



C.S. Lewis November 29, 1898 – November 22, 1963

A scholar and author, Clive Staples Lewis left his mark on the realms of literary criticism, Christian apologetics, and fantasy stories. While children know him best for the seven *Chronicles of Narnia*, his religious writings such as *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters* remain popular today, and his work on Milton, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, is considered a standard critical work. Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Lewis was educated and lived most of his life in England. He served and was wounded in the trenches of World War I France, after which he completed his studies at Oxford University. In 1925, he was elected to a Fellowship in English Language and Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he taught for thirty years. Beginning in the 1930s, Lewis and some friends often gathered informally to discuss their writings and other topics. This group known as "The Inklings" continued meeting regularly until the 1950s, and included such members as J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams.

"All joy reminds. It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago or further away or still 'about to be'."

-C.S. Lewis
Surprised by Joy (1955)

Lewis' popular success began in the 1940s with his BBC radio broadcasts (which later were compiled in written format as *Mere Christianity*) and publication of *The Screwtape Letters*. His autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, is an engaging description of his journey to faith. In 1955, Lewis left Oxford for Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he was appointed Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, a position he held for the rest of his life. It was also during the 1950s, that Lewis met and married Joy Davidman Gresham, an American writer, whose influence can be seen in Lewis' novel, *Till We Have Faces* as well as his study on the nature of love, *The Four Loves*. Joy's battle with cancer and her subsequent death were the subject of two different films both titled, *Shadowlands*. Lewis' own struggle with her loss is movingly captured in his book, *A Grief Observed*. After Joy's death in 1960, Lewis' health gradually declined. He died after an illness of several months in his home outside Oxford, on November 22, 1963, the same day President Kennedy was assassinated. Lewis was just a few days short of his 65th birthday. Raised in a Christian home, Lewis abandoned his faith as a young man, but returned to God as an adult, acknowledging the deity of Christ after a long conversation with several of the Inklings on the nature of myth and truth. "I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ..." he wrote to a friend. "My long night talk with [Hugo] Dyson and Tolkien had a great deal to do with it." A

member of the Anglican Church, Lewis' devout and vigorously reasoned faith is the subject of many of his works, and his impact on Christian thought during his life and after has been of tremendous significance. [taken from The Wade Center at Wheaton College]

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS (1942) and SCREWTAPE PROPOSES A TOAST (1959)

INTRODUCTIONS

I. The Screwtape Letters (1942)

***The “genesis” of the book came July 20-21, 1940

***Published essays in **THE GUARDIAN** Newspaper in Great Britain from May 2, 1941-November 28, 1941.

***One of Lewis’ most popular and best selling books.

***WORMWOOD is a novice devil who has been assigned as a tempter on the earth from his UNCLE SCREWTAPE who is the Undersecretary for the Infernal Lowerarchy and WORMWOOD’S supervisor. THE PATIENT is an ordinary young man who lives in England during WW2. OTHER CHARACTERS include THE PATIENT’S FIANCE, THE PATIENT’S MOTHER, THE ENEMY (GOD), OUR FATHER BELOW (THE DEVIL), SLUBGOB (The Head of the Training College for Younger Tempters/Demons), GLUBOSE (The Tempter/Demon in charge of the patient’s mother), SLUMTRIMPET (The Tempter/Demon in charge of the patient’s fiancé)...**31 Letters** in all

***Its Purpose: “to give all the psychology of temptation from the other point of View.” (Letter to his brother Warnie Lewis)

***Dedicated to JRR Tolkien with two quotes (from Martin Luther and Thomas More)

A. Some Thoughts from the Original Preface of 1941/42

*No intention of explaining how this correspondence fell into my hands.

*There are two equal and opposite errors into which our (human) race can fall about the devils...One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them...(continue reading)...

*Remember the devil is a liar so not everything the devil says should be taken to be true...

*There is even wishful thinking in Hell as well as on earth.

B. Some Thoughts from the Revised Preface of 1960

*The Most Common Question Lewis Received: Did I really believe in the Devil? Lewis’ Answer (pvii)

*The Impact of Milton, Dante, Goethe (Faust), Chesterton (read p.ix)

*The Idea of Hell: Hell is a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone lived the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance and resentment. (p.ix) and then symbolized Hell as a bureaucracy of the Managerial Age where Administration is of the highest virtue (read p.x)

- *The Absurd Fancy that devils are engaged in the disinterested pursuit of something called Evil... They are practical beings with two motives
 - 1.) The Fear of Punishment (“Hell contains Deeper Hells.”).
 - 2.) A Kind of Hunger (passion to dominate and devour (an)other).
- *The Desire to have written a similar work with advice from an archangel to a person’s guardian angel (Heaven)

C. Reflections on Some of the Letters

- *Letter I. “In attacking faith, I should be wary of argument. Arguments only provoke answers...work away at mere unreasoning feeling.”
- *Letter II. “I note with great displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Yet one of our greatest allies is the Church itself.”
- *Letter IV. Prayer
- *Letter V. War and Wormwood’s “delirious joy.”
- *Letter VII. Question as to let the Patient know that Wormwood exists.
- *Letter VIII. The Nature of Man (Humans are amphibians---half spirit and half animal...(read)
- *Letter IX. Pleasure
- *Letter X. Puritanism
- *Letter XI. Laughter (Joy, Fun, Joke Proper and Flippancy)
- *Letter XII. Sin (big and little) [some say this is one of the best letters]

