

A JOY OBSERVED: THE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE  
LIFE AND LITERATURE OF C.S. LEWIS

by  
Meagan Henry

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Approved by

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Advisor: Professor Beth Spencer

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Reader: Professor Charles Wilson

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Reader: Professor Debra Young

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*For my Father*

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ABSTRACT  
MEAGAN LEE HENRY: A JOY OBSERVED: THE STUDY OF TRANSFORMATION  
THROUGH THE LIFE AND LITERATURE OF C.S. LEWIS  
(Under the direction of Elizabeth Spencer)

This project attempts to tackle one of the inevitable aspects of life: transformations. The study of these transformations are written through the life and literature of C.S. Lewis, following events of his life and how those reflect in his nonfiction works. Through the thesis, I explore different areas of transformation through Lewis: coming to life (or belief), love, pain, grief—all culminating in joy. I conjecture that finding joy is the point of life's changes. The fundamental understanding of the different types of transformations, although studied through Lewis, is universal. It is this universal quality that has drawn and continues to draw readers to Lewis's work. And it is this quality that drew me to this project. I found comfort during my own changes through the wisdom Lewis freely shared in his writing and through the similarities I found in each of our own transformations. Lewis experienced the transformation of coming to life through his salvation, the transformation of love through his wife, Joy, and then the transformation of grief after losing her. But these transformations, I would claim, ultimately cultivate joy. And after all, joy is the reason for transformations. They exist so that we, like Lewis, can learn to seek and find joy throughout the circumstances of our life.

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## Introduction

*trans-form-ma-tion*

*A marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for the better*

-The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

Life is full of transformations. People strive for them, work towards them, and seek help to achieve them. Some want to transform their body shapes to become more appealing to others. Some want to transform their minds to have less anxiety. Some want to transform their bank accounts to better their financial situation. And some want to transform others to the expectations that they have set. But what about those transformations in life that are not intended? What about the transformations that are inevitable yet somehow we don't ever see coming?

These are transformations that affect more than one small superficial area of our lives. These are the transformations that shake us, that scare us, that divert from the norm, possibly changing the person-specific definition of 'norm' indefinitely. Death, for example, or even new life, can spur these transformations. Despite the life-altering magnitude of these transformations, I would point back to

the definition stated above which states that transformations are “usually for the better” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). That is the wonderful thing about these transformations: the opportunity of hope.

A remarkable depiction of the idea of transformations can be seen in the life of C.S. Lewis. His indefatigable search for knowledge has given his strongly voiced opinions logical support, as well as giving them a universal quality that few other authors have since achieved and an ability to relate to humanity that will reverberate to readers for years to come. “C.S. Lewis’s legacy as a soul physician will rival his importance as an apologist and author of the *Narnian Chronicles*” (Dorsett 6). Through his texts, this project will explore the experience of life-altering transformations, the difficulty of the transition that a transformation brings and the hope that is a hidden treasure for those who wish to seek it.

My first fascination with this author and his transformations originated last summer in another country while reading [A Grief Observed](#). This book is a collection of journals that stems from the time in Lewis’s life soon after the loss of his wife, Joy, to cancer, and the words he writes are saturated, spilling over the pages, with every emotion that follows such grief. Less than two years after losing my father, I was still learning to cope with the vast monster that is grief. Grief is like the mythical creature Hydra with many different heads that grow back two-fold every time that you attempt to cut them down. That being said, I was skeptical to read about someone else’s grief when I already had enough of my own. Thankfully, the C.S. Lewis fan inside of me defeated the skeptical cynic, and I read someone’s transformation, which in turn helped with my own.



As I read A Grief Observed, I was struck with surprise at how Lewis's words gave a voice to feelings that I thought were inexpressible. Each grief is unique, yes, but the irreplaceable comfort that *you are not the only one* reverberated in my head and my heart as I read this compilation for the very first time. I was fascinated by his unabashed declarations of anger and doubt but also his consistent reiterations of his beliefs in God, and the constant struggle between the two. Through a mere seventy-six pages, the reader witnesses a very logical intellectual be bombarded with questions and confusions, transforming him from an intellectual who studied to find his beliefs into a human being who was transformed by his beliefs through the experiences that life thrust upon him.

Originally, I intended to explore the experience of grief: what is unique, what is universal, and what it means to grieve. A Grief Observed, written as journals and compiled later, recounts the feelings that encompassed Lewis during the time of his wife's death. The assuredness he felt in what he believed is brought to question very honestly and without hesitation. For example, Lewis boldly writes, "Go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside" (6). There are some C.S. Lewis scholars who do not think highly of his published journals because it shows a bit of weakness and doubt, one that "lost his faith in God," in this intellectual who had been so adamant in his beliefs about everything from the war to Christian doctrine (Bramlett 18). Through A Grief Observed, Lewis questions his belief in God,

God's provision and care for him, and his own love for his wife. However, another Lewis scholar, Bramlett, disagrees with the skeptics and answers the doubting scholars: "The book is actually one-third grief and two-thirds recovery"(Bramlett 18).

You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by the rope over a precipice. Wouldn't you then first discover how much you really trusted it? (22)

This quote is one of the most central, descriptive of the entire book. A Grief Observed is about Lewis working through his thoughts and emotions to decide how much he really trusts the rope to which he so tightly clings. It is human nature to boast in the things and people we believe in, but those beliefs are not solidified until they have met opposition and survived. Merely declaring that one has faith in something means nothing until that faith, much like the rope Lewis mentions, has been tested and found true. Although some may see his earnest writings as weakening his previous doctrinal texts, I believe that this book only strengthens them. By reading A Grief Observed, we get a glimpse of who the real human being was behind the pen. His honest questions and doubts only strengthen the beliefs that he resolves at the end of the book. As Lewis says: "Only a real risk tests the reality of a belief" (23).

As seen through C.S. Lewis's perspective, grief is powerful. It is an emotion that asserts itself over logic and clouds reason. In order for grief to have such an influence, there must be an origin, or a fuel to the flame, that enables grief to become so powerful. The loss that preludes deep sorrow must be important enough to the griever to produce such a reaction. Before grief was able to be a transforming agent in Lewis's life, there had to be something or someone that elicited powerful feelings of love and care that would elicit powerful grief as well as a transformative experience. "For the greater the love the greater the grief, and the stronger the faith the more savagely will Satan storm its fortress" (xxvi). Therefore, love is an apparent transformation in Lewis's life that led to his transformation of grief, which then transformed his assuredness in himself and also in God.

Douglas Gresham, Joy's son from her first marriage, said this of his mother's love: "I think that Jack resisted the deep emotional attachment to my mother which he began to be aware of, largely because it was something which he mistakenly thought was alien to his nature" (xxix). A bachelor for fifty-six years, Lewis was not accustomed to the effects of love nor was he open to allowing such vulnerability into his life. Not only were there emotional hesitations on Lewis's part, there were also social hesitations. Since Joy's first marriage was unsuccessful, "...some of his friends disapproved of the union partially because of the Church's views concerning divorce" (Hurd). As Lewis was a prominent member and advocator of the Church of England, remarriage, even if he was emotionally able, seemed out of the question. The resistance to the realization

and actualization of his love, however, led to an even more powerful transformation once Lewis acted on his love for Joy.

Lewis and Joy's relationship was far from conventional. She was a fan, as were her sons, of Lewis's writings, and she wrote to him on several occasions about the content of his fiction series or his theological texts. Instead of straying from Christianity to atheism as Lewis had done years prior, Joy was raised in Judaism and found herself pulled to atheism before coming to Christianity. Her son writes, "her native intelligence did not allow her to be deceived for long by that hollow philosophy...and found herself searching for something less posturing and more real" (xxvii). Joy, like Lewis, was a seeker of knowledge. As a new believer, she discovered some of Lewis's texts about the truth of God's goodness and purity. Any questions she had, Joy wrote to Lewis, and he "noticed her letters at once, for they too signaled a remarkable mind" according to Douglas (xxviii). From here, an intellectual relationship blossomed between the two, but nothing more. During Joy's initial journey to England, she met with Lewis at the Eastgate Hotel to discuss her upcoming book, Smoke on the Mountain, and entertained Jack and his brother Warnie with her "quick wit, boundless sense of humor, and her keen intellect" (Hurd). Upon returning to America, however, Joy realized that her marriage to her present husband was over as he had fallen in love with her cousin and requested divorce. She and her sons fled to England after finalizing the divorce (Hurd).

Her son recounts their move and new residence in London. Lewis was not fond of London and never visited the Greshams there, but Joy soon found that

she did not care for London either. She moved her small family to Headington, just outside of Oxford, where her friends Kay and Austin Farrer, W.H. Lewis, and, of course, 'Jack', lived (Grief, xxix). It was not until this move that the relational lines between Joy and Lewis became more ambiguous. In the words of her son, "the relationship between Jack and Mother began to redefine itself" (Grief, xxix).

