

Here is last week's summary of the habits from "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," plus takeaways from the class and my "Top Twenty" list from the class as a whole:

### **Habits to Annoy the Devil from "Screwtape Proposes a Toast"—Part 1:**

1. Beware of cultural "mere routine" that numbs you to Kingdom life.
2. Daily seek transformation and flee conformity to the social environment.
3. Practice regular reflection on the direction and fervor of your spiritual life.
4. Aspire to be used greatly by God
5. Avoid celebrity worship and uncritical acceptance of celebrity ideas.

### **Habits to Annoy the Devil from "Screwtape Proposes a Toast"—Part 2:**

1. Live with compassion and Biblical behavior towards others, using Liberty for cultivation of Virtue rather than Vice.
2. Reject a merely cultural view of Equality and cultivate and practice a Biblical view of Equality.
3. Root out Envy as one of the most pernicious sins.
4. Seek to develop Biblical virtues and the fruit of the Spirit, even when culture disdains them.
5. Pursue Excellence in every endeavor.
6. Pray for gifted Unbelievers that they would repent and become agents of God's grace.

### **Habits to Annoy the Devil from "Screwtape Proposes a Toast"—Part 3:**

1. Embrace a Biblical understanding of gifts and talents that recognizes the needfulness of differences.
2. Foster a Biblical self-esteem that is not based on status or accomplishments but which is rooted in your identity as a new creation in Christ Jesus.
3. Encourage and pray for Biblical leaders, and in your own sphere of influence, mentor and model Biblical leadership.
4. Reject mediocrity and pursue Excellence.
5. Embrace humility, charity, contentment, gratitude, and appreciation to help stave off pride and an insistence on your rights.
6. Keep foremost in your life the understanding that salvation of individual people created in the image of God matters infinitely more to God than the fate of any political system or nation.

### **Some important general take-aways from our study of *The Screwtape Letters*:**

#### **Points to remember from the Preface:**

##### **1. Scripture and scorn for the devil**

"The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn." --Luther

##### **2. Two equal and opposite errors**

--to disbelieve the existence of devils

-- to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them

##### **3. The devil is a liar**

"Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle."

### **Some important take-aways from our study of *The Screwtape Letters* on Habits:**

"We are all living according to a specific regimen of habits, and those habits shape most of our life...Habits form much more than our schedules: they form our hearts.

"We think that by rejecting any limits on our habits, we remain free to choose. Actually, by barraging ourselves with so many choices, we get so decision-fatigued that we're unable to choose anything well. Since we're too tired to make any good decisions, we're extremely susceptible to letting other people—from manipulative bosses to invisible

smartphone programmers—make our decisions for us. The rule of life is intended to pattern communal life in the direction of purpose and love instead of chaos and decay.

“Only when your habits are constructed to match your worldview do you become someone who doesn’t just know about God and neighbor but someone who actually loves God and neighbor.”

--Justin Earley, *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*

### **A "Top Twenty" of key habits from our study of *The Screwtape Letters***

1. Focus on eternals (what is True, what is Good, what is Beautiful) rather than the immediate stream of ordinary life and busyness—i.e., set your mind on things above and embrace real pleasures that focus your heart and mind on Beauty, Truth, and Goodness.

2. Embrace Christianity not just as a theory, but by committing your life to Christ and being transformed.

3. Constantly keep at the front of your mind and heart *a sense of wonder* at God’s grace and mercy in calling a sinner like you to be in relationship with Him.

4. Keep your relationships surrounded with prayer and the Holy Spirit. Do not let Satan get a foothold. Practice Matthew 18 and avoid any root of bitterness.

5. Avoid contented worldliness

6. Dwell in the present and refuse to embrace worry, fear, and anxiety for the future (“awful-izing”). *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. —Matthew 6:33-*

*34. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. (v. 25)*

7. Discipline your mind to be sensitive to sinful patterns of thoughts and temptations so as to avoid them, while having a bias towards acting rather than simply feeling when it comes to acts of virtue. *It is only in so far as virtues reach the will and are there embodied into habits that they are really fatal to us. (I don’t, of course, mean what the patient mistakes for his will, the conscious fume and fret of resolutions and clenched teeth, but the real centre, what the Enemy calls the Heart.) All sorts of virtues painted in the fantasy or approved by the intellect or even, in some measure, loved and admired, will not keep a man from our Father’s house: indeed they may make him more amusing when he gets there.*

8. Cultivate Joy—it is connected with Music and Heaven and surrounds the believer with a cloud opaque to Satan.

9. Flee from Flippancy—learn to recognize it and do not allow the Devil’s armor to attach to you. **Flippancy defined: frivolously disrespectful, shallow, or lacking in seriousness; characterized by levity, especially with respect to serious or sacred subjects.** *"But flippancy is the best of all. In the first place it is very economical. Only a clever human can make a real Joke about virtue, or indeed about anything else; any of them can be trained to talk as if virtue were funny. Among flippant people the Joke is always assumed to have been made. No one actually makes it; but every serious subject is discussed in a manner which implies that they have already found a ridiculous side to it. If prolonged, the habit of Flippancy builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy (God) that I know, and it is quite free from the dangers inherent in the other sources of laughter. It is a thousand miles away from joy it deadens, instead of sharpening, the intellect; and it excites no affection between those who practice it."*

10. Satan is much more likely to rely on a slow and gradual turning away than on spectacular sin. *You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.*

11. Commit to faithful attendance and involvement in a church.

12. Cultivate good humor and kindness and flee peevishness.

13. Cultivate a family and home deeply infused with the love of Christ, beauty, and agape love for others.
14. Embrace the beauty and wonder of Silence and reject being surrounded constantly by sound and Noise.
15. Beware letting your faith get co-opted by any Cause which you embrace.
16. Avoid the horror of the Same Old Thing and reject the incessant quest for novelty. Be wary of adopting Fashions, especially spiritual ones, that may blind you to the true dangers of your time. Resist discarding the wisdom of the past in favor of ideas whose only virtue is that they are new or "Progressive." Avoid embracing the fallacies of the Historical Point of View and Deconstructionism. Seek proactively to learn from the wisdom of the past, especially Christian wisdom.
17. Be proactive in Positive Virtue, and do not define your faith in terms of what you don't do.
18. Contract the "terrible habit of obedience" to God in prayer and in all of life. Focus on spiritual realities that lead to joy and growth, and refuse to embrace discouragement. Do not let horror of the evil that men can do cause you to doubt your faith or God's goodness.
19. Cultivate a profound future Hope rooted in the joy of the presence of Christ, where perfect love casts out fear. *Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9) For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3-4)*
20. Practice regular meditation on the new heaven and the new earth described in Revelation 21 and Hebrews 11 and remind yourself of the glorious destiny of the sons and daughters of God.