



## Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life

*C.S. Lewis*

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### Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life C.S. Lewis

Available from HarperOne, now the exclusive publisher of all of C. S. Lewis's adult religious books, a repackaged edition of the revered author's spiritual memoir, in which he recounts the story of his divine journey and eventual conversion to Christianity.

C. S. Lewis—the great British writer, scholar, lay theologian, broadcaster, Christian apologist, and bestselling author of *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and many other beloved classics—takes readers on a spiritual journey through his early life and eventual embrace of the Christian faith. Lewis begins with his childhood in Belfast, surveys his boarding school years and his youthful atheism in England, reflects on his experience in World War I, and ends at Oxford, where he became “the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.” As he recounts his lifelong search for joy, Lewis demonstrates its role in guiding him to find God.

### Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life Details

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## From Reader Review Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life for online ebook

### Olivier Delaye says

C. S. Lewis, one of J. R. R. Tolkien's best friends and creator of the Narnia Chronicles, among others. Pure genius. Period.

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### Mark Adderley says

There's not much to say about this book, as it is famous, and has been reviewed many times. It's about C. S. Lewis' conversion from atheism to Christianity. He identifies a quality which he calls "Joy," which occurs in what he describes as "a stab of joy." This is the a moment of perfect happiness occasioned by . . . well, it differs. Lewis explains that he got three stabs of joy in his youth: once from the a model garden in a biscuit-tin lid that his brother had made, once while reading Beatix Potter's *Squirrel Nutkin*, and once catching a phrase from Longfellow's poem *The Saga of King Olaf*. Lewis contends that these stabs of Joy are glimpses of the divine, and that they guided him inevitably to the Christian belief that characterized his later life.

What's truly amazing about this book, to me, is how closely it follows my own life. If I could identify three stabs of Joy that I've experienced, I'd say, first of all, from Lewis' own Narnia books, particularly the episode when Lucy is reading from the magical book in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*; second, oddly enough, from the James Bond movies--I know that sounds weird, but something about the atmosphere of *Goldfinger*, especially encapsulated in the music, really caught me; and thirdly, from *Star Wars*--the 1977 film, not any of the subsequent movies.

Like Lewis, I subsequently fancied myself an atheist, and for much the same reasons. Lewis explains that he received a mature stab of Joy from the idea of Northernness that he got from the Norse mythology in Wagner; I, on the other hand, got that stab of Joy from T. H. White's book *The Once and Future King*. Lewis followed up on this by investigating Norse mythology more closely, and subsequently stopped receiving stabs of Joy from it when it became an academic investigation instead of something he did for pure pleasure. Likewise with me and the Arthurian legend.

Like Lewis, I struggled against becoming a Christian but, like Lewis, books (in his case Chesterton and MacDonald, in mine the medieval Arthurian romances) and friends (in Lewis' case, a plethora of friends including Owen Barfield, J. R. R. Tolkien and other college friends, in my case, my wife) prevailed.

So, what really made me enjoy this book was recognizing the truth of what Lewis was saying in it. And I recognized this truth, because his story pretty closely resembled my own.

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### Nathan says

C.S. Lewis, the man that "thought his way to God" (according to the back of the book), isn't really all man - he's part reading machine. Everything, every sentence, in his spiritual autobiography is laden with some classical allusion to a work that the normal person hasn't read in Greek or Latin.

After the death of his mother in his youth, Lewis enters a long lasting period of atheism. Although he knew epistemologically that God didn't exist, he still felt that there was something else "out there." This is different from agnosticism though - he believed that the "something else" was not divine, but it was a Romantic quality. Lewis' life was occasionally visited by what he came to call "Joy": "that unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any satisfaction." Not how you would define joy? Me neither, but this operational definition fits into his scheme of finding God. Enamored with Joy, Lewis sought to experience it as often as possible - in reading great books, listening to music, experiencing nature, etc, etc. However, he finally realized he was confusing object with product: these things could not produce joy, they were only vehicles of it from some other source. As the book draws to a close, Lewis is truly surprised by a God who cares, a "true mythology" (the Christian narrative), and the creator of joy. In his thirst for Joy, Lewis had gone to the cups, glasses, and water bottles that had satiated him before - now he had found the well of living water.

