

Becoming Who You Were Created to Be - *The God We Seek, the Self We Hide*

From C. S. Lewis to Consciousness, Surrender, and the God Within

By Dr. Mike Van Thielen, PhD.

An Old Book Asking a Very Modern Question

During the darkest years of World War II, C. S. Lewis began speaking to ordinary people over BBC radio about some of the oldest questions about human existence. Those broadcasts, delivered between 1941 and 1944 and later gathered into *Mere Christianity*, eventually became one of the most influential works of Christian apologetics of the twentieth century. The collected book appeared in 1952.

What makes Lewis's approach so interesting is where he chooses to begin. He does not initially ask his audience to accept Christianity, the Bible, Jesus, or even God. He starts with something far more familiar: human beings arguing with one another.

Someone says, "That's not fair." Another responds, "But you promised." We become angry because someone treated us in a way we believe they should not have treated us. Even when we behave badly ourselves, we often spend considerable energy explaining why our behavior was somehow justified.

Lewis recognized something beneath these ordinary interactions. Human beings do not merely have preferences about behavior; we continually appeal to an invisible standard against which behavior can be judged. We may disagree about how that standard should be interpreted, but we behave as if something beyond personal preference exists.

Lewis called this Moral Law.

From that simple observation, he began constructing a remarkable journey. If there is an inner awareness of right and wrong, where does it come from? If there is something behind the moral structure of human life, could there also be something behind the universe itself? If God exists, why is humanity so

deeply divided, destructive, and confused? Why do we recognize what is good and repeatedly choose something else? What is the role of freedom? What is Christ inviting human beings to become?

Lewis approached these questions through Christianity. Today, we can place parts of his journey beside what modern psychology, neuroscience, contemplative traditions, and the study of consciousness have discovered about human beings.

We should do that carefully. Neuroscience does not “prove” Lewis, and Lewis was not teaching neuroplasticity, nervous-system regulation, subconscious reprogramming, or manifestation. Those belong to different intellectual frameworks.

Yet when we allow these perspectives to converse rather than compete, something fascinating happens. They begin illuminating different levels of the same human mystery.

Why do we so often know better and still fail to live better? Why do we repeat patterns we consciously want to escape? What part of us can observe those patterns? Can awareness create greater freedom? What happens when the constructed identity begins to loosen? And could the spiritual journey ultimately be less about building a better ego and more about uncovering what lies beneath it?

Perhaps the most important question is therefore not simply, “Do I believe in God?”

It may be something more personal: **Who am I becoming, and what stands between me and the person I was created to be?**

The Invisible Compass Inside Us

Lewis begins by noticing a contradiction within human nature. We recognize standards of courage, honesty, loyalty, fairness, compassion, and responsibility, yet we routinely violate those very standards.

We value forgiveness while holding grudges. We admire honesty while occasionally bending the truth to protect ourselves. We want kindness from others yet become harsh when we feel threatened. We understand intellectually that possessions and recognition cannot provide permanent

fulfillment, yet we continually pursue the next achievement, purchase, title, relationship, or validation as though it might finally complete us.

There is something particularly interesting hidden inside this contradiction. Human beings do not merely behave; we can become aware of our own behavior.

We can catch ourselves being jealous. We can notice that we are exaggerating. We can recognize ourselves becoming defensive before the words even leave our mouths. We can observe our minds replaying an argument long after the argument itself has ended.

Modern psychology uses concepts such as **metacognition** and **decentering** to describe aspects of this ability to become aware of our own internal experience without completely identifying with it. Research on decentering describes three closely related capacities: becoming aware of our thoughts and feelings, experiencing some distance from them, and becoming less automatically reactive to their content.

That raises a question Lewis did not formulate in modern psychological terms but that fits naturally into the journey he began.

If I can observe my thoughts, am I only my thoughts?

If I can watch fear arise, am I identical to the fear?

If I can notice my conditioning, my personality, my emotional reactions, and my internal narratives, could awareness itself be deeper than any one of those experiences?

Lewis begins with moral awareness. Follow the thread long enough, and we arrive at the mystery of consciousness.

From Moral Law to the Mystery Behind Existence

For Lewis, our awareness of moral obligation suggested that reality might contain something beyond matter. Physical laws tell us what objects do, but morality introduces a different kind of statement: what a person **ought** to do.