Lewis and Joy spent much time together and with their small circle of friends as well. The platonic relationship between Joy and Lewis was easy and convenient for Lewis. Their marriage even began out of convenience. The British Home Office did not renew Joy's residential permit so "Lewis generously married Joy in a civil ceremony" (Hurd). Still under the social and emotional resistances, the marriage was kept quiet, and the two maintained their platonic relationship and were spouses in title only. It was not until Joy's mortality was called into question that Lewis was able to realize and actualize his feelings for her. Joy was a victim of cancer and became hospitalized after a collapsing spell. At this time, Lewis's feelings for Joy overcame the obstacle of resistance of social perception and of the resistance that he had for love. Douglas Gresham recalls, "He was forced not merely to inward awareness of his love for her, but also to public acknowledgement of it by the sudden realization that he was about to lose her" (xxx). The couple married a year later, this time with the intention of "seal[ing] a commitment before God" and acknowledging the blossoming love between them (Hurd).

This love for Joy transformed Lewis in ways that he had not even realized until he was faced with the possibility of not having her with him. Lewis and Joy

were married as she was recovering from her chemotherapy treatments. They had four years together as man and wife. Her son Douglas remembers “they seemed to walk together within a glow of their own making” (xxiv). It is important to realize the incredible love these two possessed for each other if we are ever to understand the true transformation that his grieving her death brought to not only his character but to his faith. Lewis and Joy were welcomed intellectual challenges to each other. And the more they learned about each other, the more and stronger they loved. Lewis became captivated by every detail of his wife’s character and influence in his life. He describes his wife in A Grief Observed:

For a good wife contains so many persons in herself. What was [Joy] not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign; and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier. My mistress; but at the same time all that any man friend (and I have good ones) has ever been to me. Perhaps more. If we had never fallen in love we should have none the less been always together, and created a scandal. That’s what I meant when I praised her for her ‘masculine virtues.’ But she soon put a stop to that by asking how I’d like to be praised for my feminine ones. It was a good riposte, dear. Yet there was something of the Amazon, something of Penthesileia and Camilla. And you, as well as I, were glad it should be there. You were glad I should recognize it (48).

Lewis experienced the transformation of life through his conversion to Christianity, love through his friendship and romance with Joy, pain and grief through his loss of his beloved, and joy through the fulfillment of hope.

What I was originally missing from my initial topic of exploration was the last part of the definition of a transformation: “for the better” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language). I didn’t want to embark on a project such as this that seemed so unhopeful. But transformations aren’t unhopeful; they are very much the opposite. They are pregnant with hope. For just as such big changes may include suffering, there is also love. There is also hope. They may be slowly developed or require a painful process, but they lead to hope for learning, for new relationships and new adventures, for new stories and new experiences, and for growth. In my own experience, I found that the changes in my life, albeit usually unwelcomed, have this common strand of hope. The desire and the discipline to be thankful have developed throughout my own transformations. Friendships have been cultivated and deepened. An ability to empathize has entered in my heart. Deep and wonderful fellowships can flourish through mutual understanding and empathy of another’s past and present circumstances. Experiencing such fellowships after deep sorrow is one of the most hopeful encouragements a person can have. And my transformation of grief, though initially crippling, has become a point of strength, a motivation, and a catalyst of hope. Transformations are dynamic changes that don’t take away from the original character of a person but evolve it. As Lewis says in his article “On Three Ways of Writing for Children,” “ A tree grows because it adds rings: a

train doesn't grow by leaving one station behind and puffing on to the next" (2).

So this project is not just about grief; it is instead a project of hope as seen through the lenses of the inevitable transformations of life.



## Chapter One

*“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world”*

*-C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy*

*“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased”*

*-C. S. Lewis, Weight of Glory*

Transformative experiences are not exclusive to one area of life. They are dynamic in the sense that they are usually connected to each other, with the presence of love at the center. For instance, grief would not be a very powerful transformation if love had not first been a powerful one. The alteration that death brings can apply to actual deaths of loved ones or deaths of relationships or friendships, both experiences eliciting the tremendous transformation that is grief and both incited by the transformation of love. The transformations during times of suffering are sometimes the most powerful experiences a person can have.

They can alter the way we perceive and experience the world. However, some transformations come, not from death, but from finding life. For C.S. Lewis, finding life came through his conversion from atheism to Christianity. "Christ's work of making New Men is like...turning a horse into a winged creature...it is not mere improvement but Transformation" (Mere Christianity 216). Salvation is, through the texts of C.S. Lewis, an incredible metamorphosis that affects not only the revolutionizing of how one loves but also how one grieves. Through reading Lewis, I believe his life represents these life-altering transformations as all interconnected, and this project will attempt to explore them through the eyes of Clive Staples Lewis.

The events or people in life that are a part of our transformation are just that: only a part. How we respond to the factors in life that transform us is also an integral part of the growth that comes from such a transformation. People can be open or resistant to these changes. For instance, there are adventurous people who welcome change. They welcome the new learning experiences and do not fight them when faced with these new parts of life. C.S. Lewis, I think, can be an example of resistance in every area of transformation that I have mentioned. As a declared atheist, he of course did not welcome the idea of Christianity, the truth of it, and certainly not its affect on his life. It was something that had to be proved to him through logic and reason. Salvation was not an easy process for Lewis. And his coming to faith affected every area of his life. He also resisted his feelings of love, not marrying until he was well into his fifties. Even when faced with the transformation of true love with Joy, he resisted allowing himself to be

vulnerable to another person. And certainly, when faced with her death, Lewis resisted the reality of her leaving. Through Lewis, we see that sometimes transformations can be even more powerful through overcoming resistance.

Lewis was raised in an atmosphere that included church and religion with parents who attended church, but he does not remember it to be anything outside of the normal for an Irish family. “If aesthetic experiences were rare, religious experiences did not occur at all” (Surprised by Joy 7). And as he describes losing his mother he says that her death “divided us from our father as well as our mother” (Surprised by Joy 19). As a child with a late mother and a distant father, Lewis was understandably confused with God’s role in his life, and Lewis saw him as a wish granter and nothing more. When his wish for a whole family wasn’t granted, he abandoned his wishful thinking. “I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear” (Surprised by Joy 21). After his mother’s death, he soon found religious practices to be monotonous and unfulfilling. For example, “he said he lost his faith—turned off by boring church services and the problem of evil in the world” (Pettinger). He considered himself an atheist by his mid-teenage years after attending several different boarding schools and developing a desire for the World: “the desire for glitter, swagger, distinction, the desire to be in the know” (Surprised by Joy 68). Specifically to Lewis, his beliefs dictated his worldview. His mother died when he was only nine, and he witnessed horrors during his service in World War I. In his book Mere Christianity, Lewis states that he believed that the “universe seemed so cruel and unjust” (38). These thoughts led him further away from his

moderately Christian upbringing and formed a barrier that he had to overcome later in life when coming back to faith. It was not until his time spent serving at Oxford many years later that he encountered challenging peers and ideas that forced him to reevaluate his beliefs and embrace a true conversion to Christianity.

A scholar by every meaning of the word, Lewis had been a devoted reader since his childhood years, beginning with Beatrice Potter. His childhood love of reading continued and grew through the years as he prided himself on the mastery of the classics of literature. Ironically, the act of reading and pursuit of knowledge that he originally thought would only carry him further away from anything spiritual was the very integral tool that led to his conversion. When faced with the idea of the *Absolute*, Lewis wanted to explain the idea away with logic, but he kept finding holes in his seemingly seamless logic. He wanted Nature to be independent of observation, self-existing, but could not explain the phenomenon without “an unbelievable alternative” (Surprised by Joy 209). He then attempted to believe that one could agree to the premises of Theism without actually believing in God. He recalls, “I suspect there was some willful blindness” in his reasoning (Surprised by Joy 209). In his spiritual autobiography, Surprised by Joy, Lewis recalls realizing that his favorite authors were all declared Christians, and therein was their only fault. He says that the writings he entertained written by authors who believed in God were some of the only writings he read that were not superficial. “All the books were beginning to turn against me” (Surprised by Joy 213). Through reading apologetic writers such as

G.K. Chesterton and George MacDonald and much prodding of his good friend and fellow Oxford professor, J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis surprisingly found himself engrossed in the possibility of God's existence.

What Tolkien did was help Lewis see how the two sides, reason and imagination, could be integrated. During the two men's night conversation on the Addison Walk in the grounds of Magdalen College, Tolkien showed Lewis how the two sides could be reconciled in the gospel narratives. The Gospels had all the qualities of great human storytelling. But they portrayed a true event—God the storyteller entered his own story, in the flesh, and brought a joyous conclusion from a tragic situation. Suddenly Lewis could see that the nourishment he had always received from great myths and fantasy stories was a taste of that greatest, truest story—of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Duriez).

