

Letter **II**

Theme: Humor

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Humor as consolation and excuse
2. Humor as flippancy

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Joy and fun

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“I divide the causes of human laughter into Joy, Fun, the Joke Proper, and Flippancy.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Wormwood receives detailed instructions on laughter. What is there about joy and music that is so detestable to Screwtape ¶2?
2. Screwtape doesn't much care for fun either ¶3. How have you discovered fun to be an aid to spiritual growth?
3. Of the four types of humor, Screwtape prefers jokes and flippancy ¶¶4–6. How is it that a joke can be a means of justifying bad behavior ¶5?
4. Screwtape notes that flippancy “builds up around a man the finest armour-plating against the Enemy that I know.” In what way does flippancy hurt our relationships with God and others ¶6?
5. How might the advice of Screwtape affect the way you “enjoy” parties and entertainments such as music, movies, and television?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” Ephesians 5:4

Ask God to help you monitor your speech and allow your words to be encouraging and edifying as you go throughout your day.

2. Intentionally plan ways to bring joy and fun into your life and the lives of others:

What do you enjoy doing for fun? In what ways might you be more intentional about planning fun to bring joy into your life and the lives of others?

Reflect upon your use of humor. Is your humor uplifting or degrading toward others? Is your humor honoring to God or crude and “out of place”? Take time this week to be more conscious about the type of humor you use or laugh at.



Letter 12

Theme: Sloth

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Small sins
2. Spiritual drift

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Intruding on our spiritual slumber

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it valuable for Wormwood to encourage church attendance, despite its spiritual snares ¶2?
2. How is it that Wormwood can combine spiritual degeneration and spiritual inclination into snares and roadblocks to spiritual growth ¶3?
3. Wormwood learns how to keep his patient from prayers by wasting time ¶4. What sorts of things keep you from prayer?
4. Screwtape makes a distinction between repentance and a “vague, though uneasy, feeling that he hasn’t been doing very well lately” ¶2. Why does Screwtape want to cultivate in his patient this feeling of not doing well with his spiritual state?
5. How are “small sins” so effective in separating people from God ¶5?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low), how would you compare your current spiritual vitality with a year ago? What has

encouraged your spiritual growth? What has hindered your spiritual growth?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

Ask God to increase your faith and give you the power to actively seek after Him.

2. Pursue God daily through active and intentional spiritual habits:

Reflect upon your relationship with God. Are you actively engaged with Him, or has your relationship gradually gone cold or distant? What activities, even good ones, might be creating spiritual laziness in your relationship with God? Which spiritual habits might you implement daily to intentionally pursue God and not drift spiritually?



Letter 13

Theme: Pain and Pleasure

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Eradication of strong personal taste

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Good books, country roads, real pain and pleasure
2. Godly detachment

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“When He talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Wormwood’s patient did “wake up” from his spiritual drift and, for the time being, slipped through his fingers ¶1. Try to identify ways in which pleasure can be a divine aid and a devilish snare ¶3.
2. What is the difference between the detachment of self that God seeks and the detachment from reality that the devils seek ¶¶3–4?
3. Why would Screwtape want to eradicate small pleasures ¶3?
4. What fresh insight can we gain from Screwtape’s observations about the way that the Enemy (God) works ¶¶2, 4?
5. What pleasures and pastimes do you find spiritually nourishing?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Galatians 2:20

Ask daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit, have the mind of Christ, and allow Christ to live through you.

2. Rejoice in the gifts and personality that God has given you:

Reflect upon the unique way in which God has crafted your personality, your personal tastes and likes. In what ways might you thank God for the unique way that He has made you to enjoy His world? What are some of the small pleasures of life that you enjoy? Make time to enjoy one of those small pleasures today and thank God for it.

How can you encourage others to celebrate their unique gifts, personality, and tastes?

Find ways to intentionally nourish yourself and others spiritually.



Letter 14

Theme: Humility

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Self-consciousness
2. Distortion about the true nature of humility

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Humility
2. Self-forgetfulness

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“All virtues are less formidable to us once the man is aware that he has them, but this is specially true of humility.”
– Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. According to Screwtape, virtues are less formidable to devils when they are known to the patient ¶2. Why would he think this?
2. How do the devils twist humility so as to destroy it ¶3?
3. What is the true nature of humility ¶4?
4. What is God’s goal for humility and all virtues ¶4–5?
5. What are your virtues and outstanding talents? How well do you handle them?
6. Screwtape says the Enemy (God) wants us “to be so free from any bias in his own favour that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbor’s talents...” ¶4. Are you able to do this?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6–7

Ask God for the gift of humility and self-forgetfulness so that you can enter into a deeper relationship with Him and others.

