



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,



All Jesus did that day was tell stories – a long storytelling afternoon. His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy: "I will open my mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world's first day."

Matthew 13:34,35 (The Message)



Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.

Philippians 4:8 (The Message)

Many well-meaning Christian leaders take a seemingly biblical stance against what is perceived as subtle demonic presences into otherwise good stories. "Beware!" is the watchword these religious folks proclaim. Some of these teachers spend much of their time on what they perceive as the 'dangerous demonic element' that has been slipped in to the story. Yet that is their sole focus, with little room for examining the good the story has to offer. Of course, we *do* need to be aware of mixtures. A little poison positioned in just the right place can do great harm. We are foolish not to keep that in focus.

Nevertheless, I have seen this watchdog stance backfire in many Christian circles for decades now. And in too many cases, the warnings to watch out for evil are not very helpful. What is produced from such concerns is a *fear* of the evil, not a discernment of it. This not only produces an increasingly immature lack of discretion, but a shrinking awareness of the great good offered in many stories. Because this is a huge subject with increasing variations, it will not be helpful to write here in generalities. I will not point to present examples, but instead will take a brief look at two well-known older stories that most of us are familiar with.

Scrooge...The British 1951 version is the only film version of **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** I ever point to. Mary and I will find time this season to watch it again, maybe for the 50th time?! Besides great acting and music, the message is powerfully gospel-affirming, more than any other version I have ever seen of this classic Christmas story. It has opened the way for further discussion and examination of the nature of evil, the condition of man, and the power of the Presence of Jesus to transform. Yet I have encountered well-meaning folks who have refused to even allow it to be viewed! Why? Because, they say, "It has ghosts in it."

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe...To many, it may seem surprising that some resist this story in either book or film versions (though we all may find elements in the film we don't prefer). Thankfully, most of us embrace the magic and wonder of Narnia. Sadly though, I still encounter dear folks who have been negatively influenced by well-meaning but misguided Christians concerning C.S. Lewis and his writings. After all, they say, "Lewis smoked a pipe!" They are truly afraid of some dark powers sneaking in by way of the white witch casting her evil. To them, the roar of Aslan is not nearly so compelling for good as is the seduction from darkness for evil. There are still many believers who think they are staying true to the gospel by refusing *any* place for holy magic, the **Deep Magic**. I still encounter them. They mean well. But they are rigid, frightened, and joyless. I long for them to be free Narnians!

So what's my point? You all know these truths already. Why be reminded? My hope is this: that as we continue to deal with the labyrinth of current conflicts we all face every day, we do not lose our childlike wonder to embrace the Unseen Real. May we all find powerful encouragement and healing comfort for ourselves as we choose to transcend our confused daily culture by making proper room in our own hearts for holy symbols and images of Reality. Why? So that while the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet flood us with lies, we will find the place of true Reality. So that while we live here in what many call the real world, we will find the place of true Reality - not in headlines - but in stories of the Holy Imagination. And so that we will seek ways to help others to find new paths for the heart, especially those stuck in their heads. Then these others that have been overburdened - rigid, frightened, and joyless - can begin to nourish their minds with beauty and goodness that comes from the One who is Truth. Then, instead of the weight of visionless, wonder-less, grinding stress, their minds will find rest, peace, and contentment to overcome the darkness.

God is not nervous, nor is He angry. He is full of Joy and Peace. He is ready to correct us in Love. He longs to take us by the heart to His Heart, and will meet us there, where Reality does not bend to headlines. He is the Light of the world. Merry Christmas!



C. S. Lewis

Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for (over) a hundred years.

(from *The Weight of Glory*)

Oswald Chambers

Nature to a saint is sacramental. If we are children of God, we have a tremendous treasure in Nature. In every wind that blows, in every night and day of the year, in every sign of the sky, in every blossoming and in every withering of the earth, there is a real coming of God to us if we will simply use our starved imagination to realize it.

(from *My Utmost for His Highest*)





Closing Thoughts...



God is sparing me from many things which He knows that I cannot bare. But He is meeting me, and helping me when I turn from the needs and struggles toward Him. It is simply crazy, I mean wonderful crazy, how His peace comes when I purposefully turn to Him for Him. And He is with me, as if I am His only one. And He will be with you as though you are His only one, too. Look up to find Him there, shining His love down into your deepest hurt.

*May His peace be yours this holy season,
Clay and Mary*



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