

These study questions are based in part on Alan Vermilye's The Screwtape Letters Study Guide. The "title" or topic of each letter is from that study guide.

Letter 1 – Reason and Reality

This first letter sets us into the middle of a correspondence that was already begun sometime earlier. In it, Uncle Screwtape is trying to help his nephew Wormwood to keep the "patient" from becoming a Christian.

1. ¶ 1 (p. 1) – In what way (according to Screwtape) is Wormwood being naive in his temptation strategy? What point do you think he is making?
2. ¶ 1 (p. 1) – In what sense is the word **argument** used, and why does Screwtape advise Wormwood not to rely upon it?
3. ¶ 1 (p. 1) – What is the connection between "thinking and doing"? Do you agree with Screwtape's assessment that this connection has been largely broken in our world today?
4. ¶ 1 (p. 1) – What does Screwtape credit for the "dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside [the patient's] head"?
5. ¶ 1 (p. 1) – What advantage do we give the tempter if we think, not in terms of "true or false", but rather "'academic' or 'practical,' 'outworn' or 'contemporary,' 'conventional' or 'ruthless'"? Can you point to examples of such thinking today?
6. ¶ 3 (p. 2) – What is the "abominable advantage of the enemy" that Screwtape refers to?
7. ¶ 3 (p. 2-3) – How does the story of the atheist in the museum demonstrate how Satan uses common distractions to derail our faith life?
8. ¶ 4 (p. 4) – What does Screwtape mean when he tells Wormwood to "keep pressing home on him the *ordinariness* of things"?
9. Luke 10:39–42 *"And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.""*

How is this an example of the ordinary getting in the way of truth and faith? What problems did it create for Martha?)
10. What special insights do you glean from this letter?

Letter 2 – Distracting the Christian Mind

Wormwood has failed to keep the “patient” from becoming Christian. Now, the strategy shifts to making him disillusioned with the Church. How is he to do this?

1. ¶ 1 (p. 5) – “All the *habits* of the patient . . . are still in our favor.” Remembering that this is an *adult* convert, how does this highlight the potential disconnect noted in letter 1 between “thinking and doing”?
2. ¶ 2 (p. 5) – Why does Screwtape see the Church as an ally in the effort to make the “patient” disillusioned with the Church? In what sense is he using the word “Church”?
3. Name some reasons why a believer might become disillusioned with the Church?
4. From St. Augustine, we have come to speak of the “visible” vs. the “invisible” Church. What do these terms mean? Why does Screwtape want Wormwood to keep the “patient’s” attention, not on the *invisible*, but rather, the *visible* Church?
5. ¶ 2 (p. 6) – “[The patient] has an idea of Christians in his mind which he supposes to be spiritual, but which, in fact, is largely pictorial.” How might you paraphrase what Screwtape is saying? What is the danger of a romanticized view of Christianity and Christians? What error do we make in focusing our attention on them?
6. ¶ 3 (p. 7) – What “disappointment or anticlimax” is Wormwood to exploit? How might this be a negative factor in your own life of faith?
7. ¶ 4 (p. 8) – “[The patient] has not been anything like long enough with the Enemy to have any real humility yet.” When is humility real? Why is real humility important in the life of the Christian?

Letter 3 – Relationships

In this letter, Screwtape recommends Wormwood collaborate with Glubose, the demon assigned to the “patient’s” mother with the goal of damaging their relationship.

1. ¶ 1 (p. 11) – “The Enemy will be working from the centre outwards”. How do the references below explain what this means?
Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
1 Timothy 4:16 “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”
2. ¶ 2 (p. 11) – The “patient” “thinks his conversion is something *inside* him . . .” What do you understand this to mean?
3. ¶ 2 (p. 12) – “You must bring him to a condition in which he can practice self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office.” What mental attitude in the “patient” is Screwtape trying to promote?
4. ¶ 3 (p. 12) – In what way is the “patient” to be encouraged to pray for his mother and why?
5. ¶ 4 (p. 13) – What third temptation does Screwtape suggest to undermine the “patient’s relationship with his mother? How do you find this at work in your own relationships?
6. ¶ 5 (p. 13) – What double standard does Screwtape promote and want cultivated in the patient?
7. ¶ 6 (p. 14) – “[T]he elder brother in the Enemy’s story” is a reference to the second part of the parable of “the Prodigal Son”. The elder son did not waste his father’s wealth on loose living. Of what sin was he guilty? How is this a factor in the strategy of temptation?