

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When you consider what means the most to you in life, do you already have it or not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

**Ephesians 1:1-10 NIV**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

When you consider your own spiritual standing before God, do you focus more on God's role or your role? Where does Paul teach us to focus?

List all the "spiritual gifts" God has given you that Paul points out in this passage (or offers, if you have not yet given him permission to change you).

Religion dictates a way for you to work your way back to God. Christianity is God making a way to give you the undeserved life—if you accept the offer. Why does God not force you to accept his love?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, your blessings are too great to understand. As I consider the distance you covered to come find and save me, I stand in awe of the depth of your patience, kindness, and mercy. There is no one like you!

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your definition of "freedom"?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. **Ephesians 1:11-14 NIV**

#### Insights:

Just as God gave Adam and Eve choice, he gives us all choice, and his foreknowledge does not determine our choice. As far as God the Father is concerned, you are saved when he chose you "in Christ" in eternity past, but that alone did not save you. As far as God the Son (Jesus) is concerned, you are saved when he died for you on the cross, but this is still not complete. As far as God the Holy Spirit is concerned, you are saved when you yield to his conviction and receive Christ as Savior.

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

God's dramatic intervention in our disastrous situation means we now have a road back home to the Father. When God could have rejected, he embraced. When God could have punished, he relented. When God could have justly accused, he reassigned our guilt to Jesus, turned to us, and *forgave*. This was not an attempt to make us better; it was the only way to take us who were spiritually dead and turn us into new creations—able to be new creations on earth and have a place in Heaven for eternity. What is your next step of gratitude and obedience?

The Bible presents God's choice to give you life and blessing as an opportunity for you to accept or reject. At the end of a long list of God's work (he chooses, convicts, communicates, commands, and communicates consequences) is the urgency for you to make a choice to accept or reject. Accepting involves giving God permission and results in leading others as well. Are you surrendering to God? Are you helping others be reconciled to God?

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, it is with stunning fascination that you would choose to give me life. I accept your love and invite your power and presence to change me. Thank you for your incredible love!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who are you most thankful for? Have you told them recently? Or, have you told their story recently?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. **Ephesians 1:15-23 NIV**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Paul made a practice of 1) praying for people, and 2) writing them a letter telling them what he was praying for them. Consider picking three people this week to 1) pray for, and 2) write a quick note telling them what you are praying for!

How can you give thanks today?

Do you have the kind of faith that is worth celebrating?

How can you pursue knowing Jesus better?

Jesus is the unstoppable head...and the church is his undefeatable body. Who does Jesus want to serve through you today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, help my faith to grow. Fill me with your wisdom and revelation so I can know you better. Help me to know the hope to which you have called me. Fill me with your power so I can be used to love others in increasingly effective ways!

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

### CONVERSATION STARTER

What is an area of your life that God has indicated he wants to help change in the next season?

### SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. **Romans 8:18-30 NIV**

### APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

As you wrestle with the brokenness of this world (and even the aging of your own body), does this help you look forward to your new body in the "new heavens and the new earth"?

"But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" Do you spend time every day looking forward to the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to take forgiven believers home?

How does knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes ("prays for") you give you courage?

### PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for recreating me to be like Jesus. Thank you for the power and presence!

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Is there anything more foundational to your life than God's love?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one.

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 8:31-39 NIV**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Make a list of all the voices in your life that accuse you of wrong—past, present and future. Do any of the voices hold more weight than the voice of God declaring you forgiven?

What sorts of difficulties can believers expect in this life? How can we be SURE that difficulties in this life do not separate us from God's love?

Based on the last line of today's Scripture, how does God display his love to us?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for clarifying that hardship on this earth does not mean that you don't love us—just the opposite! No accuser can declare me guilty when you have permanently paid for my innocence through the blood of Jesus. Thank you for assuring me of your love through Jesus NO MATTER WHAT!