A stone obeys gravity without reflecting on its moral responsibilities. Human beings, by contrast, can know what they want to do while simultaneously experiencing the conviction that they should do something else.

Lewis regarded this as a clue rather than complete proof. The Moral Law pointed him toward the possibility that there was something more like Mind behind the universe than blind mechanism.

Science has advanced enormously since Lewis delivered his BBC talks. We have learned extraordinary amounts about genetics, cosmology, evolution, neural circuitry, behavior, memory, and the biological mechanisms through which organisms survive and adapt. Yet scientific progress has not eliminated some of the oldest philosophical questions.

Why does anything exist at all? Why does the universe possess laws capable of generating matter, stars, planets, chemistry, life, nervous systems, consciousness, music, mathematics, morality, and beings capable of wondering why any of it exists?

Science is extraordinarily powerful at investigating mechanisms. Ultimate meaning belongs partly to another category of inquiry.

Some people call what lies behind existence God. Others use language such as Source, Creator, Universal Intelligence, Divine Consciousness, or Ground of Being. These concepts should not simply be treated as identical, but they emerge from a recurring human intuition that reality may possess a depth that cannot be reduced entirely to the material objects we can measure.

Lewis's conclusion was explicitly Christian. He believed that the intelligence behind existence was not merely impersonal but ultimately God.

That conclusion immediately generates one of humanity's most difficult questions.

If God is good, why is the world so often not?

Freedom and Its Dangerous Gift

Lewis's response places enormous weight on free will. Genuine love cannot be mechanically programmed. If a creature is literally incapable of rejecting you, its affection means something different from love freely given.

Freedom therefore comes with extraordinary potential and extraordinary danger.

The same freedom that allows someone to comfort another person allows someone else to exploit them. Human intelligence can produce antibiotics or

weapons. Language can communicate devotion or deception. Imagination can create works of astonishing beauty or sophisticated systems of cruelty.

A universe containing meaningful freedom inevitably contains the possibility that freedom will be misused.

Yet the modern understanding of human psychology adds another complication. Although we may possess freedom in principle, much of our daily behavior is not experienced as deeply conscious choice.

We react.

Something happens, the body activates, an emotion appears, an old interpretation follows, and a familiar behavior emerges.

A critical comment becomes anger. Rejection becomes withdrawal. Uncertainty becomes control. Fears of abandonment become people-pleasing. Shame becomes perfectionism. Old experiences quietly shape present responses.

This creates a provocative distinction between possessing free will and living **freely**.

Perhaps one of the great tasks of human development is increasing the percentage of our lives that is truly chosen rather than automatically repeated.

How We Become Someone We Were Never Meant to Be

A child enters life extraordinarily open and dependent. Very quickly, however, the environment begins teaching that child how to belong and how to survive.

We learn which behaviors receive attention, which emotions are welcomed, which emotions make adults uncomfortable, what earns praise, what invites criticism, when speaking is safe, and when remaining quiet seems wiser. Our nervous systems adapt to repeated experiences. Expectations develop, beliefs take shape, and protective behaviors become increasingly automatic.

Some people learn to please. Others learn to achieve. Some discover that controlling their surroundings reduces uncertainty. Some become invisible. Some become endlessly entertaining because laughter feels safer than vulnerability. Others become powerful because power protects them from feeling helpless.

These adaptations are not necessarily bad. Many begin as intelligent forms of protection.

The difficulty arises when the adaptation becomes the identity.

What began as “This is something I learned to do” gradually becomes “This is who I am.”

We identify with our careers, accomplishments, failures, possessions, bodies, relationships, reputations, wounds, political identities, spiritual beliefs, and stories about our past. We build ourselves (a ‘self’) from these elements and then devote enormous energy to defending it.

Traditional Christian theology speaks of humanity’s separation from God through sin. Psychology uses different languages: conditioning, attachment patterns, defenses, schemas, trauma responses, implicit learning. The concepts are not interchangeable, and we should not pretend that they are.

Yet both frameworks can help illuminate a profound human experience: **we can become estranged from our deepest nature.**

Pride, Ego, and the Self That Must Constantly Defend Itself

Lewis considered pride one of the deepest spiritual problems because pride does more than produce vanity. It creates comparison and separation.

The ego constantly monitors its place in the world. Am I respected? Am I successful? Do they like me? Why did someone else receive recognition? Why was I criticized? Why does that person have more? Am I winning or losing? Do I matter?