The likelihood of God's existence, in relation to Lewis's thought processes, led to the question of Jesus' importance and actuality in relationship to God. Each new small revelation led to a different posed theological question that forced Lewis to decide where his beliefs stood in response to the question. When recounting these experiences, Lewis warns literature-loving enthusiasts who wish to remain unconcerned with theology:

In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are

traps everywhere — "Bibles laid open, millions of surprises," as Herbert says, "fine nets and stratagems." God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous (Surprised by Joy 191).

Lewis's discovery of Christ was not instantaneous, nor was it welcomed. He had years of anti-theism that resisted every inclination to believing in God. Consequently, his coming to Christianity was not an easy one. Like clearing a car window covered in ice, it took slowly scraping and whittling little bits of his icy, arrogant demeanor away before he could see through the lens of faith to which he would tightly cling and defend for the remainder of his life. Lewis even said that he hardly knew how the final step to his beliefs was taken.

I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. "Emotional" is perhaps the last word we can apply to some of the most important events. It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake" (Surprised by Joy 237).

In Lewis's recounting of his coming to faith in the book Surprised by Joy, he presents the idea of free will and the freedom of decision making each person has in his or her conversion of beliefs.

I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice...I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out...I felt myself being, there and then, given a

free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door...meant the incalculable (Surprised by Joy 224).

Lewis's transformation lies not only in finding salvation but also in the act of deciding, or as he puts it, choosing to open the door. Any belief system including, specifically to the study of Lewis's transformations, Christianity is not happenstance, but a conscious decision of what to believe and why one would hold true to that belief.

Coming to faith, whether to a deity or a theory, changes a person, compels him to live differently, and adjusts his perspective of life's circumstances. It is a very literal transformation of thinking, feeling, and understanding life and, in Lewis's case, afterlife. How a person perceives circumstances and experiences in his life is filtered through what he believes to be the unchanging truth and stability in his life. For Lewis, this transformation of salvation led to his belief in God and then his delving into the questions that surface when the actualization of God is apparent in someone's life.

The first point to make of this transformation is that the person, as Lewis described of himself, chooses to believe what they will. When we are of sound mind, we have the ability to choose whatever theory in which we wish to believe and cling. The choice alone has an element of transformation. Choosing something to believe is a personal matter that can be influenced by others but is ultimately solely up to the one person. A person can be told by every one he

encounters that a wool coat will keep him warm in the winter, but until he chooses to wear the coat and experiences the warmth for himself, he can never truly know if the coat will keep him warm. He can listen to the advice of others when deciding whether to wear the coat, but only he can decide if the coat does in fact keep him as warm as others have described. Likewise, theistic beliefs can be advised and suggested by others. But those suggestions will be only that— suggestions—until a person chooses to experience those beliefs for himself. It is only after that initial individual experience that one can make his own sound decision about the reality or fantasy of theism.

Many people, Lewis included, follow the belief system instilled by their parents or elders, easily accepting it as truth and never questioning. However, also like Lewis, when we get to the age of reasoning, we are able to intelligently question what we believe and why we believe it. For whatever reason, at some point, a person will be faced with something that forces him or her to reevaluate the reasoning behind a belief system. Whether that belief system is Christianity, atheism, or anything in between, life has a way of challenging our convictions and our way of thinking. It is during this reevaluation that true transformation can occur. If we are to delve into reasons we believe what we believe, there is likely to be a transformation of beliefs, either strengthening our original beliefs or weakening and changing them.

It is a notable point to make that Lewis's coming to faith triggered an even more powerful transformation because of his determined refusal to acknowledge the presence of God or any kind of theism. The transformation was not that of an



individual not well informed of salvation, but one who knew the reasoning behind having faith and formed his oppositional logic accordingly.

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words “compelle intrare,” compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation (Surprised by Joy 228-229).

Lewis's resistance to salvation made his transformation all the more powerful by posing as a very formidable obstacle to the future of his spiritual experiences.

“My Adversary began to make His final moves,” Lewis says of his being pursued by Christ. “I had always wanted, above all things, not to be ‘interfered with.’ I had

wanted 'to call my soul my own.' I had been far more anxious to avoid suffering than achieve delight" (Surprised by Joy 228). The transformative power of Lewis's God is evident already, changing his desires slowly yet surely. A self-important scholar was being earnestly pursued; and instead of building his already extensive ego, it was humbling him. He describes his coming to faith as God calling and searching him out, not the other way around. What a beautiful picture. The Shepherd looking for the lost lamb. The Father waiting with open arms for his prodigal son's return. "God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that he may love and perfect them" (The Four Loves 176). Being loved and pursued is transformative in itself. To have another person surrender their high place and lower himself to search us out is the desire of many, whether the desire is voiced or suppressed. For Lewis, one who had rarely experienced such love or humility shown for him by another in his life, this was a powerful realization. For one of the first times in his life, he was pursued relationally. And this began to chisel his arrogant countenance away slowly, revealing a character of humility, of vulnerability, and of honesty beneath its previously ragged, cold surface.

Lewis then had the ability to make the decision of where he would place his faith and his spiritual future. He had to employ something that he rarely did with other people, trust. His world of reason and logic was rocked by the possibility of relationship and love. Just as one must chose to invest in a relationship with another person, Lewis too had to chose whether to accept this novel, theological idea of a relationship with Christ rather than simply research

facts as he was accustomed to doing in his role of scholar and teacher. Being pursued and returning that pursuit constitutes an even stronger maturation because it includes the conversion of thinking, the choice to change the direction of our lives to a different pursuit that leads to the decision of what or in whom to believe. And it is this conscious decision that a person makes that continues the transformation of being pursued.

If we are to approach this transformation through the eyes of C.S. Lewis, then for this paper we will, as he did, accept the realness of God and the identity of Jesus Christ. The decision to believe whether or not God exists influences how we perceive the world—the creation of the world, morality of people, and our interactions with other people. This decision affects how we act towards others, how we handle situations, and how we deal with the difficulties that life has to offer; for the Bible has a plethora of commentaries on each of these instances. The belief in his existence, however, poses the questions of his goodness and his activeness in our lives. We will address this later on, but the point is that, according to Lewis, our acceptance of this theory of Christ will transform our way of thinking, not only about each other, but also about spirituality. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The transformation of salvation is multifaceted and branched, constantly leading to new transformations of thinking.

Christianity is, in itself, a religion centered around the idea of transformation. In Lewis’s words, “God became man to turn creatures into sons:

not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man” (Mere Christianity 216). In line with Lewis’s idea of salvation, it is the act of God, in his mercy, transforming our sinful natures to his holy nature. It is a process of transforming identity. We, as Lewis does through his recounts of his journey to Christianity, first must realize who we are without Christ in order to appreciate or even want anything to do with God. Lewis says, “For the first time I examined myself with a seriously practical purpose. And there I found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion” (Surprised by Joy 226).

He points to common human downfalls and does so unashamedly. The power of his statements derives from his honesty-- honesty about not only his thoughts and emotions but everyone’s innate nature towards lusts, ambitions, fears, and hatreds. And that honesty translates Lewis’s written thoughts to something relatable to his readers. His power of writing lies in his ability to relate his experiences to others. It is not until his conversion that the importance of relating experiences comes to his attention. Although he still wrote with much authority on the subjects of theology and Christ, his honesty represents a sliver of vulnerability. It is this vulnerability that allows me to read and understand such a brilliant scholar; and it is this vulnerability that has drawn me to Lewis’s work because his vulnerability has spurred my own.

Lewis had to first come to terms with who he was without Christ to realize what it means to have Christ in order to begin this transformation of salvation. It was only then that he saw his own brokenness and need. It is during these times

of life, according to Lewis, that God intervenes and calls us to be one of his own. And it is then that Lewis could be transformed from sinner to saint, from empty to full, from despairing to hopeful. “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). By finding faith and finding that faith in Christianity, Lewis not only transformed his perception of identity but also his perception of life around him. What and in whom Lewis believed began to affect all other areas of transformation in his life. For Lewis, it transformed his work; he began exploring theology and the different facets of a relationship with God instead of merely focusing on the syntax and literature in which he had so long invested. To Lewis, “to know God is to know that our obedience is due Him. In His nature His sovereignty *de jure* is revealed” (Surprised by Joy 232). It transformed the way he perceived and loved others. As he writes in Mere Christianity, “It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit” (xix). It transformed his identity. A true coming to faith changes someone and permeates every area of his life, influencing all other experiences he may encounter. The ability to experience love, to endure hardship, and to find joy stems from the transformation of belief and, for this project, Lewis’s belief in God.

