



**EDUCATION & FORMATION
LENT WITH SCREWTAPE
FEBRUARY 25 - MARCH 17**

Screwtape is the title character in C.S. Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*. He, an older and more experienced demon, counsels the younger Wormwood through a series of 31 letters, as Wormwood attempts to keep the 'patient' out of the enemy's clutches.

In this scenario, God is the enemy. You and I are the patient, so all the good advice from Screwtape is bad advice for us.

With the Lenten themes of prayer, study, perseverance, I thought it fitting to spend Lent with Screwtape. Each Sunday, during Education and Formation, we will look at one letter. We'll ask ourselves: What is Screwtape's goal? What is his tactic? And how should we respond to the 'schemes of the devil' so that we may stand. (Eph. 6:10)

FEBRUARY 25

Speaker: Cecile Mines

MARCH 3

Speaker: Tim Heath

MARCH 10

Speaker: David Stephens

MARCH 17

Speaker: John Palafoutas

Letter 1

Terminology:

The Patient - The human the devil is trying to dam.

The Enemy - (with a capital E) God

Our Father Below - Satan - not a literal father but one to be respected and feared.

If Angels have a high hierarchy

Devils have a lower hierarchy, with a pecking order among them.

As angels ascend higher and higher toward God, devils do the reverse; they descend lower and lower toward satan.

Think of: Dante's Divine Comedy is Dante's depiction of hell (inferno) where the devil is at the very bottom circle, frozen from the waist down in ice, the farthest away from the warmth of God's love.

Devils have a pecking order, sort of like organized crime. The more ruthless, clever, and intelligent are at the bottom, with the less intelligent, less diligent, and ruthless at the top.



Subtlety:

The devil works in subtle ways.

Many people think the devil tempts us to do spectacularly wicked things such as bank robbery, murder, drug dealing, etc.

Letter 2

“There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the Enemy's camp and are now with us.”

~Screwtape

*“At his present stage, you see, he has an idea of “Christians” in his mind, which he supposes to be spiritual but which, in fact, is **largely pictorial**. His mind is full of togas, sandals, armor, and bare legs...”*

~Screwtape

All human life is filled with a feeling of initial excitement as one goes into something, followed by a period of letdown or disappointment.

Example: Marriage, Learning Greek

*He has a curious fantasy of making all these **disgusting little human vermin** into what He calls His “free” lovers and servants - “sons” is the word He uses, inveterate love of degrading the whole spiritual world by unnatural liaisons with the **two-legged animals**.”*

~Screwtape

Letter 3

*“Make sure that he is always concerned with the state of **her soul and never her rheumatism**.”*

~Screwtape

*“You must bring him to a condition in which he can **practice self-examination for an hour** without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office.”*

~Screwtape

Prayer: An address to God (such as a petition) to God in word or thought (Merriam Webster)

Aspect	What pleases the Devil	What pleases God
How often	Never	Regularly
Form	Parrot a prayer from childhood	Sincere and intentional prayer
Purpose	Pray to feel a special mood	Communicate with God
Body position	Makes no difference	Adjust body to pray
Focus of prayer	The individual's self-interest and feelings	Petition or thanks to God
To whom one prays	An object or image	God who creates all the objects and images
Attitude	Lazy, indifferent	Earnest yearning

Letter 13

“Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy’s ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden.”
Screwtape, Chapter 9

Introduction:

- Wormwood’s blunder – the man has “slipped through his fingers.”
- This happened because the man read a book and went on a walk that he enjoyed for their own sake. These two seemingly inconsequential activities were in fact "real, positive Pleasures."

The devils' tactics

- Romantic: self-pity and imaginary distress.
- World: self-important, cheap, pleasure-seeking.
- Neither tactic works when contrasted with *real* pain or pleasure.

The devils' goal: detach us from the Enemy by first detaching us from ourselves

- God wants us to "abandon the clamor of self-will" for His will.
- The devils want us seek out activities that inflates our self-will.
- God values our distinctness and gave us our own "likings and impulses."
- The devils, therefore, want to substitute these with the "standards of the World."

Our defense

- Enjoying things--that are not forbidden- because we enjoy them is good.
- Such things are accompanied by an "innocence, humility, and self-forgetfulness" and defend us against the devils' "subtlest modes of attack."

Conclusion

- A good book and a walk – for the devils, a “defeat of the first order.”
- Screwtape's Solution – ensure the man does not convert his renewed faith into action.

Letter 8

A theology of the devil

1. The devil is NOT omnipresent
2. The devil is NOT omnipotent
3. The devil is NOT omniscient
4. The devil IS really smart
5. The devil IS strategic
6. The devil IS an angel
7. There ARE demons

Characteristics of the devil

1. Devil is a deceiver/liar
2. Devil is a tempter
3. Devil is a thief
4. Devil is a murderer
5. Devil is a distorter

Individual encounters with the devil:

1. Adam and Eve
2. Job
3. Jesus

I Peter 5: ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be soberminded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

II Corinthians 11: ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Ephesians 6: ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

II Corinthians 10: ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Ephesians 2: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Original sin

Romans 3: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

Romans 6: ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life

The Law of Undulation (chapter 8)

Screwtape angrily tells Wormwood that he must consider the law of “undulation.” Because humans are half spiritual and half physical, they are always bouncing between these two worlds. Thus, the patient is always moving between satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the material world—his friends, his job, etc.

Sooner or later (the Enemy) withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs – to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish.

I Peter 4: ¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

I Peter 1: ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6: ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life

Chapter 4: Prayer

The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.” Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul. Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with God.

Prayer and providence then, far from being antithetical, are actually reciprocal. Providence inspires prayer and prayer invokes providence... Why pray? Because the Sovereign God, who is indeed omniscient, omnipotent, and good, has established prayer as the means by which we receive what he has promised and help fulfill what he has ordained. One can only wonder what blessings we are missing today both in our personal lives and in our churches because of our failure to earnestly pray.

Chapter 1

In general, argument is a bad tool, because simply engaging in argument trains humans to think. This strengthens their attention to “universal issues,” when their focus needs to remain on “the stream of immediate sense experiences.”

Chapter 2

Screwtape advises Wormwood to keep the patient focused on his neighbors at church. He wants the patient to fixate on the unpleasant parts of the people he sees in the next pew.

Chapter 3

He says the patient must be able to spend all day analyzing himself and the loftiest matters of his new spirituality, while remaining oblivious to all the things about himself that are obvious to anyone who has lived under the same roof as him. This way he never becomes aware of his own annoying habits.

Chapter 13

The man read a book, went on a walk that he enjoyed for its own sake
Real pain, real pleasure are all part of life
People have likes and dislikes
“The devil’s goal to detach us from the enemy to first detach us from ourselves.”
Enjoying things because they are good is how we were made

Ephesians 6: ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.