Letter 1 Theme: Pre-Conversion

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

- 1. Jargon
- 2. Appetites

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Science and reason

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle on to the Enemy's own ground. He can argue too." – Screwtape

QUESTIONS: ($\P = PARAGRAPH$)

- 1. Screwtape instructs Wormwood to keep the patient focused on "jargon" ¶1. How is jargon different from truth?
- 2. Screwtape affirms Wormwood for encouraging his patient's association with a "materialist" friend, ¶1. How would a preoccupation with the physical side of reality and ignorance of the spiritual be foundational for diabolical strategy?
- 3. How did Screwtape use what he called the "pressures of the ordinary" or "real life" ¶3, and the familiar ¶4, to "rescue" a patient from the influence of the Enemy?
- 4. In what ways do you think the "pressures of the ordinary" make you susceptible to diabolical influence? Hinder you from the pursuit of truth?
- 5. What do you learn about the diabolical and the divine when it comes to the value of arguments ¶2, and science ¶4?
- 6. What did you learn about the nature of divine and diabolical strategies?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." Colossians 2:8

Ask God to help you be aware of and combat the deceitful worldviews and philosophies of the world that are harmful to you and others and instead be empowered by the truth of God, which can be found in reason, science, and the Scriptures.

2. Seek God's truth through science and reason to combat jargon and our appetites:

Understanding that "all truth is God's truth," as God has revealed it in creation, and through the human conscience, use the gifts of science and reason to combat falsehoods and lies.

Reflect and ask yourself if you have any unanswered questions about God or the world that are bothering you or hindering your relationship with God. If so, know that there are probably some thoughtful Christian apologists who may have a response to your question worthy of consideration. One place to look for reasonable answers is the C.S. Lewis Institute's website, www.cslewisinstitute.org under the Topic "Apologetics."





- 1. Unconverted habits
- 2. The straw-man church
- 3. Straw-man Christians
- 4. Innate hypocrisy

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Disappointment

Key Quotes to Look For:

"One of our great allies at present is the Church itself ... I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy." – Screwtape

- 1. While bemoaning the fact that Wormwood's patient has become a Christian, Screwtape hopes to "reclaim" him by using the patient's new habit of attending church. Why might Screwtape think church attendance can extinguish spiritual growth ¶2?
- 2. How do the tempters use hypocrisy and disappointment with other Christians as a snare ¶2?
- 3. How might the church have been a snare for you?
- 4. What is it about the church that Screwtape does not want the patient to see ¶2?
- 5. How does God use disappointment with the church for His own purposes ¶3?

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6. Screwtape celebrates how easy it is to highlight the hypocrisy of other Christians while encouraging Christians to ignore their own hypocrisies ¶4. Consider: What is there about your own conduct and character that you prefer to avoid or ignore?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord!" Psalm 122:1

Ask God to help you worship Him in the community of the church and to love "the sinners" who have been saved by His grace.

2. Bring your disappointments to God:

Our disappointments can make us bitter or better. Rather than succumb to bitterness, talk to God honestly about your disappointments and in humility seek God's grace for yourself and offer it to others, even those who may hurt or disappoint you. Take a moment now to reflect upon your life and see if there are any disappointments with the church, other people, or even yourself that may be hindering your relationship with God and others. If so, ask God to turn your disappointment into an opportunity for redemption.





- 1. Introspection
- 2. Vacuous prayers
- 3. Irritating habits
- 4. Annoying communication
- 5. Religious irritation

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Process and stages

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"In civilised life domestic hatred usually expresses itself by saying things which would appear quite harmless on paper (the words are not offensive) but in such a voice, or at such a moment, that they are not far short of a blow to the face." – Screwtape

- 1. In what ways does Screwtape seek to foster "a good settled habit of mutual annoyance" between the patient and his mother ¶1?
- 2. Next to the church, the family is a choice tool for tripping up Christians. How can a false spirituality be a snare ¶¶2–3?
- 3. Under the influence of the tempters, it seems that familiarity can indeed breed contempt. What does Screwtape encourage Wormwood to highlight ¶¶4–5?
- 4. How does Screwtape's advice shed light on your own family interactions?
- 5. God works "from the center outward" to conform our conduct to His standard ¶1. How have you seen your own conduct change under God's influence?

6. Even our "religious" behavior can be used to get under the skin of family members. Are there ways that your family members might struggle with your faith and Christian conduct?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Colossians 3:12–13

Ask God to (1) fill you with His Holy Spirit so that your life richly exhibits the fruit of the Spirit and (2) help you forgive those who have sinned against you.

2. Recognizing that each person in the church is in process and in various stages of spiritual maturity and understanding, practice patience with others:

Take time to examine your heart and see if there is anyone in your church family who irritates you, bothers you, or toward whom you feel judgmental. Ask the Lord for wisdom in interacting with this person(s) as your brother or sister in Christ and, if necessary, repent of your irritation.

