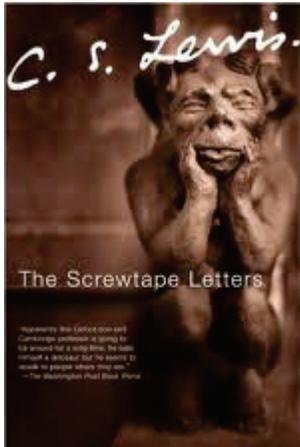


*Discussion Guide for C. S. Lewis's*

# The Screwtape Letters

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By Clay & Jean E. Jones

## Introduction

The introduction discussion questions are designed for members of new small groups to get to know each other. Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture below, and ask a volunteer to read the passage.

## Reading

*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. ~1 Peter 3:8 (NIV)*

## Discussion Questions

1. What are your hobbies?
2. What's your favorite dessert?
3. How long have you been a Christian?
4. Describe someone you know who is good at bringing harmony. What do you admire most about that person?
5. Why are the following needed for living in harmony with others?
  - a. Sympathy
  - b. Brotherly love
  - c. Compassion
  - d. Humility

## Letter I

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Your man has become accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head.... Do remember that you are there to fuddle him. From the way some of you young fiends talk, anyone would suppose it was our job to teach! ~Screwtape*

*Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. ~2 Timothy 2:25-26 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Before you were a Christian, what kinds of thoughts kept you from knowing Christ?
3. Think about someone whom you've shared the gospel with or whom you've invited to church.
  - a. If the person became a Christian, what convinced him or her?
  - b. If the person didn't become a Christian, what was the obstruction?
4. Think about the way the gospel was presented to you. Were the presenters gentle? How did this affect the way you received the message?
5. Gentleness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. What are gentle ways of instructing those who differ with you?
6. How might remembering that opponents of Christianity are entrapped by the devil help you to be gentle with them? How might remembering this guide you in your prayers for them?

## Letter II

Ask for three volunteers to read the verses. While they're finding the passages, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask the volunteers to read the verses.

### Reading

*Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman. The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavour.... In every department of life it marks the transition from dreaming aspiration to laborious doing. ~Screwtape*

*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ~Galatians 6:9 (NIV)*

*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. ~1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)*

*The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ~1 Corinthians 3:8 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Has Screwtape's observance about disappointment marking the transition between dreams to doing been true in your life? Explain.
3. What things can cause us to grow weary in doing good?
4. In the three verses above, what does Paul use as a motivation to keep going when we're tempted to give up at doing good? How might you apply this to your life now?
5. Suppose Tim and Todd both share the gospel with a friend, and suppose they put an equal amount of prayer, thought, time and love into their effort.
  - a. If Tim's friend becomes a Christian but Todd's does not, do you think God will reward Tim more than Todd? Why or why not?
  - b. What can help Todd try again with someone else despite his disappointment?

## Letter III

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Your patient must demand that all his own utterances are to be taken at their face value and judged simply on the actual words, while at the same time judging all his mother's utterances with the fullest and most over-sensitive interpretation of the tone and the context and the suspected intention. ~Screwtape*

*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ~Matthew 7:2-5 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. If the patient acts according to Screwtape's goal above, will God judge him in the way he judges himself or in the way he judges his mother?
3. Give advice to the patient, using examples from your own life.
  - a. What could he do if he suspects his mother has unkind intentions behind her words?
  - b. What could he do if his mother misinterprets something he has said and reacts angrily?
4. Screwtape wants the patient to focus on his mother's sins and irritations, while ignoring his own duties and flaws.
  - a. Where does Jesus say our focus should be?
  - b. What will happen in the patient's life if he follows Screwtape's advice?
  - c. What will happen if he follows Jesus' advice?
  - d. What might happen if the patient began to habitually respond to irritations by praying, "Lord, my mother is probably damaging a lot of her relationships, and that must hurt her. Please help her to grow. In the meantime, give me patience to love her as You love her and wisdom to see her as You see her. Show me where I do the same thing and help me overcome it."

