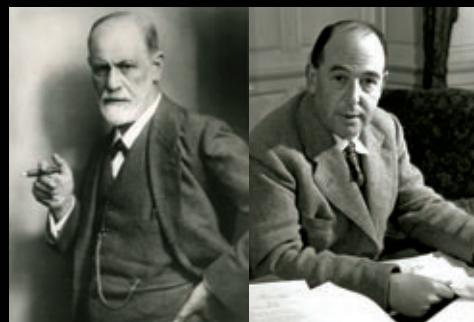


# THE QUESTION OF GOD

Sigmund Freud & C.S. Lewis WITH DR. ARMAND NICHOLI



A discussion guide to accompany  
the four-hour PBS series



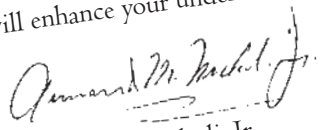
Dear Viewer,

When Harvard invited me to teach a course on Sigmund Freud many years ago, I focused the readings on Freud's philosophical writings. The students found these works provocative but unbalanced. When I added C.S. Lewis as a counterpoint, the class discussion ignited.

The writings of Freud and Lewis are strikingly parallel. Freud raises an argument and Lewis attempts to answer it. While Freud continues to serve as the primary spokesman for the secular worldview in our culture, Lewis, for many, serves as the primary spokesman for the spiritual worldview.

My book extended the discussion of "The Question of God" outside the classroom, and I am most pleased to continue the conversation with this television series. The series can serve as an excellent tool for lively discussions on the most basic issues of life with friends and neighbors—as well as in the classroom. I have found groups of 12 to 16 work best.

I encourage you, as I do my students, to focus on the arguments for both worldviews. Although this may at times be unsettling, ultimately it will prove strengthening. Above all, it will enhance your understanding of others.



Dr. Armand Nicholi, Jr.  
Author, *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud*  
*Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*



C. S. Lewis



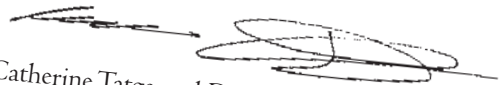
Sigmund Freud

Dear Viewer,

Does God really exist? While it's not exactly cocktail party conversation, this is a question on which we each take a position, both in our biggest decisions and in the minute details of our daily lives. For some of us the answer remains the same throughout our lives; for others, it evolves. When we came across Dr. Nicholi's work, we were struck that Freud and Lewis, arguably two of the most revered scholars in recent memory, chose to devote so much of their lives and work to reasoning through the question of God and the myriad other questions that arise from it. As filmmakers, we are storytellers, and so many stories start with such questions.

Though these two men likely never met, their works seem to speak to each other. Their conflicting worldviews challenge each other while their shared commitment to reason drives the dialogue. We have been captivated by this conversation and believe that you, as a viewer, will find yourself caught up as well. We welcome you to the table and look forward to the continuation of this debate.

Thank you,



Catherine Tatge and Dominique Lasseur  
Director / Producer, Producer

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## USING THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to help facilitate group discussions after viewing *The Question of God*. The guide is divided into nine sections, which include discussion questions, corresponding to the nine panel discussions in the series. Where appropriate, “answers” are provided following specific questions. These answers expand on material presented in the film and help to ground discussion group participants in the ideas and beliefs of Freud and Lewis. In addition, each set of discussion questions is introduced by the key question drawn from the corresponding video segment. The introduction also describes the content of each panel discussion in the series. Each discussion guide section includes the following types of questions:

**Before Viewing:** These questions ground the discussion by helping group participants identify their own ideas and uncertainties about the topics the series addresses. This reflection helps identify what each participant brings to the discussion and hones the group’s focus.

**After Viewing:** *The Question of God* presents a large amount of information on the lives and ideas of Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis. These questions are designed to help participants comprehend the content and context of the series more clearly.

**General Discussion:** Freud and Lewis’s worldviews form the basis of this series. These discussion questions bring their arguments into the present, engaging participants to critically evaluate them given their own knowledge and experience.

Also provided, as helpful resources, are brief facts about the lives of Freud and Lewis, group facilitation tips, and a bibliography of books written by Freud and Lewis.