Through this book, Lewis slowly and carefully writes the reasoning behind believing in Christianity. This is an interesting approach when compared to his conversion of faith. Lewis’s transformation of beliefs was a slow process, preceded with much thought, debating, and divine interference. It is also interesting to note the mechanical way Lewis writes his apologetic for

Christianity. His points made in Mere Christianity are very insightful and have spoken volumes to his readers for decades. The faith that he writes about has been logically proven, examined, and explained; however, it had not been tested. This does not mean that Lewis had not truly encountered a conversion; his powerful image of the “reluctant convert” makes his conversion all the more believable. This conversion was something that was difficult for him to accept, something that he wrestled with, and something that made a noticeable impact in his daily life.

The way that he describes the reason for salvation in Mere Christianity is beautiful, yet it is very obviously written from the perspective of the scholar Lewis and not simply coming from the mouth of a reluctant convert overwhelmed by the presence of Christ. His conversion was a powerful transformation in the sense that it forced Lewis to admit his failures, his weaknesses, and his inability to fix those. It did, however, allow Lewis to remain Lewis—an authoritative voice, knowledgeable in all of his areas of interest. He continued to be the scholar he had always been, only now focusing in theology and biblical claims. He recognized his position in relation to the Christ in which he said he believed, but in other areas of academia and friendship, Lewis continued to have an authoritative position and voice. His conversion transformed his focus of study, his logic, and his beliefs. It did not quite alter his approach to ideas or to emotions. Though he was sanctified by his beliefs, his continual life transformation after accepting Christ and finding life was not yet complete. For one cannot begin to understand Lewis’s transformation without the aspect of Joy.

## Chapter Two

*“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

*-C.S. Lewis, Problem of Pain*

The transformation of salvation, of renewing or coming to faith, as I stated earlier, has the potential to affect every other transformation a person will encounter during his or her lifetime. The beliefs and convictions a person holds can filter his or her perception of love, trials, grief and joy. Metamorphoses such as these influence our thoughts and our feelings. If we are to study changes such as these through C.S. Lewis, then we shall accept his premise of salvation through Christ and see how this acceptance affects the different transformations of his life. For instance, during trials, a person who has experienced and believed in God is challenged with perceiving the trial in a way that Christ would and reacting in accordance with his or her beliefs. According to Lewis, once we have transformed our spiritual minds in accepting Christ, we must acknowledge the idea that God is using trials in our lives, and that must factor into our feelings and our actions during a time of hardship. Many, if any, do not readily welcome this

element of relationship with Christ. What person wants to suffer? Humans are not, as a general rule, masochists searching for painful or tiresome tasks. And people, more specifically, who have believed, as Lewis did, in the truth of Christ, readily accept the peace and rest that he promises while disregarding the coexisting promises of trials. I can say, in an effort to emulate some of Lewis's vulnerability, I once associated trials with people who brought them upon themselves. Having not experienced much hardship at the time of my spiritual birth, I had no reason to focus on the promised trials. They were non-existent for me. I believe that Lewis believed himself to be in the opposite category from my kind. With his mother's early death and multiple school moves during his childhood, Lewis experienced hardship and therefore had the authority to write about it. In The Problem of Pain, he encourages his readers to see trials as an opportunity for growth, for improvement, and as another step in their relationship with Christ. Although he cannot explain wholly the reason for pain and suffering, he does defend its justification in the world as an ability to hope in Christ. For example, Job 13:15 says, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." Trials force us to answer, as Lewis did, questions to ourselves of God's goodness, mercy, and omnipotence.

Trials also force us to question what we believe by interrupting our routine and calling attention to imperfections in our life. Lewis makes the declaration that if one is to be transformed by the experience of Christianity, he or she must stop overlooking the scriptural text that says we are 'made perfect through suffering' (Hebrews 10:2). One must realize that the transformation of salvation has a



disclaimer: In order to fully experience that transformation of coming to faith, tribulation is imminent. Lewis says in The Problem of Pain, “If tribulation is a necessary element in redemption, we must anticipate that it will never cease until God sees the world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable” (114). In other words, the transformation of faith should change the way we perceive and act during hardships. In this text, Lewis does not argue “pain is not painful.” “Pain hurts,” he says. “That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design” (The Problem of Pain 105).

In following the delineation of Lewis’s theology, the coming to life through salvation cannot not be fully experienced until it has been coupled with the challenge of trials. His texts on the topic of pain do not support the idea that pain is easy, enjoyable, or desired. They are apologetics attempting to understand the reality of pain and why God allows it. He authoritatively defends the reasoning of why a good God allows trials and suffering and even why a believer in Christianity should embrace the suffering as a form of growth—spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. For, according to Lewis, in our faith, we agree to trials.

Prior to losing his wife, Lewis had experienced much hardship. His mother died when he was not yet ten years old. He endured having an emotionally distant father throughout his younger years, and he lost one of his closest friends while serving in World War I. Lewis was no stranger to pain when he wrote a book about the benefits of undergoing hardship, and he used those experiences to defend his apologetic about suffering and its transformative

nature when paired with salvation in Christ. If we are to believe that the saving love of Christ is transforming, then what does that process of transforming look like in our lives? What does it mean to be, as Romans 8:29 says, “fashioned in the likeness of the image of God’s Son”? Lewis answers this in The Problem of Pain; “We are, not metaphorically but in very truth, a Divine work of art, something that God is making, and therefore something with which He will not be satisfied until it has a certain character” (The Problem of Pain 34). Through Lewis’s texts, it seems that the problem that pain presents is this: We believe God to be a loving and saving God, but we can’t reason how he would allow pain and suffering into our world if he could help it. Since the scriptures claim his omnipotence, it is widely accepted that Christ could intervene when we are faced with pain. And if this omnipotent characteristic is not assumed, then he is not God.

This ties back into the transformation of faith, to realizing who God is personally and what that implies to one’s daily life. Establishing this is an integral part of the transformation of trials, Lewis claims. Pain poses the problem of our original acceptance of God as good and loving. “In a sense, it creates, rather than solves, the problem of pain, for pain would be no problem unless, side by side with our daily experience of this painful world, we had received what we think a good assurance that ultimate reality is righteous and loving” (The Problem of Pain 14). Pain transforms our thoughts about God, who he is, and how his identity fits in to our trials.

If we have truly been transformed by the salvation that Lewis logically reasoned, then we have realized that alone, we were previously slaves to a sinful nature, living in resistance to our original design. Trials, according to Lewis, are meant to open our eyes to our own insufficiency and to refocus our eyes to Christ. “If the first and lowest operation of pain shatters the illusion that all is well, the second shatters the illusion that what we have, whether good or bad in itself, is our own and enough for us” (The Problem of Pain 94). What we learn from the spirituality that Lewis so much esteemed is that our happiness should be found in Christ and that he works for the good of those that love him. If we are to believe the premise that God only works for our good then we also must come to terms that pain, in some way, must be meant for our good. The problem of pain seems to be enhanced by the thought that our spiritual transformation cannot actually be complete until we undergo a trial that forces us to determine our ability to trust the faith we say we so ardently believe when everything is not going our way.

But why is it that pain is necessary for deciding where our spiritual loyalties lie? Lewis’s take is that we, who only “know in part,” cannot see the whole picture of God’s character and thus cannot explain pain away (1 Corinthians 13:9). “Let me implore the reader to try to believe, if only for the moment, that God, who made these deserving people, may really be right when He thinks that their modest prosperity and the happiness of their children are not enough to make them blessed” (The Problem of Pain 95). One part of the transformation that pain initiates is a realization of what we have and where our happiness lies. Our theory of our own self-sufficiency must be shattered before

we can fully enjoy the happiness that is only found in Christ. Therefore, the transformation of faith and the experience of trials are not mutually exclusive events. It is a continuation of the transformation of faith—our being molded to the likeness of Christ. Trials serve as a refocusing of the faith that has transformed us.

The sacrifice of Christ is repeated, or re-echoed, among His followers in very varying degrees, from the cruelest martyrdom down to a self-submission of intention whose outward signs have nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary fruits of temperance and ‘sweet reasonableness” (The Problem of Pain 104).

Suffering is a way to refine our transformation of faith, to strengthen it, and to make it “more precious than gold” (1 Peter 1:7).

Trials also facilitate personal growth as well as spiritual. They provide opportunities to learn to handle difficulty, to deepen friendships and support systems, and to help prioritize what is most important. It is true that we learn through trials that we cannot function on our own, but we also are able to find ways to survive through the suffering. Trials help us discover where we put our trust and refine our desires or the control over desires. “The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God” (The Problem of Pain 116). We learn that when we encounter earth-shattering pain—mental, physical, or emotional—our earth is actually still intact. We learn, according to Lewis, how to function without everything perfectly in place and how to depend more firmly our transformed faith.

It is interesting to note the contrast of opinion between Lewis's two books; The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed. The Problem of Pain is a scholarly attempt at explaining the reason for suffering, while A Grief Observed is an unabashed broken man's thoughts on how to survive his own suffering. Lewis wrote The Problem of Pain in 1940, just over twenty years before Joy Davidman lost her battle with cancer, while A Grief Observed is a collection of Lewis's journal entries during his experiences of intense anguish about his wife's passing. The contrast between the two lies in the differences between his theories about pain and then his actual experience with the strongest pain he ever had to face.