## Letter IV

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Keep them watching their own minds [during prayer] and trying to produce feelings there by the action of their own wills. When they meant to ask Him for charity,<sup>1</sup> let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing. ~Screwtape*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ~1 Corinthians 13:4-6 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Does the Scripture above describe love as feelings or as actions?
3. If the patient wants to be charitable towards his mother, should he concentrate on improving his feelings or his actions? Why?
4. Jesus said what is in our hearts will come out of our mouths.
  - a. If we allow our thoughts to rehearse past wrongs, what will happen to our words?
  - b. If we allow impatient, unkind thoughts, what will happen to our words?
  - c. If our thoughts delight in evil towards someone, what will happen when an unexpected opportunity arises to be either kind or unkind, and there's no time to think?
  - d. Why is it important to make sure our thoughts are loving, and not just our outward actions?
5. What is the difference between loving thoughts and loving feelings? Which is more important for obeying Christ's command to love others?

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<sup>1</sup> *Charity* is the KJV translation of the word *love*.

## Letter V

Ask for two volunteers to read the verses. While they're finding the passages, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask the volunteers to read the verses.

### Reading

*Consider too what undesirable deaths occur in wartime. Men are killed in places where they knew they might be killed and to which they go, if they are at all of the Enemy's party, prepared. How much better for us if all humans died in costly nursing homes amid doctors who lie, nurses who lie, friends who lie, as we have trained them, promising life to the dying, encouraging the belief that sickness excuses every indulgence, and even, if our workers know their job, withholding all suggestion of a priest lest it should betray to the sick man his true condition! And how disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces. One of our best weapons, contented worldliness, is rendered useless. In wartime not even a human can believe that he is going to live forever. ~Screwtape*

*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. ~1 Timothy 6:18-19 (NIV)*

*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ~2 Corinthians 5:1 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Why does Screwtape think it's better for humans not to face mortality?
3. What are ways people hide from death? Why do we do this?
4. If you have ever faced the possibility of your own death, please share briefly how you prepared yourself and others. Did any priorities change?
5. If you have lost a loved one, please share briefly the circumstances and any preparations you or your loved one made.
6. In Paul's letter to Timothy, how does he want believers to prepare themselves for life after death?
7. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, how does he help the Corinthians prepare for death?
8. What could you do to better prepare for your own death or the death of a loved one?

## Letter VI

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*We want him to be in the maximum uncertainty, so that his mind will be filled with contradictory pictures of the future, every one of which arouses hope or fear. ~Screwtape*

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. ~Matthew 6:34 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Briefly describe a time when your mind was "filled with contradictory pictures of the future."
3. What do you do to stop worrying?
4. Screwtape tells Wormwood, "It is your business to see that the patient never thinks of the present fear as his appointed cross but only of the things he is afraid of." What's the difference?
5. Scripture teaches that one of today's troubles is preparing for tomorrow's needs.<sup>2</sup> Which of the following pitfalls are you most likely to fall into? Explain.
  - a. Indecisiveness
    - i. Definition: Inability to make a decision because of worry about possible negative outcomes
    - ii. Says: "I'm worried about all the things that could go wrong if I make the wrong decision"
  - b. Impulsiveness
    - i. Definition: Not planning or counting costs
    - ii. Says: "I won't worry about tomorrow because I won't think about tomorrow"
  - c. Ineffectiveness
    - i. Definition: Over planning and trying to make tomorrow's decisions today
    - ii. Says: "I won't worry because I'll have a plan for every possible contingency"

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<sup>2</sup> For example, storing food in Pr. 6:8; counting costs in Luke 14:28; making plans in Pr. 21:5; and having backup plans in Eccl. 11:6

## Letter VII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part.... Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours—and the more “religious” (on those terms) the more securely ours. ~Screwtape*