This discussion guide is also available online at: [pbs.org/questionofgod](http://pbs.org/questionofgod)

### THE QUESTION OF GOD WEB SITE

[pbs.org/questionofgod](http://pbs.org/questionofgod)  
*The Question of God* Web site provides additional resources to support your group discussion. Below are some highlights from the site.

**Two Different Lives:** Series video, organized as side-by-side chapters, which compares the life stories, or “spiritual biographies,” of Lewis and Freud. Also includes printable program transcripts.

**In Their Own Words:** A selection of expanded excerpts from the works of Lewis and Freud.

**Other Voices:** A selection of readings on series-related topics by a wider circle of thinkers from various walks of life, including Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project; stage director Peter Sellars; philosopher William James; and comedian/writer Steve Martin.

**Nine Conversations:** Exchange views online with other thoughtful individuals around the country. A discussion forum based on each of the programs’ nine roundtable conversations lets site visitors contribute their own ideas on the themes they find most interesting from the series.

**Interviews:** Hear from the producers and director, Dominique Lasseur and Catherine Tatge, and the author and series’ host, Dr. Armand Nicholi.

**Resources:** Links to related online resources, plus books and other relevant materials.

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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

*The Question of God* explores two diametrically opposed views of human existence through the lives of Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis. Both wrote passionately on the subject of God's existence, rigorously and relentlessly pursuing truth, and both displayed courage of conviction in the ways they lived their lives. Their intellectual work strives to answer not only what we should believe, but also how we should live.<sup>1</sup>

The series raises several fundamental questions: Does God exist? How does one decide what is moral? What does it mean to love your neighbor? How are we to understand suffering and death? Through dramatic storytelling and compelling re-creations, Freud and Lewis debate the answers to these questions, and a panel of seven men and women, from diverse walks of life, confront these issues in their own lives.

### Program 1

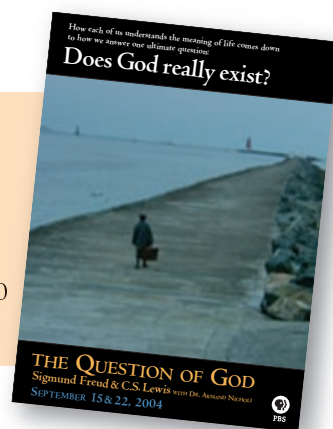
- This program begins with the early life experiences of Freud and Lewis. Freud is captivated by the power of science. Lewis's childhood is filled with creative imagination. He recalls his first intense experience of "Joy," which leads into the first panel discussion, *Transcendent Experience*.
- At the University of Vienna, Freud is fleetingly influenced by the theistic arguments of philosopher Franz Brentano; however, he chooses scientific materialism, rejecting the spiritual worldview. In *Science or Revelation?*, the panelists discuss whether "scientific work is the only road which can lead us to a knowledge of reality."<sup>2</sup>
- Early life experiences lead Lewis to reject his nominal childhood belief in God. Freud's atheism, however, results more from an intellectual process. His exploration of the mind through his patients reveals unexpected, powerful unconscious desires. The father of psychoanalysis concludes that the wish for an all-powerful, benevolent father-figure forms the basis of religion. The panelists discuss the relationship between parental authority and the concept of an ultimate authority in *The Exalted Father*.
- The last segment of Program 1 recounts Lewis's dramatic transition from militant atheist to outspoken believer. The panelists examine this transition in *Why Believe?* and *Miracles*.

### PROGRAM 2

- The program opens with a discussion of happiness. While Freud considers its prototype to be sexual love, Lewis asserts that true happiness can only be found in a relationship with God. Both agree that a great deal of happiness comes from our relationships with family and friends, but they differ in their understanding of love. In *Love Thy Neighbor*, the panelists discuss one of the basic precepts of the spiritual worldview that Freud rejects: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- The Great War and pervasive anti-Semitism turn Freud's attention to the "dark side" of humanity. In addition to the libido, Freud concludes that we are also driven by a death instinct, a destroying drive. This leads to a discussion of *The Human Condition*.
- During the Second World War, the British Broadcasting Corporation asked Lewis to speak about the spiritual worldview. His talks, an overwhelming success, are compiled in the best-selling book *Mere Christianity*. This book begins by asserting that we all seem to find ourselves under the Moral Law—an absolute standard of right and wrong that transcends time and culture. Lewis argues that the Moral Law implies a Moral Lawgiver and that our conscience points undeniably to a Creator. The panelists discuss this in *Moral Law*.
- The last segment of Program 2 recounts the suffering that Freud and Lewis endured in their lives—Freud's 16-year struggle with oral cancer, the death of his daughter, and anti-Semitism, and Lewis's tragic loss of his wife to cancer. The segment ends with how Freud and Lewis faced their own deaths and a panel discussion on *Suffering and Death*: Is the existence of evil, pain, and suffering consistent with an all-good, all-powerful God?