Ask God to bring to mind anyone against whom you hold a grudge or from whom you are withholding forgiveness. If someone comes to mind, ask God for the power to forgive this person and take the steps needed to seek reconciliation within your church body.





- 1. Devotional mood
- 2. Spiritual feelings
- 3. Childish images

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Intentional discipline of prayer

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether." – Screwtape

- 1. According to Screwtape, the best way to keep a "patient" from praying is to cultivate a "devotional mood" ¶2. What is there about such a mood that Screwtape likes?
- 2. Next to a devotional mood, Screwtape recommends a focus on feelings ¶3. What is there about feelings that Screwtape likes when seeking to twist prayer?
- 3. Screwtape also likes imaginary pictures of God as a focus of prayer ¶4. What is so diabolically attractive about praying to a mental image of God?
- 4. How can the advice of Screwtape to Wormwood help you pray better?
- 5. What is there about Screwtape's fulminations that could encourage your own prayer life ¶4?
- 6. What are some of the worldly distractions that keep you from spending time in prayer with God?
- 7. Screwtape writes that, "mortals always picture us as putting

things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out" ¶2. What do you think Screwtape is trying to keep out of the patient's mind?

8. A "real nakedness of the soul in prayer" for the patient is a situation Wormwood is to avoid at all costs ¶4. Why is this condition such a threat?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Matthew 6:9–13

Ask God to deepen your understanding of the Lord's prayer and put it into practice.

2. Develop a daily habit or discipline of prayer:

How would you describe your current prayer life? Reflect upon this and ask God to help you develop and deepen your prayer life. Consider setting aside a specific time daily to pray and commune with God.

Reflect upon ways that your prayer life has been hindered or distracted, and ask God to help you remove those things that are hurting your relationship with Him.forgiveness. If someone comes to mind, ask God for the power to forgive this person and take the steps needed to seek reconciliation within your church body.





1. Long-term medical care

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Responding to desperation

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"Consider too what undesirable deaths occur in wartime. Men are killed in places where they knew they might be killed and to which they go, if they are at all of the Enemy's party, prepared." – Screwtape

- 1. World War II was raging in Europe during the correspondence between Screwtape and Wormwood, so it is not surprising that war is a subject of several of the letters. What is the surprising devilish attitude toward war $\P\P1-3$?
- 2. Screwtape says that Wormwood's primary business involves "undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues" ¶1. What are some ways in which your faith has been diabolically assaulted and your development of virtue hindered?
- 3. In Screwtape's scenario, why do devils prefer death in a nursing home to death during war ¶2?
- 4. How does Screwtape say the Enemy (God) uses war to His advantage ¶2?
- 5. How might this letter change the way you view death? Your perspective on eternity?
- 6. Why are so many people reluctant to think about death?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12

Ask God to give you a healthy understanding of your mortality and the shortness of life so that you will seek His wisdom on earth.

2. Focus on eternal values and truth:

As you experience or hear about desperate times created by war, famine, natural disasters, and other catastrophes intentionally focus your attention on eternal values and truth. If you knew that you had one month to live, how would that change the way you live your life? In what ways can you make changes now to your beliefs, actions, and lifestyle that would orient your life toward things of eternal value?

How might you help others reflect upon their mortality and focus on "things above, not on earthly things"?



Letter 6 Theme: War (Continued)

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

- 1. Worry for the future
- 2. Self-conscious/un-self-conscious
- 3. Imaginary virtues

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

- 1. The present
- 2. Active virtues

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them." – Screwtape

- Why would the devils want us to be preoccupied more with the future than the present ¶¶1–3?
- 2. What insight do we gain from Screwtape's advice on how the Enemy (God) helps us face our difficulties and challenges ¶3?
- 3. What burdens and challenges are you carrying that could be helped by the godly "resignation" that Screwtape wants us to avoid ¶¶2–3?
- 4. In what ways does Screwtape guide Wormwood in regard to the self-conscious and un-self-conscious attitudes of his patient ¶4?
- 5. Why is it that the devils are much more interested in our actions toward others than in our attitudes ¶5?

6. Screwtape tells Wormwood to think of the patient as a series of concentric circles with the patient's will at the core, followed by his intellect, and then his fantasy life ¶5. Where does Screwtape want the patient's virtues to be located? Where does God want our virtues to be located?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?... And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" Matthew 6:25, 27

Ask God to help you cast your worry and anxiety upon Him, trusting Him to provide for you as you bring your needs before Him in prayer.

2. Live fully in the present today by actively loving God and neighbor:

Is there anything in your past (unforgiveness, broken relationships, or unfinished business) that you need to address? If so, ask the Lord to reveal those things and give you a strategy for dealing with them today so that your past will no longer control your present.