I believe that relationships deepen between people going through trials together. Certainly Joy's son, Douglas, experienced this with Lewis. At the time of Joy's passing and his return home from school, Douglas recounts, "I burst into tears, and so did he. There were no words of commiseration, it was just agony shared" (Matsumoto). Adversity forms a strong connection of empathy and encouragement that can only cultivate during times of difficulty. A shoulder of a friend to one in need of an embrace can say more than any words ever could. "Trials are people's wake up call that they cannot do life on their own" (Koster).

We learn what is important to us once something treasured is lost and how to live according to our newly found priorities. In Lewis's interpretation, times of pain can help us appreciate the transformation of faith that Christianity gives by reminding us that the promise of our faith is that all the pain and grief will be taken away and conquered by Christ. Trials solidify our perspective of Christ's

goodness and our ability to trust the God in whom we believe. They influence our relationships with others, especially those suffering along side of us and supporting us, deepening and strengthening them in ways we could have never expected. Our maturity experiences growth as we witness our ability to function under duress and discover our true priorities. Trials transform our view of God and his own suffering for us, our relationship with Christ, and are meant, as Lewis writes, to draw us closer to the faith that has originally transformed our spirituality.

You would like to know how I behave when I am experiencing pain, not writing books about it. You need not guess, for I will tell you; I am a great coward...But what is that to the purpose? When I think of pain—of anxiety that gnaws like fire and loneliness that spreads out like a desert, and the heartbreaking routine of monotonous misery, or again of dull aches that blacken our whole landscape or sudden nauseating pains that knock a man's heart out at one blow, of pains that seem already intolerable and then are suddenly increased, of infuriating scorpion-stinging pains that startle into maniacal movement of man who seemed half dead with his previous tortures—it quite o'ercrows my spirit. If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it...I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made

'perfect through suffering' is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design (The Problem of Pain 104-105).

An interesting point of observation we can make about Lewis's life and his ability to live out his theory of 'joy in suffering' is the comparison between his thoughts on suffering before and after the death of his wife, Joy Davidman. The Problem of Pain was written twelve years prior to Lewis even meeting his future wife. While he had plenty of experience with hardships, his life with and loss of Joy topped them all. A Grief Observed, Lewis's journals turned into a book, was written after Joy's death and during Lewis's grief. His authority on suffering originally found in The Problem of Pain is absent in A Grief Observed, which calls into question the whole idea of authority. I believe that is what suffering does; it calls into question authority—authority of God's sovereignty to allow such suffering, authority of our opinions on how suffering should be handled, and authority of anything claiming stability in a world of pain. However, I think that the comparison between the two books and thought processes of Lewis represents two distinct periods for him. The Problem of Pain is an abstract idea versus the lived experience in A Grief Observed. These two books are representative of Lewis's faith in very specific times of his life, and they both prove a very real example of transformation through suffering and, very specifically, grief.

As described above, their love was incredibly unique. It moved from acquaintance status to a respectful friendship to marriage to love. But also, as with the transformation of faith, Lewis did not realize his full transformation of love until he was faced with suffering. There is an undeniable link among them

all. His transformation of suffering with Joy would not have been so powerful had he not loved and cared for her powerfully.



## Chapter Three

*“The human loves can be glorious images of Divine love.”*

*-C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

*“Human beings can’t make one another really happy for long...You cannot love a fellow creature till you love God...No natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God’s hand is on the rein.”*

*-C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce*

Lewis lived comfortably with his same authoritative voice after his initial conversion experience in 1931. He wrote pieces that were highly influential on Christian culture such as Mere Christianity, The Screwtape Letters, and The Problem of Pain. He even delved into writing for children in 1951 when the first of a classic series was published: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. As he garnered acclaim for his insightful, challenging, and encouraging messages, his popularity spread outside of the realm of Great Britain and into the American home of a fledgling Christian woman named Joy Davidman Gresham.

Joy, like Lewis, was born into a religious home but turned away from religious ideals at a young age. Born into a middle-class Jewish home, Joy was

able to escape the traumas of The Great Depression and was able to attend college where she focused in American and British literature, philosophy, and history. “Although she was advantaged, a series of experiences during the depression made such an indelible impression on her that she could not sustain her belief in capitalism and the American Dream” (Allego). A few years later, Joy Davidman joined forces with the Communist Party and met her husband, William Gresham, soon after. Although her participation with Communist activity was less than she originally intended, she later claimed that the only valid reason for the Party’s presence in America was for being “a great matchmaker” (Dorsett). Joy and Bill soon left the Party and had two sons together after their marriage in 1942 (Allego).

Joy was not known for sticking to the status quo or for following the expected. She graduated from a “demanding high school at age fourteen,” finished with “an English major and French minor with honors at nineteen,” and “earned a master’s degree from Columbia in only three semesters” following her graduation from Hunter’s College (Dorsett). A fellow Hunter College graduate said of Joy: “Though ladylike, cultivated, and soft-spoken, she liked to jolt others by her nonconformity” (Kaufman). Joy was a literary buff long before “Jack,” as he was lovingly called by friends and family, entered into her life. She was not only well read, but also a talented writer. She had published poems and novels and even wrote for MGM studios. Her political beliefs and societal opinions molded much of her literature.

Whether she challenges class hierarchies, denounces General Francisco Franco and honors freedom fighters opposing his regime, or probes relationships between men and women, Davidman doggedly faces serious issues and gives her readers much to ponder as they faced (and still face) economic and gender issues in attempting to create a better world (Allego).

She, like Lewis alluded to, was an atheist that fell into the “traps” of reading. Ironically, it was Lewis’s writing that played a major factor into Joy’s own experience of salvation. Her marriage to Gresham was falling apart slowly as he was described as “an alcoholic and abusive husband” (Smith). With nowhere to turn for support or strength, she began to turn to religion, more specifically Christianity, and in doing so, she began reading Lewis’s apologetics. Joy had always been one to excel, excelling in school, arts, and writing. Therefore, her marriage, weak and failing, posed a problem to her ability to excel, one to which she was not in any way accustomed. “Better educated and more intelligent than most people, well published and highly respected for a person only thirty years old, Joy had seldom, if ever, seriously entertained weakness or failure” (Dorsett). The continual absence and abuse from Bill, however, forced the possibility of weakness and even failure. “C.S. Lewis once remarked that ‘every story of conversion is a story of blessed defeat,’” a quote that would resonate with a defeated Joy Davidman. Similar to Lewis, her recognition of God and her character as the “reluctant convert” is represented in her essay “The Longest Way Round:

For the first time in my life I felt helpless; for the first time my pride was forced to admit that I was not, after all ‘the master of my own fate’ and ‘the captain of my soul.’ All my defenses—the walls of arrogance and cocksureness and self-love behind which I hid from God—went down momentarily. And God came in.

She relied on Lewis’s own spiritual experiences written in his books to help guide her own fledgling spirituality. And it was then that Joy began correspondence with the acclaimed writer. According to the movie *Shadowlands*, written about Jack and Joy’s relationship, C.S. Lewis received much fan mail that he attempted to reply to so her letters to Lewis would not have been considered out of the ordinary. She did, however, catch his attention in one of her letters when “she asked a critical question that touched a chord in an extremely brilliant man: ‘Would you rather be a child caught in the spell or the magician casting it’” (Smith). Joy’s son, Douglas, recalls this attention from Lewis as well, “Jack noticed her letters at once, for they too signaled a remarkable mind, and a pen-friendship soon developed” (Grief xxviii).

Joy visited England two years later with the intention of meeting the man that had so much influence on her Christian and literary life and to discuss her developing book, Smoke on the Mountains, about the Ten Commandments. The two met at the Eastgate Hotel in Oxford, England; and from there, Lewis invited her to dine with him at Magdalen College (Hurd). Both Lewis and his brother Warnie enjoyed Joy and she them. However, the utopia that Joy experienced in Oxford was only brief as she returned home to find an unfaithful husband and a

broken marriage. Following her husband's recommendation, William and Joy filed for divorce; she and her two sons retreated to England (Hurd).

Much to my own romantic dismay, Joy did not flee to England for the sole purpose of being nearer to Lewis. In fact, Douglas Gresham recounts, "We lived for a while in London, and although letters were exchanged, Jack was not a visitor to our home, he rarely came to London, which was a city he was not fond of, and Mother and he were merely intellectual friends at this time" (Grief xxix). Douglas states that their family's move from London to Headington, just outside of Oxford, was due to his mother's desire to be closer to her friends, once again, not solely for Jack. However, Douglas also states that during this time in Headington, many friends visited their house and found it the setting of many intellectual conversations. "It was also during this time that the relationship between Jack and Mother [Joy] began to redefine itself" (Grief xxix).