Much human suffering does not arise exclusively from what happens, but from what an event means to the identity we are protecting.

A disagreement is experienced as disrespect. Another person’s success becomes evidence of our inadequacy. A criticism of our work becomes a criticism of our worth. A relationship ends and becomes proof that we are unlovable.

We gradually build an enormous psychological structure around “me,” and then spend our lives maintaining it.

Even spirituality can become part of that structure. The ego is perfectly capable of becoming proud of how humble, awakened, evolved, spiritual, disciplined, or close to God, it believes itself to be.

This is why information alone cannot transform us.

We can read hundreds of books about consciousness while remaining largely unconscious of ourselves.

We can study Christianity while holding resentment.

We can speak about love while treating people poorly.

We can understand nervous-system regulation intellectually while remaining completely controlled by our triggers.

Eventually, knowledge must become embodiment.

And this is where the Christian story becomes much more radical than simply learning to behave better.

Christ and the Invitation to Become Something New

Christianity does not merely claim that God gave humanity better instructions. It claims that God entered human existence through Christ.

For Lewis, this changes the entire story. Christianity becomes not simply a moral system but a process of reconciliation and transformation. *Mere Christianity* progressively moves from the Moral Law to Christian belief, then into behavior, and ultimately into what Lewis calls becoming a new kind of person.

The teachings of Jesus repeatedly challenge the very structures the ego most fiercely protects: Forgive, love your neighbor, care for the forgotten, stop obsessing about status, serve, release judgment, become childlike, lose your life to find it.

Read psychologically as well as theologically, these teachings continually move the human being away from fear, domination, resentment, comparison, separation, and compulsive self-protection.

The invitation is not merely to admire Christ. It is to follow.

And following implies becoming.

This is where Lewis's Christianity and a modern conversation about consciousness begin to approach one another, not because they are identical, but because both force us to confront the same uncomfortable reality: the personality we normally call "me" may not represent the deepest expression of who we can become.

The Observer and the First Taste of Freedom

Imagine being triggered by someone.

Your body tightens before you consciously understand what happened. A thought appears almost immediately, perhaps something like, "They don't respect me," or "Here we go again." The mind begins constructing evidence. Memories appear. Emotion intensifies. Before long, you are arguing, withdrawing, attacking, pleasing, defending, or shutting down.

For most of our lives, this process feels completely normal because the reaction feels like **us**.

Then, at some point, something extraordinary may happen. You notice the reaction while it is happening.

You recognize the tightening in the body. You hear the familiar thought. You realize that your mind is recreating an old interpretation. You notice the impulse to defend yourself.

The trigger has not disappeared. The emotion may still be there.

But awareness has entered the room.

Research on decentering describes something similar in psychological language: the ability to shift from being immersed in an experience to observing that experience, with greater distance and less automatic reactivity.

This is an enormously important transition because observation creates space. When the thought "I am not enough" becomes "I notice a thought telling me I am not enough," the content may remain, but our relationship to it has changed.

The thought no longer has absolute authority.

And in that space, choice becomes possible.



A Deeper Definition of Freedom

We often define freedom as doing whatever we want. Yet this definition becomes questionable once we recognize how much of what we “want” may be conditioned.

If childhood rejection continues dictating our adult relationships, how free are those choices? If criticism automatically produces anger, how much choice exists in the reaction? If self-worth depends upon social approval, are we truly choosing, or are we continuously responding to a need for validation?

Freedom may therefore mean something deeper than unlimited permission.

It may mean the increasing ability to respond to the present without automatically allowing the past to dictate the response.

This is where consciousness becomes practical. The observer introduces a pause between stimulus and behavior. Within that pause, we can begin to recognize what is happening physiologically, emotionally, and cognitively before automatically acting from it.

We move from reaction toward response.

That may be one of the most practical expressions of free will.

Why the Body Must Be Part of the Spiritual Journey

One major addition modern science brings to this conversation is our growing understanding that transformation is not purely intellectual.

Knowing that we are safe does not always make the body feel safe. Deciding to forgive someone does not automatically prevent the nervous system from reacting when we encounter them again. Consciously wanting intimacy does not instantly dissolve defensive patterns built over years.

Stress itself can impair the functioning of prefrontal brain networks involved in higher-order cognition, attention, behavioral regulation, and flexible decision-making. Research has shown that even relatively mild uncontrollable stress can disrupt prefrontal functioning.

