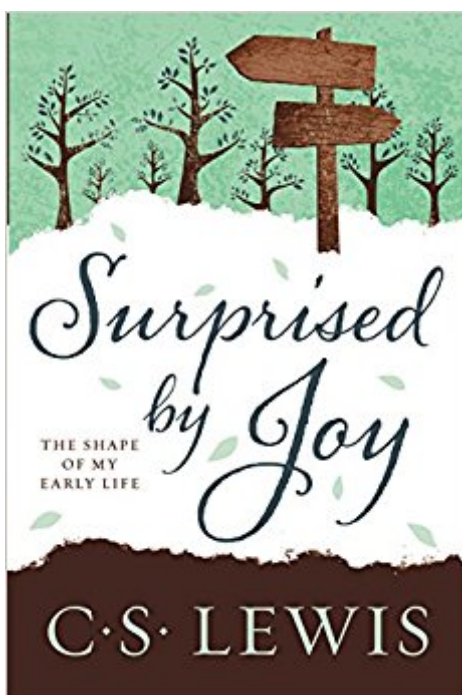


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# Surprised By Joy: The Shape Of My Early Life



## Synopsis

A repackaged edition of the revered author's spiritual memoir, in which he recounts the story of his divine journey and eventual conversion to Christianity. C. S. Lewis—the great British writer, scholar, lay theologian, broadcaster, Christian apologist, and bestselling author of *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and many other beloved classics—takes readers on a spiritual journey through his early life and eventual embrace of the Christian faith. Lewis begins with his childhood in Belfast, surveys his boarding school years and his youthful atheism in England, reflects on his experience in World War I, and ends at Oxford, where he became "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." As he recounts his lifelong search for joy, Lewis demonstrates its role in guiding him to find God.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Fascinating." --Nation "He is admirably equipped to write spiritual autobiography for the plain man, for his outstanding gift is clarity. You can take it at two levels, as straight autobiography, or as a kind of spiritual thriller, a detective's probing of clue and motive that led up to his return to the Christianity he had lost in childhood." --Sunday Times "Anyone approaching this book as a study in the psychology of conversion will find the greatest interest in the dual paths - intellectual and intuitive - which converged at last. But the casual reader looking merely for an enjoyable book will equally value many other parts." --Saturday Review "Since St. Augustine's meticulous analysis of what was the light, what the color, what the sound, the smell, the touch, what, indeed, was the good he loved when he loved God, few writers have taken the trouble to distinguish, with such clarity of

psychological insight, the nature and the degree of attraction, the nature and the degree of satisfaction, apprehended by man.” --Commonweal --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis shares his enthralling spiritual journey through his early life, chronicling his conversion to the Christian faith. “When we set out, I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. . . . It was . . . like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.” Lewis starts with his childhood in Belfast, then describes his boarding school years and his youthful atheism in England, moves to his experience in World War I, and ends in Oxford. Through it all Lewis explores his lifelong search for joy and its role in pointing him toward God.

Take note - this product is "print to order" which means that when you order, it is printed and shipped out. Mine has a production date of November 4, 2016. Unfortunately, there are several attributable flaws *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* which make this a poorly produced item. The first printed page contains a simple listing of the content and a forward by C.S.L.1 - There are no page numbers2 - The typeset and layout are fatiguing to the reader with indistinct paragraphs and only vague chapter divisions with no break in pagination.3 - There are many typos and "orphaned" words and sentences. I counted five on the 12th printed page alone. I suggest you seek a standard published and printed version of the book.

I only give this two stars to represent the content itself being very good - otherwise I would give it one. I rarely take the time to review books, as a busy Mom of four, I barely get time to read them much less review them. But I thought customers should know this book is strangely and terribly printed. If there are other reviews saying this then I guess I should have read them. It has missing words, missing or wrong punctuation, numbers in the place of letters sometimes..! What?? I can still make out the story so I will deal with it, but it sure is annoying. I have attached a couple photos so you can play the see-how-many-typos-you-can-find game. Undoubtedly more than in this hurried review. It's like a college paper before any edits, typed in haste and delirious from lack of sleep... Order from another seller and enjoy intriguing autobiographical writing from dear old Jack (Lewis).