*The Question of God: Sigmund Freud & C.S. Lewis* is available on videocassette and DVD. The companion book is also available. To order, call PBS Home Video at 1-800-PLAY-PBS

VHS \$34.99 • DVD \$34.99 • Book \$25.00  
(plus S & H)



<sup>1</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*.

<sup>2</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 40.

## ABOUT SIGMUND FREUD AND C. S. LEWIS

|                     | SIGMUND FREUD   | CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| BORN                | May 6, 1856, Frieberg, Moravia  | November 29, 1898, Belfast, Ireland   |
| PROFESSION          | Founder of Psychoanalysis and physician   | Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English, author, and Christian apologist  |
| MAJOR INFLUENCES    | Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Charles Darwin<br>Mentored by Ernst Brücke   | Plato, Virgil, Dante, J.R.R. Tolkien<br>Mentored by William T. Kirkpatrick  |
| FAMILY              | Married Martha Bernays 1886, Six children   | Married Joy Gresham 1956, Two step-children   |
| TRADEGY & LOSS      | Loss of a beloved child<br>Struggled with cancer  | Loss of his mother during childhood<br>Death of his wife from cancer  |
| WORLDVIEW           | Secular or Scientific   | Spiritual   |
| FAMOUS PUBLICATIONS | <i>The Interpretation of Dreams, The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, The Question of Lay Analysis, An Autobiographical Study</i> | <i>The Screwtape Letters, Mere Christianity, The Problem of Pain, The Great Divorce, Miracles, The Chronicles of Narnia</i> |
| DIED                | September 23, 1939, London, England   | November 22, 1963, Cambridge, England   |

## SUGGESTIONS FOR VIEWING

The series can serve as an excellent tool for lively discussions on the most basic issues of life with friends and neighbors—as well as in the classroom. Nine panel discussions covering specific topics are interwoven throughout the four-hour series. These are natural stopping points for your group discussion. There are a number of ways you can view the programs, depending on the time constraints and interests of your group. You can view and discuss only the segments that are relevant to your group’s interests, or view and discuss the entire series. The length of each video segment is noted in each discussion guide. If you choose the latter, here are two suggested viewing strategies:

- 1 Host nine meetings to view and discuss one program segment at a time.
- 2 Host four meetings to view and discuss multiple program segments per meeting. Suggested segments include:
  - Meeting 1: Transcendent Experience; Science or Revelation?
  - Meeting 2: Exalted Father; Why Believe?; Miracles
  - Meeting 3: Love Thy Neighbor; The Human Condition
  - Meeting 4: Moral Law; Suffering and Death

In the nine-meeting model, view the program through the conclusion of each panel discussion, and then use this guide to discuss the content. In the abbreviated four-session model, view the suggested segments, then focus on the questions denoted with this symbol (👉) in this guide. Whichever option you choose, schedule one to two hours for each meeting.

## GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

This series raises some challenging questions. People generally identify with either a secular or spiritual worldview and many have strong opinions on the issues the series raises. Below are some suggestions to help you facilitate an open and engaging discussion.

- If possible, preview the series in its entirety and read the book on which the series is based—*The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*, by Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr. This will help to ground you in the content and give you time to process your own ideas and uncertainties before leading a discussion. You may also want to take a look at the Web site at: [pbs.org/questionofgod](http://pbs.org/questionofgod)
- Be aware of and sensitive to the worldviews of participants—let their interests inform your choice of questions.
- Keep the group size manageable—12–16 people or fewer works best.
- Plan your discussion sessions and topics based on your group’s needs.
- Review the questions beforehand. If you need additional information, consult the Bibliography.
- Keep in mind that these are sensitive issues. Charged reactions can best be avoided by focusing on the merits of Freud and Lewis’s arguments.
- Remind the group that a major goal of the discussion is to better understand the worldview they do not embrace, leading to a better understanding of one another.

