

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

By C. S. Lewis

HIGH SCHOOL HONORS BOOK STUDY

Answer Key

Created by Breckyn Wood

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ABOUT THE BOOK STUDY

What are Honors Book Studies?

The Good and the Beautiful Honors Book Studies are student-directed consumable booklets that accompany select books from The Good and the Beautiful Library or other wonderful and inspiring books. Each Honors Book Study is designed to help students explore the book's themes and messages, appreciate the literary value of the book, and learn new vocabulary and writing skills that correlate with the book. To complete an Honors Book Study, the student simply reads and follows the instructions in the booklet while reading the corresponding book. The Honors Book Studies are intended to be completed independently, or they can be completed in a group, class, or book club setting.

What are the goals of the Honors Book Studies?

There are three main goals of the Honors Book Studies: to help the student learn to **analyze**, **appreciate**, and **gain inspiration** from good and beautiful literature.

How many Honors Book Studies should be completed?

Students can complete as few or as many of the Honors Book Studies as desired. Honors Book Studies are not designed to take the place of the High School Language Arts courses; they are designed to be used in addition to the courses for those students who work at a faster pace and can use more challenging work. The reading books for the Honors Book Studies are more challenging than the required reading books for the High School Language Arts courses and can be completed in any order.

What materials are needed?

To complete this book study, you will need the following items:

- This book study booklet
- *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis
- A computer or laptop with a basic word processing program, such as Word or Google Docs
- A pencil or pen and a journal or notebook
- A Bible

AT-A-GLANCE

Author Study

- Biography of C. S. Lewis

Vocabulary

- Challenging vocabulary words in *The Screwtape Letters* (see pages 4–6)

Literary Analysis

- Study the themes and messages in *The Screwtape Letters*
- Analyze select quotations from *The Screwtape Letters*

Writing

- Personal Notebook Response questions
- Scriptural Connection questions
- Writing a “Screwtape Letter”

Group Discussion

- Extra discussion questions for those completing this book study with a group

Author Study

C. S. LEWIS: A SOLDIER IN GOD'S ARMY

Clive Staples Lewis, known to his friends and family simply as “Jack,” was born in Belfast, Ireland, on November 29, 1898. From a young age, Lewis had a deep love of books and storytelling. He and his older brother, Warren, spent their childhood writing and illustrating tales about “Boxen,” an imaginary land of their own creation. Boxen, populated by talking animals, had a rich and complicated history, political system, and socioeconomic structure all its own. Undoubtedly, the seeds for Lewis’s popular fantasy series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, were sown during those early creative years. Sadly, the boys’ mother died when Lewis was 10, and the brothers were sent off to separate boarding schools. The next few years were difficult and lonely ones for Lewis, but he and his brother remained close friends throughout their lives.

Soon after beginning his studies at the University of Oxford, Lewis was drafted into the army. At the young age of 19, he was sent to the front lines in France, where he witnessed the horrors of World War I and trench warfare. He was much more fortunate than many, however. In April of 1918, he was wounded by a shell that killed two of his comrades and sent back to England to receive treatment. By the time he had recovered, the war was over, and Lewis returned to Oxford to finish his studies in Greek, Latin, and English literature.

Lewis excelled at Oxford and after graduation stayed on first as a tutor in philosophy and then as a member of the English Literature faculty. In the introduction to their biography on Lewis, his friends Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper wrote, “To write the biography of a man of genius as many-sided as C. S. Lewis is a daunting task ... His ideal biographer would have to be at once a Classical and English scholar, a theologian, a philosopher, an expert on fantasy, science fiction and children’s books—and no one but Lewis himself possessed all these qualifications in sufficient degree.” It is evident that Lewis’s intellect

was deep and wide reaching, and based on the number of books, speeches, and letters he left behind, it seems as though his pen hardly ever rested.

Nearly every week for over a decade, Lewis gathered with a group of literary-minded friends at The Eagle and Child, a pub in Oxford. The group, which included Lewis’s dear friend J. R. R. Tolkien, became known as “The Inklings.” During these informal meetings, members would discuss wide-ranging topics and read aloud from their works in progress. It was to this group that Tolkien first read the manuscript that would become *The Lord of the Rings*. Lewis shared several of his manuscripts with the group too, including those that became *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first novel in his science fiction trilogy. Those lively, friendly gatherings were some of Lewis’s favorite times, and

they are where he first received the encouragement and criticism he needed to hone his writing and ideas. About the Inklings, Lewis wrote, “Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a good fire?”



Though he wrote numerous books, essays, and speeches on theology and is remembered as one of Christianity’s most stalwart defenders, Lewis spent many years of his life as an atheist. After losing his mother at a young age, spending his formative years friendless and in a school he hated, and then watching the horrors of WWI from the front lines, it is little wonder that Lewis abandoned his childhood faith and belief in a loving Heavenly Father. However, Lewis’s fervent desire

to believe and his own good sense would not allow him to completely walk away from the question of God’s existence. He says about that time in his early 20s, “I was at that time living like many atheists: in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing.” These contradictions tormented Lewis, as much as he tried to affect indifference about his atheism.

Several factors played an important role in Lewis’s conversion. Perhaps most influential was his friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, and other Christians at Oxford. Lewis had many late-night discussions with these faithful men, and though he tried to correct what he saw as their mistaken logic, he realized over time that they were chipping away at all his arguments for atheism. And that is another important factor in Lewis’s conversion—

his devotion to rigorous, logical thinking. *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis's memoirs of his early life, is essentially one long logical argument for the existence of God based on Lewis's observations about human nature and the way the universe works. The most important factor, however, as it always is, was the Father's ever-outstretched arms. Lewis describes it thus:

I had always wanted, above all things, not to be interfered with. I had wanted—mad wish—to call my soul my own. I had been far more anxious to avoid suffering than to achieve delight.

You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalen [Oxford], night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.

Total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded. I gave in, and admitted that God was God ... perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.