*No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. ~2 Timothy 2:4 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. If the patient were living today, what are some of the causes Screwtape might suggest getting the patient involved with?
3. Screwtape says Wormwood can tell if he's got the patient secure by whether his meetings, causes and crusades “matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Do you think Wormwood would consider it worthwhile to get the patient to read pamphlets and books about a political cause he considers Christian instead of reading the Bible? Why or why not?
5. The church in Rome was divided between those Christians who believed eating certain foods was wrong and those who didn't. Paul wrote the following about how to handle disputable matters (things not clearly taught in Scripture as sin, but which some Christians believe are wrong). How can we apply the following verses so as to keep a cause in which we believe strongly from dividing us from other Christians?
  - a. “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.” ~*Romans 14:1*
  - b. “You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.” ~*Romans 14:10*
  - c. “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.” ~*Romans 14:19-20*
  - d. “So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.” ~*Romans 14:22*

## Letter VIII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*And that is where the troughs<sup>3</sup> come in. You must have often wondered why the Enemy does not make more use of His power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment. But you now see that the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to over-ride a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. ~Screwtape*

*In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign....But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart. ~2 Chronicles 32:24, 31 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. According to Screwtape, why doesn't God show Himself more to men?
3. Do you think it's easier to obey God when you sense His presence than when you don't?
  - a. Which takes more faith?
  - b. Which do you think God values more? Why?
4. King Hezekiah was near death when he prayed for healing. God gave Hezekiah a miraculous sign and healed him. But when Babylonian envoys came to hear about the miracle, God left Hezekiah to test him. Hezekiah in pride showed off everything in the palace and city, foolishly making Judah vulnerable to the more powerful Babylon.
  - a. In the Scripture above, what did God do to test Hezekiah and know his heart?
  - b. Why do you think that action was necessary to accomplish the test?
  - c. What turned out to be in Hezekiah's heart?
  - d. Do you think Hezekiah knew what was in his heart before he failed the test?
  - e. Do you usually know what's in your heart before humbling circumstances show you?
5. How do you think Hezekiah felt when one of his subjects, Isaiah, rebuked him?
6. Hezekiah responded to Isaiah's rebuke with repentance.
  - a. Most kings imprisoned or murdered subjects who dared rebuke them. Why?
  - b. Do you think it is harder to take correction from someone in a lower position than you than from someone in an equal or higher position?
  - c. How does God want us to respond to correction and humbling circumstances?
7. What are important things to remember when you're in a trough?

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<sup>3</sup> Pronounced "trofs," these are long, narrow depressions in the ground and represent low points in life.

## Letter IX

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*But there is an even better way of exploiting the Trough; I mean through the patient's own thoughts about it. As always, the first step is to keep knowledge out of his mind. Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardours of his conversion might have been expected to last, and ought to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition. ~Screwtape*

*When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." O LORD, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed. ~Psalm 30:6-7 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. In the psalm above, David says when he felt secure he thought he could never be shaken.
  - a. Upon what might David's security have been based?
  - b. Proverb 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." How might this verse have applied to David's situation?
3. David says God hid His face from him. What kinds of things can cause God to hide His face from us?
4. David cried to God, "Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me; O Lord, be my help."<sup>4</sup>
  - a. Why did David want mercy?
  - b. Why did David want the Lord's help?
  - c. What had David learned that drove him to this prayer?
  - d. How can following David's example help you when you are in a trough?
5. In this psalm David says God's "anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime."<sup>5</sup> How can knowing this help you when you are in a trough?
6. God lifted David out of the depths, turning his wailing into dancing.<sup>6</sup> How does this relate to the peaks and troughs that Screwtape writes about?
7. What knowledge does this psalm give that Screwtape would want kept out of the patient's head?

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 30:10.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 30:5.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 30:1, 11.

## Letter X

Ask for two volunteers to read the verses. While they're finding the passages, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask the volunteers to read the verses.

