

Study Guide for Chapters 7-9

Screwtape Letters Book Study | St. Peter & St. Martin of Tours Parishes

Lesson: Theological Anthropology

At the beginning of the session, we will consider the virtues that we're called to live and how God gives us grace for this life of virtue. A recording of this presentation will be available on the St. Peter Catholic Parish YouTube Channel and at www.ashtoncatholic.org/screwtape

Chapter 7 – Extremes

- 1) Screwtape mentions that the 'current policy' is to conceal themselves. This is how the demons act when they propose temptations to us – such that we can't tell that we're being tempted and give in without thinking. Think about your struggle with temptation and sin. What ways are you tempted in small, seemingly trivial matters, which lead to bigger sins. (We'll unpack this in a general way with some examples in the discussion).

- 2) There is a general tactic to tempting us by getting us to go to the 'extremes', except extreme devotion to God. We often see that if we can be divided to opposite extremes in human activity, there is a division that is created – one extreme tends to hate the other. Where do you see this temptation or tactic in world? In the Church? In families or other places?

- 3) Politics ought to be a human endeavor where virtue shines and bears fruit. Why is it such a good place for temptation to grip the hearts of men? What lessons can we learn about how we as citizens should approach politics?

- 4) The extreme love of God (which Screwtape wants Wormwood to avoid) is mentioned in the book of Revelation 3:14-22. The angel who protects the church of Laodicea is addressed and encouraged to call the people of Laodicea from their sinful ways. What are the warnings that are given?

Chapter 8 – Troughs and Peaks

- 1) Screwtape mentions the Law of undulation. How would you explain this ‘law’?

- 2) Screwtape explains how ‘his Enemy’ (God) uses the ‘troughs’ or low points and sufferings of life to bring us close to Him. Why does God do this? What is God’s purpose? Contrarily, what do the powers of Hell want to do with us in the ‘troughs’ and ‘peaks’?

- 3) Screwtape outlines the means of salvation that God gives to us, the way by which we are saved. Consider how God patiently invites us to follow and cooperate with Him. Have you ever considered yourself a cooperator with God? How does this perspective lead you to think about or change your daily living, your daily habits and actions?

Chapter 9 – Pleasure, Phases

- 1) Why are temptations of the flesh (gluttony, lust, etc.) so effective when we're in a 'trough', low point, or facing some great period of challenge in our life?
- 2) Screwtape notes that when they are dealing with temptation to pleasure, they are on "the Enemy's ground." Why is this? Is pleasure good or bad?
- 3) Screwtape mentions both the "desponding type who can be tempted to despair" and the "wishful-thinking type who can be assured all is well." How are these two types tempted? Which type are you?
- 4) Why should we be leery or cautious about being in a 'phase'? What is the danger for us in following God's ways?