

"The Screwtape Letters" Questions

Letter 1 – Reason and Reality

What is the connection between "thinking and doing", and how does this impact our daily lives?

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?

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?

Letter 2 – Distracting the Christian Mind

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?

Why is humility for a new believer so important? What is the importance of humility in the Christian life?

Letter 3 - Relationships

What are the 4 methods of temptation that Screwtape suggests using on the patient?

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? (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3, Eph. 6:6)

What annoying habits of others irritate you? Which of your annoying habits do you think irritate others?

Letter 4 – Sincere Prayer

Read John 4:24. What sort of balance must take place between our emotions (or spontaneous prayer) and more formal prayers like what we find in the Disciple's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15?

What does Screwtape mean when he writes that humans don't "start from a direct perception of Him"?

Screwtape likes imaginary pictures of God as a focus for prayer. What mental images of God do we create in our mind?

Letter 5 - War

What is Screwtape's attitude toward war? Does it surprise you?

What is the "real business" that Wormwood is to be about? Can you provide examples of how our faith is diabolically assaulted and the development of virtues are hindered?

How does God use suffering in the life of a Christian? (Rom. 5:3-5, 1 Pet. 5:10, James 1:2-4)

Letter 6 - Focus

How can suspense and anxiety "barricade" a person's mind against God? (Mark 4:18-19) How does Satan benefit by keeping us anxious about things that may never happen? What should be our approach to anxiety? (Phil. 4:6)

Why does Screwtape write that getting people to hate distant enemies is disappointing? Why is it easier to hate those who are close and to be charitable to those who are far away?

Letter 7 - Extremism

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?

At the time this letter was written (WW2) 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? Why?

What extremism do we find in the church today? From a Christian perspective, is there any extremism to be desired?

If you were to take a poll of the Christians you know, would patriotism or pacifism be considered the more godly position and why?

Letter 8 – Troughs and Peaks

How does Screwtape explain the law of Undulation? How do you tend to respond to the ups and downs of your spiritual journey?

How does Screwtape describe someone who puts their cause in the most danger? If we possess this attitude, what statement does that make about our view of God?

Letter 9 - Pleasure

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 as effective during our peak periods?

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 he suggests to Wormwood?

How does introducing "phases" into our thoughts work to Satan's advantage?

Letter 10 – Bad Friends

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?

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?

Letter 11 - Laughter

How can someone “progress quietly and comfortably” towards Hell without ever committing any “spectacular crimes?”

How can humor be an “invaluable means of destroying shame?”

Letter 12 – Nothing

Why is it to Satan’s advantage to get us to believe that all of our choices are “trivial and revocable?”

How can the mere habit of church attendance be a snare to our spiritual life?

Letter 13 – Personal Pleasure

What is the difference in the ways in which God and Satan want to detach people from themselves?

What does Screwtape mean by “The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able to act, and, in the long run the less he will be able to feel?”

Letter 14 – Humility

Why does Screwtape instruct Wormwood to confuse humility with low opinion?

According to Ephesians 4:2, what is the type of humility that God wants from us? From Mark 12:30-31, where does humility begin?

Letter 15 – Past, Present, Future and Eternity

What fears of the future distract you the most in your daily life? What is your line of defense when Satan starts attacking you with those fears?

Read Luke 12:16-21. What is Jesus’ advice for those who are lining in the moment but in the wrong way?

Letter 16 – Churches

If you were looking for a church, what aspects of church would tempt you to be a critic when God wants you to be a student?

According to Screwtape, what is the “real fun” in creating factions between churches? How do you see this playing out in denominations today, and what is the real danger?

Letter 17 – Gluttony

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The word discipline literally means “to beat black and blue.” Using the analogy of an athlete, what is Paul telling us in these passage about how to maintain self-control and not becoming a slave to our bodies?

What do gluttony and sexual immorality have in common as far as self-control? How is it a deception that “physical exercise in excess and consequent fatigue are specially favorable to” the virtues of chastity?

Letter 18 – Love and Marriage

Screwtape says he wants people to think that, “being in love is the only respectable grounds for marriage” and when those feelings fade, the marriage is “no longer binding.” If a marriage should not be based on feelings of being in love, on what should it be based?

Hell finds very useful the idea of “falling in love”. What problem’s do you think can arise when a couple gives in to the transient emotions or feelings of “being in love”?

Letter 19 – Using Love

Screwtape displays his cynicism of God’s love when he says, “He is one being, they are distinct from Him. Their good cannot be His. All His talk about Love must ne a disguise for something else. He must have some real motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them.” Why is it hard for some people to believe there is a God who is not motivated by anything other than pure love for His creation?

There are obviously those who, if given the opportunity, would choose to take advantage of others for personal gain. But, if we are not careful, having a constantly cynical attitude will harden our hearts, and eventually we will trust no one How do you find a balance between healthy skepticism and hard-hearted cynicism?

Letter 20 – Sexual taste

According to Screwtape, temptation loses its power once God intervenes. What does 1 Corinthians 10:13 says about temptation? Why do you think God allows temptation?

