

Discussion Guide – 10/22/25

Chapter 23

- I. **Passage:** “Through this girl and her disgusting family the patient is now getting to know more Christians every day, and very intelligent Christians too. For a long time it will be quite impossible to remove spirituality from his life. Very well then; we must corrupt it.”
 - A. **Verse:** “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20.
- II. **Passage:** “Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a ‘historical Jesus’ to be found by clearing away later ‘accretions and perversions’ and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition. In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a ‘historical Jesus’ on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new ‘historical Jesus’ on Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines. . . . [F]or each ‘historical Jesus’ is unhistorical. . . . [E]ach new ‘historical Jesus’ therefore has to be got out of them by suppression at one point and exaggeration at another.”
 - A. **Verse:** “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8.
 - B. **Verse:** “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.” 2 Corinthians 11:3–4.
- III. **Passage:** “We thus distract men’s minds from who He is, and what He did. We first make Him solely a teacher, and then conceal the very substantial agreement between His teachings and those of all other great moral teachers. For humans must not be allowed to notice that all great moralists are sent by the Enemy not to inform men but to remind them, to restate the primeval moral platitudes against our continual concealment of them.”
 - A. **Verse:** “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’” John 14:6.
 - B. **Verse:** “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:8.

- C. **Verse:** “For He himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” Ephesians 2:14.
- IV. **Passage:** “Our third aim is, by these constructions, to destroy the devotional life. For the real presence of the Enemy, otherwise experienced by men in prayer and sacrament, we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago.”
- A. **Verse:** “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” James 4:8.
- B. **Verse:** “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20.
- C. **Verse:** “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9.
- D. **Verse:** “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1.
- V. **Passage:** “About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster.”
- A. **Verse:** “Thus says the LORD: ‘Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.’” Jeremiah 22:3.
- B. **Verse:** “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ‘You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.’” Matthew 5:13–14.
1. **Comment:** The Enemy wants to separate our spirituality from the rest of our lives; but the truth is, faith is meant to transform every area of who we are. Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world—preserving against moral and spiritual decay, and shining as a beacon to those in darkness. When our faith is lived out openly, it inevitably shapes even our political and social lives,

promoting the justice and righteousness God calls us to pursue.

- VI. **Passage:** “[M]ake men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but, failing that, as a means to anything—even to social justice. The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist’s shop. . . . ‘Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason.’ That’s the game.”

- A. **Verse:** “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!’” Acts 8:18–20.
- B. **Verse:** “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10.
- C. **Verse:** “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:7–8.

Chapter 24

- I. **Passage:** “It is an unobtrusive little vice which she shares with nearly all women who have grown up in an intelligent circle united by a clearly defined belief; and it consists in a quite untroubled assumption that the outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and ridiculous. . . . Hers, which she supposes to be due to Faith, is in reality largely due to the mere colour she has taken from her surroundings. . . . Now the element of ignorance and naïvety in all this is so large, and the element of spiritual pride so small.”
- A. **Verse:** Luke 18:9–14.
1. **Comment:** Jesus tells the parable of a Pharisee (a religious leader) and a tax collector who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee looked down on the tax collector, boasting in

his own righteousness, while the tax collector humbly asked for God's mercy. The lesson for us is that believers are not inherently "better" than unbelievers; we are all sinners in need of grace. No matter the type of sin, redemption comes only through the same Savior—Jesus Christ.

B. **Verse:** "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." Romans 12:3.

C. **Verse:** "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4:7.

II. **Passage:** "It is always the novice who exaggerates. The man who has risen in society is over-refined, the young scholar is pedantic. . . . Can you get him to imitate this defect in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial in her becomes in him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride? . . . The new circle in which he finds himself is one of which he is tempted to be proud for many reasons other than its Christianity. It is a better educated, more intelligent, more agreeable society than any he has yet encountered."

A. **Verse:** "We all possess knowledge. But knowledge puffs up while love builds up." 1 Corinthians 8:1.

III. **Passage:** "He has no notion how much in him is forgiven because they are charitable and made the best of because he is now one of the family. He does not dream how much of his conversation, how many of his opinions, are recognised by them all as mere echoes of their own. . . . He thinks that he likes their talk and way of life because of some congruity between their spiritual state and his, when in fact they are so far beyond him that if he were not in love he would be merely puzzled and repelled by much which he now accepts."

A. **Verse:** "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." Romans 12:16.

IV. **Passage:** "He must be made to feel (he'd better not put it into words) 'how different we Christians are'; and by 'we Christians' he must really, but unknowingly, mean 'my set'; and by 'my set' he must mean not 'The people who, in their charity and humility, have accepted me', but 'The people with whom I associate by right'."

A. **Verse:** "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28.

- B. **Verse:** “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.” Matthew 23:8.
- V. **Passage:** “Teach him, using the influence of this girl when she is silliest, to adopt an air of amusement at the things the unbelievers say.”
- A. **Verse:** “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Colossians 4:5–6.
- B. **Verse:** “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15.

Chapter 25

- I. **Passage:** “If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring. Work on their horror of the Same Old Thing.”
- A. **Verse:** “Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.’” Jeremiah 6:16.
- B. **Verse:** “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” 2 Timothy 4:3.
- II. **Passage:** “Now just as we pick out and exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for absolute novelty. This demand is entirely our workmanship. . . . Only by our incessant efforts is the demand for infinite, or unrhythmical, change kept up. . . . [I]t diminishes pleasure while increasing desire. . . . [T]he more rapacious this desire, the sooner it must eat up all the innocent sources of pleasure and pass on to those the Enemy forbids.”
- A. **Verse:** “That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9.
- B. **Verse:** “Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.” Proverbs 27:20.