Although he was at first a “reluctant convert,” Lewis soon became a lion for the Lord, a soldier on the front lines of the war for men's souls. When World War II broke out, Lewis was too old to enter the armed forces again, but he served his country by lifting Britain's spirits through his BBC radio broadcasts during the worst of the German air raids. It was a time of great fear and uncertainty for Britain and all of Europe; people's minds were turned towards questions of life, death, and life after death. Said Air Chief Marshal Sir Donald Hardman, “The war, the whole of life, everything tended to seem pointless. We needed, many of us, a key to the meaning of the universe. Lewis provided just that.” The speeches Lewis gave during this time eventually became his book *Mere Christianity*, and they continue to inspire hope and faith in millions around the world.

Lewis was undoubtedly a giant of the twentieth century, a man of powerful intellect who served on the faculties of both Oxford and Cambridge, two of the oldest and greatest universities in the world. And yet, almost everyone who met him was impressed by his quiet manner and humble attitude. He wrote passionately and persuasively about the gospel, but even more impressively, he lived it fully. In *Mere Christianity*, he wrote, “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. ... If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and

cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.” Lewis was never afraid to tell the hard truth, and he unflinchingly strove to live this particular truth throughout his life. After the death of his wartime compatriot, Paddy Moore, Lewis cared for Moore's mother and sister for thirty years, supporting them financially and inviting them to live in the Kilns, his Oxford home, with him and his brother, whom Lewis also supported.



The Kilns, Lewis's Oxford home

For much of this time, Lewis lived on a modest income from his university job. However, when his books gained popularity and began earning him large royalties, Lewis kept his humble lifestyle and gave most of the money away. The royalties from *The Screwtape Letters* were sent to a Clergy Widows fund, and Lewis eventually established a charitable trust that allowed him to anonymously provide for an endless list of widows, orphans, churches, and others in need.

He was generous also with his time and friendship, despite being a busy professor, a prolific writer, and a public figure. At Lewis's funeral, his friend and fellow Oxford professor Austin Farrar said, “His characteristic attitude to people in general was one of consideration and respect. ... He was endlessly generous. He gave without stint, to all who seemed to care for them, the riches of his mind and the effort of his wit: and where there was need, he gave his money. ... He really was a Christian—by which I mean, he never thought he had the right to stop.”

C. S. Lewis was not perfect—he would be the first to tell anyone so. But he was a man whose actions were in complete harmony with his belief in Jesus Christ. He lived a truly Christian life, and for those not privileged to have met him, he has left a body of work that positively glows with the fire of his testimony and the warmth of his conviction.

VOCABULARY WORDS

“Be sure you know the meaning (or meanings)
of every word you use.” —C. S. Lewis



acquiesce [ak-wee-ESS]: to agree to or comply with

Mom and Dad did not often acquiesce to our pleas for more screen time.

asphyxiate [as-FIK-see-ate]: to kill or make unconscious through lack of air

Not wanting to asphyxiate themselves, scuba divers keep a close eye on their oxygen gauges.

attrition [uh-TRI-shun]: the state of being worn or weakened by continual attack

Attrition of the grinding gears caused the machine to eventually break down.

chattel [CHA-tul]: an item of personal property; slave

The practice of treating humans as chattel is a blight on our nation's history.

corporeal [kor-POR-ee-ul]: having a material body; physical as opposed to spiritual

In Greek mythology, the gods often take corporeal form as humans or animals.

coterie [KOH-tur-ee]: a fashionable, often exclusive, group of people with common interests or goals

Sharon met weekly with a coterie of her fellow artists to share and discuss their work.

demure [duh-MYUR]: reserved, sober, and modest or affectedly so; coy

I wore my most demure gray pantsuit to the job interview.

dossier [DAW-see-ay]: a file containing documents and detailed information about a specific person or subject

After years of treatments, my medical dossier could fill a whole filing cabinet.

exploitation [ek-sploy-TAY-shun]: the act of using someone unfairly in order to profit from them

The exploitation of child labor thankfully ended in the United States in the 1930s.

expurgated [EK-spur-gay-ted]: purged or cleansed from anything offensive, harmful, or incorrect

His letters were expurgated of all profane phrases before being published.

fidelity [fuh-DEL-uh-tee]: faithfulness; careful and exact observance of duty

Many abolitionists displayed an admirable fidelity to the cause of freedom.

foment [foh-MENT]: to encourage the growth of by agitation, excitement; to incite

The gang was accused of fomenting violence and was sentenced to prison.

fortitude [FOR-tuh-tood]: strength or firmness of mind and body through difficult circumstances

With great fortitude, the pioneers crossed the Great Plains and began a new life in the West.

imminent [IM-uh-nunt]: likely to happen soon; near

We stood in the airport lobby with welcome signs, awaiting Grandma's imminent arrival.

inculcate [IN-kul-kayt]: to teach and enforce by frequent repetitions

Trying to inculcate in me the basics, my piano teacher assigned me endless scale exercises.

innocuous [in-AW-kyoo-us]: harmless; safe; producing no ill effect

A white lie may seem small, but lying is never innocuous.

insipid [in-SIP-ud]: lacking spirit, life, or animation; dull

The insipid book about a silly puppy failed to capture the children's attention.

insoluble [in-SAWL-yoo-bul]: not able to be solved or explained; not able to be dissolved in a liquid

Each new mystery may appear insoluble, but the brilliant detective always solves them.

meritorious [mer-uh-TOR-ee-us]: deserving of reward, notice, regard, or happiness

Mother Teresa worked with meritorious devotion to alleviate poverty in India.

myriad [MEER-ee-ud]: an immense number; numerous and diverse

Libraries, with their myriad books on countless subjects, are invaluable research resources.

obtuse [awb-TOOS]: dull; blunt; not having a sharp sensibility or intellect

Owen was too obtuse to realize everyone was

yawning and ready for the party to end.

pacifist [PASS-uh-fist]: morally opposed to violence, particularly warfare; or, one holding such beliefs

Although some Quakers have served in the military, they are generally a pacifist religion.

panacea [pan-uh-SEE-uh]: a remedy for all diseases; a universal cure

The new law will improve the miners' working conditions, but it's no panacea.

pious [PIE-us]: devotedly religious

Our pastor lives a quiet, pious life serving his congregation and community.

platitude [PLA-tuh-tood]: a statement, usually moral, that has been used so often as to be considered cliché or trite

"Waste not, want not" is a favorite platitude of my frugal grandfather.

promulgate [PRAW-mul-gayt]: to make known by open declaration; proclaim

The internet is a popular platform for bloggers to promulgate their new ideas.

prudent [PROO-dunt]: wise and cautious in matters of judgment and practicality

Do you think it prudent to go out without an umbrella in this weather?

qualm [KWALM]: an uneasiness of the heart or conscience

Our friendly neighbors have no qualms about popping by any time to offer help.

redolent [RE-duh-lent]: strongly suggestive or evocative

Rome is a city redolent of ancient splendor.