This matters because spiritual and psychological transformation often require capacities that become harder when we are chronically threatened: reflection, perspective, impulse control, empathy, flexibility, and conscious choice.

The body therefore must come with us.

This insight is central to the R4 process I use: **Regulate, Release, Rewire, Rise**. Those four stages are not intended to replace faith, prayer, spirituality, therapy, or personal responsibility. They provide a practical framework through which the body, brain, mind, and conscious awareness can participate together in change.

Regulation creates enough internal safety to see more clearly. Release allows us to stop continually recreating the past. Rewiring reinforces more useful patterns. Rising means carrying the new way of being into actual life.

The stages are not isolated events. They flow into one another.

Regulation Creates the Capacity to See

When we are in a sustained defensive state, the world looks different. Attention becomes biased toward danger. We interpret ambiguity more negatively. We react faster and reflect less.

This is one reason telling someone simply to “think differently” often produces limited results. Thought does not exist in isolation from physiology.

When we learn to regulate through breathing, movement, meditation, prayer, grounding, healthy connection, or other practices that support physiological stability, the goal is not to eliminate normal stress. The goal is to create enough capacity so that stress does not automatically become the driver.

From that regulated state, we can begin observing our internal experience without immediately needing to escape it.

That naturally leads to release.

Release Is Not Forgetting the Past

Release is often misunderstood as getting rid of unpleasant emotions or pretending that difficult experiences no longer matter.

It is something much more honest.

We learn to allow grief without building an identity around grief. We acknowledge betrayal without allowing betrayal to determine every future relationship. We can recognize a wound without requiring the wound to become our permanent definition of ourselves.

Forgiveness belongs within this territory.

Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation. It does not require the removal of boundaries. It does not make harmful behavior acceptable.

At its deepest level, forgiveness is an act of inner liberation.

It says that what happened mattered, but what happened will no longer be given unlimited authority over what happens next.

This interpretation fits beautifully with the spiritual challenge Lewis places before the reader. The point is not merely to intellectually approve of forgiveness. The point is to become the kind of person capable of practicing it.

Once we stop carrying some of the old material, space appears.

And in that space, something new can be practiced.

Rewiring: How Repetition Becomes Identity

Modern neuroscience gives us an important concept that Lewis did not have available in contemporary scientific language: neuroplasticity.

The adult brain is not fixed. Experience and learning can alter synaptic organization and neural circuitry, and studies of experience-dependent plasticity have demonstrated ongoing structural changes within adult neural systems.

This does not mean that every repeated positive thought automatically remodels the brain in some simplistic way, nor does it mean that we can think our way out of every psychological condition.

It means something more grounded and, in many ways, more empowering: **repeated experience matters.**

Attention matters.

Practice matters.

Behavior matters.

Relationships matter.

What we repeatedly rehearse becomes increasingly familiar to the nervous system and brain.

This gives practices such as prayer, meditation, gratitude, breathwork, visualization, contemplation, forgiveness, self-inquiry, compassionate behavior, and conscious attention an additional dimension. They are not simply ideas to believe. When repeated consistently, they become experiences through which we practice another way of being.

A breakthrough can reveal a door.

Repetition teaches us how to walk through it.

This is why transformation cannot depend exclusively upon the occasional retreat, ceremony, workshop, Sunday service, inspirational book, breathwork session, or meditation.

Those experiences may open us.