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### **Brittany Petruzzi says**

Considering all the things we've studied at New Saint Andrews—and the way it keeps coming back to one thing—I find it highly interesting that it was essentially C.S. Lewis' love of story that brought him to Christ. If you think about it, story is what all of his experiences of Sehnsucht have in common. Most of the Sehnsucht took place while reading poetry or literature, and if not, it was because it transported him to the places in those stories. For example, looking up at the night sky took him to the great northern expanse of Norse Mythology and Balder the god.

But why story? Our parents read us stories as children, and, once we're old enough, we read them for ourselves. And before you know it—sometimes even before we can read or write—we're making our own stories. There must be something fundamental about it that modern man has difficulty grasping. (Incidentally, this may explain why my generation seems to hate reading so much and why modern culture as a whole is striving to recover a love for reading in children.)

I think Lewis hit upon it when he described myths as "lies breathed through silver." We all long for stories and enjoy them so much because we are looking for that One Story in which we are all players. That is why when Lewis realized that Christianity is a true myth—the one story that is completely and utterly true—his heart was won over and the rest of him promptly followed.

This is why Lewis is "surprised" by Joy. All his life he believed the lies too good to be true, and then finally found the truth to be even better.

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### **Courtney Carlson says**

This was interesting, but considering the very lengthy and detailed set-up, the denouement was hasty and disappointing. It barely brought together any of the varied strands he'd investigated; especially, his final treatment of "Joy" is relegated to one brief paragraph on the final page, and he fails to explain how Christianity satisfies/fulfills this feeling.

He believes it does, as he says in *Mere Christianity*: "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."

But he could better have explained what N. T. Wright calls "signposts" and "places where heaven and earth

meet." Or, as Van Til says so well: "Christianity stands...in antithetical relation to the religions of the world, but it also offers itself as the fulfillment of that of which the nations have unwittingly had some faint desire."

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Okay, I started this today and finished it today, and will probably reread it. This has happened with many of Lewis' books. I've read The Four Loves several times and am getting ready to reread Miracles. There often seems to be a lot that I don't get first time through.

This is a wonderful book with some less than wonderful parts. By that I mean discourses on difficult or unpleasant events and/or topics. I won't try to go over this volume in any kind of detail. I suspect it will "strike" different readers in different ways. The book communicated to me on several levels. From surprise at the details about certain things in the British Public School system (circa early 1900s) and thankfulness that America was spared those parts to a realization that most people in the last 60 years (+or-) could be argued to have received almost no education. The book is valuable simply on the level of a biography and personal account history. (My generation, for example, was the first where Latin and what was then called "foreign languages" became "elective" classes instead of simply being required. In my generation basic math, reading, grammar skills, along with at least rudimentary knowledge of history, and social studies was "required" to pass from grade to grade and then graduate.)

Aside from this however and on deeper levels the book deals with Lewis' rejection of all things spiritual, mystical, metaphysical or religious and decision to become an atheist. It then leads us through his life and reasoning from there to theism and then to Christianity.

I could say a lot more about this book but I can't in this limited space give an account that would come close to doing it justice.

Highly recommended.

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### **Douglas Wilson says**

Great. Finished yet again in November of 2017. And again in January of 2018.

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### **anca dc says**

cel mai ciuda mi'e ca nu imi las notitele proaspete, atunci cand citesc cartea. pentru ca dupa aceea nu mai ii simt pulsul in acelasi fel, nu mai este totul proaspat in mine si apoi nu mai am aceeasi usuratate in exprimarea insemnatati scrierii respective. asta ii asa, in general, dar si in special pentru cartea asta si lewis...asa ca o sa urmeze niste notite care mie imi par asa seci, serbede..imi pare rau. asta e! invatatura de minte!

mi'a placut:

\* franchetea lui de la inceput:) ca aceasta carte nu ii menita sa fie citita de oricine, ci numai de cei care au perseverenta de a trece de un anumit punct. a construit'o in felul asta.

