



**SURPRISED BY JOY:
A JOURNEY WITH C. S. LEWIS**

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

PREPARATION FOR FORGIVENESS

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis declares that Christianity tells us to repent and promises forgiveness.

If this is true, then there is a preparation that must take place before we can understand the Christian teaching on forgiveness of sin.

The problem is that we often approach God as though *He* were in the dock, as though *He* were the One needing to be judged...

Another thing we need to recognize is that only a person can forgive.

A third thing that we need to recognize is the amazing claim made by Jesus of Nazareth.

A DEFINITION OF
FORGIVENESS

There is a difference between forgiving and excusing.

Jeremiah 31:34 conveys the essential promise of forgiveness. God says, “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

**THE BASIS OF
FORGIVENESS**

Mere time does not cancel sin. Guilt is cleansed only by repentance and the blood of Christ.

A person who does not admit guilt cannot accept forgiveness. Forgiveness must be accepted as well as offered if it is to be complete.

REALLY BELIEVING IN
GOD'S
FORGIVENESS

Real belief in forgiveness very easily slips away if we don't keep working at it.

Lewis was truly speaking from personal experience.

There is a great difference between the affirmation of the intellect and that faith which is fixed in the very marrow of our bones, the faith that Hebrews calls *substance*.

Lewis reaffirms that he had been a Christian for many years before he *really* believed in the forgiveness of sins ... before his theoretical belief became reality.

What led him to say, twenty years after his conversion to Christianity, that he had, just that year, come to really believe that God had forgiven his sins?

FORGIVING OTHERS

Much of Lewis' writing focuses on the forgiveness that the Christian is obligated to give to others.

Lewis suggests that we need to start by forgiving those closest to us.

We need to lay all our old resentments down at the wounded feet of Christ.

FORGIVING OTHERS IS HARD

Being a Christian means forgiving the inexcusable, just as God has forgiven the inexcusable in us.

We need to forgive others seventy times seven not only for 490 different offenses but sometimes for only one offense.

Lewis was not speaking as an armchair theologian about forgiveness.

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Mark 11:25

THE PRACTICE OF FORGIVENESS

A sin repented and forgiven is gone, annihilated, burnt up in the fire of divine love, but there is no harm in continuing to “bewail it.”

We may also do one thing more. We may thank God that He has already forgiven us through Christ’s shed blood.

A practical aid to feeling forgiveness is the aid of confessing one’s sins to a priest.

In October 1940, Lewis decided to begin seeing an Anglican priest for weekly confession.

James 5:16– “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*”

Who would not rather live with ordinary people who get over relational disturbances quietly, letting a meal, a night’s sleep, or a joke mend everything?