“If the truth of religious doctrines is dependent on an inner experience... what is one to do about the many people who do not have this rare experience?”<sup>3</sup> ~ Freud

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in the world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”<sup>4</sup> ~ Lewis



Lewis called his transformative experience of nature and beauty “Joy”

## Transcendent Experience (32MINUTES)

How much do our early childhood experiences shape our worldview? Sigmund Freud began his life in a traditional Jewish household surrounded by the archetypal figures he would one day write about, while “Jack” Lewis grew up in Belfast, with his brother as a constant companion. Freud and Lewis encountered loss early in life, but their reactions sent them on divergent paths. The panel discusses Freud and Lewis’s early experiences, as well as their own.

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 How would you describe your “worldview”—your philosophy of life and reason for living?
- 2 This series considers two diametrically opposed worldviews. What are your initial impressions of the secular, or “scientific,” worldview? The “spiritual” worldview? 🍷

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 How does Lewis describe “Joy”? 🍷 “It is... an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction... and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure...”<sup>5</sup>

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 When have you ever experienced Lewis’s Joy? 🍷
- 2 Do you think every person on Earth has a worldview? Explain your answer.
- 3 How has your background (family, culture, education, life events) influenced your worldview?
- 4 How much has reason (as opposed to family and feelings) played a role in the formation of your worldview?
- 5 How does our worldview influence our lives? 🍷 “It helps us understand where we come from, our heritage; who we are, our identity; why we exist on this planet, our purpose; what drives us, our motivation; and where we are going, our destiny.”<sup>6</sup>
- 6 Why discuss Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis? 🍷
- 7 Are the worldviews of Freud and Lewis mutually exclusive? 🍷 “Most of us make one of two basic assumptions: we view the universe as a result of random events and life on this planet as a matter of chance; or we assume an Intelligence beyond the universe who gives the universe order, and life meaning.”<sup>7</sup>



Early in life, Freud's father immersed him in the Bible

<sup>3</sup> Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Ch. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

“But why anything comes to be there at all, and whether there is anything behind the things science observes...this is not a scientific question.”<sup>8</sup> ~ Lewis

“But scientific work is the only road which can lead us to a knowledge of reality...”<sup>9</sup> ~ Freud



Freud, the young neurologist

## Science or Revelation? (12 MINUTES)

Is the scientific method incompatible with the concept of revelation? For Freud, the young neurologist, spiritual reflection seems useless in light of biological understanding of the human condition. The panel discusses the concept of “truth.”

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 What is the “scientific method”?
- 2 How much of what you know derives from scientific observations you yourself have made?

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 How did medical progress in the late 19th century change people’s thinking about the human mind?
- 2 What is our only source of reliable knowledge in Freud’s view? 🍷 He writes: “[*The scientific worldview*] asserts that there are no sources of knowledge of the universe other than the intellectual working over of carefully scrutinized observations in other words, what we call research and alongside of it no knowledge derived from revelation, intuition or divination.”<sup>10</sup>
- 3 Freud realized that he could not definitively prove or refute the existence of God. Why then did he reject the spiritual worldview? Freud regarded the spiritual worldview as a form of wish-fulfillment. He writes: “We shall tell ourselves that it would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent Providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be.”<sup>11</sup>

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 Our current understanding of the mind owes much to Freud. He viewed our “mental apparatus” much like a complex machine. Freud predicted that the “future may teach us to exercise a direct influence, by means of particular chemical substances, on . . . the mental apparatus.”<sup>12</sup> Do you think that the human mind is fundamentally a physical device run by chemical reactions? 🍷
- 2 Is the “scientific method” the best way we have for establishing truth? Can science explain or answer our desire for meaning and purpose? 🍷



For Freud, the scientist, observation was the foundation of everything

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book I, Ch. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 62.

“God was the exalted father, and the longing for the father was the root of the need for religion.”<sup>13</sup> ~ Freud

“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists.”<sup>14</sup> ~ Lewis



The death of his father triggers vivid dreams which Freud connects with the unconscious

## *The Exalted Father* (26 MINUTES)

Do our early relationships color our attitudes in later life toward the concept of an ultimate authority? Bereft by his mother's death years earlier, Lewis witnesses brutality and harsh conditions in WWI that leave him furious at God. The tragedy of his disintegrating practice and dying father leads Freud on a journey of self-analysis, culminating in his conclusion that fear, longing, and admiration for our fathers are manifested in every religion as attitudes toward God. The panel discusses the role of human relationships in one's choice of worldview.

