

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Rating: PG • **Running Time:** 2 hours, 15 minutes
Starring: William Moseley as Peter; Anna Popplewell as Susan; Skandar Keynes as Edmund; Georgie Henley as Lucy; Tilda Swinton as the White Witch; James McAvoy as Mr. Tumnus; Liam Neeson as the voice of Aslan
Director: Andrew Adamson

Themes: Redemption, forgiveness, bravery, trustworthiness, family unity, sacrificial love, the destructiveness of

sin, taking responsibility, learning from trials, dealing with temptation

Cautions: A witch and her minions are prone to cruelty and violence. While not graphic, battles are intense with many casualties. A boy gets run through with a sword. The murder of Aslan is heartrendingly sad. Fantasy “magic” is a literary stand-in for spiritual constructs.

Story Summary

The hum of German bombers. The wail of air-raid sirens. It’s World War II, and London is under attack. Bursts of violence brighten the night sky, sending the Pevensie family scrambling for their bomb shelter. Debris flies as impulsive second son Edmund runs back into the house for a photo of his father—a soldier off at war. After a narrow escape, Mother puts her four children on a train to the country so they can safely wait out the conflict at a studious professor’s rural manor.

Peter is the eldest sibling, eager to fill his father’s shoes but bossy and lacking the maturity of a true leader. Next in line is Susan (the maternal voice of reason), followed by Edmund (a whiny, selfish lad) and the angelic, innocent Lucy. During a rainy-day game of hide-and-seek, Lucy stumbles upon an enchanted wardrobe and steps inside. She brushes past furs ... then fir trees. Snow crunches beneath her feet in a tyrannized land of talking animals and mythic beasts where it’s always winter but never Christmas. She encounters Mr. Tumnus, a friendly fawn compelled to deliver her to the evil White Witch, but who can’t bring himself to do it.

Back at the manor, Lucy tells her siblings about her adventure. No one believes her. That is until Edmund follows her into the wardrobe and encounters the alluring White Witch, who has set herself up as Narnia’s queen. Her initial hospitality masks frigid menace. She feels threatened by the Pevensie children, aware that they can fulfill an ancient prophecy and restore Narnia’s former glory. So she exploits Edmund’s resentment of Peter, teasing him with tasty Turkish delight in hopes that he will lead his family into her icy clutches.

Soon, all four children wander into Narnia where a hospitable beaver couple tells them of their destiny and about the land’s rightful king, the lion Aslan. It seems the winds of war are blowing. Aslan is on the move. Edmund slips away to find the White Witch at her mausoleum-like

fortress, hoping for more warm conversation and Turkish delight. But upon compromising his family’s position, he is rewarded with chains, not sweets.



The White Witch dispatches a pack of wolves to hunt down Peter, Susan and Lucy, who flee with the beavers toward Aslan’s camp. The majestic lion is Edmund’s only hope for rescue and redemption. Intimately familiar with the law—a Deep Magic that must be appeased—Aslan privately strikes a deal with the White Witch for the boy’s life, offering himself as a guiltless substitute on the Stone Table. In the dark of night, Aslan slips away. Lucy and Susan follow him, offering comfort until he begs his leave and turns himself over to hideous creatures who taunt, bind and shave him. The girls watch from a distance as, by torchlight, the Witch plunges a dagger into their new friend. But the sisters’ sadness doesn’t last long. In this moving allegory of Christ’s victorious sacrifice, Aslan rises again

and rejoins his loyal army (led by Peter) just in time to help it defeat the forces of darkness.

Spring envelops Narnia. Petrified creatures breathe again. And the Pevensies—sons of Adam and daughters of Eve—are enthroned at the castle of Cair Paravel. After ruling Narnia for many years, they rediscover the entrance to the wardrobe and stumble back through it, reuniting with the Professor as if no time had passed.

During production, Walden Media head Michael Flaherty told *Christianity Today*, “Everybody knows this is a monumental responsibility, that the book is a little lower than angels, and that we have to be as close to perfect as humanly possible.” Walden and Walt Disney Pictures not only honored C.S. Lewis’ classic novel, but launched a Hollywood franchise in the process.

Before You Watch

Learn a little about Christian author and apologist C.S. Lewis (and the novel that inspired this film) by visiting cslewis.org or factmonster.com/spot/narnia-lewis.html.

