

C.S. ("Jack") Lewis found love late in life, but his marriage to Joy Gresham (an American poet) did not last long. She died of cancer less than four years after their wedding, leaving behind two sons, David and Douglas Gresham.

In this clip from the film *Shadowlands* - "Do you believe in heaven?" - Lewis and Douglas grieve over Joy's loss. After Joy died, Lewis wrote about his intense pain at losing her. When he published his musings - which he called *A Grief Observed* - he did so under a pseudonym ("NW Clerk"). When friends guessed that the work was really his, Lewis acknowledged it.

Exploring difficult questions, the book contains passages like these:

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. . . There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me. (A Grief Observed, by C.S. Lewis, page 15.)

Lewis had two young stepsons. How was he supposed to deal with their overwhelming sense of loss?

I cannot talk to the children about her. The moment I try, there appears on their faces neither grief, nor love, nor fear, nor pity, but the most fatal of all non-conductors, embarrassment. They look as if I were committing an indecency. There are longing for me to stop. I felt just the same after my own mother's death when my father mentioned her. I can't blame them. It's the way boys are. (A Grief Observed, page 21.)

And then ... the inevitable question:

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be - or so it feels - welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not "So there's no God after all," but "So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer." (A Grief Observed, pp 17-18.)

Writing about his feelings, Lewis tries to make sense of his loss. But he never sugarcoats the pain or the emotional upheaval - even when he begins to make peace with what is left of his life:

Up till this I always had too little time. Now there is nothing but time. Almost pure time, empty successiveness...

One of the things that was left in his life was another book, entitled *Letters to Malcomb: Chiefly on Prayer*. Although not as well known as some of his other works, the book shows that Lewis, the widower, still had his ability to deeply ponder his own life and to help others think about theirs.

Credits:

Clip from the 1993 film, *Shadowlands*. Copyright Price Entertainment, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the film. Online, via YouTube.

Director:

Richard Attenborough

Producers:

Richard Attenborough

Brian Eastman

Screenplay by:

William Nicholson

Starring:

Anthony Hopkins - C.S. "Jack" Lewis

Debra Winger - Joy Gresham

Edward Hardwicke - Warren "Warnie" Lewis

Joseph Mazzello - Douglas Gresham

James Frain - Peter Whistler

Julian Fellowes - Desmond Arding

Michael Denison - Harry Harrington

John Wood - Christopher Riley

Music:

George Fenton

Cinematography:

Roger Pratt

Editing:

Lesley Walker

Studio:

Price Entertainment

Distributors:

Savoy Pictures (US)

Paramount Pictures (UK)

Release date:

December 25, 1993

Running time:

131 minutes

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Shadowlands-Death-of-Joy-Gresham-Lewis1)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Shadowlands-Death-of-Joy-Gresham-Lewis1)

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