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 What influence did your parents have on your worldview?
- 2 What characteristics would you *wish* God to have if He existed? Are these similar to the characteristics of an ideal parent? How or how not? 🍷

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 What factors (family, culture, education, and life events) influenced the formation of Freud and Lewis's worldviews?
- 2 What is Freud's "Oedipus Complex"?

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 In Freud's view, belief in God arises out of a deep-seated, powerful wish for an omnipotent Father: *"When a human being has himself grown up... he is in possession of greater strength, but his insight into the perils of life has also grown greater... he still remains just as helpless and unprotected as he was in his childhood... Even now, therefore, he cannot do without the protection which he enjoyed as a child."*<sup>15</sup> Does *wishing* for God mean that He does or does not exist? 🍷
- 2 In his analysis of himself and his patients, Freud discovered ambivalent feelings directed toward the father. *"Freud asserts that one's ambivalence toward parental authority—especially the positive feelings of that ambivalence—forms the basis of one's deep-seated wish for God."*<sup>16</sup> Might strong negative feelings toward one's father (or parental authority in general) lead to the wish that God *not* exist? 🍷
- 3 Have we created God in the image of an Exalted Father? Or has God created us, together with our concept of the "ideal" parent that resembles Him? 🍷



Freud with patient undergoing psychoanalysis

<sup>13</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Ch. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Freud, "The Question of a Weltanschauung," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God*, p. 25.



“I was at this time living...in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing.”<sup>17</sup> ~ Lewis

“...[I]n the long run nothing can withstand reason and experience, and the contradiction which religion offers to both is all too palpable.”<sup>18</sup>  
~ Freud



A reluctant convert, Lewis returns to belief in God

## Why Believe? (18 MINUTES)

Does the persistent human longing for God prove that He exists? Embarking upon his career at Oxford, Lewis flirts with the idea that God may be just a tempting illusion before concluding that his desire for God is in fact evidence of his existence. The panel discusses the reasoning behind their worldviews.

## QUESTIONS

### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 What influences could prompt a transition in worldview in adulthood?
- 2 How open are you to the worldview you *do not* embrace? Describe your thought processes as you weighed the evidence both *for* and *against* embracing a particular worldview?

### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 Lewis begins to explore the meaning of his experiences of “Joy.” (Review his description on page 4). What did he conclude? 🍀 Lewis writes: “*But I now know that the experience... was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer.*”<sup>19</sup>
- 2 What did the writer-philosopher Owen Barfield (whom Lewis called “the wisest and best of my unofficial teachers”<sup>20</sup>) believe about the imagination?
- 3 What were some of the influences that changed Lewis’s worldview?
- 4 Lewis’s worldview shifted from spiritual to scientific and back during adulthood, while Freud never wavered in his embrace of the scientific worldview. What role did their chosen fields play in their choices? Why did Lewis waver? Why *didn’t* Freud?

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 Freud argues that religious ideas are “*fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of these wishes.*”<sup>21</sup> Do you believe that Lewis *wished* for God? 🍀
- 2 Was Lewis’s transition primarily intellectual or emotional? Was Lewis free to turn away from the spiritual worldview? Explain your reasoning. 🍀



Lewis’s class at Oxford, where he studied philosophy and the Classics (Lewis in bottom row, fourth from right)

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p. 238.

<sup>20</sup> Lyall, “Owen Barfield, 99, Word Lover and C. S. Lewis Associate,” in the *New York Times*, 19 December 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 38.

“Tales of miracles...contradicted everything...taught by sober observation and betrayed too clearly the influence of the activity of the human imagination.”<sup>22</sup> ~ Freud

“If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy which excludes the supernatural, that is what we always shall say. What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience.”<sup>23</sup> ~ Lewis



Freud believed religious power laid in reawakened memories of very emotional episodes in human history

## Miracles (24 MINUTES)

How would Jesus Christ be received if he lived now? His work being slow to take off, Freud sees mythology reflected in history and psychology, cementing his belief that there is truth in science whereas all else is illusion. Following heated debates with fellow Oxford scholars Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien and a brief attraction to Hinduism, Lewis concludes that embracing Christ and worshipping God will allow him to reach “Joy.” The panel discusses Jesus Christ—lunatic, liar, or Lord?

