A photograph of a man in profile, sitting on a wooden chair in a room with a large window. The room has a rustic feel with a wooden ceiling, a radiator under the window, and several potted plants on the windowsill. Sunlight streams in from the window, creating a warm, golden glow. The man is looking out at a garden with trees and a house in the background. The overall mood is contemplative and peaceful.

DAVID O. HARRISON

C.S. LEWIS'S

A GRIEF OBSERVED

IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH

Experience C.S. Lewis' wonderful books anew through the eyes of an author dedicated to making classic literature accessible and engaging for all. The author has carefully updated British idioms and vocabulary for North American and international audiences.

"A Grief Observed" by C.S. Lewis is a profound reflection on loss and faith. Written after the death of his wife, Joy Davidman, it explores the raw and painful emotions of grief, examining the deep sorrow, confusion, and anger Lewis felt in the wake of her passing. He questions the nature of God and the purpose of suffering, ultimately grappling with his beliefs. Through his honest and deeply personal reflections, Lewis offers a candid look at the complexities of mourning and healing, offering readers comfort in their own experiences of loss and spiritual struggle.



With a business background and a passion for sharing messages of hope, David's journey from England to Canada, and his own transformative faith experience, enrich his storytelling and led him to author a number of his own faith-based books.

In 2006, David founded Bus Stop Bible Studies, a unique ministry spreading encouragement through public transit ads to millions of commuters across Canada. Now, in their retirement, David and his wife host a charming bed-and-breakfast in Muskoka, where David enjoys his new hobby of book writing.

The author's most notable projects include "Mere Christianity in Everyday English," "The Screwtape Letters in Everyday English," "The Pilgrim's Progress in Everyday English," and reworking Lewis' Narnia series for children, bringing his expertise to these timeless classics.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAVID O. HARRISON

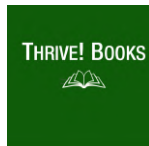
C.S. LEWIS'
A GRIEF OBSERVED
IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH

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Title: A Grief Observed.

Author: Lewis, C. S. [Clive Staples] (1898-1963)

Date of first publication: 1960 by Faber & Faber, UK

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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What people are saying...

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH



Faith Builder

★★★★★ **Very readable.**

Reviewed in the United States on December 26, 2023

A lot has changed in the last 350 years, but not Bunyan's message. An excellent read.

MERE CHRISTIANITY IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH



Mr. Jerry W. Gammon

★★★★★ **Make Lewis Come Alive**

Reviewed in the United States on December 28, 2023

Verified Purchase

If you love C.S. Lewis but have a difficult time understanding some of his archaic language, you need this modern English version by David Harrison. Mr. Harrison takes the language of mid-twentieth century England and gives it an update making Lewis more understandable and enjoyable to the modern reader. A great read.



Penelope Zelasko

★★★★★ **Great alternative to the original**

Reviewed in the United States on March 7, 2024

Verified Purchase

I didn't realize this existed until I started searching. I purchased a Screwtape letters by CS Lewis, but found the British language difficult to read. David Harrison is a genius and making things come to life when your culture is very and you can't understand the original.



Kindle Customer

★★★★★ **C S Lewis is always amazing**

Reviewed in the United States on January 11, 2024

Verified Purchase

I ordered two so my husband and I could read together. The language is easier to read than C S Lewis's first editions. Quick delivery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Monty

★★★★★ **Finally!**

Reviewed in the United States on March 1, 2024

Verified Purchase

I am so impressed Mr. Harrison has done what I wish had been done before. He took a marvelous work that, for some folks, like myself, can be lost in the language used in some parts of the book. Lewis' Mere Christianity & The Screwtape Letters have a profound message that people like myself can get a better understanding by rewording parts in a more modern vernacular that can be absorbed deeper both mentally and spiritually.

Thank you Mr. David Harrison. Well done sir !

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS



Penelope Zelasko

★★★★★ **Great alternative to the original**

Reviewed in the United States on March 7, 2024

Verified Purchase

I didn't realize this existed until I started searching. I purchased a Screwtape letters by CS Lewis, but found the British language difficult to read. David Harrison is a genius and making things come to life when your culture is very and you can't understand the original.