Section 1

Letters 1-5

Introduction

Welcome to *The Screwtape Letters* Honors Book Study. You will use this book study as a guide to learning and personal reflection while you read *The Screwtape Letters*, a book written from the perspective of Hell but with the intention of bringing us all closer to Heaven.

The goal of The Good and the Beautiful Book Studies is to strengthen both your mind and your heart. This book study is broken into six sections. Complete each section as you read the corresponding letters in the book. Using the book study will give you a greater appreciation for the complex arguments, scriptural insight, and opportunities for personal growth in the story.

Assignments

Mark off the Section 1 activities below as you complete each one in order. When all are completed, you are ready to begin Section 2. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Read the “Author Study” (pages 2–3).
- Complete the Vocabulary activity.
- Read “Introduction to Etymology” and complete the Etymology Exploration activity.
- Read letters 1 through 5 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- Answer the Personal Notebook Response Question.
- Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Use the vocabulary key on pages 4–6 when needed.

1. Each day as I walk hungrily by the bakery, the treats in the window tantalize me.
2. The school librarians expurgated all the books with inappropriate material from the shelves.

3. Despite myriad obstacles, Tara overcame them all to gain an education and eventually become a history professor.
4. That little red berry may seem innocuous, but it could cause serious illness if ingested.
5. Though he was a pacifist and refused to carry a gun, Desmond Doss still served in the army as a medic during World War II.
6. Mariah felt a qualm when she saw the beggar children and so stopped to help them.
7. Her beauty was only superficial; on the inside she was selfish and hard-hearted.
8. God heard my supplication in prayer and answered it with a feeling of peace.

Word Bank

expurgated

qualm

innocuous

superficial

myriad

supplication

pacifist

tantalize

Introduction to Etymology

Etymology is a branch of linguistics that studies the history of words and their origins. Because our language has been heavily influenced over hundreds of years by many other languages, including Latin, Greek, French, and German, English etymology is a rich and fascinating field. By tracing the history of a word back through the years, we can discover where it came from and how its usage has morphed or even taken on new meanings.

Let’s take the simple example of the word “butler.” A butler is traditionally the highest-ranking manservant in a household. When you hear the word, you may think of a

nicely dressed man with polished manners who answers the door at a mansion and brings the mail on a silver platter. But all the way back in the thirteenth century, a butler was a “bouteillier,” which comes from the Old French word for “bottle.” A bouteillier was the servant in charge of the wine cellar, and since European noblemen took their wine very seriously, that job was given to the most capable and trustworthy servant. It’s no coincidence that “butler” and “bottle” share so many letters—they share a history as well.

There are many online resources for learning more about the etymology of specific words. Here are three you can use for the “Etymology Exploration” sections of this book study:

Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (merriam-webster.com): In addition to definitions and example sentences, this site provides a “History and Etymology” section at the bottom of each entry.

Online Etymology Dictionary (etymonline.com): Although this site does not have every word like a traditional dictionary would, its entries contain much more detail and explanation than Merriam-Webster since it is a site dedicated specifically to etymology.

Google (google.com): In the search bar, type “etymology” and the word you would like to research (example: “etymology: butler”). Google will provide a brief chart of the word’s origin as well as a graph of the word’s popularity over time.

Etymology Exploration

Sometimes breaking a word down and studying the etymology of its parts can help us understand its meaning. **Superficial** can be easily broken down into **super**, which in Latin means “above” or “on top,” and **ficial**, which comes from “facies”—Latin for “face.” So “superficial” refers to the part of something that we can easily see—the face or surface. (“Sur” in French means “on,” so the two parts of “surface” and of “superficial” mean the same thing.)

Tantalize has a simple but very interesting etymology. It comes from a character in Greek mythology named “Tantalus.” In the myth, Tantalus was a king who killed his own son and served him up at a banquet for the gods. (Don’t worry! The gods later brought the son back to life.) The gods were so offended by Tantalus’s horrifying act that they banished him to Hades. His eternal punishment? To stand forever in a pool of water, yet always be thirsty, and to be within reach of fruit trees, yet never able to satisfy his hunger. Whenever Tantalus would bend to drink or reach out a hand for the ripe, hanging fruit, both water and fruit

would retreat to just out of his grasp. That’s why we now use the word “tantalize” to refer to something that teases or torments us but that we can never have.

Quote Annotation/Explanation



Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words. The first example is done for you.

1) Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don’t waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous—that is the philosophy of the future. ... The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle on to the Enemy’s own ground. (Letter 1)

Jargon = confused, unintelligible talk or language (also refers to specific technical words used by a particular group or profession)

Since truth will always be on God’s side, on the side of right, it is better for the devil to dispense with it completely than to try to use it to his advantage. Screwtape wants Wormwood to use fancy philosophical words to confuse and distract his patient instead of engaging him in a real argument about truth and lies, right and wrong.

2) At the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls. (Letter 4)

Answers will vary, but here is an example: Because we have bodies in addition to spirits, the state

of our bodies affects the state of our spirits. If we are hungry or tired, for example, it can be harder to feel close to God. The devils want to discourage us from kneeling in prayer and to make us think that the position our body is in doesn't matter. But it does. The act of kneeling can encourage humility before God and improve the quality of our prayers, and the devils don't want that.

3) And how disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces. One of our best weapons, contented worldliness, is rendered useless. (Letter 5)

Answers will vary, but here is an example: Contented = satisfied, at ease

Worldliness = valuing material things over spiritual things

When people are at war, they are constantly reminded of their own mortality; they and those they love could die at any time. This makes people value the important things (love, family, friendship, and courage) over material things.