- \* relatia deosebita cu fratele lui si lumea pe care si'au creat'o si felul in care evadau in ea:) ingenios! mi'ar fi placut si mie sa fiu un copil atat de bogat in imaginatie.
- \* sinceritatea fata de el insusi, in mai multe aspecte. de exemplu, cand vorbea de tatal sau ori cand descria cum era el [in special:]. pe mine m'a uimit.
- \* detaliileeee!!!! <3<3 pana la cer si inapooooi!! extraordinar!! ..si in descrierile peisajelor si locurilor [pe mine m'a facut sa fiu acolo, sa'mi doresc sa fiu in peisajele alea:], dar si a vietii, pur si simplu.
- \* oamenii pe care i'a ales sa ii descrie: profesorii lui si prietenii. mi'a placut la arthur cum l'a facut constient de simturi:) [nu am sa pun si eu bine-cunoscutul paragraf cu ei doi:P:)]
- \* m'a fascinat rationalul din el, eu fiind o simtitoare. normal ca mi'a placut. doooh! ..si uaaai. cum o explicat toata experinta!! dar mai ales *locul* intelegerii intregului Adevar!:)

consider ca afirmatiile despre Dumnezeu pe care le'am spicuit mai jos nu pot fi intelese in afara contextului si experientei traite si prezentate de lewis. cel putin, anumite.

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In Cartea de rugaciuni scrie ca **trebuie "sa'i aducem multumiri lui Dumnezeu pentru marea lui slava", ca si cand ii datoram mai multe multumiri pentru ceea ce este El cu necesitate decat pentru orice alt beneficiu pe care ni'l confera; asa si facem si a'l cunoaste pe Dumnezeu inseamna a sti acest lucru.**

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*Plimbarea si discutia sunt doua mari placeri, dar este o greseala sa le amesteci.* Larma pe care o facem eclipseaza sunetele si tacerile lumii exterioare; de la vorba se ajunge aproape inevitabil la fumat si atunci adio natura pentru unul dintre simturi. **Nu te poti plimba decat cu un prieten (cum era Arthur pentru mine, in vacante) care sa-ti impartaseasca atat de bine preferinta pentru fiecare schimbare a peisajului, incat o privire, un popas sau cel mult un gest sa fie de ajuns a'ti confirma ca placerea este impartasita.**

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Un tanar care doreste sa ramana un ateu inveterat se cuvine sa'si selecteze cu mare grija lecturile. Capcane sunt peste tot - "Biblia deschise, surprize cu nemiluita", cum spunea Herbert, "plase si stratageme iscusite". *Dumnezeu este, daca imi pot permite s'o spun, foarte lipsit de scrupule.*

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Cuvintele *compelle intrare*, siliti'i sa intre, au fost atat de denaturate de oameni nelegiuiti, incat ne cutremuram in fata lor; dar, intelese cum se cuvine, ele masoara nemarginirea milei Divine. **Asprimea lui Dumnezeu este mai gingasa decat blandetea omeneasca, iar constrangerea Lui este libertatea noastra.**

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**Dumnezeu trebuie ascultat pentru ceea ce este in Sine. Daca va intrebati de ce ar trebui sa ascultam pe Dumnezeu, in ultima instanta raspunsul este "Eu sunt". A'l cunoaste pe Dumnezeu inseamna a sti ca ii datoram ascultare.**

## David Sarkies says

### Not quite an autobiography

24 May 2014

It is a little difficult to categorise this book since while in part it is an autobiography, Lewis goes to great pains to exclaim otherwise. One could also suggest that it falls into a category of Christian literature known as a testimony: a story that is told by the author as to how they became a Christian. However this particular book sort of does not follow the two forms that that type of literature takes, which are:

- 1) I was a really, really, really bad person, but then God came along and now I am not; or
- 2) I became a Christian and this is how God has had an impact in my life.

As I have suggested this book does not necessarily follow either of these forms because while it is closer to the first form, normally the writer of that style of testimony goes to great pains to emphasise how bad and evil they were so that the contrast of their current lives acts as evidence of God having worked in them (and the problem with that form is that the author tends to spend so much time emphasising their bad aspects, they have little to no time to outline how God has changed them, as well as the statements about how they have changed being quite subjective, and as such need to rely upon other people as references to their changed life).

The reason that I suggest this this particular book differs from the standard testimony is that Lewis does not emphasise his wickedness, and in fact he does not seem to suggest that he really was all that wicked – or at least no less bad than the next person (for as the Bible says in the book of Romans: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God).

