



# **MEN'S** **STUDY**

## **THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS**

### **STUDY GUIDE**



## THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

### KEY FACTS

\*Originally published in 1942 (in the midst of WWII)

\*Written in an epistolary style (meaning a book composed of documents, in this case letters)

\*Consists entirely of letters from an elder demon (Screwtape) writing to his younger, eager nephew (Wormwood), as they correspond on the process of tempting and controlling a man (only referred to as “The Patient”)

\*Written as a work of fiction, but written about realities that are startlingly relevant not only for the time period it was published, but for any Christian navigating temptation.

\*Lewis grew up in a Christian family, but became an atheist in his young adulthood. After serving in WWI, he returned to theism, and eventually Christianity (in his words, “kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape”) after befriending J.R.R. Tolkien, and reading the works of GK Chesterton and George MacDonald.

## WEEK 1 | INTRODUCTION

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“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them”



## WEEK 1 | BOOK INTRODUCTION

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was your belief/perception/perspective about demons or devils growing up, and has that changed over the years? Were demons scary and real, harmless superstition, just something “bad” people struggled with, etc?

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2. What might an “excessive and unhealthy interest” in devils or demons look like? What type of Christian walk, action, or statements might reflect this mentality?

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## WEEK 1 | BOOK INTRODUCTION

3. Obviously, a horrifying monster snarling at you to commit atrocities would send most people fleeing in the opposite direction. How are humans tempted in ways that move them closer to sin and further from God?

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## WEEK 2 | TEMPTATION

Chs. 9, 20, 25

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“The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is merely Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call ‘Chirstianity And’.”





## WEEK 2 | TEMPTATION

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been tempted to give up your faith, either by denying or just ignoring it?

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2. Screwtape writes about the terrestrial and infernal Venus as temptations for men. What are they like, and how are they useful?

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3. Although Screwtape doesn't mention them, how might a terrestrial and infernal Mars be tempting for woman

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## WEEK 2 | TEMPTATION

4. From the Bible: Jesus was tempted in the desert by the devil. What can we learn from this and how can we relate it to our current context?

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5. Letter: What is your demon's mentor writing to your Wormwood about your temptations?

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## WEEK 3 | ISOLATION

Chs. 1, 9, 15

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“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”



## WEEK 3 | ISOLATION

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Across the letters, Screwtape provides some encouragement for Wormwood to keep the patient away from church, but also in some circumstances is unbothered or even seemingly encouraging of the patient's involvement in church. How can either option isolate someone from God? How can God be found and appreciated outside of church walls?

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2. What can lead to someone feeling like Christianity and their conversion is just a "phase"? What other "phases" might we experience as believers, even while continuing to live as Christians?

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3. In letter 15, Screwtape calls the present "the point at which times touches eternity", then quickly encourages Wormwood to keep the patient away from the present, and focused on the past or the future. For a demon, what is the danger in a human being focused on the present?

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## WEEK 3 | ISOLATION

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4. It is also said that both “The Enemy” and demons want the patient focused on the future, but in different forms. What is a Christlike way to be focused on the future?

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5. From the Bible: What does the Bible say about isolation and fellowship? How can we avoid not only personal isolation, but having a culture and community that doesn't isolate members within it?

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6. Letter Writing Prompt: As an apprentice demon in 2021, what would your mentor write to you as advice for isolating your patient from his family, neighbors and God?

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## WEEK 4 | DISTORTION

### Chs. 7, 13, 23

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“[You] allowed the patient to read a book he really enjoyed, because he really enjoyed it and not in order to make clever remarks about it to his new friends”



**WEEK 4 | DISTORTION**  
**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. The fact of the Resurrection and the doctrine of the Redemption were the heart of the early Christian message, according to Screwtape. What do you think is the heart of the currently popular Christian message?

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2. Why would Screwtape be glad to have Christianity be a means for accomplishing a political agenda for the good of society?

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3. Pacifism and patriotism were the chief opportunities for turning Christianity into a “means” at the time of WW II. What are some of the ways in which Christianity might be treated in the same way today?

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## WEEK 4 | DISTORTION

4. What pleasures and pastimes do you find spiritually nourishing?

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5. From the Bible: :What does the bible have to say about distortion? Select a couple verses that you have used to help you stay on the narrow path.

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6. Letter: Imagine you're the patient's angelic side. What would your angelic mentor write to you to help your patient?

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## WEEK 5 | CONCLUSION

### Screwtape proposes a toast

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“I am credibly informed that young humans now sometimes suppress an incipient taste for classical music or good literature because it might prevent their Being like Folks; that people who would really wish to be - and are offered the Grace which would enable them to be - honest, chaste, or temperate, refuse it.”



## WEEK 5 | CONCLUSION

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In the beginning we talked about The Two Errors our race can fall into about the devils: Disbelieving in their existence or feeling an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. How have your views been shaped by reading through these letters?

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2. Take this quote: “The claim to equality, outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior. What it expresses is precisely the itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient refuses to accept.” How might this quote be both the chosen poison of and the antidote to our demonic ploys?

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## WEEK 5 | CONCLUSION

3. This quote, “I am credibly informed that young humans now sometimes suppress an incipient taste for classical music or good literature because it might prevent their Being like Folks; that people who would really wish to be - and are offered the Grace which would enable them to be - honest, chaste, or temperate, refuse it. To accept might make them Different, might offend against the Way of Life, take them out of Togetherness, impair their Integration with the Group. They might (horror of horrors!) become individuals”. Screwtape implies that by accepting the Grace of God, the humans will become individuals and different. In what ways is this Divine, and in what ways could this be demonic?

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4. What are the ways we guard ourselves against the ploys of our demons?

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