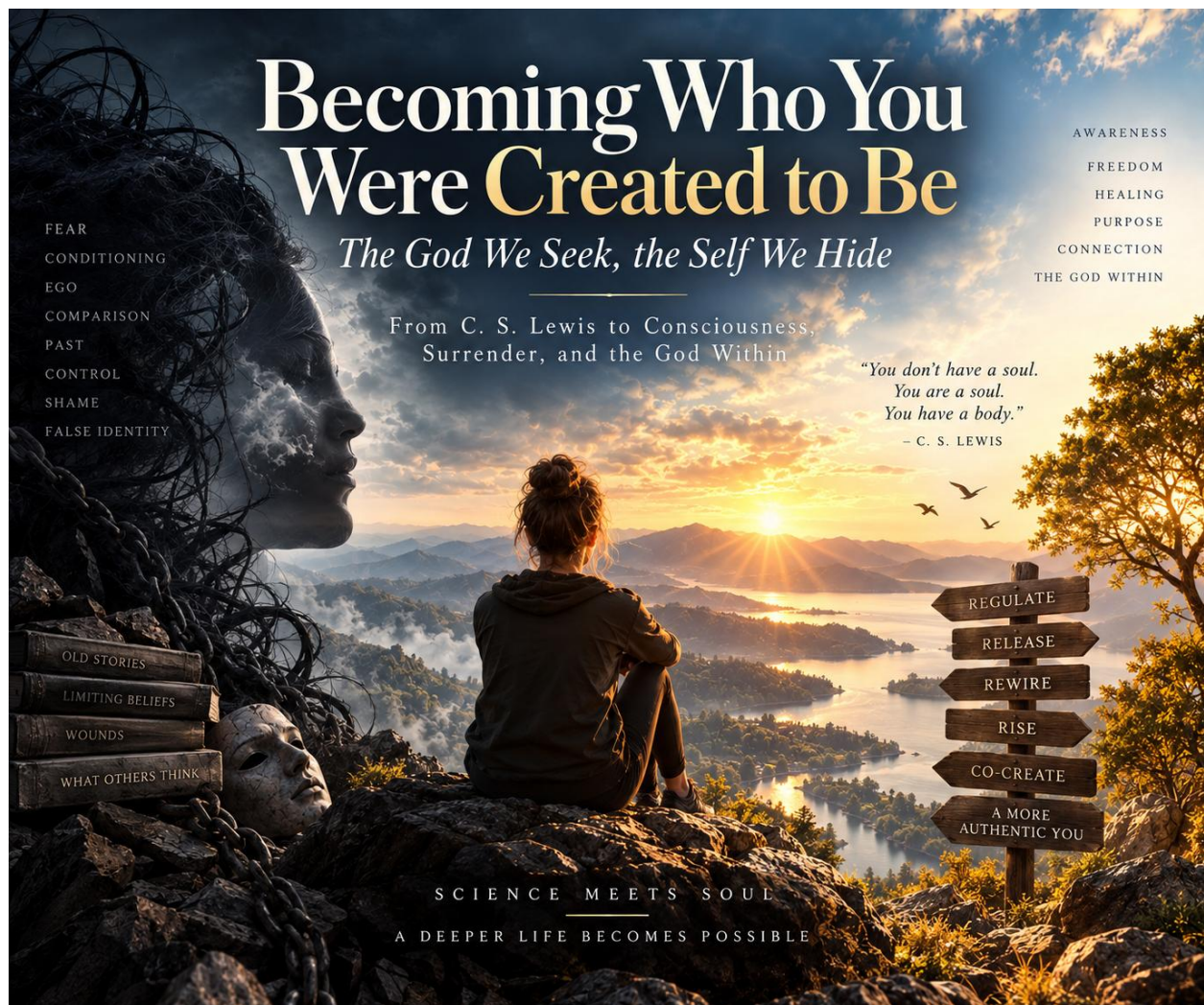
Daily life trains us.

When the Observer Becomes a Conscious Creator

Initially, awakening often feels primarily observational. We begin noticing ourselves. We see thoughts, emotions, habits, triggers, beliefs, and old reactions that previously operated almost invisibly.

But observation eventually creates responsibility.

Once I recognize that a thought is not necessarily truth, I become responsible for how much energy I continue giving it. Once I recognize that my past has conditioned certain responses, I become responsible for whether I continually reinforce those responses. Once I understand that attention influences what becomes psychologically important, I become more responsible for what I repeatedly attend to.



This is where observer consciousness can begin evolving into what I call **creator consciousness**.

The phrase requires clarification because it can easily be misunderstood. Creator consciousness does not mean that the individual ego suddenly acquires supernatural control over reality. It does not mean that thinking about a mansion guarantees that the universe will deliver one.

It means that we recognize ourselves as active participants in the formation of our lives.

We are continually creating through interpretation, attention, behavior, habits, relationships, choices, boundaries, imagination, and action. Our inner world influences what we notice, what we expect, what we tolerate, what we pursue, and how we respond to opportunities and challenges.

We have been participating in creation all along.

Awareness simply allows us to participate more consciously.

From Creation to Co-Creation

There is, however, another stage beyond personal creation.

Much of modern self-development begins with an understandable question: "How do I create the life I want?" We visualize the relationship, business, body, financial future, home, experience, or achievement we desire.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Vision can provide direction. Intention can organize behavior. Goals can create focus.