DAVID HARRISON was born and raised in England and emigrated to Canada in 1973 at the age of 21.

When he was 35, David became a Christ-follower. He is married and the father of two adult children. He attended a Brethren Bible Chapel in Scarborough for 25 years, ten of those years as an elder.

For 23 years David ran an audiovisual integration company in Toronto, Canada, catering primarily to universities, banks, and law firms.

In 2006 David founded Bus Stop Bible Studies¹, a ministry which used public transit advertising panels to display messages of encouragement from the Word of God to many millions of people in Canada.

¹ bit.ly/bsbsimagine

A GRIEF OBSERVED

For 10 years David was the Board Chair of Daystar Native Christian Outreach, based on Manitoulin Island.

Now 'retired', David and his wife, Wendy, run a bed & Breakfast in Muskoka, and David (who failed miserably in English at school) has taken to writing as a hobby.

Contact: dohauthor@gmail.com

He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

Isaiah 53:3

INTRODUCTION

My wife, Wendy, and I, recently watched the 2021 movie, *THE MOST RELUCTANT CONVERT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF C.S. LEWIS*. Much of the script for this movie is taken directly from the book, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis' personal testimony, his journey from atheist, to theist, to a professing Christian who fully accepted that Jesus Christ was, and is, God incarnate.

Even when Lewis became a theist, and earnestly worshipped God, he could not bring himself to accept the notion that God would come to earth as a man, die on a cross, and be resurrected specifically so that God could have a personal, intimate relationship with him. That just went too far! By his own admission, Lewis was "The most forlorn and hesitant convert in all of England."

It was a long and complicated journey, much like my own. In fact, as Wendy and I watched the movie, I thought, "He's telling my story." Even though we lived in completely different eras, the parallels were uncanny. For Lewis and for me, it was a long walk but eventually we arrived at our Destination.

Lewis writes, "I was in the habit of walking over to Leatherhead [from Bookham] about once a week and sometimes taking the train back. In summer I did so chiefly because Leatherhead boasted a tiny swimming-bath..."

My family moved to Leatherhead, located due south of London, when I was eight years old. Although I never swam there, I distinctly remember that outside swimming pool, with its white

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surround and blue painted interior. It was unheated and so I never went in.

He continued, "I and one porter had the long, timbered platform of Leatherhead station to ourselves. It was getting just dark enough for the smoke of an engine to glow red on the underside with the reflection of the furnace. The hills beyond the Dorking Valley were of a blue so intense as to be nearly violet and the sky was green with frost. My ears tingled with the cold. The glorious weekend of reading was before me. Turning to the bookstall, I picked out an *Everyman Book* in a dirty jacket, *Phantasies, a Faerie Romance for Men and Women*², by George MacDonald. Then the train came in. I can still remember the voice of the porter calling out the village names, Saxon³ and sweet as a nut—"Bookham,

² Published in 1858, first edition copies of George Macdonald's, *Phantasies*, sell for around US\$5,000.

³ Saxon, a British accent.

Effingham, Horsley train." That evening, I began to read my new book."

I cannot count the number of times I took that train. Sadly, that line had been converted to electric by the time we moved to Leatherhead.

Like me, Lewis was in his early thirties when he fully came to faith, becoming a devout Christ follower. *Surprised by Joy* covers those years, the first half of his life leading to his personal encounter with Jesus.

The second half of his transformed life led him to become a prolific author, writing many beloved children's books, and apologetics for those seeking to know his God.

Lewis was gifted with a prodigious intellect, in addition to his native (Irish) English, he was fluent in French, Greek and Latin, could converse in German and Italian, and had some understanding of Hebrew.

In spite of his advanced schooling, I can't help but think we would have been fast friends had we met—whether he had been born fifty-three years later, or I fifty-three years earlier.