This can bring us closer to God and out of the clutches of the devils.



Personal Notebook Response Question



Read the prompt below and write a response (at least 200 words) in your personal notebook.

In letter 2, Screwtape talks about the “disappointment or anticlimax” that happens “on the threshold of every human endeavour.” Write about a time this has happened to you—when the shine of a new hobby, possession, friendship, etc., began to wear off. How did you feel about that experience? Did you keep going, or did you give up because the thing or experience was no longer enjoyable? In letter 2, Lewis teaches us that God wants us to push through these difficult times so that we learn to be content with where we are or what we’re doing now, instead of always hoping or wishing for the next new thing to make us happy. How might you apply this lesson to your own life?



Scriptural Connection

In the Old Testament, look up and read 1 Kings chapter 19, verses 4 through 8. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the question in your personal notebook.

In the beginning of 1 Kings chapter 19, Jezebel threatens to destroy Elijah. The prophet, overwhelmed, tired, hungry, and afraid, asks God to take away his life. Instead of lecturing Elijah, the Lord encourages him to rest and eat a while, and afterwards, Elijah’s spirits are so greatly restored that he is able to continue on his journey another forty days.



Think back to Screwtape’s quote about how we humans “are animals and that whatever [our] bodies do affects [our] souls.” How does this quote relate to Elijah’s story?



Section 2

Letters 6-11

Assignments

Mark off the Section 2 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- Read letters 6 through 11 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- Answer the Personal Notebook Response question.
- Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Use the vocabulary key on pages 4–6 when needed.

1. The Hebrews in the Old Testament went through much tribulation at the hands of the Egyptians.
2. My pioneer ancestors showed incredible fortitude even while crossing freezing rivers and encountering dangerous wildlife.
3. After a year of low test scores, the principal was made a scapegoat for the students’ poor performance and was fired.
4. Upton Sinclair’s famous novel *The Jungle* portrays the exploitation and cruel treatment of immigrant factory workers in early 1900s America.
5. The lovely harp music in the hotel lobby was redolent of a relaxing afternoon at a spa.
6. I will acquiesce to your request to paint your room, as long as you pick a neutral color.
7. Since they must function well in many different social

and cultural situations, diplomats are often poised and urbane.

Word Bank

acquiesce	scapegoat
exploitation	tribulation
fortitude	urbane
redolent	

Etymology Exploration

The word **scapegoat** comes from an ancient Jewish practice that can be found in the book of Leviticus: “But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.” (Leviticus 16:10, KJV)

In this ritual, a goat was brought to the door of the tabernacle, and the high priest would lay his hands upon it, confessing the sins of the people. The goat was then sent out into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the community with it.

The word is first found in English in William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible. He combined the words “escape” and “goat” to form the new word “scapegoat,” which has taken on a much less literal meaning today.

Now complete the assignment below on a different vocabulary word from this section: redolent.

Redolent has another meaning than the one provided, one that has to do with smells and aromas. Do some research, and in a few sentences, describe the etymology of “redolent.”

Redolent comes from the Latin olere, which means “to smell.” When it was first adopted into English, it only had that meaning of “having an aroma.” But then it took on a more figurative meaning of being evocative or suggestive, perhaps because smells are vague and ethereal or because smells are closely tied to memory.

Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words. The first example is done for you.



1) Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient's soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary. (Letter 6)

Benevolence = the disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness

Malice = extreme enmity and ill will; a desire to do evil or cause harm

All humans have good and bad within them. Satan wants to make the bad within us a real and daily part of our lives and the good within us a vague, happy sort of feeling that we direct to people far from us, such as "the poor" or people suffering in other countries. In that way, the bad will grow and negatively affect people we actually interact with, and the good will become less and less a part of our daily life.

2) All extremes, except extreme devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged. ... Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred ... (Letter 7)

Coterie = a unified, exclusive group

Hothouse = a greenhouse

The devils want to encourage extremism (except extreme devotion to God) because it distracts from God.

The devils love when people form themselves into small exclusive groups and rally around some cause because these kinds of groups make the people within think they are better than the people without. Contained, like a greenhouse, the members of these groups praise themselves and, by isolating themselves from others, grow to hate anyone outside their group.

3) One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. (Letter 8)

Propaganda = information spread in order to further a cause or political group

God created us and gave us free will so that we could grow to become like Him. He loves us and wants us to willingly obey Him. He won't force us to do His will. The devils cannot understand this because they see us only as food, as something they want to absorb, overtake, and obliterate. Even though conforming our will to God may seem like the opposite of freedom at first, in the end, if we obey Him, God has promised to bless us.



Personal Notebook Response Question

Read the prompt below and write a response (at least 200 words) in your personal notebook.

In letter 11, Screwtape classifies four different types of laughter. Write about a time when you felt true Joy, as Screwtape describes, and love for those around you. Have you ever witnessed his description of Flippancy, either in your own conversations or in those of people around you? How did that make you feel? How can you practice more Joy and less Flippancy in your life?

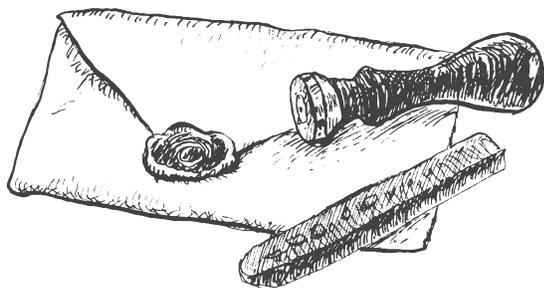


Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 7 through 10. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In letter 8, Screwtape tells Wormwood, “some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else.”

? How does this quote apply to Paul? How can understanding this truth help you when you are going through difficult trials?



Section 3 Letters 12-16

Assignments

Mark off the Section 3 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- Read letters 12 through 16 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- Answer the Personal Notebook Response question.
- Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Then write your own sentence using each vocabulary word.

