



A Mere Christian

Ron Smith

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Christians are not buckets to be filled, but fires to be kindled. What they believe and do is more important than what happens to them. My purpose in writing A Mere Christian is of course to share what I've gleaned from Lewis, Chamblin, and others. The closer we get to the ever-certain return of Christ for his Church, the more God makes his followers to understand what has previously been mystery. Our view of that return is closer than was Jack's and more of God's mystery is revealed. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it. Above all we need to understand just how great is our God! I am extremely indebted to C. S. Lewis and Mere Christianity. His incomparable work originated as a series of three broadcast radio talks in Great Britain during World War II. I owe many thanks also to Knox Chamblin, Ph.D., professor at Reformed Theological Seminary. His iTunes U course on C. S. Lewis taught me a great deal. Walter Hooper, Lewis' personal secretary near the end of his life, called him the most thoroughly converted man he ever knew.

A Mere Christian Details

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From Reader Review A Mere Christian for online ebook

Anne Hamilton says

Lucid and thoughtful, this excellent work acknowledges its indebtedness to the insights of CS Lewis. It's a slim, easily read book, packing a real impact.

I particularly appreciated the section on the *four cardinal virtues*, their opposition to the seven deadly sins and their relationship to the Beatitudes.

I also discovered a new term, one I really like: 'figura umbrae', *the shape of the shadow*. Where has this phrase been all my life? What a gorgeous term for the awkwardly named 'type' of Scripture.

I received this book from the Goodreads *First Reads* programme. What a delight it was!

Elizabeth says

****I received this book for free through First Reads for an honest review****

I enjoyed reading this book. Really, I did. The three stars up there do not tell the whole story.

What I really liked about it was the heart and story behind the book. You could feel the brilliance of the author's faith. Job 23:10 came to mind as I was reading bits of the author's bio throughout the book. The book, I would say, is in its essence a brief summary of CS Lewis' main or most popular ideas in Mere Christianity... and it did a good job at that. The ideas are conveniently organized for your ease and the author also infuses his personal stories and knowledge next to Lewis' thoughts.

What I was expecting, but did not get, was some sort of a deeper analysis of Lewis' work.... not that there were not any backstories or facts about Lewis's life to help us understand his ideas better. Far from it! But having background details next to the theory does not necessarily make it a literary analysis. I found also that the flow of ideas was not very strong in some areas of the book, which was unfortunate. I was also saddened by some statements that were made in the book that were not backed up with Biblical or logical data. In other words, too many times, the authors made statements about the nature of spiritual things (one notable instance is the old soul-spirit-body topic) as though they were absolutely true without really giving the reader any sort of evidence for it besides "Lewis said so". Lastly, although I found that the book was good at explaining the theory, if you will, behind the life of a mere christian, it did not follow-through on the application of the theory. In other words, the question "So what?" was not well addressed for the reader to then, after a reading, go on and apply Lewis' ideas to his/her life.

In short, if you are looking for a fast, easy-to-read synopsis of CS Lewis's main themes in his work, then I would say that this is the book for you!

Ron Smith says

Jeff Friend at Clarion Forward Reviews posted a five star review here:

<https://www.forewordreviews.com/review...>

In *A Mere Christian*, Dr. Ron Smith draws on his inspiration from the writings of C. S. Lewis to combine his scientific training and Christian beliefs to present well-reasoned and solid explanations of foundational biblical concepts that are frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted. The result is both a message of instruction and encouragement for Christians and a debunking of misinformation and distortions commonly held by nonbelievers.

Smith, a pediatrician for some thirty years, had been listening to recordings of Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and Reformed Theological Seminary professor Knox Chamblin's thoughts on Lewis's writings before and during the untimely death of Smith's daughter. Their teachings stirred Smith's faith and helped to refocus him on the majesty and boundlessness of God.

Smith excels in his ability to discuss and analyze scientific theories and ideas in ways that are easily understood yet not oversimplified. He is equally adept at describing religious concepts such as the seven deadly sins and the four cardinal virtues.

But his teaching on topics that embody both the spiritual and scientific simultaneously, such as time and space, are particularly enlightening. For example, he addresses the question that many have pondered through the centuries: With so many millions of people praying at the same time, how can even God keep from getting confused? His answer begins with a look at scientific method and ends with a powerful conclusion pointing to the unfathomable vastness of the creator.

