

Grace of Christ Yakima

Leader Study Guide: Community Life

Part 1: The Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis¹

The Third Week in our Fall 2021 10-week Grace of Christ Church-wide Community Life Series (*started September 12 and continues through the week of November 14*)

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Week 3 (The Screwtape Letters: Chapters 5, 6 and 7)

Get to Know You Questions

1. Share one thing you are passionate about ... bordering on the extreme (hobby, travel destination, family event, holiday, food, sport, favorite team, tv show, music group ...). What are some examples of your passion for the above?
2. Do you prefer crunchy or creamy peanut butter? A particular brand? Why?

Overview of the Study (We will be studying select chapters in the book)

Week 1: Prefaces and Chapter 1

Week 6: Chapters 10, 11, and 12

Week 2: Chapters 2, 3, and 4

Week 7: Chapter 13 and 14

Week 3: Chapters 5, 6, and 7

Week 8: Chapter 15

Week 4: Chapter 8

Week 9: Chapter 16

Week 5: Chapter 9

Week 10: Chapters 17, 18, and 19

Tips to reading The Screwtape Letters:

1. Each chapter was written as if it were a letter from a senior tempter instructing a junior tempter on how to ruin a person's (Christian) life.
2. Remember as you read that it was intentionally written from a diabolical point of view²
3. The devil and his followers are master liars. Keep that in mind as you read this book.
4. Each letter reveals how our enemy, the Devil, hopes to render us ineffective in our Christian life, and ultimately to ruin/destroy us.

Read each chapter out loud one at a time (after reading each chapter allow time for enough discussion before moving on to the next chapter). **You may not get through all of the chapters. That's OK.**

¹ C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, 1982 Edition, Touchstone book: Simon & Schuster, New York.

² On writing The Screwtape Letters, 'Though I had never written more easily, I never wrote with less enjoyment ... though it was easy to twist one's mind into the diabolical attitude, it was not fun, or not for long. The strain produced a sort of spiritual cramp. The work into which I had projected myself while I spoke through Screwtape was all dust, grit, thirst, and itch. Every trace of beauty, freshness, and geniality had to be excluded. It almost smothered me before I was done. It would have smothered my readers if I had prolonged it.'"

Questions from Chapter V (5)

1. Screwtape states, "You say you are 'delirious with joy' because the European humans have started another of their wars ... you are not delirious; you are only drunk ... I must warn you not to hope too much from a war ... Let us therefore think rather how to use, than how to enjoy, this European war. For it has certain tendencies inherent in it which are, "in themselves, by no means in our favour. We may hope for a good deal of cruelty and unchastity. But, if we are not careful, we shall see thousands turning in this tribulation to the enemy ..."
 - As you surprised that "war" does not, according to Screwtape, always, and in every way, serve the purposes of the devil?
 - What aspects of "war" serve the devil's purposes?
 - What aspects of war do not serve the devil's purposes?
 - What is the worst that comes with war?
 - What is the best that can come from war? Can you think of examples?
 - How does "war" create an environment where thousands turn to God?

2. How do you respond to the image Lewis creates when he has Screwtape write to Wormwood, "If, on the other hand, by steady and cool-handed application here and now you can finely secure his soul, he will then be yours forever - a brimfull living chalice of despair and horror and astonishment which you can raise to your lips as often as you please."
 - Is this image comforting or terrifying to you?
 - Could Lewis be right as he paints a word picture of the devil's desire to possess us for all eternity, constantly feeding off of us and our fears?
 - If you disagree with this image of what the Devil ultimately intends for us, what do you picture happens to those who reject God to their very last breath/thought? Do we just cease to exist? Do we all get to heaven no matter how we've lived or the choices we've made? Do we get a another chance (reincarnation, spend time in purgatory where we are held in spiritual prison until we have made up for our bad thoughts and deeds ...)?

3. Screwtape states, "Consider too what undesirable deaths occur in wartime." And then a little later, "How much better for us if all humans died in costly nursing homes amid doctors who lie, nurses who lie, friends who lie, as we have trained them, promising life to the dying, encouraging the belief that sickness excuses every indulgence, and even, if our workers know their job, withholding all suggestion of a priest lest it should betray to the sick man his true condition."
 - How can death, from the Devil's perspective, ever be undesirable?
 - What is the benefit of going somewhere you know you might die?
 - Would you rather know your death may come at any moment, with time to think and reflect, or would you prefer that your death crept up on you, so slowly and comfortably that you do not feel any urgency to think and reflect on what is happening?
 - When your time comes, do you want those around you to be polite, avoid the subject of death, lie to you about your real condition, or, tell you the truth? Why or why not?

4. Respond to this statement from Screwtape, "How disastrous for us is the continual remembrance of death which war enforces. One of our best weapons, contented worldliness, is rendered useless. In wartime not even a human can believe that he is going to live forever."

- What does he mean by "contented worldliness"?
- How does the awareness that we will not live forever encourage us to seek God? When did you realize you would not live "forever"? What did that awareness cause you to do?

Question from Chapter VI (6)

5. Screwtape states, "They (men and women of England) are creatures of that miserable sort who loudly proclaim that torture is too good for their enemies and then give tea and cigarettes to the first wounded German pilot who turns up at the back door."

- Is it easier for you to love your next-door neighbor or to profess your love to someone you've never met who lives half way around the world? Explain.

Question from Chapter VII (7)

6. Screwtape writes, "I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of you own existence ... our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves ... I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time ... a belief in us (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "life Force," the worship of sex, and some aspects of psychoanalysis may here prove useful. If we can produce our perfect work - the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping what he vaguely calls "Forces" while denying the existence of "spirits" - then the end of the war will be in sight."

- How would you define a materialist-magician?³
- Are there those who do not believe in God but speak of their faith in a "life force"? Think Star Wars, "May the Force be with you." Where does this philosophy/religion lead a person? what would our society look like if it were the dominant religious worldview?
- A "Life Force" without real demands on us, or a personal relationship with us, may provide comfort that some power/force is in control in the universe but without pesky demands or intrusions on our life. Is that attractive? What are the problems with such a life philosophy? Most can't access this "life force" in a powerful way ... only a few gifted with certain special genetics are able to tap into this force in a way that makes a real difference in the lives of others, the life of the universe. Does this appeal to you?
- How does the "Life Force" Star Wars philosophy differ from the beliefs of Christian faith?
- **John 1** "And the Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth ... 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

³ Materialist: someone who believes only what the physical senses can confirm. No miracles. Nothing supernatural. Magician: someone who lives in the world of magic/miracles/the mysterious. Questions the value (and even reality) of the physical world.

7. Respond to this quote, "All extremes except extreme devotion to the Enemy (God) are to be encouraged."

- Is it possible that an extreme commitment to a good cause (feeding the homeless, saving the environment, fighting for the rights of the abused, educating children, any cause) could end up ruining a person's relationship with God and with others? Explain your answer.

8. Respond to this quote of Screwtape, "We want the church to be small not only that fewer men may know the Enemy but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or clique."

- Have you ever encountered a group that has become defensive and self-righteous, a "secret society and clique?"
- Is this something you've seen in the church?
- How can the church guard against this?
- What is the main purpose of the Church (universal)?
- What is the main purpose of the church you are a part of?

If you have any questions or comments, if you need help with this study, with members of your group, or with technology, please call (248-7940 x114) or email (curt@yakimagrace.com)

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