

THE GREAT DIVORCE

STUDY GUIDE FOR

TEENS

**A Bible Study for Teenagers on the
C.S. Lewis Book *The Great Divorce***



By Alan Vermilye

“If we insist on keeping Hell (or even earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell.”

The Great Divorce



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A Bible Study for Teenagers
on the C.S. Lewis Book
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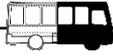
Version 1

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Introduction



I recently read a story about a man who has visited Disneyland every day since 2012. Now, more than five years later he has gone through the turnstiles 2,000 days in a row! I love Disney theme parks too, but that's commitment!

What about you? Could you visit the “happiest place on Earth” 2,000 days straight? What would you have to sacrifice in your life to do so?

In *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis, damned spirits from Hell take a celestial bus ride to visit Heaven. Once there, they are invited by people they formerly knew—relatives and friends—to stay forever.

Sounds like the opportunity of a lifetime, right? I mean, who wants to go back to a dark and dingy Hell when you're in the ultimate Disney Park ever! So, what's the catch?

It's really quite simple. You must honestly admit that you're wrong (repent of your sins) and then choose to do right (follow Jesus). Sounds easy enough, but is it really?

That's the hardest part about sin—to admit you're wrong. It can often be very hard to let go of what is dragging you down and instead embrace a better life that God has planned for you.

This story is not to be taken literally. Scripture records no bus-riding opportunities offering free passes into Heaven

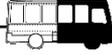
after death. The fact is, Hell is final. On the title page, you will find the following quote: “No, there is no escape. There is no heaven with a little of hell in it—no plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and feather.”

Everyone you meet in life is soul searching and their efforts either move them toward or away from God. As hard as it is to leave your old life of sin behind, it does get a little easier with each step. But you have to take that first step.

This is a fun book to read but also a bit challenging at times. Hang in there, take your time, and write notes in your book and in this study book. Most importantly, try to participate in a group discussion with others your age and with an adult leader.

I believe at the end of reading the book and completing this study, you will have a renewed passion for following Christ as well as getting rid of those things in your life that are dragging you down.

Preface



Have you ever heard the figure of speech, “You can’t have your cake and eat it too?” The idea is how difficult it can be to enjoy two things that are usually not possible to have together. For example, “Zach works every night and weekend to pay for his new car that he never has any time to enjoy.”

The same can be said about your life when following Christ, as in, “You can’t hold on to your sin and live a Christ-like life too.” It’s either one or the other. The fact is, we must completely reject our sin before the life that God has planned for us can be fully embraced.

A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for.

You are made in the image of what you desire.

Thomas Merton, Author and Theologian

1. If we allow our lives to be consumed with bad thoughts and immoral actions, what will eventually happen to our understanding of what is truly right and wrong?

2. Lewis says that there is good and there is evil and that there can be no “legitimate marriage” between the two. What “good” responses might a teenager use to justify the following “bad” behaviors?

- a) Cheating is okay as long as _____

- b) Premarital sex is okay as long as _____

- c) Drugs and alcohol are okay as long as _____

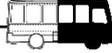
- d) Bullying someone is okay as long as _____

3. True or false: God has changed His standards throughout history to accommodate each person, place, and time.

4. Have you ever known someone who believed they could keep doing whatever they wanted while at the same time claiming to be a Christian? How did it work out for them?

5. Read Matthew 5:29–30. On our own personal journey to Heaven, why might it be necessary that we leave our “right hand” and “right eye” behind?

Chapter 1: Next Bus out of Hell



I think if I had a chance to catch the first bus out of Hell, I would be jumping for joy and would be the first person in line! Wouldn't you? We find the exact opposite in this chapter though. In fact, the people in line are argumentative, mean, and generally disagreeable to the point where some even leave the line believing there is a better option.

Perhaps we're really no better. Think about that sin or temptation that God wants you to leave behind, yet for some reason, you just can't seem to let it go. Why is that? Mainly our hesitancy is due to fear. We simply do not trust that God has something better for us.

*It is not death that a man should fear,
but he should fear never beginning to live.*

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor

1. Describe in detail the mood, atmosphere, images, and depictions of the grey town.

2. The grey town is an imaginative representation of Hell rather than an accurate, biblical representation of the real Hell. If you were to poll your friends, how might they describe Hell?

- a) They would say Hell does not exist.
- b) It's a place of eternal fire and torture.
- c) They would not know.
- d) Other _____

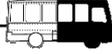
3. Using the following Bible passages, describe the nature of Hell. In your own words, how would you describe Hell to a friend?

- a) Revelation 14:10–11 –
- b) 2 Thessalonians 1:9 –
- c) Matthew 25:41 –
- d) Revelation 20:10 –

4. The messy-haired poet believes he is worthy to take this bus ride to Heaven but the others on the bus are not. How might your friends respond to your criticism of their sin while they see you ignoring your own? What might be a better approach?

5. The souls on the bus complain about the bus driver, saying, “Why can’t he behave naturally?” According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, why do unbelievers have difficulty relating to or understanding a believer’s joy?

Chapter 2: Jabber Jaws



Let's face it. Some of us like to talk more than others. There are others who are quieter and require less conversation. Which are you? Do you like to be in constant communication with others, or do you value your alone time?

This is where Lewis finds himself on his bus ride to Heaven. He wants to visually take in all that he is seeing, yet he cannot escape the conversation of others. It's in this setting that he learns a little more about the grey town, his fellow passengers, and their reasons for wanting to go to Heaven.

It was impossible to get a conversation going; everyone was talking too much.

Yogi Berra, Baseball Player

1. Have you ever known someone who tends to see themselves as the victim of almost every bad situation they find themselves in? Describe the characteristics of someone with a “victim mentality.”

2. Describe the messy-haired poet and what led to his death. What do you think he expects to find or receive once he gets to Heaven?

3. What more do we learn about the grey town from the Intelligent Ghost? What connection does the man draw to the length of time people have been in the grey town and their chances of making it to the bus stop?

4. Using a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your need for community (the fellowship of others with whom you share common attitudes, interests, and goals) in your life? Why would you choose that rating? Do you think advances in technology (i.e., phones, social media, etc.) have helped or hurt the ability to create a close community?

5. Read Matthew 19:16–22. According to the Intelligent Ghost, the residents of Hell build “unreal” houses that do not keep out the rain or danger. Just like the residents of Hell, what did the rich young ruler believe provided him a “feeling of safety”? What “feelings of safety” might a teenager substitute for Jesus today?

