

## **Screwtape Style: Dear Mama**

My Dear Wormwood,

I was thrilled to hear you have been making progress with the mother. You have a good lead, from what I hear. She's feels over-worked, unappreciated, and discouraged? I'm so glad to hear it. If you tread carefully, this can be a great opportunity. With the kids waking her up every hour last night, we already have an advantage. A tired Mom makes for a more emotional Mom, and an emotional Mom is a vulnerable one.

I do have a few tips. First, aim your best efforts at her marriage. As you know, we cannot do much with a unified marriage. Luckily for us, a cranky and exhausted wife can do wonders to change that. We must convince her that her husband is no longer the friend and ally she first married. Instead, we must reveal every sin and selfish habit, especially drawing attention to his thoughtless actions (mal-intended or not) against her.

Sometimes it's the less obvious things, things the husband doesn't even realize, that we can use to offend her the most. When he comes home from work and dumps his things on the counter nearest the door (instead of hanging his coat or putting away his keys), let her think of it as a direct assault on her work as a homekeeper. When he treks mud in with his shoes, let her think it is because he does not love her. Such extremes of thought may seem ridiculous to you or I, but to the exhausted mortal woman, it can seem possible. Your goal is to make her think the husband does not notice, or even better, that he does not care about her efforts at home.

Secondly, do what you can to keep her focused on her troubles and pains. Remind her how much her back aches, how draining the children were all day, and how many undone tasks still beckon her. Do not let her wonder what difficulties her husband faced that day or whether his back might also be aching. Valuing others above oneself is one of those silly, though strangely effective, tactics of the Enemy. If she stops to make him a cup of coffee, the next thing you know she'll be rubbing his shoulders and flirting with him on the couch. It can progress out of your control if you're not careful.

Along those lines, be sure the Mother starts to value productivity above everything else. Have her wake up early and work non-stop until bedtime. If the husband relaxes in the evening with an hour of computer gaming, be sure the wife notices the pile of unfolded laundry or unswept floors. Do not let her grab a book and relax alongside her husband. Diligence, often one of the Enemy's virtues, when

overdone can be used to our advantage as well. Convince her that as long as there is a shred of work to be done (and there always is), no one should be resting. Then, as she folds and sweeps and he sits, you can introduce the sweet bitterness of resentment.

A word of caution here. Remember, the love of a husband can be dangerous to our cause. If he senses her unhappiness, he may begin to help or (even worse) show her affection. This is where previously planted seeds of resentment can be guided into full bloom. Make her think that his displays of affection are because he “only wants one thing”. Do not let her view his help with the dishes (or kisses or cuddling) as having pure motives. If he shows his desire for her, convince her that she is being used, not loved. As we both know, the ultimate Act of Marriage can bond them together in a way that can undo much hard work on our part. Because of this, do not allow her to prioritize that Act on her mental to-do-list. It is in our best interest to keep the wife busy, busy, busy and be sure she’s far too exhausted to consider it by the end of the evening.

Now, onto the children. Lovely little opportunities for us, the children, especially the little ones. We all know that children are a favorite tool of the Enemy. He calls them Blessings and Gifts and calls parents to lay down their lives for them, just as his Son did. Insane, I know. We must convince her that the obnoxious little people she has charge of are not really worth her sacrifice. When the Mother first dreamed of having children, she probably imagined large, innocent eyes and chubby, happy grins taking up the majority of her days. Do your best to shatter those expectations.

Instead, draw attention to how much they take from her. Let them take and take and take... And need and need and need, until the Mother feels totally spent. Let them start crying at the same time for the most irrational of reasons. Let the noise bother her. Let their bad behavior surprise her. Do your best to make the day-to-day monotony of diaper changes, meals, and baths seem simultaneously overwhelming and beneath her. Let her think of all the better, more important things she could be doing with her life, if only she didn’t have the children.

Don’t let her think about the future responsible, faithful adults she is raising. Society changers, friends, workers, husbands or wives... Don’t let her think of them as life-long companions who will love her, converse with her, and care for her in her old age. Oh, and definitely don’t let her think about the grandchildren she might be able to see in their little grubby faces if she looked hard enough now. No, no, no... Thinking ahead to when her work bears fruit, as the Enemy calls it, is always a bad idea. Keep words like ‘heritage’ or ‘legacy’ far away from the runny noses and jelly stains of the day to day.

If there is any last piece of advice I have for you, Wormwood, it is to keep the Mother looking to her husband or family for her fulfillment and comfort. We know that the Enemy is always watching and willing to take the burdens of his children, but if we divert the Mother's attention well enough, this fact can be forgotten. Make her look to her husband for worth and affirmation. Then, when he lets her down (as he is sure to do), she will be ours to torment. Yes, the worst thing that could happen would be for her to turn to Him with her needs and inadequacies. Once she realizes that the Enemy offers a peace that transcends her situation, our work could be utterly compromised.

Your Malevolent Uncle,

Screwtape