**Lucy: Childlike Devotion (Following Jesus through Narnia #5)**

**ON**[**APRIL 7, 2019**](https://tachesterton.wordpress.com/2019/04/07/lucy-childlike-devotion-following-jesus-through-narnia-5/)**BY**[**TIM CHESTERTON**](https://tachesterton.wordpress.com/author/timchesterton/)

In 2005 Walt Disney studios brought out a lavish film production of C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* using human actors rather than animation. Many of you have seen it and I’m guessing you’ll agree with me that young Georgie Henley, who plays Lucy Pevensie, just steals the show. I will never forget the incredible expression of wonder on her face when she comes through the wardrobe and catches her first glimpse of the snow-covered magic of Narnia. Throughout the movie she does a wonderful job of portraying Lucy’s sense of humour, her love of fun, and her childlike innocence. She’s a very gifted actor and gives us a wonderful depiction of one of C.S. Lewis’ most loveable characters.

Most of you know we’ve been using Lewis’ ‘Narnia’ stories as our spiritual guide this Lent. We started out by thinking about Aslan the Lion, the Christ-figure, to discover what he can teach us about Jesus. We found that Jesus is not tame or safe, but he’s good, and we should approach him with absolute confidence in his love for us, and absolute obedience to his authority. We went on to consider Eustace, a boy whose selfishness turned him into a dragon. From him we discovered that only the power of Jesus can deliver us from selfishness and transform us into the people he wants us to be. In the third week we thought about Bree, Hwin, and Aravis. From them we discovered that we need to turn from pride, whether it takes the form of trying to impress others, or of thinking only of ourselves and not the interests of others. Then last week we thought about Puddleglum the Marsh Wiggle; he taught us to trust and obey our good Lord Jesus.

This week we’re thinking about Lucy, and I’ve called this talk ‘childlike devotion’. In the Gospels we discover that Jesus has a very high opinion of children.

He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:2-4).

So in Jesus’ view, the Kingdom of God *belongs*to children—it’s their native country. If we adults want to enter it, we have to learn from children what it’s all about. Lucy Pevensie can help us there.

Let me very quickly remind you that in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*the four Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, are magically transported to the land of Narnia. They discover that Narnia is under the tyrannical rule of the evil White Witch who has made it always winter and never Christmas. But they also discover that the son of the great Emperor-over-Sea, Aslan the Great Lion, has returned, and is going to set the world to rights again. He needs their help to do it, however, because of an old prophecy about two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve sitting on the four thrones of the castle of Cair Paravel.

One of the most moving stories in the whole book—and a story that we’re going to focus in on next week—is the story of how Aslan willingly gives his life in the place of Edmund, who has become a traitor. Aslan slips out of the camp at night to give himself up to the White Witch, but the two girls, Susan and Lucy, see him and go along with him. He’s sad and lonely and even asks them to touch him and put their hands in his mane so that he can feel the comfort of their presence. Later they watch as the White Witch kills Aslan with a terrible stone knife, and then her armies rush away to attack his army. The girls are left with his body, and all night long they keep vigil, crying until they have no tears left to cry.

But when morning comes, the stone table cracks in two because of ‘deeper magic from before the dawn of time’, and the girls see Aslan alive again. “Aren’t you dead, then, dear Aslan?” asks Lucy. “Not now,” he replies. “Oh, you’re real, you’re real! Oh, Aslan!” cries Lucy, and both girls fling themselves on the great Lion and cover him with kisses. A few moments later they go for a thrilling ride on his back to the White Witch’s castle, where they watch as he frees the captives she has turned into stone.

I get the sense that their presence with Aslan on this awful night forges a special bond between the two girls and the great Lion. But Susan later forsakes this special relationship. The reason is clear: she’s too interested in acting like a grown-up. And what’s the result? In the last Narnia story Peter explains to King Tirian, “My sister Susan…is no longer a friend of Narnia,” and Jill Pole adds, “She’s interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up.” Later Eustace clarifies what Jill means. He says that when the children are talking about their adventures in Narnia Susan comments, “Fancy you still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.”

Susan *knows*they weren’t games. She was there when Aslan died. She touched him with her own hands and saw Narnia with her own eyes. But for some reason it’s no longer real or important to her, or at least, not as important as being thought of as a sophisticated, grown-up girl. So she loses her childlike devotion to Aslan. It’s a sad story, and a warning to us all.

But Lucy never loses her deep love for Aslan, and because of that, she’s able to see what others can’t see and love when others can’t love. She often calls the Lion ‘Dear Aslan,’ and he returns her love, calling her ‘Dear Heart’ and ‘Dear One.’ Let me point out to you three consequences of Lucy’s childlike devotion to Aslan.

First, **she can often see him when others can’t see him**. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*Edmund is explaining to Eustace about Aslan, and he says, “Lucy sees him most often.” There’s an outstanding example of this in the book *Prince Caspian.*The children are trying to find their way to Prince Caspian’s camp, and they come to the edge of a deep gorge. The way ahead isn’t clear, but then Lucy cries out, “Look! Look! Look!” “Where? What?” everyone asks. “The Lion” Lucy says. “Aslan himself. Didn’t you see?” But no one else can see Aslan, and the majority vote to go the other way. Eventually they run into a party of enemy troops, and they have to retrace their steps back the way they came. That night, once again, Aslan appears to Lucy, and once again she has to try to persuade the others to follow her as she follows Aslan. “Will the others see you too?” she asks him. “Certainly not at first,” he replies. “Later on, it depends.”