### Reading

*I was delighted to hear from Triptweeze that your patient has made some very desirable new acquaintances and that you seem to have used this event in a really promising manner. I gather that the middle-aged married couple who called at his office are just the sort of people we want him to know—rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly skeptical about everything in the world. ~Screwtape*

*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." ~1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)*

*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. ~Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Without giving names, describe a relationship that was bad for your character, led you into wrongdoing, or took you away from more important matters.
3. Describe a relationship that was good for your character, made you stronger or wiser, or helped you to grow.
4. Screwtape particularly wants the patient to have friends with "an ingrained habit of belittling anything that concerns the great mass of their fellow men." The proverbs describe mockers as proud and arrogant people who resent correction, refuse advice, insult others, cause strife, and lack wisdom.<sup>7</sup> Consider Proverb 13:20 above. Why isn't it wise to have close friends who belittle and mock?
5. Why does Screwtape want the patient to know people who are "rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly skeptical about everything"? What is it about these attributes that Screwtape finds desirable?
6. What attributes is it wise to look for in friends?
7. One study revealed that many people who watch TV report that it satisfies their relationship needs. Name some good TV sitcom or drama companions.

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<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 21:24; 15:12; 22:10; 9:8; 14:6.

## Letter XI

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

*I trust this does not mean that you are under the impression that laughter as such is always in our favour.... I divide the causes of human laughter into Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper, and Flippancy. ~Screwtape*

*Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." ~Psalms 126:2 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Describe something that brought you joy.
3. Screwtape says Fun is of very little use him, unless it can be used to divert humans from doing what God wants them to do. He complains that Fun promotes charity, courage, and contentment. How does fun build relationships? What do you do with others for fun?
4. Screwtape encourages Wormwood to find out if his patient is of the kind who will cultivate incongruities as a pretext to talk about sex. Where do you draw the line regarding what jokes are acceptable?
5. Screwtape says, "Cruelty is shameful—unless the cruel man can represent it as a practical joke." The Bible says, "Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I was only joking!'"<sup>8</sup> Have you ever been hurt by what was later claimed to be just a joke?
6. Screwtape says Flippancy is talking about virtues or other serious subjects "in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it." He claims flippancy builds up armour-plating against God and deadens the intellect. Is he right? Why?
7. James calls double-minded, impure sinners to "Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom."<sup>9</sup> What kind of laughter and joy does he want them to abandon? Why?

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<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 26:18-19 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> James 4:8-9 (NIV)

## Letter XII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*If such a feeling [of dim uneasiness that's he hasn't been doing well] is allowed to live, but not allowed to become irresistible and flower into real repentance, it has one invaluable tendency. It increases the patient's reluctance to think about the Enemy. ~Screwtape*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. ~Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. What kinds of things cause Christians to lose their first love for God?<sup>10</sup>
3. Why do people who are dabbling with a little sin or worldly things avoid prayer and Bible reading?
4. If you've been avoiding prayer and Bible study, is it a good idea to ask God to show you the reason? Why or why not?
5. David asked God to search him and test him. Do you think that's important for Christians to do? Why or why not?
6. Has God ever showed you something wrong in you that you had been entirely blind to previously? What was the result?
7. David asked God to see if there was any offensive way in him and then to lead him in the everlasting way. Why is it important to know what's offensive in us before we can walk in everlasting ways?
8. Why does it take courage to ask God to search you and test you? What's the worst that can happen? Is finding out you have offensive ways in you a good thing or a bad thing? Explain.
9. Does God show us our flaws to humiliate us or grow us? Explain.

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<sup>10</sup> Revelation 2:4

## Letter XIII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. ~Screwtape*

*But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. ~James 2:18-19 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Screwtape doesn't want the patient to convert his new faith into action. Name some of the actions he doesn't want to see.
3. Screwtape says the more often you think about doing something but don't, the weaker your resolve to do it eventually becomes. Have you experienced this in your life? Explain.
4. Screwtape says the more often you act on something, the stronger the habit becomes. Have you experienced this in your life? Explain.
5. Name something you've been intending to do, but haven't yet—something that would be putting your faith into action. What's held you back?
6. To add a new habit usually requires giving up an old. What could you give up this week to enable you to establish a new habit?
7. What could you do this week to better turn your faith into action? Be prepared to share your results next week.