Are you worried or anxious about the unknown of the future or an upcoming event? If so, pray and ask the Lord to remove your worry and help you focus on the good works which He has prepared for you to do today.





- 1. Spiritual ignorance
- 2. Christianity as means for a cause

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Intervention

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"Some ages are lukewarm and complacent, and then it is our business to soothe them yet faster asleep. Other ages, of which the present is one, are unbalanced and prone to faction, and it is our business to inflame them." – Screwtape

- 1. What advantages do devils gain by making their presence known ¶1?
- 2. What advantages do devils gain by hiding their existence $\P1$?
- 3. At the time those letters were written, it was the policy of hell to keep demonic existence a secret. What do you think their policy would be at the present?
- 4. The themes touched on in this letter include causes, factions, and zeal ¶¶2–4. Why is zeal to be encouraged ¶2?
- 5. Throughout this letter, Screwtape gives examples of different factions that divide people, such as patriotism and pacifism or High Church and Low Church. Is there a "faction" you have allegiance to that prevents you from loving others? From loving God?

- 6. Why would Screwtape want to make Christianity a "means" and the world a "goal" ¶4?
- 7. Pacifism and patriotism were key opportunities for turning Christianity into a "means" at the time of World War II. In or by what ways might Christianity be treated in the same way today?
- 8. Screwtape tells Wormwood that "All extremes, except extreme devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged" ¶2. What, if any, causes, people, or things are you devoted to above God??

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

Ask God to help you treat all people with love and respect regardless of their political party, ethnic background, race, religion, or any other identifier the world uses to divide people.

2. When people are being mistreated, abused, or harmed, come to their defense with God's help:

Whether it's the bullying of a friend or the unjust attack by one country against another, Christians are called to intervene and confront evil actions. Reflect upon your life today. Is there someone who is being mistreated in your family, neighborhood, or workplace that you can come alongside, defend, or encourage? Ask God for wisdom in knowing how to come to the defense of those who are being treated unjustly and then act.





1. Opposing God's intentions

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. The law of undulation

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else." – Screwtape

- 1. According to Screwtape, we humans are "amphibians half spirit and half animals" ¶1. What key does this provide for understanding human nature?
- How might this insight into human nature be helpful for understanding your own life experiences and responses to God ¶2?
- 3. The troughs we go through spiritually are part of a pattern of "undulation" ¶2. How does Screwtape seek to use the "natural phenomenon" of undulation? How should we respond to the pattern of undulation?
- 4. God uses the lows of our spiritual experience as means to do deep work in our souls ¶4. How have the lows in your own life been used to enhance your connection with God?
- 5. Screwtape says God "cannot ravish. He can only woo" ¶4. What do you think this means?

6. What fresh insights do you gain into the devilish and divine ways of working with and on humanity from Screwtape's instruction about human depression and difficulties?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the oil fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk 3:17

Ask God to grow your faith and teach you to be content and rejoice daily regardless of your circumstances.

2. Seek God:

Seek Him in times of plenty and in times of want, knowing that God often does the deepest work in our lives in the most difficult times.

When have you felt closest to God? Has it been in times of plenty or during a crisis? How are you feeling today about your relationship with God? What can you do today regardless of your circumstances to rejoice in God, your Creator and Redeemer?

Ask God if there is anyone who may be facing great difficulties whom you can come alongside today. If someone comes to mind, find a practical way through prayer to encourage or comfort them in their time of need.





- 1. Troughs and down times
- 2. Twisted pleasure
- 3. Phases

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Pleasure

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula." – Screwtape

- 1. Screwtape continues his guidance to Wormwood on how to exploit "down" times ¶1. How is it that sex and sensuality are especially powerful diabolical tools during times of darkness and depression ¶¶2–3?
- 2. How do our temperaments affect the way the devils tempt us ¶3?
- 3. One of the underlying themes of Screwtape's advice is that reality is shaped by truth, not by feelings. Why is it important to take all our phases and feelings with a grain of salt ¶¶4–5?
- 4. Screwtape encourages Wormwood to persuade the patient that he is just going through a "religious phase" ¶4. What are some of the persuasive means Screwtape instructs Wormwood to use?

5. Have you ever been tempted to give up your faith, either by denying or just ignoring it?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

Ask God to help you enjoy the good pleasures of life that He has created for you to enjoy so that you might walk on the path that brings life rather than death.

2. Take time to enjoy and be grateful for the healthy, good pleasures that God has given to you each day:

Paul writes to his son in the faith, Timothy,

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy." 1 Timothy 6:17

Name some pleasures of life that God has provided to you for your enjoyment. Intentionally take some time to enjoy those pleasures and offer up your gratitude to God for them. How might you help others put their hope in God and enjoy all that God provides us with to give us pleasure?