## QUESTIONS

### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 What is a miracle? Webster’s defines it as “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”<sup>24</sup> Lewis uses the word miracle “to mean an interference with Nature by supernatural power.”<sup>25</sup>
- 2 Are miracles possible in the “scientific” or secular worldview? Explain your answer.

### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 What is the role of mythology in Freud’s thinking?
- 2 Why does Freud regard the spiritual worldview as childish? “The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life.”<sup>26</sup>
- 3 Why did it matter to Lewis whether the New Testament was historically accurate?

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 As an atheist, Lewis regarded the Bible stories as myth. What was your first reaction to biblical teachings? How has it held up or not held up? 🍷
- 2 What claims did Jesus of Nazareth make? Who do you think he was? 🍷
- 3 In the New Testament, Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Was he a lunatic or simply a great moral teacher? 🍷 The writer G.K. Chesterton points out, “no great moral teacher ever claimed to be God—not Mohammed, not Micah, not Malachi, or Confucius, or Plato, or Moses, or Buddha.”<sup>27</sup> Lewis concludes: “A man who was merely a man and said the things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic...or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice... You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”<sup>28</sup>



Lewis embraces Christ and concludes he has reached the object of his desire—“Joy”

<sup>22</sup> Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p.168.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Merriam-Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.), p. 742.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 22.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God*, p. 88.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book II, Ch. 3.

“[Agape is] a state of the will, which we have naturally about ourselves, and must learn to have about other people.”<sup>29</sup> ~ Lewis

“[Sexual love] has thus furnished us with a pattern for our search for happiness.”<sup>30</sup> ~ Freud

Lewis's book *The Four Loves* explores *Storge* (affection), *Philia* (friendship), *Eros* (sexual love), and *Agape* (selfless love)



## Love Thy Neighbor (34 MINUTES)

Can we really love our neighbor as ourselves? Decried as a pornographer for asserting that humans are motivated by sexual desires from birth, Freud is unbowed in his belief that religious pursuit is man's greatest illusion. Standing against the tide of secularism sweeping academia, Lewis pens *The Four Loves*, where he explores the nature of the four Greek words that are translated “love,” including “agape” (selfless love). The panel discusses the idea of selfless love.

### QUESTIONS

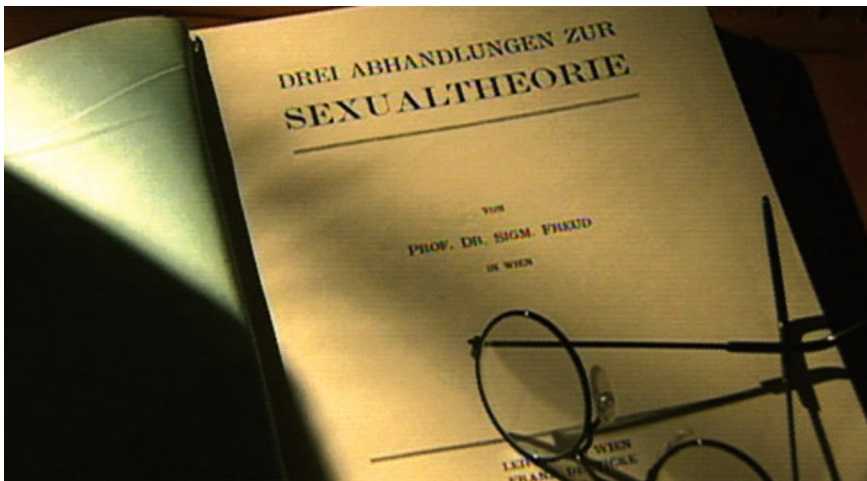
#### BEFORE VIEWING

1 What is happiness? 🟢

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 What is Freud's view of happiness? Why did he think it is elusive?
- 2 In what ways did Lewis's transition from the materialist to the spiritual worldview change him?
- 3 In Lewis's view, what are the four kinds of love we experience? What is *agape*, and how is it different from the other forms of love? 🟢