2. Rejoice in the accomplishments, achievements, successes, and joys of others:

Look for ways to celebrate the accomplishments, achievements, and successes of your friends, family, and even your competitors. Send them a congratulations card. Encourage them through words of affirmation. Throw a party for someone else.

Find intentional ways to daily encourage others. For example, you might ask the Lord to bring to mind someone daily that you might send a word of affirmation to via text, email, phone, visit, or written letter.

Practice the discipline of self-forgetfulness by focusing on how you might bless others.



Letter 15

Theme: Time and Eternity

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Suppressing both eternal and the present
2. Worry about the future

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Present and eternity

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Screwtape believes that the “Enemy” (God) wants humanity to have a double vision, focusing on both time and eternity ¶2. How is that double focus a benefit to us?
2. In contrast to a focus on both eternity and the present, Screwtape wants to obscure both from our sight. How does a preoccupation with the future do just that ¶3?
3. Screwtape makes the enigmatic statement that “nearly all vices are rooted in the future.” Explain what is wrong with over-focusing on the future ¶¶3–4?
4. What is it about the future that worries you?
5. In what ways can you discern concerns for the future that hinder your spiritual growth and hurt your heart?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.” Matthew 6:34

Ask God to help you focus on the present and not be anxious about the future.

2. Examine your heart and explore what worries you about the future and take it to God in prayer:

Set aside some time to reflect upon the things that worry you. Make a list of them. How many of those things are related to the unknown of the future? Knowing that God is in control over time and history, that He loves you and has promised to never leave or forsake you, cast your cares and worries upon Him in prayer.

Takes some time as well to reflect upon the reality of eternity. Ask God to give you His perspective, in light of eternity, on your present situation.



Letter 16

Theme: Church Hopping

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. “Diluted Christianity”
2. Opinionated pastors
3. Party and clique

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Diversity and discernment

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“Surely you know that if a man can’t be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighborhood looking for the church that ‘suits’ him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Screwtape want Wormwood’s patient to become a church “connoisseur” ¶¶1–2?
2. One church near Wormwood’s patient serves up a diluted Christianity. What does Screwtape especially like about it ¶3?
3. Another church has a minister who is a passionate protester against almost everything. What does Screwtape especially like about this church ¶4?
4. Above all, Screwtape likes “party” churches in which members takes sides and are attached to causes ¶5. What do you think Screwtape might like about your church?
5. Screwtape notes that people searching for a church are either critics or pupils. God, Screwtape says, wants people in church with a “humble receptivity to any nourishment” ¶2. Which of these reflects your attitude about church?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” Psalm 122:1

Ask God to give you His perspective on worship and involvement in your local church so that you can be a joyful contributor to the body of Christ.

2. Get actively involved in a Bible-believing church:

By this we mean one that preaches the gospel and emphasizes discipleship of heart and mind. Are you actively serving and worshipping in a Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church? If not, pray and ask the Lord to help you find a local church home in which you can be nourished in your faith and serve others.

If you are part of a local church, take a moment to reflect upon the focus and mission of your church. Is your church actively making disciples of Jesus Christ and equipping you and others to be disciple-makers? Or is your church caught up primarily in social issues and humanism? If your church is not focused on Jesus’s Great Commandment and Great Commission, ask God what your role might be in bringing the church back to its mission.



Letter 17

Theme: Gluttony

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Delicacy
2. Male and female gluttony

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Fasting
2. Proper enjoyment of food with thanksgiving

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on that subject [Gluttony], so that by now you will hardly find a sermon preached or a conscience troubled about it.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. We seldom think of gluttony as sin today; however, the devils do. What’s the difference between the gluttony of Excess and the gluttony of Delicacy ¶1?
2. Toward which type of gluttony are you inclined?
3. It is clear that Delicacy, as present in the patient’s mother, is extremely irritating ¶¶1–2. How does it shape her life and affect those around her?
4. Toward what expressions of gluttony are men especially inclined ¶4?
5. The impact of gluttony is to make food a primary preoccupation that governs our lives. What role do you think food occupies in your life?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”
Philippians 3:19

Ask God to give you a healthy approach to the enjoyment of food, drink, and other pleasures.