When I moved to Canada in 1973, I was charmed by the gentle Canadian accent and made a conscious effort to adopt it. Now, fifty years on, the native English vocabulary feels almost like a foreign language to me. Considering that Lewis wrote *A Grief Observed* more than sixty years ago—when he was already a respected Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford—it's easy to fathom how much can be lost without an understanding of early 20th-century English.

Just as I did with Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *Surprised by Joy*, I have aimed to present *A Grief Observed* in everyday English, making it accessible for readers who weren't raised in the shires of England in the early to mid 1900's. Yet, I

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hope you can still hear Lewis' distinctive voice, as if he were sitting in his chair in England, puffing on his pipe as he writes.

In the original, *A Grief Observed*, Lewis used the letters "H" and "C", etc., rather than actual names.

"H." referred to Joy Davidman, (her seldom used first name was Helen). In 1956, Lewis married Joy, an American writer, who tragically passed away from cancer four years later at the age of 45. Her death deeply affected him, and *A Grief Observed* is his reflection on the intense sorrow, questioning, and emotional upheaval he experienced after her passing.

"C." is how C. S. Lewis referred to himself in the the book. He wrote *A Grief Observed* under the pseudonym "N. W. Clerk" initially, to maintain some privacy and distance from the raw emotions he expressed in this work. As it is now common knowledge who 'H', 'C', and others are, I have chosen to us their proper names in this edition.

This book is a personal account of Lewis' grief, documenting his struggles with faith, loss, and love after Joy's death.

I remember so distinctly when my pastor, Don Hamilton, lost his first wife to cancer. At the visitation, as we hugged and as he wept, he said, "David, I have conducted so many funerals in my career. I simply had no idea. I had no idea."

If you find yourself on a similar journey, it is may prayer that Lewis' writing will bring a measure of solace and ultimate hope.

Here is a brief introduction to C.S. Lewis' life and career:

Clive Staples Lewis (29 November 1898 – 22 November 1963) was a distinguished British writer, literary scholar, and Anglican lay theologian. He held esteemed academic positions in English literature at both Magdalen College, Oxford (1925–1954), and Magdalene College, Cambridge (1954–1963). While he is best known for his beloved series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis also

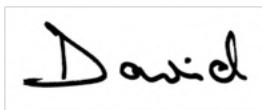
garnered acclaim for other works of fiction, including *The Space Trilogy*. Additionally, his non-fiction Christian apologetics, such as *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*, have had a profound impact.

A close friend of J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings* and who was a devout Catholic, Lewis was an active member of the informal Oxford literary group known as the Inklings. In this 1955 memoir, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis recounts his journey from being baptized in the Church of Ireland to falling away from his religious upbringing during adolescence, and then returning to Anglicanism at the age of 32, influenced by Tolkien and other friends. His renewed faith significantly influenced his work, and his wartime radio broadcasts on Christianity earned him widespread acclaim.

Throughout his career, Lewis authored over 30 books, which have been translated into more than 30 languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. The *Chronicles of Narnia* series, in particular, has enjoyed enduring popularity and has been adapted for stage, television, radio, and film. His philosophical writings continue to be widely cited by Christian scholars across various denominations.

Lewis himself died on 22 November 1963 from kidney failure at the age of 64. In recognition of his literary and theological contributions, Lewis was honored with a memorial in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey on the 50th anniversary of his death in 2013.

In the perpetual wonder of grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Regarding footnotes: Certain footnotes have been added by the author, most often where reference or elaboration were considered necessary.



PART 1

No one ever told me that grief could feel so much like fear. I'm not actually afraid, but the feeling is similar. The same fluttering in my stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep swallowing hard, like I'm trying to keep something down.

Sometimes it feels like being a little drunk or concussed. It's like there's a barrier between the world and me, and everything feels muted. I can't fully absorb what people are saying, or maybe I just don't want to. Everything seems so dull. And yet, I want people around. I hate it when the house is empty. I wish they'd talk to each other instead of directing their words at me.