Smith writes concisely and with purpose. He does not attempt to impress with his wealth of scientific knowledge, but rather uses it to bring greater depth of understanding on issues as varied as evolution, the law of human nature, the difference between instinct and morals, and the spiritual anatomy of body, soul, and spirit. He also offers words of encouragement throughout his subjects, tying in the spiritual points that underlie them. "Let me remind you that God is not a prisoner of time. Just as he is watching each grain of your life pass through the aperture of the hourglass, he sees all the grains that have already fallen and those that have yet to fall."

A Mere Christian clearly makes Smith's passionate case that although science has its place and is helpful to mankind, ultimately the proof for a loving, all-powerful God who created all things trumps scientific theory. C. S. Lewis would have been proud.

Michelle says

I received an electronic copy of this book from the author, with the request to provide a review. I shall try to provide an unbiased review, although in interests of full disclosure, I did enjoy the email conversation I had with the author, which may actually bias me slightly despite my best efforts...and then I might be overly critical in my attempt to balance that out, so take that disclaimer how you will!

I read the book through twice to be thorough, and because I'm still struggling to adjust to e-reader

technology after 30 years of reading 'real' books. As a copyeditor, I was pretty pleased with it – there are always things that could be tweaked, but there weren't any major typos or repeated errors that made me itch for my electronic red pen.

As a C.S. Lewis fan, I enjoyed the references to Lewis' works, although I've only read a couple of his non-fiction works, and that was years ago, and as a Christian I agreed with, or at least didn't _not_ agree with, most of the points the author makes. However, there are a few points he makes that made me think carefully, which is a good thing, and there's one point that I completely disagree with.

First, my biggest and most serious quibble with _A Mere Christian_. On pages 19 and 52-3 the author implies that whether or not God created in six literal 24-hours days isn't important, and he offers the classic 'a day with God is like a thousand years' argument. Now, I'm no scholar of Biblical Hebrew, but I'm told by people who are that the language used is very specific that God created in six literal days, as we know days today. Is six days versus six thousand years a salvation issue? No, not directly, but an incorrect understanding of Genesis and creation and how to interpret the various books the Bible can lead to chinks in one's spiritual armour which can then be used as ways to undermine one's faith. So this is rather important. Here's a succinct article about days and thousands of years, FYI:
<http://creation.com/2-peter-38-one-da...>

I'm not sure the discussion about spiritual anatomy in chapter 4 has any basis in scripture, although that doesn't necessarily make it incorrect or not – I'm just not sure that I buy into it the idea. I'll have to give it more consideration.

I'm not sure about the author's intent in including a discussion of the seven deadly sins in chapter 5. What some Christians refer to as the seven deadly sins really are no more or less 'deadly' than any other sin – to God, sin is sin is sin. The only unforgivable sin is the rejection of the Holy Spirit, but the author does a really good job of explaining that concept on pages 47-8, so I think that balances it out, but if there were a section in the book that needed to be elaborated on, I think it would be the author's views on why he thought the seven deadly sins were important to include. There was also no discussion of original sin, which is a topic that's rather important in general.

Overall, I'd recommend this book to the mature Christian who likes to think critically and is looking for something new to mull over.

Megan says

An overall decent reflection of the author's thoughts on Lewis's work. It read more like a summary - I felt that if I hadn't read Mere Christianity, then most of the arguments would have seemed simplistic and assuming. I felt that the book as a whole lacked structure and was unsure of its own message. That said, it had some good points within it which make it worth reading.

Lorrie says

This little book written by Dr Ron Smith, "A Mere Christian", reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' "Mere Christianity", is a lesson on Christianity - what it means to be a Christian and how the Church (Bride of

Christ) is admonished to be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus.

I was particularly interested in his commentary on God being outside of time and space as we know it. I don't completely understand this concept, but God did not mean for us to understand everything this side of eternity. I also liked that he provided ample Scriptural references for cross-study with the Bible.

I found myself highlighting as I read. Topics include the Creation and the science behind Creation that requires a Creator, the Law of Human Nature, free will, the 7 deadly sins and the 4 cardinal virtues, and "believers as pretenders".

The book can also be considered a condensed lesson in Christian Apologetics. Christians are told to contend for their faith and that requires Scriptural knowledge and study. Dr Smith provides the reader with a brief but good study in Theology that can better equip him to stand up for his faith in Christ.