So, the question that is then raised is what is it with this book and what does it teach us about its author. Well, what I would have to say is that in a way it takes us on Lewis' journey through life to that point in time when he came to discover the joy of life, and in another way it also chronicles his intellectual development through not just his learning and his reading, but also through his life experiences. From what I discovered from this book, it appears that Lewis was one of those 'large' boys that is always picked on at school because while they are large, they are not necessarily strong, nor are they all that popular. We also learn that C.S. Lewis was in the trenches for the last part of World War I and came to experience the nature of war first hand. However, while he does state 'this is war, this is what Homer wrote about' I get a completely different idea of war from his description: modern warfare was nothing like the warfare of the Ancient Greeks in that the war Homer describes is a war where the fighting is not only up close and personal, but it also has the generals and leaders getting into the thick of the actions. In contrast, there was nothing personal about World War I; in fact it seemed that the entire war was the end point of industrialisation in which it was little more than a machine that simply existed to destroy people in the most bloody and painful ways possible.

His story about his time at Wyvern (which when I first read the book, I believed it was a name that was made up so as to protect the guilty, but I have since, after quickly performing an internet search, discovered otherwise) is also quite interesting as he seems to pull the cover off what goes on in these exclusive English Public Schools. Mind you, I have never been to a boarding school, nor have I studied at a boys school, so I am unable to authenticate whether there was homosexuality going on between what Lewis calls the 'Bloods' and those known as the 'tarts'. However, it is interesting to note his comments on the topic as I do not believe it is mentioned elsewhere. However, let us take note that:

- 1) It occurred in Edwardian England, and enough for it to be noticeable;
- 2) If you were caught it would result in gaol time;
- 3) Lewis does not seem to think that the reason people do not like it has anything to do with any Biblical prohibition but rather because of its criminal nature, and anybody that is caught in a homosexual relationship is no doubt going to be treated the same as anybody else committing a crime;
- 4) Lewis believes that there are much greater sins that are accepted and does not understand why it is that homosexuals are punished while proud and greedy people get away with their actions;
- 5) He does not believe that he has any right to comment on it or speaking out against it.

After Lewis returns home from war the book, for some reason, seems to drift into some sort of esoteric form of writing as he outlines how he meets believers at Oxford (including Tolkien) and how he fights and riles against Christianity only to, in the end, reluctantly concede, at first, that there is a God, and then, as he begins to investigate spirituality, comes to accept that Christianity is the one religion that he can call authentic. In a sense the joy that he comes to discover through Christianity is a type of joy that he had not encountered elsewhere, such as the joy of reading a good book, or the joy that one gets out of pleasurable activity. In fact, as Lewis suggests, humanities desire for pleasure arises from that desire to find joy and to fill oneself with that joy due to the fact that one's life seems empty without it. It is not that pleasure gives joy, but rather it creates a short terms satisfaction that must be continually met because once the initial rush has worn off then the crash comes, and when one crashes, it tends to end up being much, much harsher than the initial rush (though that is always very subjective because while one tends to crash after the rush, when the crash comes, the rush is suddenly a distant memory).

What Lewis is suggesting (and what many other Christians also suggest) is that what God provides is that sense of joy and contentment that, well, may not be as intense and as strong as say ecstasy, but is a type and form of joy that gives one strength to continue. Personally, I would suggest otherwise because Christianity is not all beer and skittles (just ask a martyr, if you could because, well, martyrs end up being, well, dead), but what Christianity gives you (that, well, ecstasy doesn't) is not just a sense of hope, but a hope that all of this bad stuff will simply not last forever.

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## John says

This book wasn't what I was expecting. At first, I had expected it to be the story of how Lewis met his wife, Joy, as was portrayed in the movie SHADOWLANDS with Anthony Hopkins. Upon learning that such was not the case, I then expected it to be a straight-forward autobiographical account of Lewis' life. Wrong again. Actually, SURPRISED BY JOY is a memoir about Lewis' formative years. More specifically, it deals with Lewis' early rejection of Christianity and the manner in which he eventually returned to the fold. Most of the book, however, is given to childhood reminiscences and reflections on various books that had an impact on him as a young man. All that is well and good, but I found it a bit dull. Early on in SURPRISED BY JOY, Lewis states that the best part of any biography is the stuff at the beginning, the stuff that deals with the subject in his or her youth. This is where Lewis and I differ. I'm generally not all that interested in people's childhoods and would much prefer them to get on with talking about their life's work and accomplishments. SURPRISED BY JOY doesn't really give us a glimpse into Lewis' professional life, and that was what disappointed me about it. That certainly doesn't make it a bad book--just not my style. As for the quality of the writing and the degree of insight throughout, it's every bit as brilliant as you'd expect from a writer of Lewis' caliber.

