

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

Who would you most like to receive a hand-written letter from, and what would you like it to say?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. **Ephesians 1:1-11 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Like the original audience, if you are also a faithful follower of Jesus, you have the benefits of Jesus' plan for you, power in you, pleasure because of you, and presence with you. How does this Scripture help you better understand each?

Why do you think God hid his "mysterious will" for a time?

Paul regularly prayed for Christians to grow in "grace and peace." How will it be evident in your life when YOU are growing in grace and peace—how will you and others be able to tell?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for your plan...your peace...your power...your presence...help me truly grow in your grace and peace!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How has your definition of real "power" changed over the years?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe in him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. **Ephesians 1:12-23 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

According to the Scripture, WHEN and HOW did God identify you as his own?

What helps you maintain an open, humble, teachable stance towards the Holy Spirit?

Who are you thanking God for in your life? Have you told them through a call/text/email/letter?

How are you growing in your understanding of God's power in your life?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, when I am tempted to worry about my success, help me be filled with your peace and focus on the greatness of YOUR power. Help me grow in my knowledge of your power!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

When you love others, does the love originate with you, or do you pass along the love that God provides? What's the difference?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. **Ephesians 2:1-10 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How does this inspire a compassionate response in you towards those who are not yet reconciled to God the Father?

Looking back, how have you noticed God working to make YOU a "masterpiece"?

Any air of superiority vanishes when we consider that God gave us life when we didn't deserve it. How does receiving grace help you show patience and kindness to others?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, it was with humility and gratitude that I praise your name! We kneel in amazement when we consider the incredible wealth of your grace and kindness towards us. Help me be a conduit of your love and truth here on the earth you created!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is the most special place you have ever visited?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. **Hebrews 10:19-29 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

List the privileges God has secured for believers through Jesus' blood.

Why should we "hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm"?

Jesus is the only sacrifice capable of allowing God to forgive human sin. Are you accepting God's forgiveness, forgiving yourself, and offering forgiveness to others?

Can you think of a way to motivate someone to love and good works today?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross. Thank you for giving me power to live a new life. I look forward to your return. Help me keep a sober mind and a passionate heart to follow you!

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

CONVERSATION STARTER

How often are you tempted to blame someone else for your problems?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

For we know the one who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back."

He also said, "The LORD will judge his own people."

It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away." But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved. **Hebrews 10:30-39 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

How does this description of God affect your understanding of him?

We can be deeply thankful that the early Christians gave us a dramatic example of patient endurance in the face of dramatic persecution. While we do not face the same, living for Jesus in a world hostile to faith does invite pushback. What are you facing that you need to "patiently endure"?

"You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever." What is distracting you from focusing on the hope of Jesus returning?

Will you be one of the faithful ones whose soul will be saved? Remember "...we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus"!

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, empower me to have faith, hope, and focus as I long for you to return. Help me take seriously your commands so that I can patiently endure!