## Letter XIV

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Your efforts to instill 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. ~Screwtape*

*For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? ~1 Corinthians 4:7 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Give examples of vainglory and false modesty (preferably from your own life). Why should both be avoided?
3. Screwtape wants the patient to think of humility "not as self-forgetfulness but as a certain kind of opinion (namely, a low opinion) of his own talents and character." What does self-forgetfulness have to do with humility?
4. Answer the questions Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 4:7 (quoted above).
5. Paul tells Timothy to set an example for others and to be diligent in godliness and ministry "so that everyone may see your progress" (1 Timothy 4:15).
  - a. Why do you think Paul wants Timothy to let others see his progress?
  - b. Give examples of righteous and unrighteous motives that could be behind letting others see growth.
  - c. James says boasting and bragging is evil (James 4:16). How can Timothy show progress without boasting or bragging?
  - d. Last week's final question was, "What could you do this week to better turn your faith into action? Be prepared to share your results next week." What were your results?
6. A well-known actress in a television commercial says she uses the advertised products because "I'm worth it," and the listener should use the products because "You're worth it."
  - a. To what is the advertiser appealing?
  - b. Why does the advertiser think this will succeed in selling more products?
  - c. Do you think some people are worthy of certain products, and others are not?

## Letter XV

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy now, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the Present. ~Screwtape*

*And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'" "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." ~Luke 12:16-21 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Why was the rich man foolish?
3. Some people say, "I'm too busy to serve God now, but I'll serve Him when I retire." Is this wise or foolish? Why?
4. Those who postpone serving God until they have more time seldom find the time, even after retirement. Why not?
5. Screwtape says, "the Enemy wants men to think of the Future too—just so much as is necessary for *now* planning the acts of justice or charity which will probably be their duty tomorrow."
  - a. Do you think Screwtape is right? Why?
  - b. If we don't plan for acts of justice and charity, will we be more or less likely to do them?
  - c. If today I plan to do something kind this week, what will be happening to my character today?
6. How would your plans for today change if you knew you were to die tonight? In twelve months?

## Letter XVI

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for volunteers with different Bible versions to read the verse.

### Reading

*Surely you know that if a man can't be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that "suits" him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches. ~Screwtape*

*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.  
~Proverbs 18:1 (NKJV)*

*An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment. ~Proverbs 18:1 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Why does Screwtape want the patient to look for a church that suits him, rather than staying in one church that isn't totally pleasing?
3. Without naming places, what are some things that might be unpleasant in churches?
4. Why does Screwtape want the patient to adopt a critical attitude in church on all but doctrine?
5. If you notice yourself becoming critical in church of things other than essential doctrines, what are ways to stop yourself?
6. Why doesn't Screwtape like churches that bring "people of different classes and psychology together in the kind of unity the Enemy desires"?
7. How might a church be organized so that no members are ever in conflict with other members? Would that be beneficial?

## Letter XVII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Bring him into the state in which the denial of any one indulgence—it matters not which, champagne or tea, sole Colbert or cigarettes—“puts him out”, for then his charity, justice, and obedience are all at your mercy. ~Screwtape*

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ~Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Love is neither rude nor self-seeking.<sup>11</sup> Did the patient's mother show love when she didn't get her tea and toast exactly as she wanted? Explain.
3. What unpleasant tendencies in yourself were you reminded of as you read this week's chapter? If none, answer the following questions:
  - a. What kinds of things “put you out” when you don't get them?
  - b. What would your family members say puts you in a bad mood?
  - c. What did you complain about this week?
  - d. What wasn't done the way you wanted this week?
4. How do selfishness and pride affect attitude when we don't get our way?
5. How can we apply Philippians 2:3-4 (above) when we feel we deserve better than we're getting?
6. Jesus said, “The greatest among you will be your servant.”<sup>12</sup> How can we apply this when things don't go our way?

