

College Christian Study -Sunday, March 6th, 2005 -- **Mere Christianity – by C.S. Lewis**
Book III: Christian Behavior (*chapters 5-8*)

Book III contains twelve chapters which consider questions related to Christian morals.
-Chapters 5 and 6 are on sexual morality and Christian marriage.
-Chapters 7 and 8 deal with forgiveness and the “Great Sin.”

Chapter 5: Sexual Morality

The virtue of chastity never changes, but the rule of propriety does. This Christian virtue is most unpopular because in our day it seems “so contrary to our instincts.” Has our instinct gone wrong? The Christian rule concerning sexual morality never changes, but the social rules of propriety, modesty, and decency do.

Important is to make clear that the heart of Christian morality is not found in this discussion. Sins of the flesh (“animal self”) versus purely spiritual pleasures (“Diabolical self”) were considered to the lesser of two evils according to C.S. Lewis.

Mere Christianity was written in the mid-1940’s, so Lewis was claiming that this unhealthy situation regarding sex had been going on since the 20’s. But if he thought people had been “fed all day long on good solid lies” about sex then, just think about how much more we are thus fed today.

Chapter 6: Christian Marriage

Christ’s words tell us that in Christian marriage the two become one. What do you believe this means? The relationship of the Christian virtues of justice and promise keeping, related with love and marriage help to connect ideas of a deeper meaning of love. Love, as distinct from “being in love” is not merely a feeling, but a deep unity, maintained by will and strengthened by habit. Love that you see in Hollywood productions does not begin to provide the fuller sense of Christian love in marriage. It can be quite different from social beliefs. (see Matt. 19:4-6 and Mark 10:5-9)

Because of the intent of this total union, Christianity teaches that marriage is for life. Why is a “public, solemn promise” to stay together until death so easily reversed, as if divorce is a “simple readjustment of partners”? God meant for this promise made before and to Him to be kept and justified through this blessed union.

Chapter 7: Forgiveness

The Christian virtue of forgiveness is at the center of faith. Compare the ideas of loving your neighbor as your self (Matt. 22:39), including your enemy, with forgiveness to the principles of love found in I Corinthians 13:4-8. Everyone says that forgiveness is a “lovely idea”; that is until the need to do it actually becomes a reality. This idea is not to pressure the individual, but serves as a reminder of what Christianity involves.

“Forgive us our sins as we also forgive everyone who sins against us” (Luke 11:4) is central to Christianity. Jesus says that we will not be forgiven if forgiveness is not in us. God first had to forgive us for there to be any possibility of a real relationship with Him. And, because He forgave us, we must forgive others if we are to be forgiven.

Chapter 8: The Great Sin

The “great sin” is none other than the sin of pride or self-conceit, the opposite of Christian humility. It is at the root of all vices and all sin. To have a warmhearted respect for, as when saying we are “proud” of a daughter or grandson, is not the sin of pride. It depends entirely on what we do with the “feeling.” God is such that to get in touch with Him we will be “delightedly humble.” Pride can be considered a “ravaging spiritual cancer” because it hides itself so well in all other sins. Pride hides itself best in “religious” attitudes like righteous indignation or spiritual superiority. But as long as Satan has succeeded in convincing us to switch the tables with regard to sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit, we will hardly even notice the real cancer.