## Morgan says

Interesting to read immediately after *The Pilgrim's Regress*. I could see how the latter was an allegorical representation of his own conversion. I only wish he'd written a regular autobiography as well, for I'm very interested to hear of his later life in his own words.

Recommended for: Ages 15 to Adult (mentions of sinful behavior by the other boys at school, and mentions of certain temptations)

Many years ago, I read the first few chapters of this book as research for a speech on C.S. Lewis. I simply didn't have time to read the whole thing then, but I think I'm glad I waited until now. I don't think I would have quite understood the purpose of the book in the frame of mind I was in at the time, and without having read *The Pilgrim's Regress*.

Lewis covers his childhood much in the way that any man might cover his childhood in an autobiography, relating the general atmospheres of his home and schools, notable events, and particular memories. But he also has a slightly different focus. He always tells of the flashes of what he called Joy, sharply distinguished from both Happiness and Pleasure, a thing which becomes more apparent as the book progresses. Having just come out of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, an allegorical representation of Lewis's journey to Christianity, I recognized his Joy as the real life basis for *John's Island*. I would recommend reading those two books one right after the other, though I'm not sure if the way I happened to do it is best, or if you'd be better going the other way around.

His school experience was interesting. His first boarding school was terrible in basically every way, his second not so bad, though he was bullied somewhat, and his time at that school did not last long. Wyvern is why I give an age caution on the book. While he was never involved himself, he does address the fact that there was some homosexuality between the older and younger boys. Yet during his time at Wyvern, despite how horrible it was, he managed to find Joy through the books he discovered.

Post school is really where he starts focusing on the specifics that affected his religion. He called himself a reluctant convert, and it's easy to see throughout this book how that was so. But it's also easy to see how inescapable God's calling is. Lewis resisted, but it is impossible to ignore that God was calling him. Even which authors he discovered point back to God's calling.

What I find interesting is how logical Lewis was. He really thought things through. It may be more difficult to see in his fiction, but it's very apparent in his nonfiction. And logically, he could not make himself adhere to his teenage and young adult atheism. "A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading." This was certainly true in Lewis's case. And it was very interesting to see how someone with Lewis's background could grow to become one of the most influential Christian writers of his time.

For more reviews from me and my sisters, visit [www.shirereviews.blogspot.com](http://www.shirereviews.blogspot.com)

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## Demetrius Rogers says

I love *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I even like *The Screwtape Letters*. But, I haven't really connected with

Lewis' essays as much. I've never really been able to follow his train of thought. Maybe it's his brittishness, or perhaps his discursive mind, but I just can't seem to hang with his discourse. However, I love his imaginative works! And oh man, I love his Till We Have Faces. Anybody who can write such literature deserves further investigation. Well, after reading this autobiography, I'm even hungrier to know more. Cause he had this curious thing for what he called 'Northernness.' And he explained it this way: "a vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity... almost like heartbreak, the memory of Joy itself..." And it was this Northernness that fueled his literary imagination. And you can see it, taste it, and smell it in his fictional works.

And it got me thinking... passion is an interesting thing. The object of one's passion may or may not be something especially interesting... until it's covered over with the flames of somebody's passion, and then... then it becomes something beautiful. "Northernness," in and of itself, wouldn't of ever got my attention. But, cloaked in Lewis' imagination... I can't seem to get enough. I love it too, because Lewis loved it, and gave me a reason for loving it. I think that's one of the great lessons in the art of pedagogy -- find what you love (what you LOVE) and give that to others. "Northernness," thanks to the likes of Lewis and his forebears, is one of literature's great gifts.

So much more in this account, but that's what I appreciated most.

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## Lavinia says

"Surprised by Joy" este autobiografia intelectuala a lui C.S. Lewis si prezinta trecerea lui de la crestinismul din copilarie la ateism, la teism si apoi la un crestinism matur. In prima parte a cartii descrie copilaria in Irlanda, relatia cu tatal si fratele lui, apoi diversele scoli si internate prin care a trecut, anii petrecuti la Oxford si experienta primului razboi mondial. Intors la Oxford dupa citiva ani, intilneste mai multi intelectuali crestini, printre care si J.R.R. Tolkien. Lecturile lui sint masive si impresionante, incepind cu mitologie [nordica, celtica si greaca:], continuind cu poetii romantici, filozofi [Aristotel, Berkeley, Hegel:], ajungind pina la autori crestini, cum ar fi Milton si G. K.Chesterton. In 1929, in timpul unei calatorii cu autobuzul [ :) ] accepta existenta lui Dumnezeu. In 1931, dupa o lunga discutie cu Tolkien si Dyson despre crestinism si mitologie, si o lunga noapte de lupta cu ideea acceptarii lui Isus ca fiinta divina, devine crestin.