Then, out of nowhere, there are moments when something inside me tries to tell me that it's not so bad, that I don't mind it all that much. I was happy before I met Joy. I have my coping mechanisms. People get through this stuff. Come on, I won't do so poorly. This voice is almost convincing, but then a sharp, painful memory flashes, and all that "commonsense" crumbles like paper in a fire.

After that, I sink into waves of tears and self-pity. But honestly, I almost prefer the raw agony to the wallowing. The self-pity is disgusting, and even while I'm doing it, I know it's wrong. It makes me misrepresent Joy; I start turning her memory into something she wasn't—a fragile doll to cry over. Thank God the real Joy is still too strong in my memory to let me get away with that (will it always be this strong?).

PART 1

Me? I wasn't like that at all. Her mind was sharp, quick, and as strong as a leopard. She could smell any hint of pretense or sentimentality a mile away, then strike it down before you even realized what was happening. How many of my little illusions she shattered! I quickly learned not to talk nonsense to her unless I did it just for the sheer pleasure — oh, and there's that pain again — of being called out and laughed at. I was never less foolish than when I was Joy's lover.

No one ever told me about the laziness that comes with grief either. Except at work, where I seem to run on autopilot, I despise making any effort at all. Even writing or reading a letter feels like too much. Even shaving — what's the point? Does it really matter now whether my face is rough or smooth? People say a grieving person needs distractions, something to pull them out of themselves. That's true, but only in the way a bone-tired man might want another blanket on a freezing night. He'd rather stay cold than get up and find one.

No wonder lonely people let themselves go; eventually, they stop caring.

But where is God in all of this? That's the most disturbing part. When you're happy, so happy that you don't even feel like you need Him, He feels close by. You turn to Him in thanks, and it's as though He's welcoming you with open arms. But when you're desperate, when you need Him most, what do you find? A door slammed shut in your face. Bolts locking from the inside. And then silence. The more you wait, the louder the silence becomes. No lights, no signs of life inside. Was He ever really there? It seemed so before, just as strongly as He seems absent now. What does that even mean? Why is God so close when things are good and so far away when you're in pain?

I tried sharing some of this with myself this afternoon. God reminded me that even Christ felt abandoned: "Why have you

forsaken me?" I know that, but does it make it any easier to understand?

I don't think I'm in danger of losing my faith. My real fear is of coming to believe terrible things about God. The conclusion I dread isn't, "So there's no God after all," but, "So this is what God's really like."

Our elders used to say, "Thy will be done," but how often was that obedience rooted in fear? How often was it an act of love—an act, in every sense of the word—used to cover up deep resentment?

It's easy enough to say that God seems absent because He doesn't exist. But then, why does He feel so present when we're not asking for Him?

One thing marriage has done for me: I can no longer believe that religion is just a substitute for our unmet desires or for sex. Joy and I feasted on love in all its forms—solemn and light-hearted, romantic and realistic, sometimes as intense as a storm, sometimes as comforting as slipping on soft shoes. Nothing was left unfulfilled. If God were just a substitute for love, we would have had no need for Him. But that's not what happened. We both knew we wanted something beyond each other, something entirely different. Saying that love is enough would be like saying that people who are in love never want to read, eat, or breathe.

After a friend died years ago, I had a vivid sense of his continued existence. I've begged for even a fraction of that same certainty about Joy, but there's been no answer. Just the same closed door, the same empty void. "Those who ask don't get."⁴ I was a fool to ask because now, even if that assurance came, I'd doubt it. I'd think I was hypnotizing myself with my own prayers.

⁴ John 14:14

PART 1

At least I know to stay away from the spiritualists. I promised Joy I would, and she knew something about those circles.

Keeping promises to the dead or to anyone is one thing, but “respect for the wishes of the dead” is a trap. Yesterday, I almost stopped someone from doing something trivial by saying, “Joy wouldn’t have liked that.” That’s unfair. Soon I’d start using “what Joy would have liked” as a weapon to impose my will on others.

I can’t talk to the kids⁵ about her. The moment I try, their faces don’t show grief, love, fear, or pity. They show embarrassment, the worst of all reactions. It’s like they think I’m doing something inappropriate. They just want me to stop. I felt the same way when my father mentioned my mother after she died. I can’t blame them. That’s just how boys are.