At the end of paragraph 3, we learn that Screwtape seeks to make the “role of the eye in sexuality more and more important.” If the role of the eye (Physical appearance) in sexuality is exaggerated, what will be its inevitable outcome? Should we discount physical appearance as a part of sexual attraction?

Letter 21 – Entitlement

What does Screwtape mean when he talks about people making claims on their own life? How do you respond when your plans are intruded upon? Why is it hard for us to accept that claims over our lives are not ours to make?

Screwtape manages to go from ownership of “my boot”, to “my dog”, to my “wife” and eventually to “my God”. How can this tendency toward possession be related to the sin of pride and idolatry?

Letter 22 – The Christian Life

Screwtape is horrified by what he finds in the girl’s dossier (a dossier is a collection of documents about a particular person). If hell kept a dossier on you, what would Screwtape find? Would he be upset and frustrated as he is with this girl?

Why does Screwtape refer to God as a “hedonist at heart” (one who believes the pursuit of pleasure is the most important thing in life). What does Screwtape mean by “everything has to be twisted before it is any use to us”?

Screwtape vows, “We will make the whole universe noise in the end.” Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. How does Peter’s illustration of satan as a roaring lion and his goal of devouring you keep you aware of the noise and distraction in your life.?

Letter 23 – The Historical Jesus

The historical Jesus that Screwtape refers to is an attempt by each generation to reinvent Jesus according to the scholarly ideas or theories of that generation. As a result, it changes every 30 years or so. In the prior generation it was promoted along “liberal and humanitarian lines”. In the patient’s generation, it was being promoted on “Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines.” What is the fashionable teaching about Jesus in our culture today?.

It is good for a Christian to be aware of social responsibilities, but why should we also be careful in using Christianity as a means to obtain social justice?

Letter 24 – Ignorance and Arrogance

What are some stereotypes that Christians might believe to be true based on what they’ve been taught? (For Example: Christians are happier than people who are not Christians). At what point in our Christian walk might we be more prone to think of ourselves as superior to non-Christians?

Read Philippians 2:3. What is Pau’s direction about pride in the presence of others especially no-Christians?

Screwtape says, “the idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him”. Many churches today invest in women’s retreats, men’s groups, softball leagues, music production, and facilities while spending only a small percentage of their

budget on benevolence, missions and outreach. Read James 2:1-4. What would James' warning be to these churches?

Letter 25 – The Same old Thing

How can the restless associated with the “the same old thing” impact and influence our lives? Change may bring temporary satisfaction, but what do we do when the novelty wears off?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-11 and Philippians 4:11-13. What does Paul tell us about living with contentment in these two passages? How is contentment ultimately a heart change?

Letter 26 – Unselfishness

Screwtape says, “courtship is the time for sowing those seed which will grow up ten years later into domestic hatred.” What are some things that couples might do for each other during courtship that they fail to do in marriage?

God created us to experience and enjoy both eros and agape love. Read Song of Solomon 1:1-4 where eros is used for love and Romans 5:8 where agape is used for love. What is the difference between the two forms of love? Why are each important to the marriage relationship?

Why does Screwtape not want the couple to notice that, “love is not enough, that charity is needed and not yet achieved and that no external law can supply its place”. What does Luke 6:35 tell us about loving our enemies?

Letter 27 – Answers

Read Matthew 6:5-6. What does Jesus say about the “false spirituality” of the Pharisees prayers? Why would the devil want to encourage a sense of “false spirituality” rather than letting you petition God with sincere prayers and questions?

Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. In your own words, how does Jesus instruct us to pray? How hard is it for you to model this prayer in your daily life?

Read John 14:13; 15:16 and 16:23. How do you reconcile these verses with statements like, “If God is going to do what He wants, why pray?” or “why doesn't God seem to answer my prayers?” or “How do I know that what I prayed for wouldn't have happened anyway?”

Letter 28 – Perseverance

Screwtape suggests attacking the man through either adversity or prosperity in his middle age years. How are each different? Which of these temptations would be fertile ground for you?

Why would Screwtape want us to believe that this world can be turned into heaven?

Letter 29 - Cowardice

Screwtape says, “hatred is best combined with fear” and “hatred has its pleasures”. How does Screwtape link hatred and fear? Why is hatred and “anodyne for shame”?

Read Matthew 16:25. What does Jesus say about the courage necessary to follow Him?

What does Screwtape mean by, “the emotion of fear is, itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good”?

Letter 30 – Fatigue

What does Screwtape say that fatigue and unexpected demands produce? Provide an example of a time when a “sense of disappointment” turned into a “sense of injury” in your own life?

Screwtape admits that demons are comforted when they see us blow our top. Read Romans 5:3-5. What spiritual principle do we need to produce when we are fatigued and angered? Why is it important?

What are the two ways in which humans use the word “real”? What example was provided for each?

How can Wormwood use these two applications to raise doubts about his patient’s faith and persuade him to deny reality?

Letter 31 – The Other Side

How would you describe the patient’s “sudden clearing of the eyes” as he saw Wormwood for the first time on the other side of death? Have you ever experienced “a sudden clearing of the eyes” in some way? What did you gain as a result of that experience?

Read Job 19:25-27 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. What do these verses say about our experience with death?

Who else did the man see upon his death? How was being in the presence of God different for both the man and Wormwood?