil is only accomplished through Christ's redemption. Human beings cannot become perfect (and sinless) on their own. Only God can do this. However good our character is, all our best efforts at cultivating virtue cannot save us. Only God can forgive sins. We need to receive salvation.

Biblical Reference:

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. (Luke 1:76-77)

CHAPTER 17: THE HUNTING OF THE WHITE STAG

Christian Message: When God breaks the power of sin human beings can take the position they were designed for and rule and reign in life.

In this final chapter it is the traitor Edmund and not his brother Peter who plays the main part in defeating the Witch. Peter acknowledges this when he says: "It was all Edmund's doing." Edmund is now doing what is right and fighting on the right side. He is no longer foolish and is now wise. He has experienced how dangerous the Witch is and he perceives that breaking her wand (her power) is the way to win the battle. It is Edmund who has the insight and sense. We read, "Edmund was a graver and quieter man than Peter, and great in counsel and judgment." After the battle Peter, Edmund, Susan and Lucy are crowned kings and queens of Narnia. They rule peacefully and grow into adult men and women until one day when following a white stag they go back through the wardrobe find themselves in England telling the Professor all about their adventure.

It is significant that the story ends with human beings (sons of Adam and daughters of Eve) as rulers. They

have taken the position they were designed for but had forfeited due to sin. Although God is the ultimate ruler, human beings under his authority are called to rule and reign in life.

Biblical Reference:

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. (Romans 13:1)

Christian Character Virtues: The Christian virtue we see here is wisdom, especially in the sense of choosing the best course of action, namely, prudence or good judgment. We read of Edmund that “he had the *sense*” which could equally be “he had the wisdom.” Common *sense* is wisdom (but it is not that common). Edmund has the good *sense* to perceive the root cause of the problem and smashes the Witch’s wand with his sword. He does this rather than making the mistake that everyone else was making and attacking the Witch rather than her weapon. This behavior is strategic and shows good judgment. It is the turning point in the battle.

Here we see Edmund as a transformed character. He risks his life and is badly wounded fighting for Narnia and Aslan. He is wise enough to change and display allegiance and loyalty to the side of good rather than evil. He is a reformed character. He is courageous and risks his life (“But nothing would stop him. He fought his way through three ogres to where she was just turning one of your leopards into a statue”).

Biblical Reference:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise. (Psalm 111:10)

My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion (Proverbs 3:21)

Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe. (Proverbs 28:26) ■

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