Freud's book *Sexualtheorie* is a series of essays on humans' sexual feelings and desires from birth on



#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 Does our worldview affect our ability to experience happiness?
- 2 How do Freud and Lewis's views of love differ? 🟢
- 3 Why did Freud find the precept to “love your neighbor as yourself” so unreasonable? 🟢 He writes: “If I love someone, he must deserve it in some way. . . . Not merely is. . . [a] stranger in general unworthy of my love; I must honestly confess that he has more claim to my hostility. . . . He seems not to have the least trace of love for me. . . . Indeed if this grandiose commandment had run ‘Love thy neighbor as thy neighbor loves thee,’ I should not take exception to it.”<sup>31</sup> Freud concludes that this ideal precept is impossible to fulfill: “nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man.”<sup>32</sup>
- 4 “The key to understanding the precept ‘to love your neighbor as yourself,’ Lewis says, is to understand the phrase ‘as yourself.’ How do we love ourselves?”<sup>33</sup> 🟢

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Ch. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God*, p. 176.

“Often enough the violent, cunning or ruthless man seizes the envied good things of the world and the pious man goes away empty.”<sup>34</sup> ~ Freud

“[F]ree will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.”<sup>35</sup> ~ Lewis



Freud with his daughter Sophie, who died of influenza

## *The Human Condition* (17 MINUTES)

How can one explain the evil in the world? Amidst the tragedy of World War I and the deaths of his daughter and grandson, Freud implores people to cast away their self-deceptions and realize that religion cannot truly console. The panel discusses the manifestations and reasons for “evil.”

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 Do we all have a “dark side”? Explain your answer.
- 2 How much of your behavior is determined with the opinions of others in mind? Would your actions be different if no one were ever to know about them?

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 What drew Freud’s attention to the dark side of human beings?
- 2 In Freud’s view, where does human evil originate?
- 3 What is the origin of human evil in Lewis’s worldview?

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 Lewis writes: “When souls become wicked they will certainly use this possibility to hurt one another; and this perhaps accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs...”<sup>36</sup> Explain why you agree or disagree. 🗨️
- 2 In Lewis’s worldview, how could an all-good, all-powerful God permit human evil and the suffering it causes? 🗨️
- 3 A basic precept of Lewis’s worldview is to forgive and love our enemies. Is this possible? Is it sensible? Is embracing the spiritual worldview *necessary* to do this? How does this relate to Lewis’s concept of loving one’s neighbor? 🗨️



The death of Sophie’s son, Heinele, reinforced Freud’s non-belief in God

<sup>34</sup> Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book II, Ch. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 89.

“It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk.”<sup>37</sup> ~ Lewis

“It would be an undoubted advantage if we were to leave God out altogether and honestly admit the purely human origin of the regulations and precepts of civilization.”<sup>38</sup> ~ Freud

## Moral Law (22 MINUTES)

Where do we get our concept of right and wrong? Lewis solidifies his position as a defender of the Christian faith with British radio broadcasts and the publication of *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *The Problem of Pain*, maintaining throughout that the human conscience and morality itself exist because of God. The panel explores their “moral codes.”

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

- 1 Are we born with an innate sense of right and wrong? Explain your reasoning. 🍷
- 2 To what extent has your moral code been influenced by your parents, culture, worldview, etc.?

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 Where does our morality come from, according to Freud? 🍷
- 2 In Lewis’s worldview, is the Moral Law just a social convention, or does it reflect real truths, which we discover like the laws of mathematics? 🍷

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 Lewis writes: “[T]hough there are differences between the moral ideas of one time or country and those of another, the differences are not really very great. . . . [T]hink of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.”<sup>39</sup> Does the idea of a universal Moral Law support Lewis’s or Freud’s view of its origins? 🍷
- 2 If a conflict arises as a result of a difference in moral beliefs, how should it be resolved? Is Lewis right in saying that “the moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard. . . . You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right. . . .”?<sup>40</sup> Are there absolute, universal moral truths? 🍷
- 3 Lewis writes: “If no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other, there would be no sense in preferring civilized morality to savage morality, or Christian morality to Nazi morality.”<sup>41</sup> Should we be tolerant of different moral codes? Explain your reasoning. 🍷
- 4 Freud believed that the solution to human evil lay in education and “the dictatorship of reason.”<sup>42</sup> “Our best hope for the future is that intellect—the scientific spirit, reason—may in process of time establish a dictatorship in the mental life of man.”<sup>43</sup> Do you agree that the more education people obtain, the more moral they become? 🍷



Lewis wrote prolifically in the late '30s and '40s

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book I, Ch. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book I, Ch. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Nicholi, *The Question of God*, p. 63.

