

# Returning to Narnia

By Susan Verstraete

It feels like an old friend is coming for a visit. Many of us who love the book *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* are delighted to see the story introduced to a wider audience and to return to Narnia ourselves through Walden Media and Walt Disney Pictures' new movie. Below I've offered a few suggestions to capitalize on the kingdom opportunities provided by this film.

**Take your family or friends on an extended trip to Narnia.** *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is one of seven books in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series. Beginning with *The Magician's Nephew*, which reveals the early history of Narnia, read the books aloud as a part of family worship or as a continuing bedtime story. Singles may want to read and discuss *The Chronicles of Narnia* with a group of friends. The book, *A Family Guide to Narnia* by Christin Ditchfield is a helpful companion to the series, providing biblical applications and a discussion question for every chapter in all seven books.



**Suggest the autobiography.** If someone you know is especially taken with the movie, suggest they read more about the author, C.S. Lewis. In the book, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis details the events leading up to and through his coming to faith in Christ. For those who might not read an entire book on the subject, TBF Thompson Ministries publishes a beautiful tract called "Walking with Giants"<sup>1</sup> that recounts an important conversation between Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, central to Lewis' conversion to Christianity.

**Start a discussion about symbolism.** You should not assume that your friends and family have heard the Gospel just because they have seen the Narnia movie. Of course, we all know that young children do not have the complex reasoning skills necessary to decipher allegory, but it may surprise you to find that many adults will miss seeing Aslan as a Christ-figure, the stone table as the stone tablets of the Law, or Aslan's death as an example of substitutionary atonement.

*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is rich with symbolism from unlikely sources, including Norse mythology, Arabian folk tales and 17<sup>th</sup> century poetry, to list only a few. In conversations with unbelievers, it will be most helpful to concentrate on the Christian allusions in the movie and pray that God will help you transition into a clear explanation of the Gospel.

**Enjoy the movie.** Don't get so caught up in *using* the movie that you forget to *experience* the movie. Hollywood produces few beautiful, exciting and moral films that families can watch together, so be sure to enjoy this one without over-analyzing it in the theater. Interacting with the story on that level was, after all, Lewis' original intent. In George Sayer's biography of C.S. Lewis, he says:

His idea, as he once explained to me, was to make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life. He hoped that they would be vaguely reminded of the somewhat similar stories that they had read and enjoyed years before. "I am aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination." (*Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis*, page 318)

When *Christianity Today* asked Douglas Gresham—Lewis' stepson and co-producer of the film—how Christians should approach the movie, he said:

Yes, Christians who watch the movie or read the book will look for Christian symbolism. But I think that's the wrong way to approach it. I think it's far better to read the book or see the movie and try to find out where you fit into Narnia. Analyze yourself and how you would react under these circumstances. Who are you? Are you an Edmund? Are you a Peter? Or a Lucy or a Susan or a Tumnus? Where do you fit? (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/interviews/douglasgresham2.html>)

**Explore on your own.** I first read *The Chronicles of Narnia* shortly after my conversion as a young adult. After finishing the series, I went on to read C. S. Lewis' *Space Trilogy*, his autobiography and much of his non-fiction work. Over the years I've returned to Lewis again and again to explain philosophical difficulties in Christian doctrine. Even though I can't endorse all of Lewis' theology, I can say that few authors have so affected my thinking and stretched my understanding. After you leave Narnia, I invite you to explore more of Lewis' work, much of which will be available in your local library.

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<sup>1</sup> TBF Thompson Ministries, 12 Killyvally Road Garvagh, Co Londonderry N Ireland BT51 5JZ. The booklets are sent free of charge, but they ask you pay postage.