But eventually the spiritual journey may ask a more difficult question.

What if the highest use of consciousness is not forcing reality to satisfy the ego?

What if it is aligning the individual with something greater?

Then the question gradually changes from "What can I get?" to "What is trying to emerge through me?"

Instead of asking only how to make life conform to our plan, we begin asking how our gifts, choices, service, intentions, actions, and consciousness can become aligned with deeper purpose.

This is what I mean by **co-creation**.

Co-creation contains intention, but it also contains surrender. We still act. We still build businesses, write books, create art, fall in love, pursue goals, take risks, and imagine a better future. But we become less attached to the belief that our limited conscious mind already knows exactly how life must unfold.

The ego says, "Life should give me what I want."

Co-creation asks, "How can my life become an expression of what I am here to contribute?"

That distinction matters because without it, manifestation can quietly become spiritualized narcissism.

True co-creation requires humility.

And humility leads us back toward Lewis.

The God Within Without Making the Ego God

When I speak of the **God within**, I am not suggesting that the personality, ego, or individual identity is God.

That would be the ultimate inflation of the very self we are trying to see beyond.

The idea is almost the opposite.

Christian tradition contains a deep theology of divine indwelling, including the presence of the Holy Spirit and the invitation to participate in the life of God. Lewis's later chapters similarly move beyond mere rule-following toward the transformation of the human being in relationship with God.

From a contemplative perspective, many people throughout history have reported that as the ordinary noise of the mind quiets, another quality of experience becomes accessible: stillness, presence, connection, compassion, unity, reverence, or an experience they describe as God.

We should not pretend neuroscience can verify the theological interpretation of these experiences. Science can investigate neural correlates of prayer, meditation, attention, mystical experience, and emotion. It cannot presently settle the metaphysical question of whether God is objectively encountered within them.

That distinction is important.

Yet the experience itself deserves respect.

Perhaps the phrase "God within" is best understood not as "I am God," but as **I can become sufficiently still, open, humble, and conscious to experience relationship with the divine within the deepest interior of my own being.**

God is not reduced to something inside us.

Instead, the inner world becomes one of the places where God can be encountered.

That changes the spiritual journey profoundly.

We stop searching exclusively outward.

We begin listening inward as well.

When Prayer Becomes Transformation Rather Than Transaction

This shift changes prayer.

For many of us, prayer begins as asking God to change external circumstances. Help me succeed. Heal this. Protect that person. Give me an opportunity. Remove this problem.

There is nothing inherently wrong with petitionary prayer. It belongs deeply within the Christian tradition.

But prayer can mature from transaction into transformation.

Instead of asking only, "God, change this situation," we can also ask, "What is this situation revealing in me?"

Instead of simply asking for the difficult person to disappear, we might ask what that relationship is exposing to our own fear, boundaries, pride, resentment, or need for approval.

Prayer becomes a place of alignment.

We ask for clarity where ego creates distortion, courage where fear dominates, forgiveness where resentment lives, and wisdom when we cannot control the outcome.

Eventually, silence itself can become prayer.

There is less demand and more listening.

Less control and more relationships.

We are no longer merely asking God to participate in our plan.

We are learning to participate in something larger than ourselves.

Losing the False Self Without Losing Yourself

One of Lewis's most powerful themes is the paradox that surrendering ourselves ultimately allows us to find ourselves.

At first, this sounds contradictory because much of modern culture is built around constructing the self. Build your identity. Create your brand. Improve your image. Increase your status. Demonstrate your uniqueness. Protect your position.

Yet many spiritual traditions eventually point in the opposite direction.

Instead of endlessly adding more to ourselves, we begin removing.

What remains beneath the title?

Who are you without the applause?

Who are you without the wound you have repeated for twenty years?

Who are you when you no longer need another person to validate your value?

Who are you beneath the identity you built to make everyone else comfortable?

The deeper spiritual journey may therefore resemble excavation more than construction.

We remove the masks, defenses, borrowed beliefs, old resentments, automatic patterns, and endless comparisons until something more authentic begins to emerge.

The goal is not self-destruction.

It is liberation from the false identity that has been mistaken for the whole self.

Perhaps we do not need to create our deepest self.

Perhaps we need to uncover it.