1. Stonewall Jackson was famous for his clever stratagem to outwit the Union Army.
2. Virginia Woolf was part of a coterie of writers and thinkers known as the Bloomsbury Group.
3. The gas leak down in the mines nearly caused the miners to asphyxiate.
4. Look at those big, dark clouds; a thunderstorm is imminent.
5. Fidelity in marriage is essential; spouses should be able to trust each other completely.

Word Bank

asphyxiate

coterie

fidelity

imminent

stratagem

1. Asphyxiate:

2. Coterie:

3. Fidelity:

4. Imminent:

5. Stratagem:

Answers will vary.

 Etymology Exploration 

Do some research on the etymology of the word “fidelity.” Then answer the questions below.

1. What language(s) does the word “fidelity” come from?

It originally comes from Latin and came to English through Middle French.

2. Find another word that has the same etymological roots as “fidelity.” Write it and its definition below. (Hint: look in the etymology section of “fidelity” on Merriam-Webster.)

“Confide” shares a root with “fidelity.” It means “to trust or have confidence in.”

3. Look up the word “fealty.” Write its definition below and explain how it is related to “fidelity.”

“Fealty,” in a feudal system, is the loyalty shown to a lord by his vassals or tenants. Fealty, like fidelity, comes from the Latin fidelitas, which is also related to fides, which means faith.



Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words.



1) Your efforts to instil either vainglory or false modesty into the patient will therefore be met from the Enemy’s side with the obvious reminder that a man is not usually called upon to have an opinion of his own talents at all, since he can very well go on improving them to the best of his ability without deciding on his own precise niche in the temple of Fame. You must try to exclude this reminder from the patient’s consciousness at all costs. (Letter 14)

Vainglory = vanity; extreme pride

Niche = a cavity in a wall, often for the display of a statue

Screwtape is telling his nephew that even when he tries to puff his patient up with pride or encourage in him the outward appearance of modesty, God will counteract this attack by teaching the patient to stop focusing on himself so much. Because even when we’re trying to be modest by downplaying our accomplishments, we’re still making the mistake of thinking of ourselves too much. God wants us to forget ourselves in His service. We should stop trying to measure how good we are and focus on improving our talents instead. The devils want to keep this thought from our minds.

2) Our business is to get them away from the eternal, and from the Present. With this in view, we sometimes tempt a human ... to live in the Past. But this is of limited value, for they have some real knowledge of the past and it has a determinate nature and, to that extent, resembles eternity. It is far better to make them live in the Future. ... [T]hought about the Future inflames hope and fear. Also, it is unknown to them, so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealities. In a word, the Future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity. (Letter 15)

The devils want to distract us from God by removing our thoughts from the present and focusing them either on the past or on the future. People can waste their time longing for the past, which is good in the devils' eyes, but Screwtape says it is even better to have us fixate on the future because it is full of the unknown, which instills fear in us. It can also instill hope, but both hope and fear can cause obsession with things that haven't happened yet and things we often cannot control. Screwtape says the future is least like eternity because it isn't real—we never actually experience the future, just an ongoing string of the present.



Personal Notebook Response Question

Read the prompt below and write a response (at least 200 words) in your personal notebook.

In letter 12, Screwtape writes the following: “You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. ... Nothing is very strong: strong enough to steal away a man’s best years not in sweet sins but in a dreary flickering of the mind over it knows not what and knows not why, in the gratification of curiosities so feeble that the man is only half aware of them ...”

How is what Lewis describes in this passage like social media and other forms of numbing entertainment? Have you ever found yourself seeking those numbing effects in order to avoid facing an unpleasant duty or emotion?



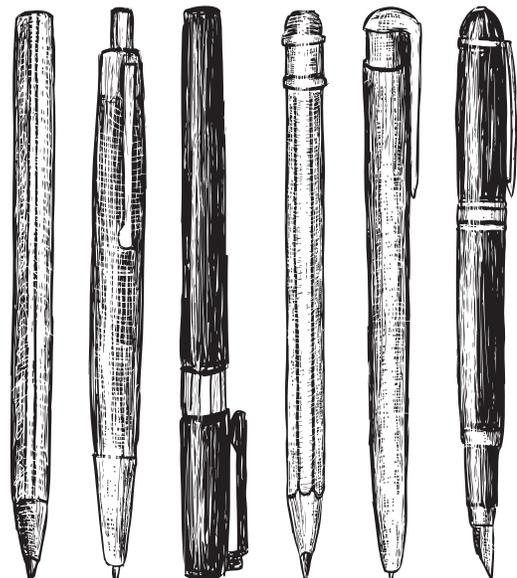
Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read Matthew chapter 16, verses 24 through 27. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In letter 13, Screwtape tells Wormwood, “When He talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever.”



How does this quote relate to what you read in Matthew? Who are some people you know, either from history or your own life, who have given their lives in Christlike service? Do you think they were happy, despite their immense sacrifice?



Section 4

Letters 17-21

Assignments

Mark off the Section 4 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- Read letters 17 through 21 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- Answer the Personal Notebook Response question.
- Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Then write your own sentence using each vocabulary word.

1. For their courageous and meritorious actions in battle, the soldiers received the Medal of Honor.
2. The FBI has a long and thorough dossier for each of its most wanted criminals.
3. My burnt, salty cookies for the bake sale were an unmitigated disaster.
4. Sadly, societies throughout history have reduced minority groups to mere human chattel.
5. The origins of the Easter Island heads have been an insoluble mystery for many years.

Word Bank

chattel
dossier
insoluble

meritorious
unmitigated

1. Chattel:
2. Dossier:
3. Insoluble:
4. Meritorious:
5. Unmitigated:

Answers will vary.

Etymology Exploration

Do some research on the etymology of the word “chattel.” Then answer the questions below.

1. What language(s) does the word “chattel” come from?

It originally comes from Latin, and it came to English through Old French.

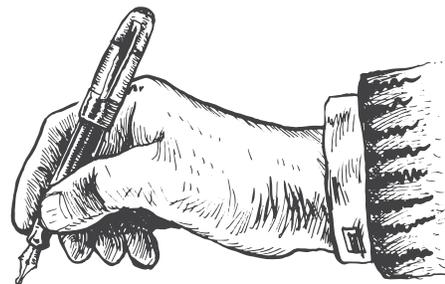
2. “Chattel” is closely related to a word for a piece of live-stock property. What is that word?

