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## ***The Leadership of C.S. Lewis: Ten Traits to Encourage Change and Growth* by Crystal Hurd**

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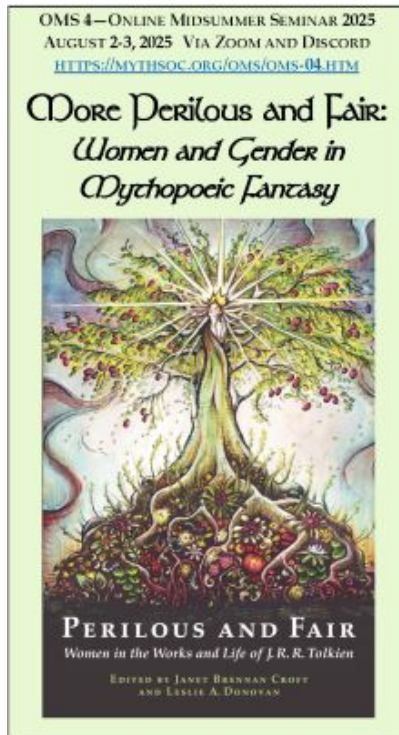
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### *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis: Ten Traits to Encourage Change and Growth* by Crystal Hurd

#### Additional Keywords

Christianity, Lewis biography, leadership study

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**THE LEADERSHIP OF C.S. LEWIS: TEN TRAITS TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE AND GROWTH.** Crystal Hurd. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2022. 247 p. ISBN 9781935688334. \$18.99.

WALK INTO ANY BOOKSTORE and you'll find leadership books jumping off the shelves. There is an ever-expanding market for self-help books, as readers continually seek expert advice from leaders. Indeed, many authors fuse Christian beliefs into their leadership books, seeking to empower their audience in both pragmatic leadership skills and the faith. But where does C.S. Lewis fit into the leadership genre? Lewis dominates any Christian bookshelf, but how does Lewis speak to leadership skills?

Crystal Hurd found the sweet spot in brilliantly combining Lewis and leadership studies in her new book, *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis: Ten Traits to Encourage Change and Growth*. Hurd seeks to explore "how a bookish Oxford don became an authority of religious writing and a leader who continues to sharpen the minds of spiritual individuals throughout contemporary culture" (21). Throughout her book, Hurd provides not only insight into Lewis's life, but also examines ten key leadership qualities Lewis exemplified. Hurd presents Lewis as a Christian role model while providing practical advice for the reader's own leadership development. In this way, Hurd describes her book as "a hybrid text: it is both a biographical exploration and a leadership study" (21). While the link between Lewis and leadership might at first glance seem a peculiar topic of study (a point Hurd explicitly cites as a critique she received from others while working on her project), Hurd is the perfect individual to investigate such a connection. A quick look at Hurd's biography shows she holds an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Additionally, Hurd's current research and teaching appointments all revolve around Lewis studies (235).

Hurd thoroughly succeeds in accomplishing her goal of conducting a biographical exploration of Lewis's leadership qualities. The reader not only

learns more about Lewis's life, but also gains practical leadership skills. However, potential readers should know Hurd writes from a devoutly Christian position. As Hurd states, "*We, working through Christ, have the power to impact our culture in extraordinary ways*" (21). Hurd infuses her Christian faith into her Lewisian leadership study, extolling ideas ultimately found within Christianity. That said, I will quickly summarize Hurd's ten chapters, each of which deals with a particular leadership quality Lewis exemplified.

Hurd opens her leadership study through a discussion on humility, the quality wherein we "think little of the self and develop a true focus on serving others" (25). Being focused on humility, the chapter centers around Lewis as a servant leader and the differences between humility and ambition. Hurd highlights Lewis's many titles, which never interfered with Lewis's willingness "to learn from anybody he met" (35-36). The first chapter concludes with a brief exploration of humble characters within Lewis's fiction, particularly in *The Chronicles* and *The Ransom Trilogy*.