I sometimes think that shame—awkward, senseless shame—prevents more good actions and simple happiness than any vice could. And not just in childhood.

Or maybe the boys are right. What would Joy think of this little journal I keep returning to? Are these notes morbid? I once read that, “I stayed awake all night with toothache, thinking about toothache and about staying awake.” That’s exactly what it’s like. Part of every misery is its shadow—the fact that you don’t just suffer, but you have to keep thinking about how much you’re suffering. It’s not enough that I live each day in grief; I have to live each day thinking about living each day in grief. Are these notes just making it worse? Feeding the endless cycle of dwelling on one thing?

But what else can I do? I need something to dull the pain, and reading isn’t strong enough anymore. By writing it all down (well,

⁵ Joy had two sons by her first marriage, David and Douglas Gresham.

a fraction of it), I feel like I'm stepping a little bit outside of it. That's how I'd explain it to Joy But she'd probably find a hole in my reasoning.

It's not just the kids. An unexpected side effect of my loss is realizing I make everyone else uncomfortable. At work, at the club, on the street—I see people trying to decide whether they should say something to me or avoid the subject. I hate it if they do, and I hate it if they don't. Some people just avoid me altogether. Warren⁶ has been dodging me for a week. I prefer the young men who are well-mannered, almost boys, who come up to me like I'm the dentist they dread, blush, say what they need to, and then escape to the bar as fast as they can. Maybe we, the grieving, should live in separate communities like lepers.

To some, I'm even worse than awkward. I'm a walking reminder of death. Whenever I meet a happily married couple, I can feel them both thinking, "One of us will end up like him someday."

At first, I was terrified of going to the places where Joy and I had been happiest—our favorite bar, our favorite walking spot. But I forced myself to do it, like sending a pilot up again right after a crash. Surprisingly, it made no difference. Her absence doesn't hit harder in those places than anywhere else. It's not tied to a specific place. I guess if you were banned from eating salt, you wouldn't notice the lack more in one dish than in another. Eating, in general, would just be different. It's like that. Life is different now, everywhere, all the time. Her absence is like the sky—it's spread over everything.

But no, that's not quite right. There is one place where her absence feels intensely real, and it's a place I can't escape: my own body. It felt so different when it was the body of Joy's lover. Now it's like an empty house. But I shouldn't fool myself. If something

⁶ Warren was C.S. Lewis' brother.

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went wrong with my body, if I thought I were sick, it would matter to me again. Cancer, and cancer, and cancer—my mother, my father, my wife. I wonder who's next in line.

Joy herself, while dying of it and fully aware of what was happening, told me she had lost much of her old fear of cancer. Once she was actually facing it, the word and the idea seemed less terrifying. And I almost understood what she meant. This matters. You never really meet Cancer or War or Sorrow—or Joy, for that matter. You only meet the individual moments that come with them. There are ups and downs in everything. Even in the worst times, there are good moments, just as there are bad ones in the best times. You never experience the full force of what we call “the thing itself.” And we're wrong to call it that. The “thing itself” is simply the collection of those ups and downs. The rest is just a word, an idea.

It's amazing how much happiness, even joy, we shared together after hope was gone. That last night, how long we talked! How calmly, how deeply, we nourished each other's souls.

And yet, not fully together. There's a limit to how close two people can be, even in marriage. You can't really share someone else's weakness, or fear, or pain. What you feel may be just as bad, maybe worse, but it's not the same. It's different. When I talk about fear, I mean that raw, physical fear—the body's instinct to recoil from its own destruction. That smothering feeling, like being trapped. You can't share that with someone else. The mind can sympathize, but the body—less so. And in one way, the bodies of lovers can share the least. All their intimate moments have trained them to have complementary, not identical, reactions to each other. Sometimes even opposite reactions.

We both knew this. I had my own pain; she had hers. The end of her suffering would mark the beginning of mine. We were heading down different paths. This brutal truth, this separation—