During this time of flourishing and friendship for the small Gresham family, there was a small hitch in their plans. The British Home Office rejected Joy's application for a renewal on her residential permit, and they were soon to be forced out of the country (Hurd). However, Lewis, relinquishing his bachelor status, stepped in to save the day, and "married her in name only, to give her and her two sons nationality" (Kaufman). The two were wed in a civil ceremony on April 23, 1956 (Hurd). Here it is important to point out that Lewis had yet to relinquish his tight grip on his emotions. The marriage was in title only, and Lewis fully intended to keep his friendship with Joy intact and expected no change in the norm. Lewis still held his aforementioned authoritative voice through his

writings and his lectures, after his conversion and even after befriending the fiery Yankee. Throughout their friendship, however, Lewis found Joy as a challenge, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. In the movie *Shadowlands*, Joy criticizes Jack on his tendency to only befriend people to whom he felt superior in intelligence and wit. Douglas Gresham's quote about his mother supports this film scene in his introduction to *A Grief Observed*:

Joy Gresham was perhaps the only woman whom Jack ever met who was his intellectual equal and also as well-read and widely educated as he was himself. They shared another common fact: they were both possessed of total recall. Jack never forgot anything he had read, and neither did she (Grief xxii).

She challenged him through their friendship, long before any romantic feelings were expressed. However, I believe that it is through this challenging that those romantic feelings began to surface.

Joy had been plagued with small health problems throughout her life; however, only a few months after the two friends' civil marriage, the ailments became significantly more drastic. Joy was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given only a short time left to live. And here, in the face of adversity, in the face of potentially losing her, Lewis realized that he loved her. And it was here that he began to be transformed by his love for Joy, transformed into a man who did not have all of the answers or all of the authority, into vulnerability. The more the resistance, the more powerful the transformation. Her son Douglas recounts this

point of change for Lewis, how he resisted the change and how his love for her ultimately destroyed his resistance:

I think that Jack resisted the deep emotional attachment to my mother which he began to be aware of, largely because it was something he mistakenly thought was alien to his nature. Their friendship on a platonic level was convenient and caused no ripples on the placid surface of his existence. However, he was forced not merely to inward awareness of his love for her, but also to public acknowledgement of it by the sudden realization that he was about to lose her. (Grief xxx).

“Once when I had remarked on the affection quite often found between cat and dog, my friend replied, ‘Yes. But I bet no dog would ever confess it to the other dogs’ (The Four Loves 42). This can directly correlate to Lewis’s initial outlook on his relationship with Joy. An American, Jewish-born divorcee, Joy did not represent the ideal picture of an Anglican Christian woman to many of the British members of the church, including many of Lewis’s friends and coworkers. “In the mind of many of C.S. Lewis’s friends, it was bad enough that a bachelor nearly sixty years old married a woman of forty. But to make matters worse, she was an American divorcee who also happened to be Jewish and the mother of two boys” (Dorsett). Thus he was not vocal about his first marriage to Joy. He and she both saw the union as expedient. And then the cancer developed. One of the ways we discover what is most important to us when it is threatened. The

loss is as powerful, if not more, than the possession. It was only after the threat of losing Joy did Lewis realize his attachment to her. And “it was only after she contracted cancer that their real marriage took place in a hospital in Oxford, where Joy lay dying” (Kaufman). A priest who was friends with Lewis at the time agreed to marry the two so that theirs would be a “commitment before God” (Hurd). With Joy potentially on her deathbed, Lewis surrendered his pride and submitted to his emotions. Being friends with Joy challenged him; being in love with Joy changed him.

Lewis began to “lead the life of a hospital orderly” (Griffin 358). The announced marriage allowed Joy to move into Lewis’s home at The Kilns without speculation or nasty rumors. Taking care of her two boys and Joy’s increasingly worsening condition, Lewis continued to pray for his wife’s healing. And caring increased feelings. Joy’s feelings for Lewis were present long before his emerged. Perhaps love was transformative for her as well. Being cared for by her beloved perhaps gave her motivation to continue the fight for her health. “Joy may have been dying...but she certainly looked at peace. That was because she was in love” (Griffin 359). She defied the doctors’ terminal sentence, miraculously recovered, and went into remission. “The improvement in my wife’s condition,” Lewis wrote, is, in the proper use of the word, miraculous” (Griffin 362).

The newlyweds shared a honeymoon in Wales upon her improvement and three years of marriage together. “Joy and Jack were like two school-aged youth who were cutting up and having a wonderful time. The reality that Joy had brought great happiness to Jack became evident by what he wrote to one friend:



'It's funny having at 59 the sort of happiness most men have in their twenties...Thou has kept the good wine till now" (Dorsett). Lewis embraced his new life with Joy, the changes to his character by letting another into his heart, and the implications of what her failing health meant. "Appreciative love gazes and holds its breath and is silent, rejoices that such a wonder should exist even if not for him, will not be wholly dejected by losing her, would rather have it so than never to have seen her at all" (The Four Loves 33).

He even determined himself to write a book to radio broadcast about love. In 1958, two years after his marriage to Joy, Lewis released a series called The Four Loves, a subject he was not previously knowledgeable enough to explain authoritatively as he had done in his previous books. Lewis might have written The Four Loves without Joy as his wife, but it would have been much less profound and certainly more theoretical than experiential. Though this piece of literature maintains his authoritative voice, it allows the reader more insight into Lewis's emotions in ways the other books and public works, I would argue, did not. He writes about the *eros* type of love, and says that were a lover to be asked what he wanted, he would not respond with simply a sexual desire, but by saying "I want to go on thinking about her" (Griffin 366). Through this book that he wrote during his true marriage to Joy, the reader can see traces of her, traces of their story, and traces of how Lewis feels about his bride throughout the explanation of the four different types of loves.

*Storge* means affection, the sort of love there ought to be between relations. *Philia* means friendship. *Eros* is, of course, the love

between the sexes. And *agape* is love in the Christian sense, God's love for man and the Christian love for the brethren (Griffin 364).

It is a valid point to make that Lewis did not attempt to tackle this topic of love until he had experienced all four, until Joy made that possible. Following typical unconventional Joy fashion, Lewis proceeded through these different loves with Joy unconventionally, but nonetheless powerfully. "It began in Agape, proceeded to Philia, then became pity, and only after that, Eros. As if the highest of these, Agape, had successfully undergone the sweet humiliations of an incarnation" (Griffin 360). Love transforms the way that we see other people, and for Lewis, that's exactly what happened. The happiness that had eluded Jack in his younger years and Joy in her first marriage culminated in their time as man and wife. "Lewis admitted that when she and the boys came into his life it was extremely difficult for an aging bachelor to have an instant family in his house. But the result was that both he and Warren were forced outside of themselves and this was precisely what these self-centered bachelors needed" (Dorsett).

The presence of Joy and, as a result, strong love in Lewis's life did not detract from his relationship with Christ. On the contrary, his experience of loving Joy helped symbolize his love and spiritual kinship with God. According to the Bible, we were given marriage as a gift to emulate a fraction of Christ's love for us. He writes in his journals in *A Grief Observed*, documenting his battle of intense grief and intense love after Joy's death: "In that respect, loving her has become, in its measure, like loving Him" (66).

All natural affections...can become rivals to spiritual love: but they can also be preparatory imitations of it, training (so to speak) of the spiritual muscles which Grace may later put to a higher service; as women nurse dolls in childhood and later nurse children (The Four Loves 41-42).

As I made the bold claim that all the other transformations in life stem from the initial transformation of belief. What or whom we believe in, or if we believe in anything, is integral to the decisions we make and the paths that we choose. For Lewis, the experience of salvation changed his work, his interests, and his hope. For Joy, converting to Christianity changed her lifestyle, her marriage, and her literature, both writing and reading. Lewis's conversion helped to spur Joy's, and Joy's helped to challenge Lewis. And their love for each other transformed their perception of love with Christ in a way that neither had before experienced. Without the connection of their salvation, that love might have never been cultivated. Loving and being loved have transformative capabilities for all of us, and it is evident through Lewis's experiences and writings following those experiences that he felt the repercussions of those transformations. Yet, his transformation was still incomplete.

## Chapter Four

*The most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant—in a word, real. Is all that work to be undone? Is what I shall still call [Joy] to sink back horribly into being not much more than one of my old bachelor pipedreams? Oh my dear, my dear, come back for one moment and drive that miserable phantom away. Oh God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it?*

*-C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed*

Grief, as a branch of trials, has its own unique degree of transforming ability, and we are able to see that written in Lewis's journals. We can also see his own reaction to grief and how he feels about times of hardship before and after the greatest catastrophe of his life.