Bios and Zoe: The Difference Between Existing and Truly Living

Near the deepest part of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis distinguishes ordinary biological life from the divine life of God using the Greek terms **Bios** and **Zoe**. Within his Christian framework, this distinction serves a larger point: Christianity is ultimately not about making ordinary human life slightly nicer; it is about participating in a different quality of life.

That distinction remains powerful.

A person can be biologically alive for decades without ever becoming deeply present to existence.

We wake up, check the phone, work, solve problems, consume information, worry, achieve, eat, entertain ourselves, sleep, and repeat. Years have passed.

Then sometimes something interrupts the pattern.

A death. A birth. Illness. Love. Awe. A moment in nature. A profound meditation. A breathwork experience. A crisis. A sunset. A question we can no longer ignore.

For a moment, the ordinary machinery stops.

We become aware that we are alive.

That is the territory toward which Zoe points.

Not simply having a pulse but inhabiting existence consciously.

Rising Means Bringing Consciousness into Real Life

Eventually all spiritual philosophy must survive contact with Monday morning.

It is relatively easy to feel peaceful in a retreat environment. It is more revealing to observe ourselves when someone challenges us.

It is easy to speak about surrender while life is going according to plan. Surrender becomes real when the plan collapses.

It is easy to believe in forgiveness before betrayal.

It is easy to talk about abundance when resources feel secure.

It is easy to proclaim unity until we encounter someone whose beliefs contradict everything we stand for.

This is where the final stage of R4—**Rise**—becomes meaningful.

Rising does not mean becoming permanently calm, positive, or spiritually elevated. It means learning to remain conscious while still being fully human.

We continue experiencing anger, disappointment, grief, uncertainty, desire, fear, and pain. These emotions are not failures of consciousness.

The difference is that we no longer need every emotion to become an identity or every trigger to become a command.

We can feel anger without becoming cruelty.

We can feel fear without giving fear complete authority.

We can grieve without losing the capacity to love.

We can experience uncertainty without immediately attempting to control everything around us.

We become increasingly capable of carrying consciousness into the messy reality of relationships, family, business, health, loss, money, ambition, conflict, and ordinary daily life.

That is embodiment.

Where Science and Soul Finally Meet

Science and spirituality are often presented as opponents, but they are frequently asking different kinds of questions.

Science is exceptionally good at examining mechanisms. How does stress affect the brain? How does attention work? How do neural pathways change?

How does breathing influence physiology? How does memory become reconsolidated? What happens in the brain during meditation?

Soul asks another set of questions. Why are we here? What makes life meaningful? What is consciousness? What is love? What is God? What happens when we die? Who am I beneath the personality? What am I called to contribute?

The mistake is to demand that one discipline completely answers the questions of the other disciplines.

Science without soul can become extremely sophisticated about mechanisms while remaining silent about meaning. Spirituality without scientific humility can drift into certainty about things we do not actually know.

We need both discernment and wonder.

Science teaches us to question assumptions, demand evidence, and remains willing to change our models.

Soul reminds us that not everything meaningful can be reduced to measurement.

That is the territory I call **Science & Soul**: not the forced blending of science and spirituality, but a respectful conversation between what can be measured and what must still be experienced.

The Journey Home

And so, we eventually arrive back where C. S. Lewis began: an ordinary human being saying, "That's not fair."

Hidden inside that simple statement is an extraordinary chain of questions.

Why do we experience moral obligations at all? Why do we repeatedly violate what we know? What part of us recognizes the contradiction? What happens when awareness begins observing the patterns that normally control us? Can observation create greater freedom? Can greater freedom become conscious creation? Can conscious creation mature into co-creation rather than control? And can co-creation eventually lead us toward surrender rather than greater ego?

The path begins to form natural progression.

We first become conscious enough to see ourselves. Regulation creates enough internal stability to remain present. Release loosens the grip of yesterday. Repetition and neuroplasticity allow new responses to become more available. We carry those responses into life and Rise. The observer becomes a more conscious participant in creation, and eventually the creator discovers something even deeper: life may not be asking us merely to impose our desires upon reality, but to align our individual lives with something greater.

At that point the spiritual question changes.

We stop asking only, "How do I create the life I want?"

We begin asking, "What kind of human being am I being invited to become?"

That may be the point at which creator consciousness matures into co-creation, control softens into alignment, and the ego stops trying to become God.

Instead, we become increasingly available **to God**.

Perhaps this is one of the deepest meanings of surrender.