Cattle

3. Look up the word “capital.” Find the definition that is related to wealth and assets, and write it below. How are “capital” and “chattel” related?

Capital = the sum of money or stock which a merchant, banker, or manufacturer employs in his or her business

Both capital and chattel come from the Latin caput, which means “head.”



Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words.



1) Leave them to discuss whether “Love,” or patriotism, or celibacy, or candles on altars, or teetotalism, or education, are “good” or “bad.” Can’t you see there’s no answer? Nothing matters at all except the tendency of a given state of mind, in given circumstances, to move a particular patient at a particular moment nearer to the Enemy or nearer to us. (Letter 19)

Celibacy = chastity

Teetotalism = refraining from drinking alcohol

The devils don’t actually care about anything except pulling humans toward Hell and destruction. They don’t care what humans do or argue about—be it love or education or individual ways of worshipping—as long as they can use those things to pull us away from God. In this way the devils are very sneaky because they can use anything to achieve their ends, even something we might consider universally good, like love or education.

2) And all the time the joke is that the word “Mine” in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either Our Father or the Enemy will say “Mine” of each thing that exists, and specially of each man. ... At present the Enemy says “Mine” of everything on the pedantic, legalistic ground that He made it: Our Father

hopes in the end to say “Mine” of all things on the more realistic and dynamic ground of conquest. (Letter 21)

Pedantic = vainly displaying or making a show of knowledge

We human beings like to think that we own ourselves and that our time is our own; but really, everything we have was given to us by God, our Creator. The devils, of course, reject God’s authority and ownership. They hope, in the end, to steal us from God by tempting and eventually conquering us.



Personal Notebook Response Question

Read the prompt below and write a response (at least 200 words) in your personal notebook.

In letter 18, Screwtape writes the following: “They regard the intention of loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life, as something lower than a storm of emotion.”

Have you seen examples of this “storm of emotion” in movies, TV, or popular books? Do you think these portrayals are realistic? Why or why not? Next, write down a few ideas and examples of what you think love is like in a loyal, happy marriage.

Screwtape goes on to say, “Feed him on minor poets and fifth-rate novelists of the old school until you have made him believe that ‘Love’ is both irresistible and somehow intrinsically meritorious.”

Do you think there is anything inherently noble or “meritorious” about being in love? If so, what? If not, why do you think society is always portraying it as such?



Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4 through 8. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In some translations of the Bible, the word “love” can be found in place of “charity,” and for that reason, these verses are commonly read at Christian weddings.



How does the apostle Paul’s idea of love or “charity” compare to Screwtape’s? How can the virtues Paul describes contribute to a happy marriage?

3. She sat with a shy, demure smile but never got up the courage to join the conversation.
4. Life out in the country can be insipid, with none of the excitement or vibrancy of city life.
5. Susan B. Anthony would promulgate her belief in voting rights for women through pamphlets, conventions, and other awareness-raising activities.
6. My mom believes chicken soup is a panacea for any childhood illness.

Word Bank

demure

panacea

foment

platitude

insipid

promulgate

Section 5 Letters 22-26

Assignments

Mark off the Section 5 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- Read letters 22 through 26 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- Complete the Brainstorming activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank.

1. The dock workers began to foment an uprising, encouraging each other to form a union.
2. It may be a platitude, but it’s true that the best way to make friends is to be a good friend.

Etymology Exploration

Do some research on the etymology of the word “panacea.” Then answer the questions below.

1. “Panacea” comes from the name of a goddess from which culture? What was she the goddess of?

Panacea was the Greek goddess of healing.

2. “Panacea” comes from the combination of two smaller words, “pan” and “akos.” What do those two words mean in their original language?

Pan means “all” in Greek and akos means “cure.” So a “panacea” is a “cure-all.”

3. The Pantheon is an ancient temple in Rome, and its name shares the same “pan” root as “panacea.” What does “Pantheon” mean in its original language?

Pantheon means “all the gods.”

Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words.



1) He's vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least ... Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side. (Letter 22)

Vulgar = common; unrefined; rude

Bourgeois = middle class; materialistic

God has created a beautiful world for us to enjoy and delight in, and this disgusts the devils. They do not have bodies and cannot experience love, joy, or even simple pleasures; and so they are jealous of us, though Screwtape hides his jealousy behind apparent disdain. Because God created everything, everything in its natural and intended state is good; that's what Screwtape means by nothing being "naturally on [his] side." The devils have to corrupt and twist things before they can be used for their purposes of temptation and destruction.

2) It is always the novice who exaggerates. ... In this new circle your patient is a novice. He is there daily meeting Christian life of a quality he never before imagined ... He is anxious (indeed the Enemy commands him) to imitate this quality. Can you get him to imitate this defect in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial in her becomes in

him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride? (Letter 24)

Novice = one who is new to something; a beginner

Venial = forgivable; excusable

The patient is new to Christianity and is eager to act like and be accepted by his new Christian friends and girlfriend. This could be a good thing if he imitates their better qualities, but Screwtape wants Wormwood to get the patient to imitate their defects. In the girlfriend's case, she has a tendency to think that people who do not share her beliefs are silly. Since she really is an earnest Christian, this defect is forgivable, but if the patient takes it on as his own, because he is new to Christianity, he is in danger of exaggerating it to the point of becoming self-righteous and filled with spiritual pride.



Brainstorming

Complete the activity below in your personal notebook or on the brainstorming page provided.

As your final writing assignment of this book study, you will write your own version of a "Screwtape Letter," in which you are the patient the devils are discussing. In preparation for that assignment, spend some time brainstorming. Below are questions to get you thinking. Since this is not a traditional writing assignment, feel free to diagram, make lists, or even draw pictures to help you organize your ideas. The boxes on the next page may help you with this process.

- If Wormwood were observing you daily, what weaknesses do you think he would notice about you? How do you think Screwtape would encourage him to use those weaknesses to pull you away from your Father in Heaven?
- What are some of your strengths or best attributes? How do you think Screwtape would advise Wormwood to turn those strengths to their advantage?
- Screwtape encourages distraction almost more than he encourages actual temptation. What things in your life distract you most from focusing on God and the gospel?