“The Safest Road to Hell is the gradual one.”
- *Letter XIII. Innocent Pleasures contribute to a man’s self-forgetfulness while Hell wants a man to “abandon the people or food or books he really likes in favour of the best people, the right food and the important books.”
- *Letter XIV. Humility
- *Letter XV. Time (read)
- *Letter XVI. What Church is suitable for the Patient? (read)
- *Letter XVIII. The intention of Hell to make “being in love” (something lower than a “storm of emotion”) the only respectable ground for marriage rather than love that comes from “fidelity, fertility and good will.
- *Letter XIX. Hell’s Story of how Satan was thrown out of Heaven.
- *Letter XXI. Cultivating “My time is my own.” Attitude.
- *Letter XXII. Screwtape’s Anger that the Patient is in love with another Christian. God is “a hedonist at heart.” “Everything has to be twisted before it’s any use to us.”
- *Letter XXIII. The Quest for the Historical Jesus
- *Letter XXV. The Concept of ‘Merely Christian’ and The ‘Christianity and...’ Syndrome.
- *Letter XXVII. Prayer (again)
- *Letters XVIII-XXXI. The Death of the Patient

II. Screwtape Proposes a Toast (1959)

***Lewis was often asked to write more “Screwtape Letters” but had no desire to do so.

***An Invitation from **THE SATURDAY EVENING POST** in the USA

invited Lewis and he said ‘Yes’.

***The New Preface “The idea of something like a lecture or ‘address’ hovered vaguely in my mind, now forgotten, now recalled, never written. Then came an invitation from The Saturday Evening Post and that pressed the trigger.”

***”Screwtape Proposes a Toast: a toast given by Screwtape at the Annual Dinner of the Tempter’s Training College for Young Devils.

***Although it would appear to be a critique of the education system of England, it is rather a Direct Attack on the errors of public education in the USA...**the overwhelming failure to teach passion and virtue; egalitarianism which leads to mediocrity rather than excellence.**

*****Highlights of Screwtape Proposes a Toast**

1. The Dinner served has consisted of human souls...insipid still. (names)
2. The Dinner is “full of hope and promise” because Hell has never had so many souls in such abundance and despite the souls being of poor quality Hell has managed to raise them to a ‘level of clarity and deliberateness at which mortal sin becomes possible.’
3. The Stages of Triumph...religious toleration, Atheism...Our Father Below’s strategy...liberty/personal freedom distorted by Rousseau, Hegel...Nazism and Communism...
4. Democracy’s “I’m as good as you.” Hell can cause a man to ‘enthroned at the centre of his life a good solid resounding lie.’ educational systems, national government, personal state of mind (psychology).

2016 COURSE FOR LENT@ NLPC

“Lead us not into Temptation...”: A Study of CS Lewis’ THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

Wednesday February 17	Intro to CS Lewis and The Screwtape Letters including Letters 1-5
Wednesday February 24	Letters 6-11
Wednesday March 2	Letters 12-17
Wednesday March 9	Letters 18-23
Wednesday March 16	Letters 24-31
Wednesday March 23	Conclusions including “Screwtape Proposes a Toast “

The Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis [LETTERS #1-5]

(with selections read and a time of reflection or Bible Study)

Letter #1 Summary: Make THE PATIENT be preoccupied with the ordinary, day to day realities of life rather than thinking or reflecting on the truth or falsehood of certain arguments, including science.

*Hebrews 2:14-18 What “abominable advantage” (para 3) does God have over Satan?

Q: Why is Screwtape so concerned about the use of reason to tempt THE PATIENT and more in favor with the use of feeling to tempt THE PATIENT?

Letter #2 Summary: Make THE PATIENT disillusioned with the church by highlighting people he self-righteously thinks are strange, weird, odd or even hypocritical.

Q: What do you think of Screwtape’s statement that “One of the great allies at present is the Church itself”? (para 2)

Letter #3 Summary: Keep annoying THE PATIENT with “daily pinpricks” from his mother.

Q: What are the 4 methods of temptation Screwtape is told to use in relationships?

Letter #4 Summary: Keep THE PATIENT from taking prayer seriously or even his intentions to pray. Distract and Mis-direct his focus away from God, who is personal, to a God who is just an object/a general notion of God or even better distract/misdirect his focus on to himself.

Q: Screwtape advises Wormwood to try to keep THE PATIENT from praying at all, but if THE PATIENT does try to pray get him to have “parrot-like” prayers or very emotive lackluster prayers to a general notion of THE ENEMY (God). What does Jesus have to say in Matthew 6:5-13?

Letter #5 Summary: Do not be so hopeful about the effects of war on THE PATIENT because God often lets our patients suffer to strengthen them and to torment us.

Q: What effect does war have on one’s Christian Life? Screwtape also says it doesn’t make a difference whether someone is “an extreme patriot or an ardent pacifist” There is a famous quote by a military chaplain that says “There are no atheists in foxholes”. What does that mean and would Screwtape agree or disagree? Read Romans 5:3-5 or James 1:2-4 and discuss how does God use suffering (like in war) to strengthen the life of a Christian.

Next Week: The Screwtape Letters #6-11