

Day 1 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

What is one thing you were initially scared of that you are thankful you chose to do despite your fear?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. **John 1:1-14 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

The Word refers to Jesus. He has been there from the beginning. He was involved in creation. But Jesus didn't just stay in heaven. Jesus left heaven and came to earth.

He went through a lot of the same things that we go through, good times and hard times. He was being prepared for his ministry. Some of you are being prepared right now—you may not be aware of it—hurts, struggles, difficult times. They shape us and prepare us.

Application (5 minutes)

How does the suffering Jesus endured uniquely equip him to be compassionate to you in your struggles?

How has God shown his faithfulness to you?

How could you imagine God using the growth you've experienced to equip you to serve others?

Is there a way you feel called to serve that scares you? Why not tell someone else about it as a first step?

Prayer (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for being compassionate, faithful, present and encouraging. Fill me with hope as I endure difficulty with your patience and embrace change with your power.

Day 2 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

When was the last time someone told you a hard truth? Did you listen?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture: In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, “He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!’”

John’s clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize, he denounced them. “You brood of snakes!” he exclaimed. “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire. “

I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?” But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.” So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” **Matthew 3:1-17 NLT**

Sermon Insights: Have you taken that step of surrender—giving yourself completely to God—surrendering yourself and being lowered under the water?

Application (5 minutes)

The Pharisees and Sadducees were powerful politically. They came to observe, not obey. Are you tempted to stand back and judge rather than step up and obey?

What area of your life are you intentionally not obeying or imitating Jesus? Is there any pride or false sense of security that is stopping you?

Believer’s baptism presents two pictures: the burial of your old, sinful self (when you go under the water), and the resurrection of your new self, created to be like Jesus (when you come up out of the water). Baptism is an intentional choice you personally make AFTER you become aware of your sinful condition and you repent (turn to God). Have you personally repented (turned to God) and chosen to be baptized as a matter of your own choice? (For further study, check out Acts 2:38 and Romans 6!)

Prayer (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for coming to our broken land and offering healing, peace, and power to the humble. Teach me to be humble so that I can be empowered to love and serve you effectively. Thank you for sharing your life with me and making me into a new person.

Day 3 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

The Apostle Paul said that we should be aware of Satan’s strategies. What temptation(s) uniquely call to you?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” **Matthew 4:1-4 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Temptation 1 of 3: Focus on the physical things.

Pay attention to these temptations – because the devil uses these same types of things to not only cause us to sin, but to get us off track and waste our lives.

Jesus prepared for the temptation:

- We need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.
- We need to spend time with God in prayer and his Word.
- We need to deny ourselves: “It’s not about me.”

Application (5 minutes)

How do you become aware of the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life?

Do you approach reading God’s Word and prayer like a conversation between you and God? Are you better at listening or talking? What is God teaching you?

How is God encouraging you to strategically “deny yourself”?

Prayer (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for loving me as a good, good Father. Thank you for your faithful and enduring love. Help me to embrace challenges as a trusting child with full confidence in you as Father. Thank you for working through all things to bring about good.

Day 4 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

How do you define “power” – complete control? Enduring influence?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’” Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’” **Matthew 4:1-7 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

Temptation 2 of 3: Focus on power.

Pay attention to these temptations – because the devil uses these same types of things to not only cause us to sin, but to get us off track and waste our lives.

Jesus prepared for the temptation:

- We need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.
- We need to spend time with God in prayer and his Word.
- We need to deny ourselves: “It’s not about me.”

Application (5 minutes)

Satan, whose name means “the Accuser,” invited Jesus to prove his identity and display his power. Jesus refused to take the bait, because God’s power is shown in love, not force. God forces no one to obey, believe, or comply. He is kind to everyone and waits patiently for people to respond of their own choice. If your past experience with “church” is quite the opposite, ask yourself: were the “powerful” religious leaders really following Jesus’ example?

God has given every human being some power. Many use it to attempt to control other people. Jesus offers a different way: he inspires us to show “self-control.” How can you show self-control?

Who inspires you the most? How do they use their power?

Prayer (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for sustaining Jesus through his temptations and giving us power to face ours with self-control. Help our eyes to be clear as we look for ways to show real power—loving ourselves and others even we are disappointed.

Day 5 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

Describe true happiness.

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’” Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’”

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. “I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.” “Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’” Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus. Matthew 4:1-11 NLT

Sermon Insights:

Temptation 3 of 3: Focus on possessions.

Pay attention to these temptations – because the devil uses these same types of things to not only cause us to sin, but to get us off track and waste our lives.

Jesus prepared for the temptation:

- We need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.
- We need to spend time with God in prayer and his Word.
- We need to deny ourselves: “It’s not about me.”

Application (5 minutes)

In a time of physical weakness, Jesus appealed to the unchanging truth of the Scriptures in the face of intense temptation.

Think about the last time you were tempted—what Scriptures came to mind?

Shortcuts to happiness often end up creating misery. God promises to give you wisdom if you ask him wholeheartedly. What area of your life do you need God’s wisdom so that you can take the right steps and experience true satisfaction?

Are you willing to wait for God to provide what you need?

Prayer (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for helping me see what will bring true happiness. Give me wisdom to know what path to take, and give me confidence to follow you even when the path is unfamiliar.