

Grace of Christ Yakima

Leader Study Guide: Community Life

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

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

Please use only what you find helpful in this guide.

Week 1 (The Screwtape Letters: Preface(s)² and Chapter 1)

Get to Know You Questions

1. What is your least liked vegetable and why? When was the last time you ate that vegetable?
2. Where were you on the morning of September 11, 2001? What were your first thoughts?

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 view³
3. Each letter reveals plans of the enemy on how to make a Christian ineffective.

Read the preface(s) and chapter 1 Together Out Loud

Questions from the Preface to the 1961 Edition⁴

1. Have you read The Screwtape Letters before? If yes, what was your previous experience with the book? Why do you think some find The Screwtape Letters a challenging book to read?
2. Lewis writes, "the commonest question is whether I really 'believe in the devil.' Now, if by 'the Devil' you mean a power opposite to God, and, like God, self-existent from all eternity, the answer is certainly No.

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

² Some editions have more than one preface

³ 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.'"

⁴ This preface is not included in all editions of The Screwtape Letters. We are including a copy of this preface on the Community Life Page.

There is no uncreated being except God. God has no opposite ... the proper question is whether I believe in devils. I do. That is to say, I believe in angels, and I believe that some of these, by the abuse of their free will, have become enemies of God and, as a corollary, to us. These we may call devils."

- Do you believe in devils? Why or why not?
 - What is your understanding of where the Devil and his minions came from?
 - What kind of power does the Devil have? What does the Devil want with us?
 - Did Jesus believe in the Devil? Discuss.
 - What does the Bible say about the Devil and those evil spirits who serve him? See passages in the Appendix below.
3. What do you think of Chesterton's description of Hell? "Hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance ..."
- Do you believe in an actual "hell"? If yes, what do you picture "hell" to be like? If no, what is the final destination for those who reject God to the very end of their life?
 - Consider Jesus' parable in Luke 16:19-31. Discuss.
4. Lewis pictured hell as a "society held together entirely by fear and greed. On the surface manners are normally suave. Rudeness to one's superiors would obviously be suicidal ... for of course 'Dog eat Dog' is the principle of the whole organization."
- Do you think Lewis is right about hell? Discuss.

C.S. Lewis Dedicated this book to his friend J.R.R. Tolkien (Author of "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy)

Questions from the Original Preface (Dated July 5, 1941)

5. Lewis writes, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. the other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."
- Do you agree with Lewis?
 - What might the danger be with either of these extremes? Can you think of any examples of those who have adopted one or the other of these positions ... and the result in their life?
 - Lewis adds a quote from Martin Luther, "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."
 - If you believe that the devil is real, and that he seeks to do us harm, what is the best way to "drive him out"?

Questions for Chapter One

6. Screwtape advises Wormwood, "It sounds as if you supposed that argument was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches (he means God's clutches). That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier. At that time the humans still knew well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life because of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons, we have largely altered that ... he doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false" but

as "academic" or "practical," "outworn" or "contemporary," conventional" or "ruthless." Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the church. Don't waste your time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong or stark or courageous - that is the philosophy of the future ... The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's (God's) own ground ... by the very act of argument you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result?"

- Do you agree that most today do not care much about whether Christian faith is true or false, but rather that it is practical or contemporary?
 - What is the best way to communicate the substance of the Christian faith to someone who does not believe?
 - What value does argument (not antagonistic ... logical reasoning) have in our society today? Do most people you know believe there is a real "right" and "wrong" and if shown (by logical reasoning) something is "right" they willingly alter their life to that truth? If not, what do most people base important life decisions on?
7. Read the section in Chapter 1 of the "patient, a sound atheist" whose reading was leading him in the "wrong direction."
- What do make of Screwtape's evaluation of the patient, and his tactic to keep his patient from thinking too much about such an important topic until after lunch?
 - Have you seen this temptation to avoid thinking about something important until a more suitable time play out in your life, or the life of others?
8. In the last paragraph Screwtape advises, "Above all, do not attempt to use science (I mean, the real sciences) as a defense against Christianity. They will positively encourage him to think about realities he can't touch and see. There have been sad cases among the modern physicists ... do remember you are there to fuddle him."
- How do you understand the relationship between Christian faith and the sciences? Do they disagree with each other, ignore each other, or support each other?
 - What about those scientists who dismiss the need for God and affirm the "Big Bang" and "Evolution"?
 - How do you respond to those who say they can't believe in Christian faith or the Bible because science has proven we are the result of evolution?
 - What does the author mean by the "real sciences"?
 - Can a person be a Christian and yet believe in evolution? Explain and discuss?

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)

Appendix

Additional Support for Leaders

Scripture Passages to Consider for Question 2 (Preface for 1961 Edition)

- **Matthew 4:1-4** *"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' ⁴ But Jesus answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*
- **Matthew 25:41** *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"*
- **Mark 4:15** *"And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them."*
- **Mark 5:1-13** *"They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' ⁸ For he was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' ⁹ And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many.' ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.' ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea."*
- **Luke 22:3** *"Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve ..."*
- **John 8:44** *"Jesus said, 'You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'"*
- **2 Corinthians 11:14** *"And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."*
- **Ephesians 6:11** *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."*
- **Jude verse 6** *"And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day."*

- **1 Peter 5:8** *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*
- **Revelation 12:7-9** *"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."*