

Letters 10–12

Vocabulary:

Each underlined word below is shown in the context of the passage in which it appears. Determine from context what the word means and define it in your own words. Then compare your definition with that found in a standard dictionary.

1. I gather they are even vaguely pacifist, not on moral grounds but from an ingrained habit of belittling anything that concerns the great mass of their fellow men. . . .

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

2. He can be taught to enjoy kneeling beside the grocer on Sunday just because he remembers that the grocer could not possibly understand the urbane and mocking world which he inhabited on Saturday evening. . . .

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

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3. . . . he must be made to imagine that all the choices which have effected this change of course are trivial and revocable.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

4. For this reason I am almost glad to hear that he is still a churchgoer and a communicant.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

5. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

Questions:

1. What event in the patient's life occasions these letters?

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2. According to Screwtape, what are the four causes of human laughter? Briefly explain each one. Which does Screwtape consider the best of all for the demonic purpose?
3. How does Screwtape advise Wormwood to use the patient's churchgoing habits?

Dig Deeper:

4. Letter 10 focuses on the patient's choice of friends. How does Screwtape urge Wormwood to exploit the patient's new friendships? What does Screwtape mean by saying Wormwood should get the patient to lead "two parallel lives"?
5. What criteria do you use when choosing friends? What, if any, specifically Christian criteria do you use? Have you ever been in friendships that threatened to lead you away from God? If so, how did you face the situation? What friendships do you currently value, and why?

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6. List some positive examples of friendship between people in the Bible. Read Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 22:24; 27:6; and James 4:4. What do these verses suggest the Christian approach to friendship should be? Read John 15:12–15. How is Jesus our friend?

7. In Letter 11, Screwtape states that he does not know what the “real cause” of joy is. Read John 15:5–11 and 16:19–24. What is the real cause of joy?

8. In Letter 12, Screwtape says that we humans “dread nothing so much as effective contact” with God because of our guilt. What guilt is Screwtape talking about? (Refer to Romans 3:23; 8:7, 8.) Read 1 John 1:5–2:2. Why is it important to confess our sin to God? What can we expect to experience as a result?

9. What does Screwtape call the safest road to Hell? What do you think he means by this? Read Matthew 7:13, 14. How does the road to “destruction” contrast with the road to “life”?

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Optional Activities:

1. *Critical Report:* View and critique a currently popular sitcom or other humorous program or movie (you should get parental input and approval on anything about which you are uncertain). How does it achieve or try to achieve humor? Make reference to the four categories Screwtape outlines. Prepare a report on your conclusions.
2. *Discussion or Essay:* In Chapter 12, Screwtape tells Wormwood to cultivate the “dim uneasiness” his patient feels “that he hasn’t been doing very well lately.” He also tells him God will not allow him to completely suppress this feeling of guilt. Why would God not allow this sense of unease or guilt to be suppressed? Is there good and bad guilt? Is there a difference between “guilt” and “feeling guilty”?