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Screwtape Letters 18-20 **(SEX, LUST, LOVE & MARRIAGE)**

These are INTENSE chapters in CS Lewis’ writing from Screwtape’s point of view! Some might say “uncomfortable topics” but I say (and JP2 says) no….the very topics that young people want to talk about and also **deserve** to talk about truthfully. These 3 letters are all related and should be studied together.

**In letter 18** Screwtape is trying to explain the “finer points” of sexuality to Wormwood. He criticizes God for creating something as absurd as LOVE…God is a mystery to Screwtape since devils are incapable of feeling love. So naturally, the letter quickly shifts to a consideration of the sin of lust (for this is what devils DO understand). Devils have achieved great victories over mankind thru sexuality over the ages, so Screwtape has a lot to share.

**In letter 19** Screwtape continues to write on the subjects of love, sex, and marriage (as he promised Wormwood at the end of letter 18). Interestingly, he begs Wormwood to not show his letters to anyone (he is suggesting that God LOVES humans and even hinting that love exists could be heresy for him).

**In letter 20** Screwtape continues to write **enthusiastically** about the potential for lust in human beings, including the targeted young man. He describes all young men’s desires as having a dark side that makes them desire a partner in sin. He suggests that chastity is unhealthy.

The relationship between love and sex is clearly too complicated for Lewis to do it justice in only a few paragraphs (JP2 spent at a decade doing so!) but his key insights (mainly that humans conflate love and lust) are great topic for reflection and discussion! Let’s do this….

Discussion Questions about letters 18-20 in the book…

1. God has placed humanity in a dilemma concerning sex – either complete abstinence or unmitigated monogamy. How do the devils seek to twist sex so that we don’t live according to God’s standards?
2. Love is a fundamental difference between heaven and hell. What does the conflict over love show about God and Satan?
3. How has the demonic strategy of twisting sexual desire varied through the ages? In what ways might the devils be twisting sexual desire for our time?