- C. **Verse:** “The fool folds his hands And consumes his own flesh.
Better a handful with quietness Than both hands full, together
with toil and grasping for the wind.” Ecclesiastes 4:4–6.
- III. **Passage:** “The use of Fashions in thought is to distract the attention of men from their real dangers. We direct the fashionable outcry of each generation against those vices of which it is least in danger and fix its approval on the virtue nearest to that vice which we are trying to make endemic. The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly gunwale under.”
- A. **Verse:** “You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” Matthew 23:24.
- IV. **Passage:** “The Enemy loves platitudes. Of a proposed course of action He wants men, so far as I can see, to ask very simple questions; is it righteous? is it prudent? is it possible? Now if we can keep men asking ‘Is it in accordance with the general movement of our time? Is it progressive or reactionary? Is this the way that History is going?’ they will neglect the relevant questions. And the questions they do ask are, of course, unanswerable; . . . what the future will be depends very largely on just those choices which they now invoke the future to help them to make.”
- A. **Verse:** “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8.
- B. **Verse:** “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:17.

Chapter 26

- I. **Passage:** “Yes; courtship is the time for sowing those seeds which will grow up ten years later into domestic hatred. The enchantment of unsatisfied desire produces results which the humans can be made to mistake for the results of charity.”
- A. **Verse:** “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.

- II. **Passage:** “[T]each a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them. . . . Another great help, where the parties concerned are male and female, is the divergence of view about Unselfishness which we have built up between the sexes. A woman means by Unselfishness chiefly taking trouble for others; a man means not giving trouble to others. . . . Thus while the woman thinks of doing good offices and the man of respecting other people’s rights, each sex, without any obvious unreason, can and does regard the other as radically selfish.”
- A. **Verse:** “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21.
- B. **Verse:** “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Romans 12:10.
- III. **Passage:** “You must make them establish as a Law for their whole married life that degree of mutual self-sacrifice which is at present sprouting naturally out of the enchantment, but which, when the enchantment dies away, they will not have charity enough to enable them to perform. They will not see the trap, since they are under the double blindness of mistaking sexual excitement for charity and of thinking that the excitement will last.”
- A. **Verse:** “For love is as strong as death . . . Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it.” Song of Solomon 8:6–7.
- B. **Verse:** “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:12–13.
- IV. **Passage:** “If each side had been frankly contending for its own real wish, they would all have kept within the bounds of reason and courtesy; but just because the contention is reversed and each side is fighting the other side’s battle, all the bitterness which really flows from thwarted self-righteousness and obstinacy and the accumulated grudges of the last ten years is concealed from them by the nominal or official ‘Unselfishness’ of what they are doing or, at least, held to be excused by it.”
- A. **Verse:** “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” James 4:1.
- B. **Verse:** “So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” Romans 2:3–4.

- V. **Passage:** “Some degree of mutual falseness, some surprise that the girl does not always notice just how Unselfish he is being, can be smuggled in already. Cherish these things, and, above all, don’t let the young fools notice them. If they notice them they will be on the road to discovering that ‘Love’ is not enough, that charity is needed and not yet achieved and that no external law can supply its place.”
- A. **Verse:** “Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:14.
- B. **Verse:** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Ephesians 5:25.

Chapter 27

- I. **Passage:** “The use of his ‘love’ to distract his mind from the Enemy is, of course, obvious[.] . . . When this, or any other distraction, crosses his mind you ought to encourage him to thrust it away by sheer will power and to try to continue the normal prayer as if nothing had happened.”
- A. **Verse:** “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:6.
- B. **Verse:** “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Romans 8:26.
- II. **Passage:** “False spirituality is always to be encouraged.”
- A. **Verse:** “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.” Isaiah 29:13.
- III. **Passage:** “[W]orry him with the haunting suspicion that [prayer] is absurd and can have no objective result. Don’t forget to use the ‘heads I win, tails you lose’ argument. If the thing he prays for doesn’t happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don’t work; if it does happen, he will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which led up to it, and ‘therefore it would have happened anyway’, and thus a granted prayer becomes just as good a proof as a denied one that prayers are ineffective.”
- A. **Verse:** “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16.

- B. **Verse:** “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” 1 John 5:14.
- IV. **Passage:** “Why that creative act leaves room for their free will is the problem of problems, the secret behind the Enemy’s nonsense about ‘Love’. How it does so is no problem at all; for the Enemy does not foresee the humans making their free contributions in a future, but sees them doing so in His unbounded Now. And obviously to watch a man doing something is not to make him do it.”
- A. **Verse:** “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’” Isaiah 46:10.
- B. **Verse:** “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” 2 Peter 3:8.
- V. **Passage:** “Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating the Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true.”
- A. **Verse:** “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16.
- B. **Verse:** “Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.” Isaiah 46:8–9.
- C. **Verse:** “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” John 17:17.
- VI. **Passage:** “And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another.”
- A. **Verse:** “Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.” Deuteronomy 32:7.
- B. **Verse:** “I will utter hidden things, things from of old—things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next

generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.” Psalm 78:2–4.

C. **Verse:** “Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors.” Proverbs 22:28.

1. **Comment:** This proverb uses the metaphor of ancient boundary stones to warn against erasing or disregarding God’s truth handed down through the generations. God desires us to learn from both the faithfulness and the failures of those who came before us, so that we may hold fast to His unchanging Word.