2. Reflect upon the ways food and drink impact your life:

Examine your heart and reflect upon how you view food. How much time do you think about food each day? Are you so picky about your food that it impacts the ways you treat other people? Do you treat servers in restaurants with respect and kindness, or are you demanding and overly picky about your food’s presentation, taste, or warmth? Are you hyper-fixated on your diet so that it becomes a topic of most meals and conversations? Are you constantly craving more food and drink?

Consider fasting on occasion to get a deeper understanding of how you think about food and drink. Examine how food can be used in positive ways in our relationships with others and to be good stewards of our physical bodies. Pray and ask God to give you healthy appetites and approaches toward food and drink.



Letter 18

Theme: Sex

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Romantic love

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Abstinence or monogamy

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“The Enemy’s demand on humans takes the form of a dilemma; either complete abstinence or unmitigated monogamy.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. According to Screwtape, God has placed humanity in a dilemma concerning sex—either complete abstinence or unmitigated monogamy ¶2. How do the devils seek to twist sex so that we don’t live according to God’s standards?
2. Why is God’s creation of love offensive and irritating to Screwtape ¶¶3–4?
3. The devils not only twist sex but love as well. How have they twisted love to destroy God’s intentions ¶5?
4. What do we learn about God’s true intention for sex and love from Screwtape’s instructions to Wormwood?
5. How might the observations of Screwtape change the way you think about both sex and love ¶¶4–6?
6. Screwtape brags that humans have been persuaded that the commitment of marriage is no longer binding if two people fall out of love ¶6. Do you see evidence of this in contemporary culture?
7. Screwtape claims that “whenever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them ¶6. What does Screwtape mean by this?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Mark 10:6–9

Ask God to help you understand and value God’s creation of the marriage relationship between one man and one woman in which the two become one flesh until death parts them.

2. Seek to honor God:

Honor God with the way in which you steward the gift of sex as it was created to be used, abstinence outside of marriage, monogamy in marriage.

Reflect upon the way in which you view sex. How has your view been influenced by God’s standards as found in Scripture as opposed to the world’s perspective on sex?

How has the idea of romantic love perhaps distorted your perspective on biblical love and unconditional commitment in both singleness and marriage?

In what ways are you promoting God’s perspective on sex in your current relationships, conversations, and recreational activity? If single, what has helped you in practicing faithful abstinence outside of marriage? If married, how have you practiced faithful monogamy in marriage?

Whether married or single, how are you honoring those of the other sex with your sexual attitudes, thoughts, and practices?



Letter 19

Theme: Love

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Twisted love

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Love

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“Nothing matters at all except the tendency of a given state of mind, in given circumstances, to move a particular patient at a particular moment nearer to the Enemy or nearer to us.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Love is the fundamental difference between heaven and hell ¶2. What does the conflict over love show about God and Satan?
2. Screwtape also reveals the basic demonic strategy, making use of anything and everything so that we are drawn away from God ¶3. How do the devils twist love to their own purposes ¶2?
3. How have you experienced love as being both a means of drawing you to God and a means of being pulled away from God?
4. Screwtape cannot comprehend God’s “impossible love” for humans ¶1. Why do you think this is so?
5. Does Screwtape regard “being in love” as a desirable state for humans ¶3? Why or why not?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Ask God to help you deepen your understanding both in your heart and mind of God’s love for you, others, and this world.

2. Love the Lord your God:

Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Reflect upon the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor (Matthew 22:36–40.) What about your thoughts, words, and deeds are demonstrating your love? How might you better love those in your family, neighborhood, or workplace?

Pray and ask for God who is Love (1 John 4:8) to empower you to love.