- 1. Snobbery
- 2. Peer pressure

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Inclusion

2. Integrity

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

"All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be." – Screwtape

- 1. Clever, slightly sophisticated intellectuals especially fashionable during World War II were "just right" for diabolical use. How would they be a snare for Wormwood's patient ¶¶1–2?
- 2. What social set would be just the right tool for a tempter to use on you?
- 3. Screwtape hopes the patient lives two different lives—one with his "rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly sceptical" friends and one with those he kneels beside on Sunday morning ¶¶1, 5. Are there places where you act one way with one group of people and act another way with a different group of people?
- 4. Screwtape notes that the value they have given to the word "Puritanism" is "one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years" ¶3. How would Screwtape wield the word "Puritanism" to "rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety"?

- 5. How is it that the diabolical use of peer pressure can turn us into first-order hypocrites ¶4?
- 6. How do you handle peer pressure that could be spiritually polluting?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33

Ask God to help you to develop healthy friendships that draw you and others closer to Him and give you the strength and positive peer pressure to know how to reach out to those who don't know Jesus.

2. Intentionally include "outsiders":

Include outsiders and those on the edge of the crowd, even though it might not be socially acceptable. Jesus intentionally reached out to the "tax-collectors and sinners" of his day. Who in your workplace, neighborhood or even church are being excluded from the "in-crowd"? How can you reach out to in love?

Reflect upon your relationships. Are you being unduly influenced by negative peer pressure to ostracize, look down on, or exclude others? What people are good influences in your life? Ask the Lord if you need to make any changes in the way you handle your friendships.



Appendix: Overview Chart of Themes, Diabolical Strategies and Divine Strategies Based on the Letters within *The Screwtape Letters*

APPENDIX

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THEME OF THE LETTER	DIABOLICAL STRATEGY	DIVINE STRATEGY
1. Pre-conversion	1. Jargon 2. Appetites	Science and reason
2. Church	 Unconverted habits The straw-man church Straw-man Christians Innate hypocrisy 	Disappointment
3. Family	 Introspection Vacuous prayers Irritating habits Annoying communication Religious irritation 	Process and stages
4. Prayer	 Devotional mood Spiritual feelings Childish images 	Intentional discipline of prayer
5. War	Long-term medical care	Responding to desperation
6. War continued	 Worry for the future Self-conscious/unself- conscious Imaginary virtues 	1. The Present 2. Active virtues
7. Devils, patriots, and pacifists	 Spiritual ignorance Christianity as means for a cause 	Intervention
8. Dry and desert experiences	Opposing God's intentions	The law of undulation
9. Life phases	 Troughs and down times Twisted pleasure Phases 	Pleasure
10. Cliques	1. Snobbery 2. Peer pressure	1.Inclusion 2.Integrity

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THEME OF THE LETTER	DIABOLICAL STRATEGY	DIVINE STRATEGY
11. Humor	 Humor as consolation and excuse Humor as flippancy 	Joy and fun
12. Sloth	1. Small sins 2. Spiritual drift	Intruding on our spiritual slumber
13. Pain and pleasure	Eradication of strong personal taste.	 Good books, country roads, real pain and pleasure Godly detachment
14. Humility	 Self-consciousness Distortion about the true nature of humility 	Humility Self-forgetfulness
15. Time and eternity	 Suppressing both eternal and the present Worry about the future 	Present and eternity.
16. Church hopping	 Diluted Christianity Opinionated pastors Party and cliques 	Diversity and discernment
17. Gluttony	1. Delicacy 2. Male and female gluttony	1. Fasting 2. Proper enjoyment of food
18. Sex	Romantic love	Abstinence or monogamy
19. Love	Twisted love	Love
20. Sex, love, and marriage	 Twisted sexual desires Terrestrial/infernal Venus 	Direct action
21. Pride and peevishness	Conquest	Creation

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THEME OF THE LETTER	DIABOLICAL STRATEGY	DIVINE STRATEGY
22. Love	1. Lure of the opposite sex 2. Noise	 Pleasure Love Music and silence
23. Jesus	 Historical Jesus Christianity as a means of social justice. 	 Great moralists Resurrection and Redemption
24. Godly influence	 Convention Spiritual pride Spiritual confusion The inner ring 	Spiritual influence of others
25. Pleasure and the same old thing	 Christianity and Novelty and Fashion 	Rhythm and "platitudes"
26. Unselfishness	1. Twisting love 2. Twisting eros	Charity and true love
27. Prayer and time	 False spirituality Historical point of view 	Prayer and distraction
28. The corruption of aging	 Middle age Attrition and attachment Idealization of youth "Experience is the mother of illusion" 	Detachment
29. Twisted virtues	1. Hatred 2. Cowardice	Virtue and the value of morality
30. Confusing what is false and real	Fatigue and weakness	Truth and faith
31. Deliverance	None available to devil in heaven	Life beyond death