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 23:11

## Letter XVIII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the two quotations from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*In other words, the humans are to be encouraged to regard as the basis for marriage a highly-coloured and distorted version of something the Enemy really promises as its result.*

*~Screwtape*

*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.*

*~Screwtape*

*To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. ~1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Is no longer being in love grounds for divorce? Explain.
3. What is the difference between the love that results from a long-term, committed marriage and the "being in love" that often precedes Western marriages?
4. What are ways to help love grow in marriage?
5. Does 1 Corinthians 13 describe love in terms of emotion or actions? Which is more important in marriage?
6. How do loving and unloving actions affect our feelings?
7. What is your best single piece of marriage advice?

## Letter XIX

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*In the meantime, get it quite clear in your own mind that this state of falling in love is not, in itself, necessarily favourable either to us or to the other side. It is simply an occasion which we and the Enemy are both trying to exploit. Like most of the other things which humans are excited about, such as health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace, it is, from the point of view of the spiritual life, mainly raw material. ~Screwtape*

*Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...*

*~Romans 14:16-17 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. In the passage above, Paul was trying to get the Roman Christians to stop fighting about what diets were good or bad. Suppose a friend of yours decides a particular diet is "good" and other diets (including yours) are "bad."
  - a. What could your friend say or do which would cause you to want to quit hanging around him or her, particularly at meals?
  - b. What are ways your friend might spiritualize his or her diet?
  - c. What could your friend do to keep you as a friend?
3. How can God use Christians who take a special interest in the following areas?
  - a. Education: home school, public school, Christian school, public university, Christian university
  - b. Career: secular, ministry-related
  - c. Politics
4. How can Satan exploit Christians who take a special interest in the above areas?
5. How might Christians make the kingdom of heaven about one of the areas in the last two questions? What should the kingdom of heaven be about instead (see Scripture above)?

## Letter XX

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*For as things are, our man has now discovered the dangerous truth that these attacks don't last forever; consequently you cannot use again what is, after all, our best weapon—the belief of ignorant humans, that there is no hope of getting rid of us except by yielding. ~Screwtape*

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.<sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. ~1 Peter 5:8-11*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. What does Screwtape call "our best weapon"? Why is it so useful?
3. In 1 Peter 5:8, what two things does Peter tell Christians to do because their enemy the devil is looking for someone to devour?
  - a. What are ways to develop more self-control?<sup>13</sup>
  - b. Why is alertness important in resisting temptation?
  - c. How can we be more spiritually alert?<sup>14</sup>
4. In verse 9, what does Peter say to do about the devil?
  - a. What should we know that will help us do this?
  - b. How does knowing this help?
5. According to verse 10, what will happen if we are self-controlled and alert, and we resist the devil?
  - a. When will this happen?
  - b. How does resisting the devil result in strength, firmness, and steadfastness?
6. According to verse 11, why shouldn't Christians despair that the devil is their enemy?<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Titus 2:12, 1 Peter 1:13, and Galatians 5:22-23.

<sup>14</sup> See Ephesians 6:18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6.

<sup>15</sup> See also John 14:30-31.

## Letter XXI

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Now he is not yet so uncharitable or slothful that these small demands on his courtesy are in themselves too much for it. They anger him because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen. You must therefore zealously guard in his mind the curious assumption "My time is my own". ~Screwtape*

*For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ~Romans 14:7-8 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. What do you do during your "me" time?
3. What kinds of things interrupt your "me" time?
4. How do you respond when your "me" time is interrupted?
5. What are good ways to handle interruptions of things you really wanted to do?
6. What do you think about the statement, "I don't get enough 'me' time"?
7. Screwtape says the patient is "in theory, committed to a total service of the Enemy." What can we do to be sure commitment to total service is in practice, not just in theory?
8. What do you think of the statement, "All of my time for ministry is spent on my own family"?

## Letter XXII

Ask for three volunteers to read the verses. While they're finding the passages, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask the volunteers to read the verses.