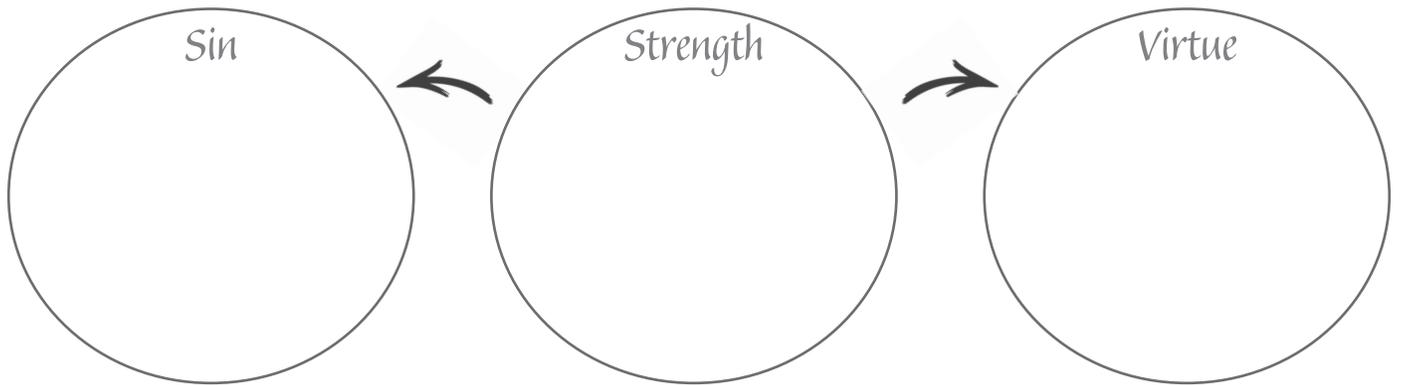
Strengths

Weaknesses

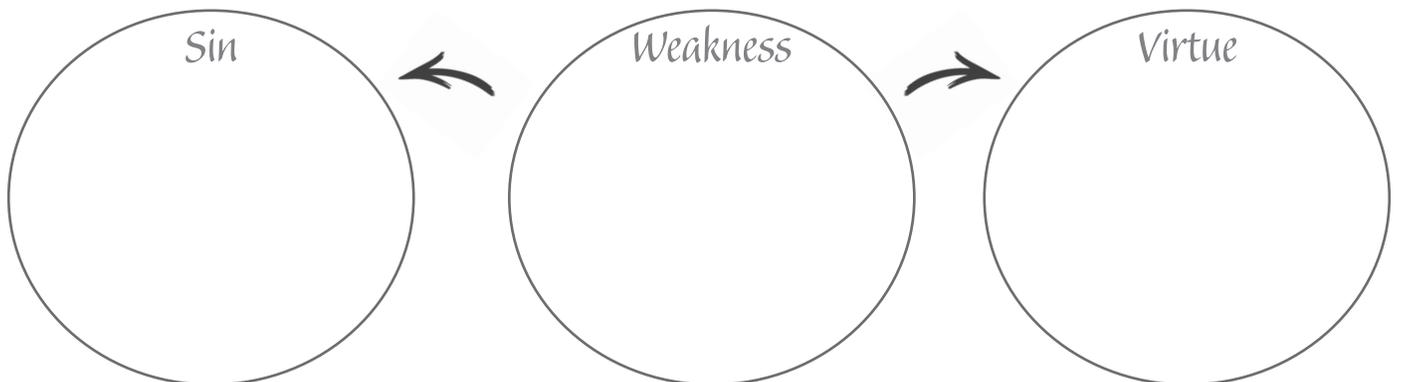
Distractions

Answers will vary.

Pick one of the strengths you listed. How could it become a sin? A virtue?



Pick one of the weaknesses you listed. How could it become a sin? A virtue?



Section 6

Letters 27-31

Assignments

Mark off the Section 6 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- Read letters 27 through 31 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.
- Complete the Screwtape Letter Writing Assignment.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. You may have to change the tense or make the word plural.

1. My pious mother made sure we went to church every Sunday and said our prayers every night.
2. The hologram seemed corporeal, but my hand went right through it when I tried to touch it.
3. John is newly in love and constantly bursts out in rhapsodies about his girlfriend.
4. Not wanting to seem obtuse in biology class, I spent all night researching about DNA.
5. World War I is often described as a war of attrition, since both sides lost so many men over years of constant fighting.
6. Ever prudent, Jane has been saving for college since she was 12.
7. Watching TV for too long puts the children into a stupor.
8. The army inculcates its rules and values into new recruits over months of rigorous training.

Word Bank

attrition
corporeal
inculcate
obtuse

pious
prudent
rhapsodies
stupor

Etymology Exploration

The Latin root of “corporeal” is “corpus,” which means “body.” Look up and write down definitions for the words and phrases listed below, which all share the “corpus” root.

corps: a body of troops; any division of an army

corpse: a dead body

corporation: a group of employers and employees; a political body formed to act as a single person

esprit de corps: a feeling of loyalty and good comradeship shared by the members of a group

habeas corpus: “You shall have the body”: a person charged with a crime has the right to appear before a judge



Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read Mark chapter 10, verses 17 through 27. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In letter 28, Screwtape writes, “Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is ‘finding his place in it,’ while really it is finding its place in him.”



How do you see this truth played out in the verses about the rich young man? What can you do to knit your heart closer to Christ and further from the things of “the World”?

Screwtape Letter Writing Assignment

Use the following prompts and guidelines to write your own version of a “Screwtape Letter.”

Now that you have spent many hours reading *The Screwtape Letters* and reflecting on its important lessons, it is your turn to mimic Screwtape’s style and write a letter of your own. Imagine that you are the patient Wormwood has been assigned to tempt. Look back through your personal notebook responses and your brainstorming session. What do you think Wormwood would say about you to his uncle? Which behaviors in your daily life would make Wormwood happy, and which would worry him?

