

Study Guide for Introduction, Chapters 1-3

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

Introduction

- 1) What do you hope to gain or grow in from this study?
- 2) What general questions do you have about the ‘invisible’ parts of creation and the spiritual life? (e.g. angels, demons, grace, sacraments, sin, temptation, etc.)

Chapter 1

- 1) Screwtape mentions the materialist friend of the Patient. How can the influence of the materialist friend be of benefit to the demon, Wormwood? Where do you see materialism in our culture? How does it manifest in your own life? What practices of virtue does God lay out to help us avoid materialism?
- 2) Screwtape contrasts ‘jargon’ with ‘argument’ in this chapter. How would you summarize this suggested tactic to tempt us away from God? How does God inspire and help us with argument (i.e. truth, logic, reason)? What does this paradigm of jargon and argument reveal about the human person’s desires, abilities, and capacities? How does God use argument, truth, and reason to help us follow Him?

- 3) Toward the end of the letter, Screwtape advises distraction from the important things by convincing the Patient that what is 'really important' doesn't have to do with God. This is similar to what occurs in Luke 10:39-42 when Jesus visits Martha and Mary. How did this distraction work in the Gospel? How does Jesus address it? How are you distracted from the Lord and following Him? How does this manifest, what problems does it create for you, and how might you begin to change that? (e.g. – trusting in oneself more than the Lord)

Chapter 2

- 1) When the Patient converts and becomes a practicing Christian, Screwtape doesn't see this as a major setback. What is the strategy that he proposes will work best? What thoughts and vices does he suggest to Wormwood as the most effective way to get the Patient to turn away from 'the Enemy' (God)?
- 2) How do we properly understand and react to the state of other Catholics in the Church, both those we personally know in our parish community, and those who are publicly known, especially when they give a bad witness? What about the disorder that we can see in the structures of the Church (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §751-780)?
- 3) What are the virtues and practices that God wants to grow in us to be able to see, understand, and live well in His Church alongside other believers, sinners, and, disciples?

Chapter 3

- 1) Screwtape advises Wormwood to distract the Patient with the faults of others, as a distraction from the real person and circumstances of this relationship. While he never says what the general purpose of this is, theorize as to which virtues will be undermined? How will these tactics keep the Patient from becoming the follower of Jesus Christ that a disciple must be?

- 2) Screwtape refers to the older brother in Luke 15:11-32. What is the fault in the older brother and what is Christ warning us of in this parable?

- 3) Think about your own relationships – your spouse, children, parents, friends, coworkers, fellow parishioners, etc. How are you specifically tempted to treat to others poorly based on small assumptions, judgements, excuses, human faults, or accusations? What are the virtues and spiritual practices that would help you to overcome these temptations (cf. *Virtues and Vices Chart* and *Examination of Conscience*)?