

# The Screwtape Letters

## Letter 7 – Extremism

### Summary

Wormwood (due to youth and inexperience) has asked Screwtape if he should reveal himself to the patient. In this letter, Screwtape tells him that the current policy is to keep humans ignorant of their existence. Screwtape also follows up on a previous discussion of whether Wormwood should try to influence the man to become a fervent patriot or an extreme pacifist during the war. Screwtape advises that in the end it really does not matter as long as he misdirects the patient's thoughts away from God.

*Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. According to Screwtape, what is the “cruel dilemma” demons face in deciding whether or not to making their existence known to man? (¶1)
2. Do comic figures or benign illustrations of ‘devils’ assist in the work of Screwtape and Wormwood? How does the media inhibit our belief in demons and spirits? (¶1)
3. At the time this letter was written (remember the setting is during World War II), Screwtape claims it is their policy to conceal themselves. What about today? Would you say that at the present time Screwtape would still say to keep demonic existence a secret? (¶1)
4. What does Screwtape claim is a devil’s “perfect work”? (¶1)
5. How does Screwtape explain to Wormwood the scheme behind deciding whether to lull people to complacency or to inflame them into extremism? (¶2)
6. Screwtape suggests that the church, although heavily guarded, has proved successful in promoting extremism by creating subordinate factions. What extremism do we find in the church today? From a Christian perspective, is there any extremism to be desired? (¶2)
7. If you were to take a poll of the Christians you know, would patriotism or pacifism be considered the more godly position and why?
8. What is Screwtape’s advice to Wormwood regarding how he should decide whether to push extreme patriotism or pacifism? (¶3)
9. Screwtape encourages Wormwood to take the patient’s passion (the “Cause”) and make it part of his faith so that it appears though he is sacrificing for the “Cause”. As Christians, what can we learn from this? (¶4)
10. What does Ecclesiastes 7:18-20 say about avoiding extremes?

# The Screwtape Letters

## Letter 8 – Troughs and Peaks

### Summary

In the eighth letter, it is obvious that Screwtape is becoming increasingly annoyed with Wormwood’s inexperience and naïve enthusiasm. Wormwood’s hopes that his patient’s religious phase is dying away are quickly dashed by Screwtape’s explanation of the law of Undulation, details of God’s master plan for humans, and how those plans contrast to Satan’s master plans.

*Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. How does Screwtape explain the law of Undulation? How do you tend to respond to the ups and downs of your spiritual journey? (¶1)
2. Explain Screwtape’s assessment of human nature as “amphibians” – half spirit and half animals? (¶2)
3. Read James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:3. Why does God rely on “troughs” or trials even more than on the “peaks” in our lives? (¶3)
4. Fill in the blanks. Humans are primarily \_\_\_\_\_ to Screwtape and his workers for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ the human’s will into theirs. (¶3)
5. Explain how Ephesians 4:22-24 supports Screwtape’s argument that God wants to fill the universe with little replicas of Himself who voluntarily choose to love and serve Him? (¶3)
6. Screwtape provides a direct comparison between the relationship that God wants to have with us and the relationship that Satan desires. (¶3)

God’s relationship with us	Satan’s relationship with us
1. <i>Servants to become sons</i>	<i>Cattle to become food</i>
2.	
3.	
4.	

7. The definition of ravish is to “seize and carry off (someone) by force”. The definition of woo is to “try to gain the love of someone.” So then, what does Screwtape mean by saying God “cannot ravish. He can only woo”? (¶4)
8. What does Screwtape mean by, “He cannot ‘tempt’ to virtue as we do to ‘vice’”? (¶4)
9. Screwtape said that their cause is never more in danger than when someone “no longer desiring, but still intending, to do [God’s] will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.” If we possess this attitude, what statement does this make about our view of God?

# The Screwtape Letters

## Letter 9 - Pleasures

### Summary

In this letter, Screwtape advises Wormwood on how best to exploit his patient's spiritual dry period by first trapping the man with sensual pleasures (especially sex) then by attacking his faith directly. Screwtape also discusses the subject of pleasure in its original, pure form as designed by God, and he explains how Satan perverts and transforms it into sin.

*Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. - Screwtape*

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did Screwtape say that one of the most effective methods of tempting people during the "trough periods" is through sexual temptation? Why is it not effective during our peak periods? (¶2)
2. What does Screwtape mean by, "Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground"? What is the workaround Screwtape suggests to Wormwood? (¶2)
3. What does Screwtape suggest about temptation when he says, "an ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula"? What is God's solution as found in 1 Corinthians 10:13-14? (¶2)
4. What is another way Screwtape suggests exploiting the dry spell that the patient is going through? (¶3)
5. How would these thoughts affect us as either a pessimist or an optimist? (¶3)
6. Screwtape said, "A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all." How does Revelation 3:15-16 support this statement? (¶3)
7. What is another option that Screwtape mentions as a means to exploit the patient during his dry spell? (¶4)
8. How does introducing "phases" into our thoughts work to Satan's advantage? (¶4)