Chapter two focuses on morals and ethics. Naturally, Hurd highlights Lewis's rejection of relativism and subjectivism and discusses Lewis's conception of natural law, as it appears in *Mere Christianity* and *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis's natural law obviously bleeds into the Tao, allowing Hurd to do a short explanation of its origins and Lao Tzu, the 7<sup>th</sup> century Eastern philosopher who is credited with the Tao's conception (47). Having provided a philosophical basis for Lewis's moral ethics, Hurd then moves onto a more pragmatic discussion, writing, "Morality, for Lewis, is united with the *good*" (51). This definition leads into an elaboration of moral leadership, which comprises the three facets as outlined in *The Abolition of Man*: reason, emotion, and appetites. Hurd ends the second chapter through a discussion on virtue, claiming moral values are "taught, influenced, or modeled" by those who we admire (56). For Hurd, virtue acts as a solid basis for educators, citing her own educational leadership program. Hurd writes, "Individuals can be influenced and inspired by leaders who wish to mold moral and ethical citizens" (58). In essence, Hurd presents Lewis as a teacher and model for fellow Christians to follow.

Chapter three takes a much more biographical approach as Hurd explores "vision." Hurd tracks Lewis's major life goals, both secular and religious, elaborating on Lewis's spiritual maturation. As Hurd writes, "Lewis's vision was to 'awaken' Christians to the real premise of their religion, to strip it of its presuppositions and preconceived notions, to find common ground among splintered denominations" (64). Hurd discusses Lewis's use of language and different communication techniques as he spread the Gospel. According to Hurd, Lewis adapted his mode of speech and writing to fit his audience, ultimately encouraging others in the Christian faith. As Hurd explains, Lewis

had a clear vision of his Christian purpose and used his flexibility and communication skills to help others find Christ.

In Hurd's fourth chapter, she continues utilizing a heavy biographical lens, tracking Lewis's experiences within the trenches during WWI. Within the biographical framework, Hurd explores courage as another leadership attribute Lewis exemplified. Hurd cites courage as "a structural virtue because it supports and underscores many other virtues essential to leadership" (81). Hurd also quotes Lewis's definition of courage as it appears in *The Problem of Pain*: "the willingness to stand up for one's deepest values" (81). Hurd connects courage with integrity, utilizing Lewis's life situations as evidence for their interconnectedness. The chapter also has three subsections, fleshing out the concept of courage: 1) asking for help, 2) facing calamity, and 3) dealing with criticism. Hurd again concludes the chapter with a short examination of courage as it appears in *The Chronicles* and *Till We Have Faces*.

Chapter five explores intellect's connection with leadership. According to Hurd, intelligent leaders "must be able to think, organize, and synthesize to create innovative solutions to problems" (99). Establishing a basis for intellectual leadership, Hurd dives into Lewis's parents' intellectual pursuits, giving a detailed account of both Albert Lewis's and Flora Hamilton's devotion to academic study. Hurd illustrates the impact Lewis's parents' academic interests had on Lewis's own intellectual ambitions. Interestingly, Hurd's current research focuses on the artistic influence of the Lewis and Hamilton families and its impact on C.S. Lewis's life. Hurd's current research on the Lewis/Hamilton families is palpable within the fifth chapter, as the reader is given not only interesting biographical information on Lewis's parents, but also their intellectual aspirations, making for an engaging chapter. Hurd closes, claiming using "the intellect for the greater good is a hallmark of successful leadership" (116).

Chapter six moves into a conversation on compassion, which Hurd defines as "suffering with our neighbors, even if the suffering is not of our own cause or invention" (121). Clearly drawing on Christ's second great commandment, Hurd positions compassion within a Christian framework, tracing it in Lewis's life. Hurd discusses the "Inner Ring," that is, Lewis's caution against cliques, as outlined in *The Four Loves*. Hurd also goes into a deep discussion on emotional intelligence as it connects with compassion, offering a solid overview of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (129).

In Hurd's seventh chapter, she focuses on duty, a concept she defines as "the work one completes to create beneficial outcomes" (137). Hurd demonstrates Lewis's sense of duty specifically within the academy as a professor. The chapter connects well with the first chapter which emphasized humility. Both chapters highlight the motif of selflessness, as Hurd writes,

“Duty is about serving others with a joyful heart, thwarting those jealous tendencies back into ourselves” (142). Hurd also discusses Lewis’s duties to his Christian faith, which led him to reject otherwise secular duties, such as writing propaganda for the English government during WWII (147). Lewis’s rejection stood on moral grounds, believing integrity to God as more important than governmental opportunities. Hurd ends the seventh chapter tracking duty as it appears in *The Chronicles*, *The Ransom Trilogy*, and *Till We Have Faces*.

