

C.S. Lewis and the Longing for God: Connecting the Gospel to Deep Felt Need

Embedded in each of us are deep felt needs that, when properly understood, reveal the heart's quest for God. As Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee". To understand these longings, as a fact evident in in our own lives, will make us better at connecting the Gospel to the deep longings in the hearts of all we meet. This workshop will explore these longings and how to segue from the longings to a presentation of the Gospel.

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I. Introduction

1. MacDonald: "We do not have souls; we are souls we have bodies." (*Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood*)
2. Getting past watchful Dragons
3. Using the imagination and sometimes using stories
 - a. Nathan and David
 - b. Types of imaginative use (examples):
 - i. Primary Imagination - Coleridge
 - ii. Transforming - Wordsworth (Projection or Transference)
 - iii. Penetrating - Shakespeare (Variation) and Dante (Similes)
 - iv. Realizing - Medieval

- c. Two types of metaphor:
 - i. Pupil's
 - ii. Master's
 - iii. Transposition (cf. Hamlet and Shakespeare)

II. CS Lewis and human longing for God

1. Lewis learned from his own experience that he had deep longings that echoed even deeper needs for some object that was not clear to him. As he wrestled with these longings he eventually discovered that they were pointers to God. Since Lewis chronicled his own pilgrimage to faith so elegantly what he discovered proves to be an incredible aid to the person engaged in personal evangelism. Since these longings seem to have a universal quality about them, whenever it is possible to turn a conversation towards the direction of these longings it is surprising how often the conversation points to Christ. It is good, therefore, that all doing personal evangelism learn how to speak honestly about these longings. Lewis's experience can be a guide.
2. In a sense to address the matter of these longings is to step inside of the key communication principle: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
3. CS Lewis and Evelyn Underhill's three deep longings:

There are,

...three deep cravings of the self, three great expressions of man's restlessness which only mystic truth can fully satisfy. The first is the craving which makes him a pilgrim and wanderer. It is the longing to go out from his normal world in search of a lost home, a better country.... The next is that craving of heart for heart that makes him a lover. The third is the craving for inward purity and perfection, which makes him an ascetic, and in the last resort a saint. (Underhill, *Mysticism*, 126-127)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pilgrim longing
Nostalgia | Lewis: Myth (Classical longing)
Homer's Ulysses |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremy and Great Expectations | Virgil's Aeneid |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Lover longing
Loneliness | Lewis: Lady (Medieval longing)
Dante's Beatrice |

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| <p>c. Ascetic/Saint longing
Hertford College

Hypocrisy</p> | <p>Lewis: Nature (Romantic longing)
Wordsworth's lost innocence

Jaded (Anne Lamott's rat poison)</p> |
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4. Taking a cue from Lewis and Underhill, what other longings might indicate a deep spiritual hunger for God?
- a. Question inspired by 9/11: "How can we be safe and secure?"
 - b. Question inspired by 9/11: "What does this mean?"
 - c. Questions of identity raised by Donald Miller
5. A few other significant points relative to evangelism:
- a. Dialectic of Desire
 - b. Ecclesiastes 1:1-2; 3:11; 2:25
 - c. Dawson Trotman: *Born to Reproduce*
 - d. Growing: Self-aware and empathetic [an Incarnation-like activity; see C. S. Lewis's Sarah Smith of Golders Green: self-giving leads to an enlargement of self]
 - e. Diminishing: Am I my brother's keeper? Self-referential and utilitarian [see C. S. Lewis's Frank and the tragedian alter-ego; Narcissism and *The Abolition of Man*]