Choose one of the following topics for your letter or make up your own topic:

- Pick one strength and one weakness from the lists you made and imagine Wormwood has told his uncle about them. How would Screwtape encourage Wormwood to turn each into a sin instead of allowing them to become ways for you to serve God and become more humble?

- Pick one of the distractions from the list you made. How would Screwtape advise Wormwood to use that distraction to distance you from God, and what could the eventual consequences be?
- Pick one of your favorite scriptures or scripture stories and turn it into the theme of your letter. (Look back through the “Scriptural Connection” activities for inspiration.)

Your letter should:

- Begin with “My dear Wormwood,” and end with “Your affectionate uncle Screwtape.”
- Be about *you*, “the Patient.”
- Use the inverted language Screwtape uses: “the Enemy” for God, “Our Father Below” for Satan, etc.
- Be at least 500 words.

Optional Bonus Activities

The following activities could help you get more out of your *Screwtape Letters* experience and continue the good habits you’ve started:

- Pick a favorite quote (or several) from the book and turn it into an art project. Write it big on a piece of paper, color it, draw around it, and/or decorate it any way you want. When you’re done, put it somewhere you’ll see it every day as a reminder.
- Choose another book by C. S. Lewis to read, and look for themes and ideas similar to those you encountered in *The Screwtape Letters*. Some of his most popular theological books include *Mere Christianity*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Problem of Pain*.
- If you enjoyed the “Etymology Exploration” sections of this book study, go off and do some more exploration

on your own! To get you started, the following is a list of words with interesting histories: assassin, clue, dunce, malaria, nimrod, robot, sandwich, tawdry.

- Do some extra research on C. S. Lewis’s group of writer friends, The Inklings. The most famous members include J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield. Consider starting a similar group—a book club, a writers group, an art appreciation club ... Who would you invite? Where would you meet? What would you want to discuss?



Group Discussion Guide

Section 1

- Some editions of *The Screwtape Letters* include the following two quotes after the dedication page:
“The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn.”—Luther
“The devil ... the powdred spirite ... cannot endure to be mocked.”—Thomas More
 How do these quotes set the tone for what you’re about to read? Why do you think Lewis included them?
- In the Preface, Lewis states, “Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar.” Why do you think Lewis felt it was important to remind his readers about this fact? Do you think Screwtape is a persuasive voice? Do you ever find yourself believing him or agreeing with him at any point in the book?
- When you read the Author Study, were you surprised to learn that Lewis had not always been a Christian? What can you learn from his conversion story?

Section 2

- Read the following quote from letter 10:
“In modern Christian writings, ... I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as ‘Puritanism’—and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years? By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life.”

In the book, the devils are always trying to get humans to care more about the appearance of something than the thing itself, the “truth.” They don’t want us to think

in simple terms of right and wrong, good and evil, true and false. How do you see this in the world around you? What are some other Christian ideas or behaviors society has rejected or labeled negatively?

- Look back through letter 9 and discuss with the group what Screwtape says about the nature of pleasure. What does he mean when he writes, “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”? In what way is Evil, then, dependent on Good?

Section 3

- In letter 14, Screwtape writes the following:
“He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognise all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things. He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love—a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours.”

Who in your life has many “glorious and excellent” qualities? What do you admire about this person? How does focusing on a person’s good qualities help you love them more and recognize them as a child of God? And how can recognizing your own gifts and talents help you feel gratitude to God?

- What do you think of the little glimpses Lewis provides into the devils’ experiences and way of life? For example, in letter 13, Screwtape talks about the “asphyxiating cloud” that prevented Wormwood from attacking his patient one day. Do you find these amusing? Enlightening? Unnerving? Do they add or detract from the rest of the book for you?

Section 4

1. In letter 17, Screwtape talks about “the gluttony of Delicacy.” He says about the patient’s mother,

“Because what she wants is smaller and less costly than what has been set before her, she never recognizes as gluttony her determination to get what she wants, however troublesome it may be to others.”

Had you ever thought of gluttony in that way before? With this broadening of the definition, can you see more examples of gluttony in the world or in your own life that you didn’t recognize before?

2. Have you ever practiced religious fasting? If so, do you agree with Screwtape that it can “imperil [the] lines of communication” between you and temptation? How so?
3. With the group, discuss the first few paragraphs of letter 19. Do you think Screwtape truly believes the propaganda he’s forced to disseminate, or is the “appearance of heresy” in his earlier letters an indication of his real beliefs? Do you ever feel pity for Screwtape and the other devils?

Section 5

1. In letter 25, Screwtape writes,

“He gives them the seasons, each season different yet every year the same, so that spring is always felt as a novelty yet always as the recurrence of an immemorial theme ... [W]e pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for absolute novelty.”

In this letter, Lewis teaches us that a constant demand for newness and excitement quickly leads to boredom and dissatisfaction. However, he also teaches that our lives are naturally full of change and that God has blessed us with a sense of delight at those changes. With that in mind, discuss with the group some of your favorite foods, weather, activities, or traditions from each season of the year. When they come around each year, how do they feel at once excitingly new and

endearingly familiar? How can you focus on these things so as to combat that “demand for absolute novelty”?

2. Also in letter 25, Screwtape talks about wanting to keep Christians divided into small, divisive groups:

“What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call ‘Christianity And.’ You know—Christianity and the Crisis, ... Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing ... If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference.”

Have you observed this phenomenon in your own congregation? What are some common divisions that keep us from uniting as the body of Christ? How can we foster greater unity in our religious communities?

Section 6

1. In letter 29, Screwtape asserts the following:

“This, indeed, is probably one of the Enemy’s motives for creating a dangerous world—a world in which moral issues really come to the point. He sees as well as you do that courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality.”

How do we benefit from living in a dangerous, morally confusing world? Do you agree that each virtue is a form of courage?

2. What do you think about the last letter of the book? How did reading it make you feel? What words, phrases, or literary techniques does Lewis use to slowly increase the reader’s sense of dread and foreboding?
3. How does Screwtape describe the patient’s first glimpses of heaven? Does the picture he paints align in any way with how you imagine that momentous occasion will be?