So Lucy does as she’s told, and she’s able to convince the others to follow her, and gradually, one by one, they are able to see Aslan. We often say “Seeing is believing,” but Lucy teaches us that in the Christian life it’s often the other way around—believing is seeing. Well, that’s not quite right either: what Lucy teaches us is that ‘Believing *and loving*is seeing.’ Lucy can see Aslan because she loves him; that’s her secret.

And we need to learn that secret too. If you wait for conclusive proof of love before you marry someone, you’ll never get married. If you wait for conclusive proof before you choose to believe in Jesus, you’ll never believe in him. There are things we can only understand from the inside. They make no sense at all when we’re on the outside looking in.

Many years ago, when I was a student, I went with some friends one Sunday evening to a healing service. I don’t remember the details, but I do remember that there were some remarkable healings in answer to prayer that night. One of my fellow-students had brought a friend with him, a man who wasn’t a Christian and was extremely skeptical. He spent the entire journey home after the service pointing out to us the obvious rational explanations for the things we had seen. He didn’t believe and he didn’t love God; therefore he couldn’t see. How very grown-up!

Because Lucy loves Aslan, she can see him when others can’t. Also, because Lucy loves Aslan, **she’s quick to accept correction from him**. Aslan isn’t a tame lion, remember, and so even though Lucy is his dear one he doesn’t shrink from correcting her. On the first Sunday of Lent, when we were talking about Aslan, I mentioned the story we were thinking about a moment ago—the story of the time Lucy tried to lead the others after Aslan when only she could see him, but they wouldn’t follow. When he appears to her again that night, this is what happens:

      ‘Yes, wasn’t it a shame?’ said Lucy. ‘*I*saw you all right. They wouldn’t believe me. They’re all so…’

      From somewhere deep inside Aslan’s body there came the faintest suggestion of a growl.

      ‘I’m sorry’, said Lucy, who understood some of his moods. ‘I didn’t mean to start slanging the others. But it wasn’t my fault anyway, was it?’

      The Lion looked straight into her eyes.

      ‘Oh, Aslan’, said Lucy. ‘You don’t mean it was? How could I – I couldn’t have left the others and come up to you alone, how could I? Don’t look at me like that… oh well, I suppose I *could.*Yes, and it wouldn’t have been alone, I know, not if I was with you…’

In the Gospels Jesus makes a very clear link between love and obedience: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). In my experience this is a sort of ‘chicken and egg’ type of affair. If we want to grow in our love for Jesus, one of the best ways is to do our best to follow his teaching. If we want to grow more conscientious in following his teaching, one of the best ways is to deepen our conscious contact with him, to get to know him better and to love him more, so our obedience isn’t a dreary and dutiful thing but the childlike obedience that Lucy gives to the Aslan she loves so much.

Because Lucy loves Aslan with a deep and tender love, she can see him when others can’t, and she is quick to accept correction from him. Likewise, if we love Jesus our ‘good Lord’, we will be able to experience his presence and we will be quick to accept his correction.

One more thing: **because Lucy loves Aslan, she also has a tender heart toward others**. Of all the characters in the Narnia stories, she’s probably the one who’s most patient with the failings of others. She’s always ready to reach out to people others find hard to love. For instance, in the second week we heard the story of how Eustace became a dragon because of his greed and selfishness. When he went to sleep on the dragon hoard he put a gold armband on his arm; when he woke up a dragon, his arm had gotten a lot thicker and the armband caused him terrible pain. Lucy was the one who noticed this: “Oh, look,” she said, “there’s something wrong with its leg.” And she tried to help the dragon by using some of her magical cordial to ease its pain. Earlier in the story, she was the one who tried to help Eustace when all he could think of was himself. And at the end of the series, *The Last Battle*—which is sort of like the ‘Book of Revelation’ of Narnia, in which Aslan brings an end to the world he created so long ago— it’s Lucy who weeps for the world she’d come to love so much, until she realises that all that was good in Narnia now lives on in Aslan’s country.

The apostle John points out to us that if we don’t love our sisters and brothers who we have seen, how can we love God whom we haven’t seen? And the reverse is also true—genuine, childlike love for Jesus will always soften our hearts to the sufferings of others, even others who aren’t easy to get along with.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God belongs to children. We adults have to learn to be childlike to enter it. Lucy’s childlike devotion to Aslan teaches us about this. She loves him with a deep and tender love, and so she can see him when other can’t. She’s ready to accept correction from him. And she’s ready to love others with the same love she learned from him.

At the end of John’s Gospel Jesus meets Simon Peter for the first time since Peter denied him three times in the courtyard of the high priest’s house. I’m sure Peter expects some word of reproof, but instead Jesus asks him a single question, in slightly different form, three times over: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” (John 21:16). The first question Peter is asked by the Risen Jesus isn’t about his failures or his expertise or his successes. It’s about his heart’s devotion.

I suspect the same will be true for us one day. I suspect that when we see the Son of God face to face, his first concern won’t be our Bible knowledge or our successes or any of that stuff. I suspect that his first concern will be, “Do you love me?” Learning to love Jesus like a little child is apparently a high priority in the Kingdom of God. Lucy Pevensie can teach us how to do it. Let’s pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to follow her example.

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