The same man who wrote, "God is Goodness. He can give good, but cannot need or get it. In that sense all His love is, as it were, bottomlessly selfless by very definition; it has everything to give and nothing to receive," also wrote "Go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and

what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting on the inside”(Problem of Pain 43, A Grief Observed 6). This drastic change in perception was caused by the death of his beloved, Joy. A Grief Observed is the emotional depiction of how Lewis worked out the latter sentiment. “Jack’s problem was that when his prayers of grief were not answered immediately, he believed God to be cruel and unjust” (Bramlett 18-19). And here we finally see Lewis not just in his brilliance, but also in his humanity.

Lewis first describes the sensation of fear that grief brings. “The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing,” he says (3). There is an emptiness, a draining, a dread, that is hard to describe. It is the feeling of being afraid without actually being scared of anything. Lewis also says that he had never heard of the laziness of grief. He describes how he wants to do nothing at all. That even reading is “too much.” Perhaps the influx of emotions changes one to numbness, and in turn the numbness obstructs any motivation for more.

Lewis does not turn from God, which I think is a very important point to make. This book is not about an intelligent man strong in his faith who becomes broken and loses his belief in God. Many people when faced with various trials have a tendency to renounce the faith that was once so strong. Lewis doesn’t do this. This book very much discusses God and the reality of Lewis’s faith. He does, however, question God. Lewis readily voices his doubts and unsettling thoughts about God and his care for his children.

In A Grief Observed, Lewis poses this question: “Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?” (6). Lewis compares this thought to how Christ felt on the cross. In the book of Matthew, Jesus cries out and asks why God has forsaken him. However, the knowledge of the similarity does not make the fact any easier to accept. Lewis continues to wade through these confusing thoughts, not of rejecting God, but of wondering what to believe about Him and how it pertains to his experience with his grief over Joy. He struggled with believing in the goodness of God because he felt that God had abandoned him when in fact he most needed him. Perhaps the influx of such grief clouds one’s visions from even previous undisputed truths. Perhaps it exacerbates some anxiety buried beneath something that we only think we believe. His questions are not unreasonable ones. “Oh God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it?” (19). Joy went in and out of remission and had occasional success with her treatment when the cancer was not in remission. From reading his journal writings in A Grief Observed, Lewis seems to feel almost tricked. He questions why he and Joy were ever given the opportunity to hope when it would only be snatched away in the relatively short time of their four-year marriage.

Until something challenges what someone believes, one never fully understands how much he or she believes it. After Lewis discovered faith and pursued his relationship with Christ and the theology that applies to such a relationship, he was not intensely challenged with what he believed but very

openly discussed his beliefs with others. He wrote with authority about the truth of God, the goodness of God, and the love of God. But it is not until authority has withstood challenges that it can have true resonance. Lewis renounces his authority on the subject by realizing he didn't trust 'the rope' as much as he originally thought. "I thought I trusted the rope until it mattered to me whether it would bear me. Now it matters, and I find I didn't" (37). What a powerful sentiment. The authority in Lewis's voice has been replaced with humility. And what a scary place that must be, to begin to question everything that he once professed without repose. To me, the most powerful transformation Lewis had to his readers was not his questioning of faith but the fact that he did question. It humanized him, from this figure of authority and of divine knowledge to someone broken in need of healing. And that is something that can resonate with those who share his faith and even those who do not; it is universal. It is this resonance, the translation of a brilliant scholar to an ordinary person, which bequeaths the comforting feeling of not being the only one. This is depicted by - Madeleine L'Engle in the foreword to Lewis's A Grief Observed:

C.S. Lewis, the writer of so much that is so clear and so right, the thinker whose acuity of mind and clarity of expression enabled us to understand so much, this strong and determined Christian, he too fell headlong into the vortex of whirling thoughts and feelings and dizzily groped for support and guidance deep in the dark chasm of grief (Grief xxxi).

But he did not stay in that chasm. He clung to the truths that he had believed years earlier and was finally able to put those into practice. Isn't that what hope is all about? Hoping to not stay where you are; hoping for something better than where you are; longing for the possibility of a change in location, whether that location is an emotional one, a physical one, or a spiritual one.

“Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don't understand” (25). Lewis very readily questions God's goodness and struggles with deciding whether he is an absent God or a cosmic sadistic God—a topic he very readily defended in The Problem of Pain. Perhaps, though, people suffering from grief want so badly to be rid of it that they hinder the process. Their eyes are “so blurred with tears,” as Lewis describes of his own, that they are unable to look at the healing that is already beginning around them. I think that is what happens to Lewis during his time of questioning, but I also think that his questioning redefined his beliefs in a way that strengthened his faith. And it strengthens through redefining. His first foundation of faith was shaky, so with the death of Joy, it was demolished, where a different, stronger foundation could be built in its place. I think Lewis realizes this in the middle of his grieving—that naming God as a sadist is incorrect. If one's house was a house of cards, “the sooner it was knocked down the better” (38). The unfortunate part of this truth is that the firmer foundation can only be built after the house is knocked down, and the house can only be knocked down by suffering. Lewis says that God's hand in grief is like a



surgeon whose intent is wholly good. If one were to stop the surgeon before he was finished, then all the pain would be for nothing.

It is this realization that suffering is used for our good that helps Lewis redefine his beliefs about God and toward God. He wonders if he had the ability to take Joy's pain upon himself if he actually would. Or if it is another thing that changes when the stakes are heightened. He wonders if taking another's pain is ever allowed, and he realizes that "it was allowed to One" (44). He is referring to the faith of which he was once so sure, then questioned, and now is coming slowly back to with a new perspective and meaning. This faith says that Jesus took the punishment of the world upon himself so that we would not have to suffer for it. This connection is important to Lewis's transformation. He says that through this connection of Jesus' suffering to his own; he finds that he can "now believe again." And his experience with Joy, her life, her death, and her love, helped make that possible. Since the God in whom Lewis believed is known to be a God that is Love, shouldn't all manners of love point back to him? I believe Lewis's transformation of love did that. It pointed to Christ, even in his despair. His longing and remembering of Joy and their relationship he compared to Christ, and through grieving her, he learned to understand if only just a little bit more about the love of Christ.

[To Joy] Rebuke, explain, mock, forgive. For this is one of the miracles of love, it gives—to both, but perhaps especially to the woman—a power of seeing through its own enchantments and yet not being disenchanted. To see, in some measure, like God. His

love and His knowledge are not distinct from one another, nor from Him. We could almost say He sees because He loves, and therefore loves although He sees (72).

He talks of what Joy would think of him if she were to see him then, struggling through, picking up the cards, questioning not only God's love for him but even his true love for her. And then he realizes, she knew his faults. She knew his shortcomings and loved in spite of, or even perhaps in light of, them. It clicks. That's what Christ does. Loves in spite of, in light of, our "rotten places" (71). What a bitterly sweet moment in which one is lost: acutely aware of every shortcoming, yet overwhelmed with grace. This is where every transformation we've encountered begins to make sense. This is where comfort begins to seep in underneath the bolted shut door of grief. This is where joy cultivates.

Progressing and moving forward, from anything, never happens instantaneously. It is a long process of little improvements that are something even unnoticeable until many of the improvements have been completed. Lewis eventually gets to this realization. "Perhaps changes were not really observable. There was no sudden, striking, and emotional transition. Like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight. When you first notice them they have already been going on for sometime" (62). Lewis's experience with Joy was a humbling one, a learning one, and a transformative one. Lewis's voice of authority faded into his reliance on the truth of the Christ's authority. Although he may have felt that way, Lewis did not fall into desolation. He constantly searched for answers;

only this time he realized that he would never have them all. Lewis began to finally fully grasp the faith to which he had claimed thirty years earlier.

In a sense [A Grief Observed] is not a book at all; it is, rather the passionate result of a brave man turning to face his agony and examine it in order that he might further understand what is required of us in living this life in which we have to expect the pain and sorrow of the loss of those whom we love. (xix)

We *must* remember that these transformations are changes for the better. And there is hope; there can be joy. “Everyone needs the message: There is hope at the end of despair” (Matsumoto).

## Chapter Five

*“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

-Romans 5:3-5

*“...An unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again.”*

— C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy

Joy is a tricky thing. We equate joy with happiness, but they aren’t one in the same. Happiness is fleeting; joy should not be. We say, ‘*Be joyful!*’ as though it is easily commanded. It’s not. To capitalize on Lewis’s previous analogy, happiness is like completing the building of a house of cards—surging pride at

the finish and deep disappointment when a rouge wind blows. Joy, rather, is a real house, a house with a strong foundation, with windows to watch the wind blow by, unable to harm the house. The ability to be joyful is the blending of these aforementioned transformations and finding the hope that the passages above and C.S. Lewis both describe. Joy is not poured out onto the lucky; it is bestowed as an honor on those who seek it.