We do not disappear when the false self loosens. We become more authentically ourselves.

The defensive layers begin to fall away. Old stories lose some of their authority. Our need for constant validation decreases. We can become strong without dominating, successful without making achievement our identity, loving without possessing, spiritual without feeling superior, and faithful without requiring certainty about everything we cannot know.

Maybe awakening was never about escaping human life.

Maybe it was about learning to inhabit it completely.

Lewis began with right and wrong and ultimately moved toward transformation. Today, we can add the language of metacognition, nervous-system regulation, stress physiology, neuroplasticity, subconscious conditioning, embodiment, and conscious choice.

Yet the central invitation remains remarkably timeless.

Know yourself deeply enough to recognize what you are not. Become aware of what controls you. Release what keeps you bound to yesterday. Practice

what you wish to become. Use your freedom consciously. Become humble enough to recognize the limits of control. Become courageous enough to love. Become still enough to listen.

And perhaps somewhere beneath the noise, conditioning, ambition, fear, accomplishments, wounds, defenses, and identities we have accumulated, we encounter something that was not created by any of them.

Presence.

Awareness.

Soul.

And, perhaps, God.

The journey that appeared to be taking us toward something new may ultimately be bringing us back to something that was present all along.

Which leaves us with a question deeper than whether we intellectually believe in God:

How much of what stands between God and us are we willing to release?

Perhaps that is where transformation truly begins.

References and Further Reading

Lewis, C. S. (1952). *Mere Christianity*. Geoffrey Bles. The book was assembled from Lewis's wartime BBC broadcasts and his earlier volumes *Broadcast Talks/The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behaviour*, and *Beyond Personality*.

Lewis, C. S. (1943). *The Abolition of Man*. Oxford University Press. A complementary Lewis work examining objective value, moral formation, reason, and what he called the Tao.

Bernstein, A., Hadash, Y., Lichtash, Y., Tanay, G., Shepherd, K., & Fresco, D. M. (2015). Decentering and related constructs: A critical review and metacognitive processes model. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(5), 599–617. doi:10.1177/1745691615594577. This review describes

decentering in terms of meta-awareness, reduced identification with internal experience, and reduced reactivity to thoughts.

Bernstein, A., Hadash, Y., & Fresco, D. M. (2019). Metacognitive processes model of decentering: Emerging methods and insights. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, 245–251. doi:10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.01.019.

Holtmaat, A., & Svoboda, K. (2009). Experience-dependent structural synaptic plasticity in the mammalian brain. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 10, 647–658. doi:10.1038/nrn2699. The review examines structural changes in adult neural circuits associated with experience and learning.

Xin, W., & Chan, J. R. (2020). Myelin plasticity: Sculpting circuits in learning and memory. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 21, 682–694. The review describes evidence that experience and learning can influence not only synapses but also oligodendrocytes and myelin.

Arnsten, A. F. T. (2009). Stress signaling pathways that impair prefrontal cortex structure and function. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 10(6), 410–422. doi:10.1038/nrn2648. This influential review describes how uncontrollable stress can impair prefrontal functions involved in higher-order cognition and behavioral regulation.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living*. Delacorte. A foundational modern work connecting mindfulness practice with stress, awareness, and mind-body health.

Siegel, D. J. (2012). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press. A broad synthesis of interpersonal neurobiology, attachment, neural development, and integration.

Frankl, V. E. (1946/2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press. A complementary exploration of meaning, suffering, personal responsibility, and the uniquely human capacity to choose one's stance toward circumstances.

The New Testament. Particularly relevant passages include Matthew 5–7 on the Sermon on the Mount; Matthew 16:24–25 on losing one's life to find it; Luke 17:20–21 on the Kingdom of God; John 14–17 on divine indwelling and union; Romans 12:2 on the renewal of the mind; Galatians 2:20 on the transformation of identity; and 1 Corinthians 3:16 on the Spirit dwelling within.

A Note on Science and Spiritual Interpretation

The scientific references above support specific claims concerning stress physiology, neural plasticity, metacognition, learning, and psychological distancing. They do **not** scientifically establish theological claims about God, Christ, divine consciousness, manifestation, the soul, or a metaphysical “God within.” Those ideas belong to theology, philosophy, contemplative experience, and personal spiritual interpretation. Keeping that distinction clear allows science and spirituality to enrich one another without asking to pretend it can prove what lies outside its proper domain.