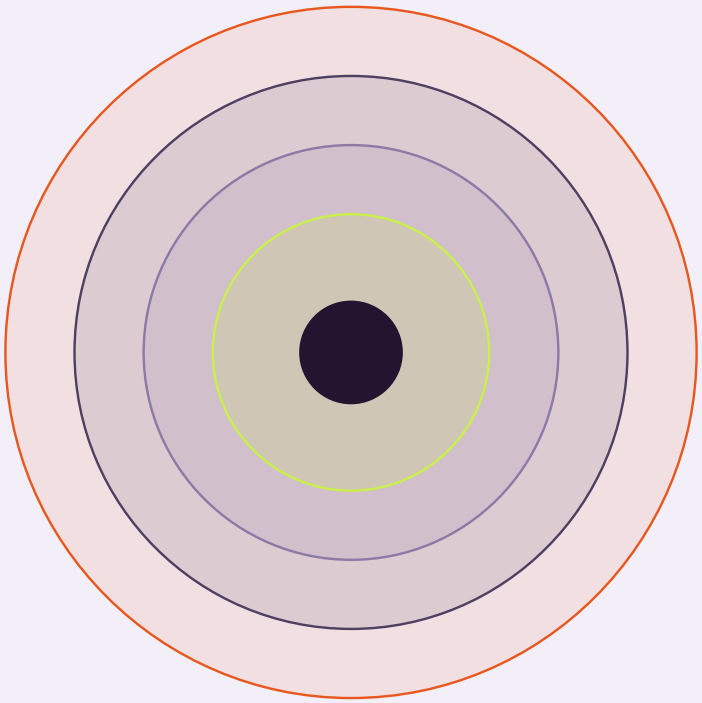


Mere Christianity

A reading of the book by C. S. Lewis (1952)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Mere Christianity, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

C. S. Lewis was an Oxford tutor in English literature and a former atheist when the BBC asked him to give a series of radio talks during the Second World War. Mere Christianity gathers those talks from 1941 to 1944, revised, into four books. He starts not with scripture but with the Moral Law: the sense, found across cultures, that we ought to behave in a certain way, and the plain fact that none of us does. From there he sets out the beliefs most Christian churches share, what they mean for daily behaviour, from the virtues to forgiveness, pride and charity, and finally the doctrine of the Trinity. He argues by everyday analogy rather than technical theology: a quarrel over a seat, sheet music, a fleet of ships, toy soldiers, and a house being rebuilt into a palace.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Every quarrel assumes a rule that both sides already know.

Lewis opens with ordinary arguments, not with religion. When people complain about a broken promise or a jumped queue, they do not just say they dislike it; they say the other person has broken a standard. That shared appeal is what makes it a quarrel rather than a fight, and it is the first clue he follows.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Two facts sit under all clear thinking about ourselves: we believe we ought to behave a certain way, and we do not.

Book One rests on this pair. Lewis argues that people everywhere feel bound by a standard of decent behaviour, and that nobody fully keeps it. Even our excuses give us away, because we would not bother making them if we did not believe in the rule.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Instincts are the keys of the piano; the Moral Law is the sheet music that says which one to play.

Lewis answers the claim that morality is only herd instinct. When the urge to help someone in danger fights the urge to stay safe, a third thing judges between them and often backs the weaker one. That judge, he argues, cannot simply be one of the instincts.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

To call one morality better than another is to measure both against a standard that is neither.

Against the idea that morals are mere convention, Lewis points out that we do judge between them, for example when we call Christian morality better than Nazi morality. If no code were better than another, moral reform would be impossible and progress would be an empty word.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Lewis says Christianity begins in dismay, not in comfort.

Book One ends on unease. If there is a power behind the Moral Law and we keep breaking it, we are at odds with that power. Lewis argues that talk of forgiveness means little to someone who does not think there is anything to forgive, so the comfort only comes after the bad news.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Lewis argues that great moral teacher is the one verdict on Jesus that is not open to us.

This is the argument now often summed up as lunatic, liar or Lord. Because of the claims Jesus made about himself, Lewis says, he was either mad, something worse, or telling the truth. Critics reply that it assumes the gospels report his words accurately, which is the point most debates turn on.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Morality has three jobs, like a fleet: keep the ships from colliding, keep each one seaworthy, and know where the fleet is going.

Book Three opens with this picture. Most public talk about morality covers only the first job, fair play between people. Lewis argues the inner state of each person matters just as much, and that both depend on what you think a human life is for.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Pride is the great sin because it is competitive by nature: it enjoys having more than the next person.

Lewis calls pride the vice that almost everyone dislikes in others and almost no one notices in themselves. Other faults can bring people together; pride sets each person against everyone else. His test is simple: the more it annoys you when someone else is proud, the more of it you probably have.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You thought you were being given a tidier cottage; the builder had a palace in mind.

In Book Four Lewis borrows a parable from George MacDonald. You invite God in to fix the leaks, and then he starts knocking down walls and adding wings. Lewis uses it to explain why the change Christianity describes is harder than expected: the aim is not a nicer version of you but a new kind of person.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write down your own two facts
- [ ] Read Book One in one sitting
- [ ] Mark the step where you part ways
- [ ] Read with someone who disagrees
- [ ] Run a pride check

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Act as if you loved one difficult person
- ◯ Check the fleet on Sunday evening
- ◯ Catch the excuse

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Write down your own two facts

Name one standard you expect other people to keep, such as honesty or keeping promises.

Then write down one time this month you fell short of it, and the excuse you gave.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Read Book One in one sitting

Book One is short and was written to be heard on the radio.

Read it straight through this week, then write one sentence on what Lewis claims and one on where you are least convinced.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Mark the step where you part ways

Walk the argument on this page and note the step where you stop agreeing.

Write down your reason in two sentences, so you can test it against the book.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Read with someone who disagrees

Lewis spoke to a mixed audience of believers and sceptics.

Ask a friend who sees it differently to read Book One with you, and meet once to compare where each of you stopped.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Run a pride check

List three situations where you most want to come out ahead of someone: at work, online, in the family.

For each, ask whether you want the thing itself or only to have more of it than they do.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Act as if you loved one difficult person

Once a week, do one concrete kindness for someone you find hard to like, without waiting to feel warmly.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Check the fleet on Sunday evening

Ask three questions about your week: did I treat people fairly, what is out of order inside me, and what am I actually aiming at.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Catch the excuse

When you hear yourself explaining why this case was different, write the excuse down.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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December 2026

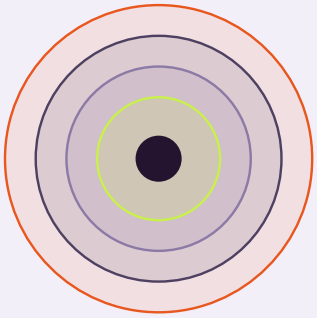
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Start with the rule you already argue by, and follow it honestly as far as it leads.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER C. S. LEWIS