As seen through Lewis's life, the transformation of life by coming to salvation was initially very difficult. He describes himself in Surprised by Joy as a "prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape" (229). But he makes the conscious decision to continue his relationship with this God that has pursued him so ardently. Lewis then began seeking more answers and understanding to logically support his theism and beliefs. He began to see himself, not as an individual with full control but "a rebel who must lay down his arms" (Mere Christianity 56). There is a hopeful expectancy in his writings of Heaven and of the future that life with Christ promises. These expectations are solidified through his own experiences, and we as readers can experience them not only through our own circumstances but also through his writings. This hope is evident in Mere Christianity as Lewis describes the metamorphosis of creatures who believe the claims that God makes in the Bible of perfection in His children.

The command *Be ye perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that

we were 'gods' and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said (Mere Christianity 206).

The view Lewis holds of his future with Christ is evidently filled with hope, and that hope is transformative to his thoughts, his expectations, and his view of who Christ is. Hope, according to Lewis, has the desire to transform happiness to joy, fleeting to lasting. The resentment found at the inception of his salvation was transformed through the hope that God promises to make his children “dazzling, radiant, [and] immortal” (Mere Christianity 206). The transformation of salvation initiated a cultivation of joy in Lewis, and the process of learning joy throughout the different transformations he encountered proved in itself to be a powerful conversion.

James 1:2 says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” Here again, we are faced with the

challenge of joyfulness, this time not necessarily by coming to faith but in the face of trials. In The Problem of Pain, Lewis uses this book as an apologetic to present the theological defense of God allowing pain in a world where He has complete control to change every bad situation to a good one. Lewis conjectures that pain is necessary because “it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment” (The Problem of Pain 93). In other words, an inconvenience, something going wrong, is the only thing that could shatter someone’s notions of their own goodness. And until that false perception is altered, one would not seek God, His goodness, or His blessings because he would believe that they were unnecessary.

Now God, who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek it in Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call ‘our own life’ remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. What then can God do in our interest but make ‘our own life’ less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible source of false happiness? (The Problem of Pain 94).

It is through this realization that one’s comprehension of the reasoning for suffering, and even God-mandated suffering, can begin to be transformed into a joyful expectation such as exemplified in Lewis’s coming to faith. In his initial conversion, Lewis was doubtful of God, of his power, and of the logic behind such a belief system. Likewise when confronting the issue of suffering, Lewis voices the questions that many Christians and non-Christians alike have

wondered: the sovereignty and goodness of God. Through The Problem of Pain, Lewis answers each question with the other. It is because God is pure goodness that he allows trials so that each of us has the opportunity experience the happiness that He intends for us. “What we would here and now call our ‘happiness’ is not the end God chiefly has in view but when we are such as He can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy” (The Problem of Pain 41). It is this realization of the purpose of pain that enables one to experience joy through suffering, to “count it all joy when faced with trials of many kinds,” as James says. If coming to faith declares that one trusts in God, the trials that follow are a refining and solidifying of that declaration.

Grief is a mode of pain in which this refining of trust and formation of joy can be cultivated. In Lewis’s own experience, he says that the loss of his wife served as God awakening him to his spiritual state. “He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down” (A Grief Observed 52). While not as authoritative as he originally seemed in The Problem of Pain, Lewis maintains the same premise that the removal of “false happiness” is done by a loving God who intends for us to find that our true happiness lies only in Him. Lewis does not come to this conclusion as assuredly or as quickly in A Grief Observed, but he does acknowledge his belief in the truth of that sentiment. Through this book, we can see Lewis work out this theory of goodness coalesced with suffering instead of just reading his conjectures without experience behind them as we do in The Problem of Pain.



He evolves his thoughts from questioning God to praising Him, and through this evolution, his grief begins to cultivate his joy.

Praise is the mode of love which always has some element of joy in it. Praise in due order; or Him as the giver, of her as the gift. Don't we in praise somehow enjoy what we praise, however far we are from it? I must do more of this. I have lost the fruition I once had of [Joy]. And I am far, far away in the valley of my unlikeness, from the fruition which, if His mercies are infinite, I may some time have of God. But by praising I can still, in some degree, enjoy her, and already, in some degree, enjoy Him (A Grief Observed 62-63).

Towards the end of the collection of journals in A Grief Observed, Lewis realizes that the loss of his wife, while traumatic, allowed him to enjoy God and thus her life through praising "the giver" for "the gift" that he had been bestowed, if only for a short time. And praise, as Lewis says, always has an element of joy in it.

Throughout these works and his life experiences, there is a steady strand of hope, a promise of joy. His initial searching of logic to explain away spirituality and his unbelief in an afterlife resulted in his surety of his eternal rest with Christ. His resistance to love begat the greatest human love he had ever experienced. And then the heart-wrenching sorrow that he endures draws him closer to Christ, and redefines an even deeper relationship. Changes can be terrifying but they can also be revitalizing, giving one reason to rejoice.

## Chapter Six

*“Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, ‘What? You too? I thought I was the only one.’”*

*-C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

Interestingly enough, it is his seeking and discovery of joy that spurred my own search for the lasting over the fleeting. As a reader of Lewis, I have always personally felt that his thoughts were light-years above my own. I would come to his works as a student looking to learn, looking to be taught by someone much more sophisticated, knowledgeable, and mature in theology than myself. For a while, it was a good writer-reader relationship since Lewis’s theories and ideas usually had the authority that I associated with such a teacher. And although I enjoyed his writings, it was not until I had experienced my own grief and then read about his that I began to fully appreciate the weight of his other works. It’s funny how experiences can transform our perspectives and understandings of

ideas and beliefs. I found that I no longer simply respected Lewis, I related to him. And relating was much more powerful than respecting.

I will never forget reading his collected journal entries on the subject of grief while lying on a stiff, wooden bench in the middle of the Jamaican slums taking a break from playing with kids in the overbearing sun. Exhausted and air-condition deprived, I was skimming along the lines of the small book, just trying to keep my eyes open. The book was given to me three months after my father passed away. In apparently Lewis fashion, I resolved at the time to be unaffected by emotions, meaning I had no need for the book. Weaker people had need for the book, not I. I soon found, however, that my resolve was not as resolute as I had originally planned. A year and a half later I found myself carrying it with me on a plane flying towards a mission trip, as last resort reading material only. For I had experienced enough grief for a lifetime; surely I had reached the status of an expert by now. (You see the correlation of stubbornness between Lewis and myself already, do you not?) I even made it through the first two chapters with the simple impression that *this is a good book; I'll recommend it to others*. And then I read the line: "You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you" (22). Yes! I thought, surprised that something C.S. Lewis wrote was exactly what I had thought. I retrieved a pencil from somewhere deep in my bag and began fervently underlining and note taking in this book that was to teach me so much. Reading A Grief Observed accomplished two very integral things: it helped me realize that I am not the first, nor the last person to ever experience something difficult that

challenges everything I once held so tightly; and it gave me the challenge to be joyful. Not only that, it gave me the courage to pursue joy in the face of difficulty. The traumatic events of the year before were no longer circumstances that happened to me; they were opportunities to seek joy, to learn what it means to be joyful always, and to experience that lasting delight which circumstances could no longer alter. Perhaps my house of cards needed to be demolished and rebuilt stronger. Perhaps I didn't trust the rope, but now I was learning how. Perhaps my transformation could not be completed until I realized these things. I realized that grief does not stop. It continues to change; and according to Lewis, it changes from fleeting to lasting, from grief to joy. And suddenly Lewis's position of authoritative teacher transformed into empathetic friend.

Joy is learned and not learned quickly as seen through Lewis's transformations, nor my own for that matter, but the learning is essential to the beliefs that he declared. Joy is the hope that lies within transformations. I believe that it is no coincidence that Lewis's beloved was named Joy. And I don't think that it is any coincidence that Lewis had to work in order to get Joy. Just as their love moved unconventionally, so does our pursuit of joy. Joy is not an easily attainable virtue. It must be sought out and practiced deliberately before we can enjoy the full depths of what joy is supposed to give. Lewis helped Joy by donating his finances, giving her advice, and being a model for her two children. He married her so that she would be able to stay in England, and when she became ill, he cared for her in every way that he could. And through all of this he found joy in his wife, in spending time with her, and in being her husband. So

must we all seek joy, and in seeking, we will find (Matthew 7:7). Perhaps that is the true transformation that he had to make. Perhaps it is the true transformation that we all must make, to seek joy and to allow joy to enter our lives, whatever the circumstances may be. For just as Lewis said in Mere Christianity, “The longest way round is the shortest way home” (xix). So is the route to joy a long road, but the lengths we must go to in order to experience joy are the shortest, most direct way we can reach it. A joyful person will be changed by transformations, but they will not digress because of them. As seen through C.S. Lewis’s life and works, it becomes a source of consistency and stability throughout our ever-changing circumstances. “I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it [Joy] would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world” (Surprised by Joy 18). And one cannot begin to understand Lewis’s transformation without the aspect of Joy.

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