

The Screwtape Letters

Letter 10 – Bad Friends

Summary

In this letter, Screwtape approves of Wormwood's efforts to encourage a spiritually harmful relationship that his patient has developed with a couple that is fun, bright, wealthy, and worldly. This relationship will prove to be more effective if he can guide the man into leading a double life, one at church and another with his new friends.

All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be. - Screwtape

Discussion Questions

1. How does Screwtape describe the middle-aged married couple that has just come into the patient's life? (¶1)
2. How could all of these social sets become a snare for a Christian and especially for a new convert? What social sets are snares for you? (¶1)
3. What is the danger or trap that we can fall into when we find ourselves in relationships with friends whose faith doesn't coincide with our own? (¶2)
4. What does Screwtape mean by saying "All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be"? (¶2)
5. If the statement above is true, what does 3 John 1:11; 1 Corinthians 11:1; and Philippians 2:5 say about how we guard ourselves against compromising on our faith?
6. Screwtape says that he sees a lot of modern Christian writings about Mammon (the worship of material wealth and greed) but little about worldly vanities, choice of friends, and the value of time. What does Screwtape give as the reason for that? (¶3)
7. What does 1 John 2:15-17 say about how Christians are to be separate from the world?
8. There are three tactics Screwtape advises Wormwood to employ once the patient realizes that his faith and friends do not match up. Which tactic to use will depend on his patient's level of stupidity. Describe them below: (¶4)
 - a. Parallel Lives
 - b. Exploit his Vanity
 - c. Doing sinners good by hanging around them

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Letter 11 - Laughter

Summary

Wormwood's patient has found a new set of sophisticated friends who are suitable to Screwtape because they are "consistent scoffers and worldlings" as well as "great laughers". Screwtape feels it is important, at this point, to explore the subject of laughter and to explain why it is not always in the devil's favor.

Only a clever human can make a real Joke about virtue, or indeed about anything else; any of them can be trained to talk as if virtue were funny. - Screwtape

Discussion Questions

1. How can someone "progress quietly and comfortably" towards Hell without ever committing any "spectacular crimes"? (¶1)
2. In English, the word "scoffer" can mean "one who mocks, ridicules, or scorns the belief of another." In Hebrew, the word translated "scoffer" or "mockers" can also mean "ambassador." So, a scoffer is one who not only disagrees with an idea, but he also considers himself an ambassador for the opposing idea. Read Proverbs 29:8 and Psalm 1:1. Ultimately, what is the scoffer's goal, and what is the Bible's counsel about joining in with scoffers?

3. What are the four causes of laughter and describe each of them below? (¶2)

¶2	
¶3	
¶4	
¶6	

4. Screwtape says that he does not know the real cause of Joy. Read Romans 15:13 and Psalm 28:7. What does the Bible say is the source of joy?
5. Why is Screwtape not a fan of fun either? What is the only benefit of fun for Screwtape? (¶3)
6. How can humor be an "invaluable means of destroying shame"? (¶5)
7. Flippancy is defined as a "lack of respect or seriousness; frivolousness" especially when it comes to "grave or serious matters." How does a "habit of flippancy build up around someone as armor-plating against God?" (¶6)
8. Read Psalm 19:14. How might this verse change the way we approach conversations, television, music, and the movies we watch?

The Screwtape Letters

Letter 12 - Nothing

Summary

Wormwood is having success helping his patient drift away from God. However, Screwtape fears that Wormwood might be moving too quickly and provides advice on how to carefully guide the patient on a slow path to Hell. Screwtape notes that the danger in rushing the process is that the man will awaken spiritually, realize where he is, and start making positive changes in his life.

*Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts. -
Screwtape*

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it Satan's advantage to get us to believe that all of our choices are "trivial and revocable"? (¶1)
2. How can the mere habit of church attendance be a snare to our spiritual life? (¶2)
3. Screwtape said that having a "vague, uneasy feeling that we are not doing well" is better than recognizing clearly that we are being sinful. Why does Screwtape say this "dim uneasiness needs careful handling"? (¶2 & 3)
4. Why does Screwtape suggest that when we are in a state of sin, we will dislike religious duties and hope they will be done quickly? (¶3)
5. As the patient continues on this downward spiral, Screwtape says that "the uneasiness and his reluctance to face it" will "cut him off more and more from real happiness". Do you think the patient's avoidance of Christians and Christian activities could be synonymous with depression? Why or Why not? (¶4)
6. Screwtape said, "It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing." Why doesn't it matter how small the sins are? (¶5)
7. Compare Matthew 7:13-14 with the "safest road to hell" that Screwtape describes? (¶5)