

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is the meaning or purpose of life?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will give his own glory to the Son, and he will do so at once. Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going. So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” **John 13:35–38 NLT**

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**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How much does your life currently match up to Jesus’ description of the meaning and purpose of life?

How does receiving God’s love for you help you show his love to others?

Does it encourage you to know that growing in love is a process? What are the signs you are growing?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for the powerful, unmappable gift of your unconditional love. Thank you that you give me security through driving my fears away, and you give me significance in sharing with me the mission to share your love!

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

There is a lot of confusion about what “love” is...how would you describe “love”?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead. That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.

The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. **1 Peter 4:1–9 NLT**

**Consider 1 Corinthians 14:1 in different translations:**

Let love be your highest goal! (NLT)

Pursue love. (NASB)

Follow the way of love. (NIV)

Make love your aim. (RSV)

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Jesus loves and forgives you, and he does so with a purpose: to change your life from dark and broken paths to a life-giving path. Are you still embracing “food” that is leaving you “hungry” or “sick”?

How does “suffering physically for Christ” help you be “finished with sin”?

Whose approval are you living for, people or the living God?

Does it encourage you that those who followed Jesus and died are now with Jesus forever?

What does it mean that “love covers a multitude of sins”? Does that mean to ignore or promote evil?

What translation of 1 Corinthians 14:1 is your favorite?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for giving those who are suffering for Jesus a special hope. Help me to be disciplined in my thought life and prayer life so that I can pursue love and prepare thankfully for your return. Give me ways to actively show love to others!

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

What are some substitutes for love?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don’t know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently. **1 Timothy 1:5-7 NLT**

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.

*[The Apostle Paul’s description of love]* Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. **1 Corinthians 13:1–13 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Consider the progression: biblical instruction leads to a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith which is intended to fill the believer with love. Does this describe you?

What seemingly spiritual activities can actually be substitutes for real love?

What are you personally most tempted to substitute for the hard work of showing genuine love?

In the Apostle Paul’s description of love, what comes naturally to you and what do you have to work at?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for providing us with biblical instruction so we can have pure hearts, clear consciences, and genuine faith for the purpose of loving you and others. Help us show genuine love to others and not fall prey to the temptation to use unspiritual substitutes in place of real love!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite way of getting directions to a new destination?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” **Matthew 22:34–40 NLT**

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don’t get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil. **Proverbs 4:23–27 NLT**

**Sermon Insights:**

To claim that we love God while hating or mistreating other people is just plain hypocrisy. Trying to love other people without FIRST loving God is a futile effort at best. Why is that? Because it is only when we have been transformed by God’s grace, only when God’s Spirit lives in us inspiring and empowering us, will we really be able to love others in the same way that Jesus loved us.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Where does our power to love come from?

How are you loving:

- God?
- Your neighbor?
- Yourself?

Why is learning to practice God’s attitudes and actions towards yourself essential to understanding God’s love for you? For example, does it make any sense to have an unforgiving attitude towards yourself if God himself forgave you—*for the purpose of releasing you from shame and guilt*? “Love your neighbor **as yourself**” means how you treat others is directly related to how you treat yourself!

Pick a person you can show God’s love to today. To increase your likelihood of following through, write it down and tell someone you trust what you intend to do!

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for loving me first. Assure me of your presence in my life and fill me with your power so that I can love you, myself, and others with your love.

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How would you state Jesus’ “greatest command” in your own words?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

**Scripture:**

*Jesus said, “If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.*

Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.” **John 14:15–21 NLT**

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.” **John 3:16–21 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

What must it have been like for the disciples to have first experienced the Holy Spirit living “with” them and then to have the Holy Spirit live “in” them?

How are you 1) learning, and 2) obeying Jesus’ commands?

What did Jesus promise to those who accepted and obeyed Jesus’ commands?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, teach me to love you actively with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and give me the power and opportunity to love my neighbor as I love myself! Thank you for teaching us what true power looks like and how to use it to benefit you, myself, and others!