### Reading

*Music and silence—how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell ... no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise—Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile—Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires.*  
~**Screwtape**

*The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ~1 Kings 19:11-12 (NIV)*

*"Be still, and know that I am God ... ~Psalms 46:10 (NIV)*

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord... ~Ephesians 5:19 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. How does noise defend against "silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires"? Why do some people surround themselves with non-stop noise?
3. What kinds of things might occur when one is still and quiet before God?
4. What affect do different kinds of music have on people? Consider patriotic songs, love songs, rock music, classical music, and worship.
5. Mothers often sing to calm a frightened child. Consider Psalm 63:7: "Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings." Explain what David means.<sup>16</sup> How can we apply this to our lives?
6. God told Moses to teach the Israelites a song to be passed on to all generations. Name a song that instructs. Why did God choose song to instruct the Israelites and their children?
7. How can we apply Ephesians 5:19 (above) to our lives?

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<sup>16</sup> Note that frightened fledglings seek protection under their parents' wings.

## Letter XXIII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*Only today I have found a passage in a Christian writer where he recommends his own version of Christianity on the ground that "only such a faith can outlast the death of old cultures and the birth of new civilisations". You see the little rift? "Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason." That's the game. ~Screwtape*

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ~Galatians 1:6-8 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Suppose someone wants to share the gospel with a friend. Which of the following change or misrepresent the gospel? Explain.
  - a. "All of us have made mistakes. Jesus died for our mistakes."
  - b. "Even if you don't yet believe Christianity is true, why not pray the sinner's prayer just in case it is?"
  - c. "Pray the sinner's prayer and you'll be saved. God doesn't really care about how you live."
  - d. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."
  - e. "We don't claim to have the truth—that would be arrogant. We're just on a journey to find God's love."
  - f. "You can sow money for whatever you want. If you want to know your children will be saved, give money to the church."
3. Which of the following statements represent religion as a means to something other than God?
  - a. "Christianity will restore your confidence and self-esteem."
  - b. "You need material possessions because when people see your possessions, they'll want to know how you got them. When you tell them they came from Jesus, they'll want to know Jesus too."
  - c. "Come to our church to strengthen your marriage."
  - d. "Come to Christ and He'll heal you of your sickness."
  - e. "Come to Christ and He'll forgive your sins and take you into heaven to be with God forever."

## Letter XXIV

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*It is an unobtrusive little vice which she shares with nearly all women who have grown up in an intelligent circle united by a clearly defined belief; and it consists in a quite untroubled assumption that the outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and ridiculous.... Can you get him to imitate this defect in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial [a small sin] in her becomes in him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride? ~Screwtape*

*To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” ~Luke 18:9-14 (NIV)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Proverb 26:12 says, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” In the parable above, the Pharisee was wise in his own eyes, while the tax collector knew he had lived foolishly.
  - a. What does it mean to be wise in one's own eyes?
  - b. Why is there more hope for a fool than for a person wise in his own eyes?
3. Proverb 14:6 says, “The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.” A mocker looks down on and ridicules others.
  - a. What are ways Christians put down others, perhaps without meaning to?
  - b. Why can't those who look down on others find wisdom?
4. Proverb 12:1 says, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.” In the parable above, the Pharisee was confident of his own righteousness. Elsewhere the gospels tell us many Pharisees hated Jesus correcting them.<sup>17</sup>
  - a. Why do the spiritually proud hate correction?
  - b. How is love of discipline related to love of knowledge?
  - c. Why is it stupid to hate correction?
  - d. What are godly ways to handle someone correcting you?
  - e. What did Jesus say the Pharisee's pride kept him from receiving that he needed?
  - f. What can our own pride keep us from receiving that we need?

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Matthew 21:45-46 and Luke 11:53.