"But what, in conclusion, of Joy? For that, after all, is what the story has mainly been about. To tell you the truth, the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian." From final

page of *Surprised by Joy*. This book describes C. S. Lewis's intellectual journey from Atheism to Christianity, and how the felt experience he calls Joy led him there. After conversion, the Joy that once made everything else in his life pale in comparison became a subject of disinterest to Lewis. His pursuit of the pearl of great price seems to end in an existential malaise. Was Joy just a cosmic bait-and-switch? Lewis's journey begins with early experiences that produced in his imagination "an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any satisfaction." (p. 18.) These inward experiences filled him with enormous bliss and created an inconsolable longing for something he knew not. The experiences would pass in a moment but they left behind "a longing for the longing that had just ceased" and "everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison." (16.) Of this Joy, Lewis wrote that "the central story of my life is about nothing else." (17.) Yet, in connection with his final steps toward Christianity, "No kind of desire was present at all." (231.) Lewis did not attribute his eventual belief in Jesus as the Son of God to an intellectual or emotional decision, or even a determined will. Rather, he describes his conversion in existentialist terms: "[A] man is what he does; there is nothing of him left over or outside the act. As for what we commonly call Will, and what we commonly call Emotion, I fancy these usually talk too loud, protest too much, to be quite believed, and we have a secret suspicion that the great passion or the iron resolution is partly a put-up job." (237.) Looking back on Joy, Lewis wrote, "I now know that the experience, considered as a state of my own mind, had never had the kind of importance I once gave it. It was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer." The experiences of Joy were relegated to the "lower life of the imagination." They conveyed no spiritual knowledge and imparted no spiritual life: "This lower life of the imagination is not a beginning of, nor a step toward, the higher life of the spirit, merely an image. In me, at any rate, it contained no element either of belief or of ethics; however far pursued, it would never have made me either wiser or better." (167.) No wonder, then, that the subject of Joy had lost nearly all interest for Lewis as a Christian. What leaves this book on a somewhat minor note is that Lewis never describes a real Christian spiritual experience that comes anywhere close to uplifting the soul as Joy did. Nowhere does Lewis speak of Christian experience that compared in any way to the Joy that had filled him with enormous bliss, created inconsolable longing, made all else insignificant in comparison, and of which he would say "the central story of my life is about nothing else." The book ends with the impression that the existential act of belief was the definitive mark of Lewis's Christian experience. There seemed to be no analog for Joy in his own Christianity as there was, for example, with Bernard of Clairvaux who could write: "We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread and long to feast upon Thee still We drink of Thee the Fountain Head and thirst our souls from Thee to fill"

As I write this (Dec 29 2012), I would say this has been the most influential book in my life. As I re-read my initial review (Feb 28, 2014), I would say this book began phase 1 of my development after college. One of the first books I chose to read for myself. Very Very influential for me. I have since moved on and wouldn't call it the most influential, but I certainly wouldn't be where I am today without it. I am no longer in vocational Christian ministry, but anyone in Christian ministry should read this. The review: I would love to give it 5 stars except the middle third of the book was so dry! I don't understand why he put so many details regarding his school days! He was raised in a nominally Christian family, but gave up his faith at 13. He was in many different studying situations (if I remember correctly, even homeschooled for a couple years). In college he kept running into thinkers he deeply admired, who were also Christians. He would say they were excellent people, but couldn't believe they were Christians too... Tolkien was the culmination of these people. The way he describes his pursuit of god--like the mouse's pursuit of the cat, is great. He also has some one liners like "I somehow had smuggled in the idea that what I wanted was pleasure, but I got pleasure and found out it wasn't what I wanted" and something like: pleasure is available on demand, but joy is available only as a side effect. For better or worse, this book stops when Lewis is in his mid twenties... a grief observed is a snapshot autobiography of a few years at the end of his life, and offers his insights into his life more matured. It is another must read for Lewis lovers.

No non-fiction has ever captured, described, or brought to light the deepest longings of my heart better than Lewis's "Surprised by Joy." (Though when it comes to fiction, that honor goes to Lewis's dear friend, J.R.R. Tolkien and his LOTR trilogy.) I first read this book a while ago, but I have to periodically return to it, at least scanning through the highlights. It's just as deep and rich on the umpteenth review as on the first, if not more so.

Awesome! Came in a reasonable amount of time but for a great price! You can tell it's an old book but that just adds to its charm!

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