Bible Bookmarks 1 Sam. 12:1-7; Eph. 4:25; Gen. 3:1-5, 16-19 & 23; Isa. 14:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:17, 11:14; Matt. 14:28-33, 16:21-23; 1 Pet. 2:9, 5:8; John 1:44-46, 3:16, 18:10-11, 21:1-9; Acts 4:1-22; Rom. 5:8, 6:23; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:22; Col. 1:13-14; Ps. 103:9-12

Talking Points

1 Peter wants to be the “man of the house,” but lacks certain tools. What aspects of his character need to mature before he can become a leader worth following? Discuss the significance of the moment when he accepts responsibility for Edmund’s rebellion.

2 When talking with Peter and Susan about Lucy’s “tall tale,” the Professor asks whether Lucy or Edmund is more prone to honesty. Why is it important to develop a reputation for telling the truth? Read Ephesians 4:25, then see how Samuel’s reputation gave him credibility at a crucial moment (1 Sam. 12:1-7). Can you think of a time when a good track record caused someone to give you the benefit of the doubt?



3 Read Isaiah 14:13-14. Like Satan, the White Witch is an ambitious deceiver wearing a bogus royal title. Discuss other parallels between her and our spiritual enemy (2 Cor. 11:14, 1 Pet. 5:8), then find out who among creation has a *legitimate* claim to royalty (1 Pet. 2:9).



4 With which child do you most identify? Why? What did the Professor mean when he said, “You’re a family. You might just try acting like one”?

5 Peter and Susan tell Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, “We’re not heroes, we’re from Finchley,” as if heroes come from someplace special. How were people similarly shortsighted in Jesus’ day? Share John 1:44-46 and ask your teen, “Do you ever feel tempted to sell yourself short because of where you come from? If so, why?”

6 What character flaws and circumstances made Edmund vulnerable to the schemes of the White Witch? (Touch on selfishness, resentment of authority, impulsiveness, etc.). How have you seen Satan use such things against people today?

7 Aslan can’t save Edmund by applying brute force or by rewriting the law. Why not? Talk about God’s commitment to play by the rules He set in motion, and how far He went to show us grace (Rom. 5:8 & 6:23; Heb. 9:22; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:13-14; John 3:16).

8 Do you wonder what Aslan says to Edmund privately about his sins? Perhaps more poignant is what the lion tells the siblings: “What’s done is done. There is no need to speak to Edmund about what is past.” Why does he say this, and who may have been tempted to heap more guilt upon him? What might have happened then?

What does this illustration, along with Psalm 103:9-12 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, tell us about true forgiveness?

9 Ensnared by his fleshly appetite for Turkish delight, Edmund winds up in chains eating vile food, which goes to show that the White Witch—like Satan—promises more than she intends to deliver (Gen. 3:1-5, 16-19 & 23). Share modern examples of how the devil seduces people and leaves them imprisoned or wanting more.

10 Being bombed by the Germans taught Peter a battle tactic that served him well in Narnia. What was it? Have you ever endured a trial that, upon reflection, taught you an important lesson that helped you later?

11 The same noble impulsiveness that sends Edmund racing after his father’s picture or to Peter’s defense in battle also gets him into trouble. How? Which of Jesus’ disciples often spoke or acted without thinking things through? How did that get him into trouble? (Matt. 14:28-33 and 16:21-23; John 18:10-11) When did it serve him well? (John 21:1-9; Acts 4:1-22) Discuss how our personalities are neither right nor wrong, but something we need to understand about ourselves and yield to God. Which of *your* dominant traits might be both a strength and a weakness?

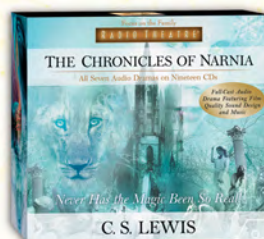
Follow-Up Activity

When Peter and Susan describe Lucy’s incredible tales of Narnia to the Professor, he examines the options and concludes, “If she’s not mad and she’s not lying, then logically we must assume that she’s telling the truth.” In his book *Mere Christianity* (end of section II, chapter 3), C.S. Lewis proposes the same three alternatives for Jesus’ claims about Himself (also detailed in Josh McDowell’s best-seller *More Than a Carpenter*). Use this compelling case for Christ as a devotional opportunity, either one-on-one with your teen or with the whole family.

Just for Fun

Edmund has his share of embarrassing moments. One also befell the young actor who played him onscreen. Sources close to the film say that Skandar Keynes’ voice changed so much during production that some of his voice track had to be relooped ... by his sister. —by Bob Smithouser

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