## Letter XXV

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*We direct the fashionable outcry of each generation against those vices of which it is least in danger and fix its approval on the virtue nearest to that vice which we are trying to make endemic [widespread]. The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly gunwale under. ~Screwtape*

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. ~Matthew 23:23-24*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Why did Jesus call the teachers who emphasize one teaching to the neglect of another hypocritical? (Hint: tithing on spices was showing off their strict obedience to God.)
3. Jesus decries straining out gnats while swallowing camels: that is, taking one teaching so far that another teaching is neglected. In the following statements, what is the gnat (the teaching that's held strongly) and what is the camel (the teaching that's neglected)? The first is done for you.
  - a. When asked if he'd like to come to an in-depth Bible study, Joey replies, "I don't want to be one of those dry theologians—all I need to know is that I love Jesus."
    - i. Gnat: Being a dry theologian is unappealing.
    - ii. Camel: The Scripture tells us to meditate on God's word day and night and to hide His Word in our hearts so we won't sin against God.
  - b. When asked to volunteer for a church function, Joey replies, "I don't want to ignore my family so I don't get involved in church past Sunday morning service."
  - c. Joey's brother has been using drugs. When Joey is asked if he has talked to his brother about it, he replies, "No, I don't want to be the kind of person that rebukes everybody. Neither do I want to be like those hell-fire-and-brimstone preachers who are always telling everyone how bad they are."
  - d. When asked if he has shared the gospel with anyone recently, Joey replies, "I don't want to be one of those people who every time they sit down with someone they have to share the gospel and everyone runs from them, so I witness with my life."
  - e. When Joey's wife asks how he in good conscience could watch a certain racy movie, Joey replies, "I don't want to be too holy and lose touch with culture. I don't want to be so heavenly minded I'm no earthly good."
4. Who can do more earthly good: the heavenly minded or the earthly minded? Why?

## Letter XXVI

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

... [T]each a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them. ~**Screwtape**

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ~**Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)**

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. Why does Screwtape want the goal of surrendering benefits to be unselfishness rather than making others happy?
3. Instead of acting out of selfish ambition or conceit, what should we do?
4. This verse isn't saying to consider others more skilled or talented, but more worthy of preferential treatment. In Luke 14:7-14, Jesus give two practical ways to do this: choosing the lowest seat of honor at banquets and inviting to dinner those who can't repay you.
  - a. What is a practical way you could choose the "lowest seat" in a work of service?
  - b. What is a practical way you could choose the "lowest seat" in a family relationship?
  - c. What is a way you could serve without earthly repayment (money, recognition, position)?
5. God gives spiritual gifts and talents to every Christian so they can build others up in Christ. These include wisdom, knowledge, healing, pastoring, teaching, evangelism, administration, and helps.
  - a. How can spiritual gifts be used to feed selfish ambition?
  - b. How can they be used properly to build others up?
  - c. What are ways you can keep from the temptation to use spiritual gifts for selfish ambition?

## Letter XXVII

Ask everyone to turn to the Scripture. While they're turning, read the quotation from *The Screwtape Letters*. Then ask for a volunteer to read the verse.

### Reading

*The use of his "love" to distract his mind from the Enemy is, of course, obvious, but you reveal what poor use you are making of it when you say that the whole question of distraction and the wandering mind has now become one of the chief subjects of his prayers. That means you have largely failed. When this, or any other distraction, crosses his mind you ought to encourage him to thrust it away by sheer will power and to try to continue the normal prayer as if nothing had happened; once he accepts the distraction as his present problem and lays that before the Enemy and makes it the main theme of his prayers and his endeavours, then, so far from doing good, you have done harm. ~Screwtape*

*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving ~Colossians 4:2 (NASB)*

### Discussion Questions

1. What part of this week's reading struck home to you the most? Why?
2. What are things that have distracted you from prayer?
3. Why does Screwtape want Christians to try to thrust distractions from their mind by sheer will power?
4. Jesus said, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation" (Luke 22:40). With that in mind, why does Screwtape not want Christians to pray about being distracted from prayer?
5. What does it mean to "devote yourself to prayer"?
6. Keeping alert in prayer can include not allowing ourselves to be distracted from prayer, not dozing off, being alert to what needs prayer, and being alert to answers to prayer. How can we be more alert in prayer?
7. How can we have an attitude of thanksgiving, even if we're going through troubling times?
8. What are some things you can do to help keep from being distracted from prayer? (Don't forget the one we've already covered!)