



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

November 2015 – *Our Choice of Friends*

One of the ways Christians can open themselves up to the influence of Satan and his angels is in their choice of friends, an issue C.S. Lewis explored in the *The Screwtape Letters*. In one letter, senior devil Screwtape writes to his nephew Wormwood:

I was delighted to hear from Triptweeze that your patient has made some very desirable new acquaintances and that you seem to have used this event in a really promising manner. I gather that the middle-aged married couple who called at his office are just the sort of people we want him to know—rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly sceptical about everything in the world...

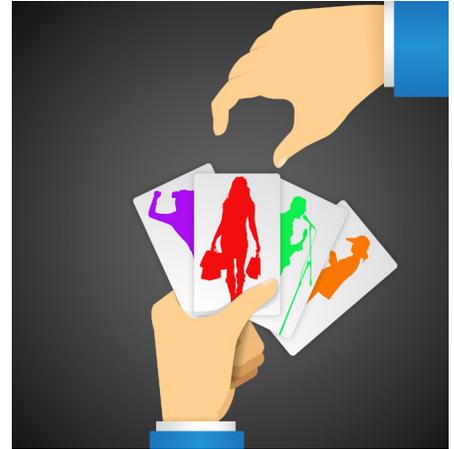
No doubt he must very soon realise that his own faith is in direct opposition to the assumptions on which all the conversation of his new friends is based. I don't think that matters much provided that you can persuade him to postpone any open acknowledgment of the fact, and this, with the aid of shame, pride, modesty and vanity, will be easy to do. As long as the postponement lasts he will be in a false position. He will be silent when he ought to speak and laugh when he ought to be silent. He will assume, at first only by his manner, but presently by his words, all sorts of cynical and sceptical attitudes which are not really his. But if you play him well, they may become his. All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be. This is elementary. The real question is how to prepare for the Enemy's counterattack.

The first thing is to delay as long as possible the moment at which he realises this new pleasure as a temptation. Since the Enemy's servants have been preaching about "the World" as one of the great standard temptations for two thousand years, this might seem difficult to do. But fortunately they have said very little about it for the last few decades. In modern Christian writings, though I see much (indeed more than I like) about Mammon, I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as "Puritanism"—and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years? By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life.¹

While there are many good reasons for Christians to associate with people from all walks of life and to have non-Christian friends as well as Christian friends, we need to be on guard lest any of our associations lead us to become double-minded or otherwise behave in a manner unworthy of a follower of Christ. Do you regularly evaluate the impact of your friendships on your walk with Christ?

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:33 (ESV)



¹C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, p. 49-51.