<sup>43</sup> Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p. 171.

“Obscure, unfeeling and unloving powers determine men’s fate.”<sup>44</sup> ~ Freud

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”<sup>45</sup>  
~ Lewis



The devastating loss of his wife, Joy, rekindles Lewis’s struggles with his faith

## Suffering and Death (41 MINUTES)

How do you equate an omnipotent, all-loving being with what we’ve come to expect and experience in our lives? Cancer-stricken, Freud escapes to England, where he speaks out against the Third Reich, continues his work on the unconscious mind, and dies as he lived, an atheist, with no last-minute appeal to God. Following the death of his wife, Joy, Lewis faces the greatest spiritual crisis of his life, concluding that God is not always understood, but He is always there. The panelists examine suffering and death.

### QUESTIONS

#### BEFORE VIEWING

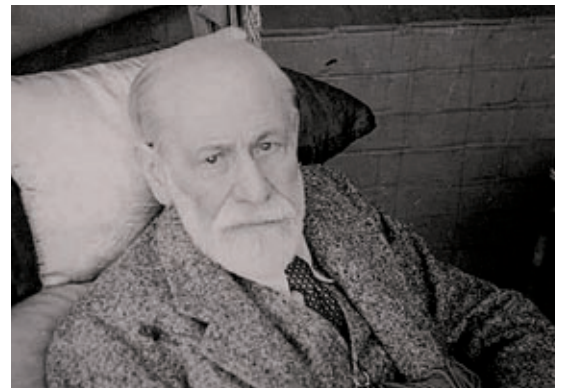
- 1 Given the suffering and evil throughout history, is it likely that humans would create an all-powerful, loving God? Why or why not?
- 2 Freud writes: “Our unconscious then does not believe in its own death; it behaves as if it were immortal.”<sup>46</sup> Can you conceive of your own death—of non-existence?

#### AFTER VIEWING

- 1 What is “The Problem of Pain”? ➡
- 2 How did Freud face his own death? How did he choose to die?
- 3 What was Lewis’s reaction to his wife’s death? How did he resolve this?

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

- 1 How can the good and bad of human existence be reconciled if there is an all-loving God? If there is not? ➡
- 2 How does your worldview influence how you confront death? ➡



Ravaged by cancer, Freud spends his last years in great pain

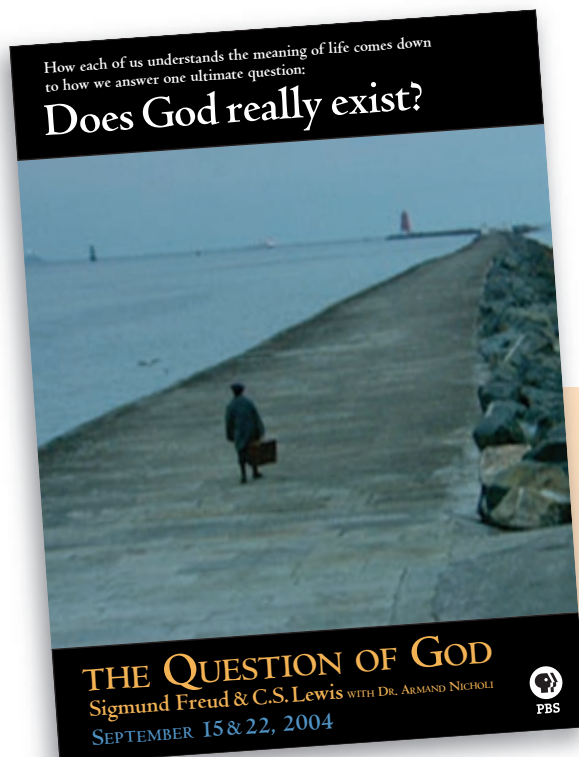
<sup>44</sup> Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII, p. 167.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XIV, p. 296.

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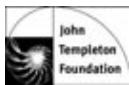
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