Letter 20

Theme: Sex, Love, and Marriage

DIABOLICAL STRATEGIES EXPOSED:

1. Twisted sexual desires
2. Terrestrial/infernal Venus

DIVINE STRATEGIES REVEALED:

1. Direct action

KEY QUOTES TO LOOK FOR:

“It is the business of these great masters to produce in every age a general misdirection of what might be called sexual ‘taste.’ This they do by working through the small circle of popular artists.” – Screwtape

QUESTIONS:

1. Temptations lose their power as God steps in ¶1. Why do you think God allows temptations at all?
2. How has the demonic strategy of twisting sexual desire varied through the ages ¶3?
3. In what ways might the devils be twisting sexual desire for our time?
4. Screwtape writes about the terrestrial and infernal Venus as temptations for men ¶4. What are these temptations like, and how are they useful to the devil?
5. Although Screwtape doesn’t mention them, how might a terrestrial and infernal Mars be tempting for woman?
6. Screwtape says that the most powerful weapon related to sexual temptation is to make humans believe that temptation will go away only if we yield to it ¶3. Do you agree or disagree?

7. Screwtape points out that the sexual morality of culture is influenced by artists and advertisers ¶3. Where do you see evidence of this today?

DIVINE STRATEGIES TO PRACTICE:

1. Pray and Meditate upon Scripture:

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” Hebrews 13:4

Ask God to help you be pure in heart and not allow the world, the culture, and society to twist or distort God’s original design for sexuality.

2. Take captive any thoughts That are ungodly or a distortion of God’s love for other human beings:

Reflect upon the influencers who are bombarding your mind with sexual temptation. How might you avoid and or counter these harmful messages about sex and love? How can you honor members of the opposite sex and care for them in a sexualized world?

Whether you are married or single, seek ways to honor “the marriage bed” and live a pure life.



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

APPENDIX

CSLI STUDY GUIDE • *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis

THEME OF THE LETTER	DIABOLICAL STRATEGY	DIVINE STRATEGY
1. Pre-conversion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jargon 2. Appetites 	Science and reason
2. Church	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unconverted habits 2. The straw-man church 3. Straw-man Christians 4. Innate hypocrisy 	Disappointment
3. Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introspection 2. Vacuous prayers 3. Irritating habits 4. Annoying communication 5. Religious irritation 	Process and stages
4. Prayer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devotional mood 2. Spiritual feelings 3. Childish images 	Intentional discipline of prayer
5. War	Long-term medical care	Responding to desperation
6. War continued	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worry for the future 2. Self-conscious/unself-conscious 3. Imaginary virtues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Present 2. Active virtues
7. Devils, patriots, and pacifists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spiritual ignorance 2. Christianity as means for a cause 	Intervention
8. Dry and desert experiences	Opposing God's intentions	The law of undulation
9. Life phases	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Troughs and down times 2. Twisted pleasure 3. Phases 	Pleasure
10. Cliques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Snobbery 2. Peer pressure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion 2. Integrity

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THEME OF THE LETTER	DIABOLICAL STRATEGY	DIVINE STRATEGY
11. Humor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Humor as consolation and excuse 2. Humor as flippancy 	Joy and fun
12. Sloth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small sins 2. Spiritual drift 	Intruding on our spiritual slumber
13. Pain and pleasure	Eradication of strong personal taste.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good books, country roads, real pain and pleasure 2. Godly detachment
14. Humility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-consciousness 2. Distortion about the true nature of humility 	Humility Self-forgetfulness
15. Time and eternity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suppressing both eternal and the present 2. Worry about the future 	Present and eternity.
16. Church hopping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diluted Christianity 2. Opinionated pastors 3. Party and cliques 	Diversity and discernment
17. Gluttony	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delicacy 2. Male and female gluttony 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fasting 2. Proper enjoyment of food
18. Sex	Romantic love	Abstinence or monogamy
19. Love	Twisted love	Love
20. Sex, love, and marriage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Twisted sexual desires 2. 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lure of the opposite sex 2. Noise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pleasure 2. Love 3. Music and silence
23. Jesus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical Jesus 2. Christianity as a means of social justice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Great moralists 2. Resurrection and Redemption
24. Godly influence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convention 2. Spiritual pride 3. Spiritual confusion 4. The inner ring 	Spiritual influence of others
25. Pleasure and the same old thing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christianity and ... 2. Novelty and Fashion 	Rhythm and “platitudes”
26. Unselfishness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Twisting love 2. Twisting eros 	Charity and true love
27. Prayer and time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. False spirituality 2. Historical point of view 	Prayer and distraction
28. The corruption of aging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Middle age 2. Attrition and attachment 3. Idealization of youth 4. “Experience is the mother of illusion” 	Detachment
29. Twisted virtues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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