Resilience is the topic of chapter eight, another leadership quality Lewis demonstrated in his life. Hurd again employs a strong biographical lens as she tracks Lewis’s life challenges, including his mother’s death, trouble at boarding schools, his dismal early academic appointments, and his failure as a poet. Hurd also briefly discusses Lewis’s love life, including his ties with Mrs. Moore (Patty Moore’s mother) and Joy Davidson. Hurd has a subsection on criticism, demonstrating Lewis’s handling of critique and how we can persevere in the face of adversity. According to Hurd, “[r]esilience is important because it gives us an opportunity to admit our faults and to start again” (170). Again, Hurd takes an empowering tone, blending both academic and Christian language to encourage the reader’s own leadership qualities.

Hurd’s ninth chapter focuses on inspiration. Hurd opens this chapter a bit differently, as she reflects on her introduction to Lewis: “Much like the wardrobe in *Narnia*, Lewis opened a door that welcomed me into a whole new universe of thought. I craved critical thinking blended with a Christian worldview” (174). Hurd’s personal touch mixes well with her academic tone, allowing the reader to connect with her on a personal level. Having established Lewis as a major inspiration in her academic and spiritual life, Hurd precedes to define inspiration as “admiring an individual for certain qualities and being motivated by actions” (175). Having given a definition for inspiration, Hurd then breaks the concept down into three categories: evocation, transcendence, and approach motivation, with a subsection for each.

Hurd’s tenth and final chapter deals with creativity, the leadership quality Hurd argues is the most important aspect associated with successful leadership. For Hurd, Lewis’s ultimate purpose was the spreading of the Gospel, a message Hurd claims Lewis communicated in creative ways. Hurd argues Lewis’s leadership comes to the forefront in his fiction, writing,

Lewis’s primary aim then was not to ‘preach’ through fiction but to use story to illustrate principles in action, to mold characters who explored spiritual and theological concepts without the heavy lifting of philosophical entanglements and circular arguments. (202)

Hurd defends her evaluation of Lewis’s creative leadership through a closing exploration of “imaginative apologetics” within *The Chronicles*, *The Great*

*Divorce, The Screwtape Letters, The Ransom Trilogy, and Till We Have Faces* (202). Hurd's book ends with "A Final Word," boiling down leadership into a simple yet poignant sentence: "Leadership is simply the art of influencing others" (213). Her last passage calls us to "embrace the Great Journey that God has destined for us" as she reminds the reader "[o]bedience is key. Go light your corner. The world is waiting for you" (213). Having provided us with ten key leadership elements and demonstrated how Lewis exemplified them in his life, Hurd encourages the reader to move forth with this knowledge in the Christian walk.

Hurd skillfully blends both practical leadership advice grounded in solid academic research with interesting and well documented biographical accounts of Lewis. Additionally, Hurd wants the reader to actively engage with the text, as each chapter ends with five "Discussion Questions" and an extra blank page for notes. While Hurd provides a solid leadership study, there are some minor points of improvement for a future edition. In the prologue, Hurd herself explains the text's hybrid nature, but also writes, "Some readers may find this structure laborious or dare I say, *boring*. However, I wish to illuminate how Lewis satisfies, with both spiritual and secular models, the qualities of an effective leader" (22). Hurd's self-evaluation acts as a preemptive critical evaluation of the text's organization. Coming from an academic background, I was not bothered with the book's structure. However, if marketed for the general audience, I foresee such an organizational structure presenting an issue, as some of the passages informed by leadership scholarship could be a little dense for the non-academic. Additionally, I appreciated Hurd's exploration of leadership qualities as they appeared in Lewis's fiction. However, Hurd's fictive leadership study was employed only four times, in the close of chapters one, four, seven, and ten. A future edition would benefit from consistent chapter closures, ending with a brief examination of each leadership quality as they appear in Lewis's fictional works. Lastly, there were some minor typos (see pages 26, 29, 101, 169, and 182).

Overall, Hurd has produced a meticulously well-researched piece. Hurd's Christian faith does not interfere with the book's main thrust; rather, Hurd's spiritual beliefs add to her unique Lewisian/leadership study. Over the years, it becomes more difficult for scholars to find a unique perspective within Lewis studies. Hurd's text has carved its own space within the field, as she mixes pragmatic leadership advice with a unique view on Lewis's personal life. Hurd's *The Leadership of C.S. Lewis: Ten Traits to Encourage Change and Growth* finds space on any bookshelf, as the book can attract the academic and non-academic alike.

—Mark-Elliot Finley