Cei [ca mine:] care se astepta sa gaseasca o o trezire spectaculoasa la Realitate, vor fi usor dezamagiti. Pentru ca totul se intimpla la nivel intelectual, tot procesul e unul rational. Cartea merita oricum citita. Mi-a placut mult fragmentul in care vorbeste de intoarcerea lui din razboi, profesor fiind, si-i face prieteni pe Tolkien si H.Dyson, iar cind afla ca acestia sint crestini ajunge sa exclaim: "these queer people seemed now to pop on every side!". ;)

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I-am gasit pe arthur stind in pat, in capul oaselor. pe masa de alaturi era un exemplar din "myths of the norsemen".

si *tie* iti place cartea asta? am intrebat eu.

si *tie* iti place cartea asta? a intrebat el.

in clipa urmatoare tineam amindoi cartea in miini, sedeam cu capetele aplecate deasupra ei, aratam cu degetul, citam, vorbeam - aproape strigam - descoperind, intr-un torent de intrebari, ca eram incintati nu doar de acelasi lucru, ci si de aceleasi fragmente si in acelasi fel; ca amindoi simtiseram sageata Bucuriei si ca, pentru amindoi, sageata fusese trasa din nord. mii de oameni au avut experienta descoperirii celui dintii

prieten, dar ea continua sa fie o minune; o minune la fel de mare [pace romancierilor:] ca prima iubire, sau chiar mai mare. fiind departe de a crede in posibilitatea de a avea un prieten, nu tinjise niciodata sa am unul, nu mai mult decit sa ajung regele angliei. daca as fi descoperit ca arthur concepuse in mod independent o replica exacta a lumii boxoniene, nu as fi fost din cale-afara de surprins. probabil nimic nu este mai uluitor in viata unui om decit descoperirea ca exista de fapt oameni care-i seamana foarte, foarte mult.

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## Madelyn says

**"Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back....everything is different."**

I can easily mark this as my favorite autobiography. It didn't drone on and on as most others do. Starting out in his childhood, spreading through his years at Oxford and when he served as professor, and ending shortly after his conversion to Christianity, there was insight for almost every season of life. I've been a long-time reader of many of the classic Lewis works (Mere Christianity, Narnia, etc.) and even some lesser known works (Till We Have Faces). But after I read this intuitive book, His novels shine with a new light, and it brought my enjoyment of them to a whole new level.

### FACTS ABOUT C. S. LEWIS:

-He had a certain condition as a child where he couldn't move either of his thumbs. Because of this, he wasn't able to do many things normal children do, such as using scissors, painting, building with blocks, etc. It's this condition that drove him to read.

-One of his favorite authors as a child (and adult) was George MacDonald. He was one of the very few Christian authors he read. He realized early on that there was something in MacDonald's writing that all the other books were missing. Ultimately, this author played a large part in his conversion.

See the full review (with pictures!) at my blog, Literary Cafe: <http://literarycafe.weebly.com/home/s...>

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## Lydia Dyslin says

Surprised by Joy is by C.S. Lewis.

I really enjoyed this book. I liked learning more about C.S. Lewis's life. I have enjoyed most of the books I have read that are by him, and I enjoyed reading his conversion story.

Many of the references to literature were lost on me, though. He compared an event in his life to some ancient poem that I had never read, and so most of that side of the book was lost on me.

However, even if I didn't understand a lot of the references, I still liked reading the book. It was interesting and I appreciated his ability to analyze different things that happened to him in his life and how they had a long-term effect on him.

I did wish the book talked a little more about his later life and about the people who really helped convince him there was a God (like J.R.R. Tolkien! He only got a sentence or two, sadly).

4 stars out of 5. I will probably re-read this again when I am older and I will probably pick up more of the

deep things in this book. (Because I will be the first to admit I probably missed LOTS of good stuff that is here. XD)

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