

Walking through the Wardrobe



A DEVOTIONAL QUEST INTO
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

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PART ONE
Walking with Lucy



SHE'S THE YOUNGEST IN THE FAMILY BUT THE FIRST TO
FIND A WAY INTO NARNIA. FOLLOWING IN HER FOOTSTEPS
TAKES A DOSE OF CURIOSITY, A PILE OF COURAGE,
AND A WHOPPING AMOUNT OF CHILDLIKE FAITH.

ARE YOU GAME?

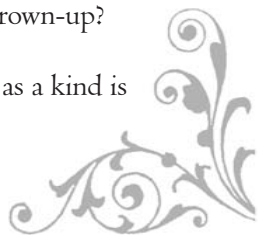


Never Too Old

YOU'VE HEARD THEIR snide comments before. Yeah, you know who I mean: those *LOTR* junkies who sneer at people for liking the Narnia stories. "Dude, Tolkien's stuff is so much *deeper* and more *complex*," they say, punctuating the comment with some quote in Elvish. And then they add, "Narnia is for *kids*."

Oh, really? Then why was it written by a grown-up?

Tolkien himself maintained, "If fairy-story as a kind is



worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults.”⁶ Lewis agreed: “It certainly is my opinion that a book worth reading only in childhood is not worth reading even then.”⁷ So if the Narnia stories meant anything to us when we were kids, they can still mean something now—possibly even more. We’re never too old.

Check out Lewis’s inscription to his goddaughter, Lucy Barfield, on the inside page of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. He indicated that at some point she’d probably grow out of the book, but then she’d grow into it again. In other words, we all go through a stage when we think we’re too cool or too grown-up for all that “kid stuff.” But then we reach a point when we’ve matured in humility enough that we can regain that sense of delight and wide-eyed wonder.

Even so, there will always be those who consider such behavior childish. In Lewis’s day, the Oxford don was surrounded by other scholars who could act very superior and snobbish when they wanted to, which was most of the time. Anything written in plain, everyday English—especially for children—was considered beneath them. In their minds, Lewis wasn’t supposed to be writing stuff

like that. He was supposed to act responsible and grown-up and write scholarly works that only smart people read. (He did that too, but that's not what he became famous for.)

Along with children's books, he also wrote stuff about the Christian faith using words that ordinary people could understand. Apparently, he wasn't supposed to be doing that either (even Tolkien was fairly annoyed with him about that, especially when Lewis dedicated *The Screwtape Letters* to him⁸). But it bothered Lewis that the theologians and ministers weren't writing about God and faith in a way that the everyday person could grasp. If the theologians didn't get their act together and write at a readable level, then who would? Lewis would, that's who. Because, he insisted, *somebody* had to.⁹

So, for his childlike attitude toward both fantasy and faith, Lewis was looked at askance by the academic community. Needless to say, it was a painful road. No wonder he could write so convincingly about Lucy's experience after her first journey to Narnia!

Of course, it's no accident that the youngest child in

the Pevensie family—the one who’s the most curious and open and willing—is the first to get into the otherworld. And as a result of her simple faith, she’s not only disbelieved by the others, but she’s picked on for insisting it’s not just a game, particularly by Edmund (who, incidentally, is trying very hard to be grown up). She’s penalized for having a childlike attitude and loses the trust of those closest to her. Yet eventually, after their adventures in Narnia have reached a peaceful conclusion, Lucy is called Queen Lucy the Valiant. Apparently, childlike faith and perseverance are attitudes Aslan honors.

They’re attitudes Jesus honors too.

Frederick Buechner writes, “When Jesus is asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, he reaches into the crowd and pulls out a child with a cheek full of bubble gum and eyes full of whatever a child’s eyes are full of and says unless you can become like that, don’t bother to ask.”¹⁰

From Jesus’ perspective, it takes the humility of a child to grasp what the Kingdom is all about. Those who think they are too grown up or cool for all that simple faith business are missing the mark. The disciples included. When a

group of parents tries to bring their children to see Jesus, the disciples shoo them away because they don't have VIP passes. But Jesus welcomes the children and says, "The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it" (Luke 18:16-17). Particularly those who are trying so hard to be grown up.

In one of his New Testament letters, the missionary Paul wrote, "When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things" (I Corinthians 13:11). Note how he didn't say, "I put away *childlike* things." There's a difference between the humble, *childlike* faith that Jesus says we must have to enter the Kingdom and the self-centered, *childish* attitudes that keep us from experiencing the wonder of what God has in store for us.

Plenty of adults are childish about their faith. There's nothing more ridiculously juvenile than people thinking they have to be grown up and serious when it comes to living the Christian life. Sure, there are times when we need to

be serious about things like worship. Passing notes about the music leader's mullet is just plain childish. But delight and awe in the presence of God—true worship—isn't. Someone with a childlike attitude can still take faith seriously without putting on a long face and shushing everyone else.

All our attempts to be grown up and cool are really just evidence of childish selfishness anyway. We don't want our pride to be hurt. We don't want to earn the disrespect of our peers. We don't want to be picked on for being shallow or simple. So we cop an attitude of cool and hope it passes for smart. But it's probably time to shake the whole "I'm too cool for that" demeanor and follow Lucy into the wardrobe. Otherwise, we'll never reach the Kingdom at all.

Entering the Kingdom requires childlike faith. What will it take for you to be a kid again?

I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven.

MATTHEW 18:3

Further In

- What attitudes, habits, or enjoyments should you hang on to from childhood, and what should you grow out of? Why?
- Why is childlikeness an important quality in the Kingdom of God?
- What are some *childish* attitudes that come between you and your ability to take delight in what God is doing in your life?
- How willing are you to be a kid again when it comes to trusting in Jesus? What holds you back?
- What are you going to do about it?

The Word on Childlike Faith

Take some time to read one or more of the following Bible passages:

ISAIAH 11:6; MATTHEW 11:25; MARK 9:36-37; ROMANS 8:15-17; 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15; 1 JOHN 3:1-2