

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who in your life has shown you true and unconditional love?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.

So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

We love each other because he loved us first. If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers. **1 John 4:7-21 NLT**

Long ago the Lord said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself." **Jeremiah 31:3 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

God is love and God loves us: passionately, personally, intimately and eternally.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

God's love is expressed in sending Jesus as a sacrifice to "take away our sins." Think about this...what has God freed you from?

"Such love has no fear" – are you drawing close to God and experiencing freedom from fear?

How can you more fully experience God's "perfect love"?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, in spite of the fact that I have not earned your affection or deserved your kindness, THANK YOU for loving me with a perfect love that saves me from the power and pain of sin. Fill me with confidence in your presence!

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Have you ever felt truly alone?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons... **Luke 8:1-2 NLT**

Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. **John 19:25 NLT**

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" **John 20:1-2 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

The whole Bible can be reduced down to one phrase – "God loves you – let him!"

At some point, the path of Jesus intersected with Mary's, and he healed her from the torment of evil. Mary could smile again because Jesus rolled the stone of sin off Mary's life, and Mary was one of Jesus' first female followers. With tears flowing freely, Mary watched Jesus die. On Saturday she observed a long sad Sabbath. And early Sunday morning, Mary went to the tomb, her heart was dark with grief. Mary's mission was to wash the blood out of Jesus' beard, anoint his body with fragrant oils, and say goodbye.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Can you resonate with Mary Magdalene in being changed by Jesus' love?

Can you imagine the horror she went through as she watched the Son of God be brutally killed?

Mary Magdalene was committed to Jesus because he had given her life. Even though you don't always understand God or his ways, are you surrendering to the Holy Spirit's influence on your life? How?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for loving and saving and empowering Mary Magdalene to be who you created her to be and not leaving her in the broken mess she had become. Thank you for caring for me deeply and refusing to leave me alone.

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is something wonderful that happened today that you were too busy to fully appreciate?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in.

Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. Then they went home.

Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener.

"Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message. **John 20:1-18 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Give an example of a time when God was with you but you couldn't understand it at the time.

What is the most surprising part of this story?

Do you think it is significant that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene?

Why do you think Mary Magdalene clung to Jesus?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for appearing to Mary and calming her fears. Thank you for being present in my life even when I have trouble seeing or understanding your presence or plan. Teach me to trust you!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

How much do you matter to God? Is your answer based on what God says or what you feel or both?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their suffering. Yet Jerusalem says, "The Lord has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us."

"Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands..."

**Isaiah 49:13-16 NLT**

[Mary Magdalene] turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

"Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

"Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message. **John 20:14-16, 18 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

This moment is so important because it shows us both the power of God and the love of God! The tender love of God for Mary Magdalene is the same for you and me! Jesus was not so high and mighty that he didn't have a moment to spend with Mary. Jesus is at once the conquering king and the gentle shepherd. This is our God. This is what love does. Love shows up in hard times, sad places, dark corners, and despondent hearts and brings hope.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Name 2-3 attributes of God that we see in Isaiah 49. How does that affect your understanding of God?

How does Jesus' love for Mary affect how you believe Jesus sees you? Have you ever been tempted to think Jesus doesn't care about you individually?

"Conquering King" and "Gentle Shepherd" – which description of Jesus do you appreciate more? Why?

Consider that YOU are made in the image of God. How then do these descriptions encourage you in your growth?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for "writing my name on the palm of your hands." Thank you for loving me and using me to love others!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

To what would you compare God’s love?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle’s!

The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.

For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust. Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone— as though we had never been here.

But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children’s children of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments! The Lord has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything.

Praise the Lord, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. Yes, praise the Lord, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will! Praise the Lord, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom. Let all that I am praise the Lord. **Psalms 103:1-22 NLT**

We love each other because he loved us first. **1 John 4:19 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:** You are God’s idea, and God doesn’t have any bad ideas!

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Consider taking a few minutes to read this passage *out loud* as a moment of worship, faith, and dedication to God.

To give us what we deserve is justice. God gave Jesus what *we* deserve. That was mercy. To forgive others is NOT to assess what they deserve. It is to give them what they need. Who needs your forgiveness?

God describes himself as our Father. A good father is a source of life and provides provision and protection. In what new ways do you need to look to God as your father?

God’s “unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.” How does that encourage you?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you that your love for those who fear you never fails. Thank you for sending Jesus to take my punishment, die in my place, and rise from the dead. Teach me to fear you and rest in your love!