

# The Screwtape Letters

## Letter 1 – Reason and Reality

### Summary

In this letter, we learn that Wormwood has been making sure that his patient spends plenty of time with his materialistic friends. Wormwood believes that by using reason and argument he can keep the man from belief in God. Screwtape does not disagree that it is good to influence the man's thoughts, but he reminds Wormwood that his main job is to keep the patient from thinking too deeply about any spiritual matter. Instead he should use ordinary everyday distraction to mislead the man.

*The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's own ground. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. In what way does Screwtape say that Wormwood is being naive? (¶1)
2. What is Screwtape's explanation of why Wormwood should avoid reliance on "argument"? (¶2)
3. What is the connection between "thinking and doing", and how does this impact our daily lives? (¶1)
4. Screwtape claims that people "having a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing together inside their head". What specifically does he credit for this? What do you think the other "weapons" are today? How can they be used to destroy argument? (¶1)
5. If, according to Screwtape, people are not persuaded by what is true or false, what does he say people are concerned with? Why do people believe what they believe? (¶1)
6. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. What is the "abominable advantage" God has over Satan? How should this encourage us in our Christian walk? (¶3)
7. The story of the atheist in the British museum provides a dark and somewhat disturbing insight into rather pleasant distractions that can draw us away from spiritual matters. In this particular instance, the atheist's appetite was enough to pull him away from his train of thought in which God was working. How can Satan use common distractions to create detours in the course of our daily lives? (¶3)
8. Why would Screwtape advise Wormwood to "Keep pressing home on him the *ordinariness* of things"? What "comfort zones" in our Christian walk do we need to be cautious of? (¶4)
9. Read Luke 10:39-42. What ordinary everyday distractions was Martha concerned with? Who did it make her resent? What did she miss out on?

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## Letter 2 – Distracting the Christian Mind

### Summary

Screwtape begins this letter by rebuking Wormwood for letting his patient escape him and become a Christian. However, all is not lost. If he can cause the man to become disillusioned with the church by highlighting the strange habits and hypocrisies of its members, Wormwood still might succeed. Screwtape tells Wormwood to attack the man's spiritual immaturity in an effort to win him back.

*The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavor. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. "There's no need to despair," Screwtape writes. "Hundreds of adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy's camp and are now with us." What is Lewis alluding to in this passage? (¶1)
2. Why does Screwtape suggest, "all the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favor"? (¶1)
3. Screwtape claims, "One of our great allies at present is the Church itself." What strategies might tempters employ with new Christians to create dissatisfaction with the church? (¶2)
4. Consider yourself a new Christian who has just walked into your church for the first time. What expectations might you have about fellow church members, the leadership, the church, and the worship service?
5. Screwtape tells Wormwood to keep the patient focused on the visible church. St. Augustine wrote there is a "visible" and "invisible" church in Christianity. How would you describe these two churches, and why does Screwtape believe it is important to keep the patient fixed to the "visible".?
6. Screwtape claims the patient "has an idea of 'Christians' in his mind, which he supposes to be spiritual but which is, in fact largely pictorial." What romanticized view of Christianity might a new convert have of their spiritual life? (¶2)
7. In regards to our disappointment, Screwtape said, "Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman." For what purpose might God allow disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavor? What is the result if we get through the "initial dryness"? (¶3)
8. After all this, Screwtape provides Wormwood the perfect means to attack his patient. "He [the patient] has not been anything like long enough with the Enemy to have any real humility yet." Why is humility for a new believer so important? What is the importance of humility in the Christian life? (¶4)

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## Letter 3 – Relationships

### Summary

In this third letter, Screwtape suggests that Wormwood focus on the patient's relationship with his mother. By cooperating with Glubose, the demon who is working on his mother, Screwtape imparts secrets on how to slowly deteriorate the relationship.

*You must bring him to a condition in which he can practice self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. Read Romans 12:2 and 1 Timothy 4:16. How is God working “from the center outward” to transform our conduct to his standard?
2. What is the first method of temptation that Screwtape suggests using on the patient? (¶2)
3. Read John 14:15, 1 John 5:3, and Ephesians 6:6. Screwtape says the patient thinks “his conversion is something inside him.” What is conversion if it's more than just a commitment to a heart change? (¶2)
4. Although seemingly counter intuitive, why would Screwtape want Wormwood to have the “patient” practice an hour of self-examination “without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office”? (¶2)
5. What is the second method of temptation that Screwtape suggests using on the patient? (¶3)
6. What methods does Screwtape suggest Wormwood employ to render the patient's prayers for his mother innocuous? (¶3)
7. What are the two advantages that Screwtape says will occur by employing this method? (¶3)
8. Read Luke 18:1. What motivates the Pharisee to pray? How should we approach God when praying for others?
9. What is the third method of temptation that Screwtape suggests using on the patient? (¶4)
10. What annoying habits of others irritate you? Which of your annoying habits do you think irritate others?
11. What is the fourth method of temptation that Screwtape suggests using on the patient? (¶5)
12. What is the “double standard” Screwtape encourages between the patient and his mother? (¶5)
13. Provide an example of something being said “with the express purpose of offending and yet having a grievance when offence is taken”.
14. At the end of the letter, Screwtape wants Wormwood to search out whether the mother is jealous of her son's recent conversion. How is this similar to the story of the ‘elder brother’ in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-31? (¶6)